Part 2:
DIR® Functional Emotional Levels of Development

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Nine Core Functional Social & Emotional Developmental Capacities (FEDL)
*Age range is when this begins to develop but it continues to develop through relationships & experiences

Level 1: Regulation & Shared Attention 0-3 mos*
Level 2: Engaging & Relating/Mutual Engagement 4-6 mos*
Level 3: Purposeful Emotional Interaction/Two-Way Purposeful Communication 6-8 mos*
Level 4: Shared Problem Solving/Sense of Self 9-18 mos*
Level 5: Symbolic Thinking/Creating Ideas 18-36 mos*
Level 6: Building Bridges/Emotional Thinking 30-42 mos*
Level 7: Multi-causal & Triangular thinking 4 years*
Level 8: Comparative & Gray Area Thinking 7 years*
Level 9: Reflective Thinking/Growing Sense of Self/Stable Internal Standard 10 years & above *

"Climbing the developmental ladder"

KEY FLOORTIME PRINCIPLES ACROSS ALL FEDL LEVELS

~ These levels build upon one another ~
Capacities at the lower levels support the development & quality of the higher levels

~ Many children demonstrate variation in their capacities across levels & developmental domains ~
Developmental gaps at any level will impact the child's ability to access & maximize growth at higher levels

~ Move up & down the ladder as needed ~
A child may develop solid capacities at a developmental level, but not "master" the level. We must attend to all levels simultaneously & where there are gaps in functional capacities, we must go back, revisit & build forward for a child to maximize their growth & true potential

DIR® FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY – LEVEL 1

Level 1: Shared Attention & through Co-Regulation the development of Self Regulation over the course of development:
The child is calm & focused, taking in the sights & sounds of the world, able to screen out distracting internal or external stimuli; available to interact & explore their world.

• Getting calm together
• When calm able to gaze at the caregiver's eyes & look at faces
DIR® FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY – LEVEL 1

Regulation & Shared Attention

What do We See?

DIR® SESSION SUPPORTING
FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY – LEVEL 1

Level 2: Mutual Engagement:
The child is able to engage with trusted caregivers, demonstrating warm connections, robust engagement, trust & intimacy; sharing attention together around a meaningful experience.

Able to share “joy” and fall in love.

To “woo” & “be wooed”, stay engaged across a wide range of emotions.
What Do We See?
Level 3: Intentional Two-way Purposeful Communication:
The child can engage in “back & forth” communication with their caregiver using vocalizations, facial expressions, affect, movement, gestures, or language. We begin to understand the “intent” of the infant.
Level 4: Sense of Self, both physical & emotional, the ability to stay in a long continuous flow of interaction, shared social problem solving & behavioral organization:

The child has emerging ideas, all his or her own. The child & caregiver stay in a long continuous flow of non verbal & later verbal interactions, described as “circles of communication”, which are increasingly robust & sustained.

In the long continuous flow of interactions, the child & caregiver are executing ideas & resolving problems together in the natural flow of day to day activities of daily living & in play scenarios. In treatment this also occurs in the natural flow & sometimes in semi-structured activities that can occur.

The child's sense of self, both physiologically & emotionally is strengthened.
The child begins to attune to very early social expectations, that later leads to impulse control...
DIR® SESSION
SUPPORTING FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEVEL 4
Shared Social Problem Solving

Shared Social Problem Solving
What Do We See?

DIR® SESSION
SUPPORTING FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEVEL 4
Shared Social Problem Solving

Shared Social Problem Solving
What Do We See?

DIR® SESSION
SUPPORTING FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEVEL 4
Shared Social Problem Solving

Shared Social Problem Solving
What Do We See?

DIR® FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CAPACITY – LEVEL 4
Behavioral Organization... Cueing into Mum...

Shared Social Problem Solving
What Do We See?
DIR® Session Supporting
Functional Emotional Development Capacity – Level 4
Behavioral Organization... Cuing into Mum...
What Do We See?

DIR Functional Emotional Development Capacities – Levels 5 & 6
With the foundations of the lower levels of development in place, & continuing to become deeper & richer, children with ASD & related disorders are often:
• warm
• engaging
• intentional
• able to solve problems
• beginning to have their own ideas

These capacities provide the foundation for higher level thinking, expanding on their ideas, reasoning, abstraction & reflection

DIR Functional Emotional Development Capacities – Levels 5 & 6
Developing these higher level capacities enables the child to:
• Deepen the quality of his or her emotional relationships
• Move beyond polarized thinking into more flexible modes of thinking
• Regulate his or her impulses & moods
• Use more complex thinking to support richer academic abilities

DIR® Functional Emotional Development Capacity – Level 5
Level 5: Symbolic Thinking/Language/Emotions:
The child begins to use symbols (language) to express & share ideas.
This develops in play at first, the child mimics daily life; The child then begins moving to more original imaginary ideas & actions dramatizing a widening range of child's real-life issues.
Level 5: Symbolic Thinking/Language/Emotions:

- The child begins to use symbols (language) to express & share ideas.
- This develops in play at first, the child mimics daily life;
- The child then begins moving to more original imaginary ideas & actions dramatizing a widening range of child's real-life issues.
Level 6: Building Bridges/Abstract Thinking:

The child can connect ideas logically & give reasons behind ideas (answer "why questions").

The child discovers new organizing concepts by connecting symbolic ideas which in turn more complex, fuller, emotionally-charged plots.

Play has a logical flow with a beginning, middle & end, with projected outcomes.

The child has an understanding of motives of characters, (causal thinking)
DIR® SESSION SUPPORTING
FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY – LEVEL 6

Abstract Thinking  What Do We See?

DIR® - ALL LEVELS 1-6 IN THE FLOW....

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~ Many children demonstrate variation in their capacities across levels & developmental domains ~
~ Move up & down the ladder as needed ~

DIR FUNCTIONAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITIES (FEDL) 7-9

Level 7: Multi-causal, Comparative, & Triangular Thinking: The child is able to give multiple reasons behind ideas & use this flexible thinking to support modulation. The child also begins to understand how one relationship may impact other relationships.

Level 8: Comparative & Gray Area Thinking: The child is not stuck in polarized thinking, but can understand varying degrees of emotions, ideas, etc. (e.g., “I am only a little mad”). They can also make comparisons between ideas & support their ideas in logical ways (e.g., “I like this cookie better than that one because this one has more chocolate chips”). This comparative & gray area thinking supports the child's ability to begin to understand social hierarchies.

Level 9: Reflective Thinking/Growing Sense of Self/Stable Internal Standard: As the child approaches puberty they become more self-reflective, can consider more than one frame of reference & begin to consider the past, present & future.
DIR Functional Emotional Development Capacities (FEDL) 7-9

Levels to think about..... Levels to think about.....