

## Understanding and Working With Repetition and Perseveration

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A very interesting phenomenon occurred during a session that highlights a common issue when working with many children who have challenges in auditory processing and language, and exhibit repetitive behavior and perseveration. This is a general principle that is important not only for such children but all relationships. During the session, Darren's mother was doing great and being patient with him, helping Darren reason things out. When Darren was tapping his fingers, his mother asked him what he was feeling. "Mad" was his answer. When she asked him what else he was feeling, he responded "Sad," and then "Talking." His mother was able to zoom in on the emotion "mad" in combination with "talking" and asked Darren how mad he was about having to talk. He was able to show her with gestures. A little mad, a lot mad, et cetera. This exchange was based on reading Darren and understanding what he was trying to say.

Verbally, he wasn't able to express his feelings and got distracted. His mother was able to help him come back to the subject by being patient and reading him. Later in the session, other opportunities for this kind of exchange arose. Darren was talking about having a birthday party and wanted his Aunt Mary to come. However, Aunt Mary lived far away and wasn't able to come. We were nearing the end of the session, and Darren's mother was in a hurry to get through all the things that we needed to address. Rather than being patient with Darren and helping him talk about his feelings in wanting Aunt Mary to come to his party, his mother was thinking for him, solved the problem and lectured him., Darren ended up repeating words to himself and getting perseverative around Aunt Mary and the party.

With patience and taking the time to read Darren, his mother could have let this play out and reassured Darren that they would try to find where Aunt Mary lived on the map when they got home, continuing the conversation later. Discussion around why he wanted to see Aunt Mary, missing her, and how he would feel about Aunt Mary not coming to the party, and what would make it easy for her to come and what would make it hard for her to come could have taken place over many days, effectively addressing the different emotions he was feeling. However, Darren's mom felt pressured by time constraints and resorted to filling in the blanks for Darren, thus letting a golden opportunity pass without taking advantage of it.

This is a good illustration of how everyone can resort to, under pressure in similar situations, thinking for the other person instead of helping them think for themselves. Many children and teenagers with Darren's challenges repeat themselves and get involved in perseverative patterns. When a child, teenager, or adult has these kinds of challenges and repeats himself, he is often trying to let you know that he wants to make a point. Instead of filling in the blanks for him, try to read the person. They will often be like a puzzle, becoming distracted in their own

thoughts, jumping from subject to subject, and then coming back to the original subject. You can help by giving the person multiple choices: good answer first, silly answer second. Try listening with a “third ear” and piece together what the person is getting at. Describe the feelings around this desire, and then introduce the reality: “I want Aunt Mary to come to the party,” and then “Aunt Mary lives far away, she is ill, et cetera.”

During a back and forth discussion where the person is doing a lot of talking, substitute depth for repetition. That is the key. When you don't read the person with these types of challenges, you will often get repetition and perseveration. In reading the person, you can get a deeper conversation about what's on their mind, and have an in-depth discussion that elaborates on their emotions.

Children may exhibit respective language or echolalia at different times in their development and for different reasons. It can happen in the very beginning of learning language or later in life as they are dealing with stress. It's important to understand where a child is within Greenspan Model by looking at their social-emotional development. Understanding their profile will help you come up with an effective response. Some additional things to consider when working with a child who is repetitive or echolalic,

<b>Signs to watch out for</b>	<b>Regulate and Communicate</b>	<b>Be aware of Adult Tendencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repetition of words/phrases/questions</li> <li>- increase in volume of voice</li> <li>- Tension in facial expressions</li> <li>- Increase in body movement</li> <li>- Heightened distractibility</li> <li>- In their own world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stay calm and be soothing</li> <li>- Model the calm emotional state you want to encourage in the other person</li> <li>- Show empathy</li> <li>- Ask simple questions to encourage communication</li> <li>- Give options if necessary</li> <li>- Try to expand on what he person is already telling you</li> </ul>	<p>Many adults have tendencies/habits that feed into repetitive behavior patterns in others. As adults we have to change our response to elicit a new response from a child.</p> <p>Many Adults tend to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lecture instead of listening</li> <li>-Dismiss or ignore behavior-which also dismisses communication and feelings</li> <li>-Escalate to shut down behavior</li> <li>-Try to redirect without addressing child's emotional state</li> </ul>