



# RHUBARB

The ISADD Newsletter  
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## ANOTHER ENDORSEMENT OF ABA – WITH SOME IMPORTANT CONDITIONS

### EDITORIAL yyyyyy



*The Season's Greetings to all our readers.*

We are coming to the end of another year, which has seemingly flown by at a very fast rate. The longer one is alive, the faster the years seem to pass - this is not just folklore, but has been investigated by psychologists – the perception occurs because of the ratio of measured time to the length of time one has lived. To many of our client families, the parents being still under thirty years of age, a year probably seems a long time – to those parents I would say, although a year living with a pre-school child with autism seems a long time, in fifteen, twenty years in the future, you will look back on it as a relatively short period. Will you remember that time as one devoted to doing all you could to ameliorate the effects of autism on your child, or will you look back with regret, knowing you could have done more?

With that, hopefully motivational, thought, I hope you have a happy, relaxing time over the holiday break, and have a wonderful year in 2006.

Daryl Cooper  
Editor

### yy ISADD XMAS BREAK. yy

The ISADD office will be closed December 23, 2005 until Tuesday January 3, 2006.

In an invited contribution to the Australian Psychological Society's Bulletin, "In Psych", well known researcher Margot Prior provides an "Update on Autism".

*(Late Note – Margot Prior has just recently been named as Victorian Woman of the Year, or similarly titled award – Congratulations Margot!)*

In the update she states:

"Applied Behaviour Analysis/Intervention (ABA) has the best evidence for treatment effectiveness: most other treatment approaches have not been subject to controlled studies of efficacy and follow up outcomes..... (ABA) is expensive in time and resources, and *relies on huge family commitment and personal investment.*

Some of the conditions which are needed for ABA to work well have been documented.

These include:

- \* high intensity
- \* early age better than later
- \* many hours per week (20 – 40) over a long period of time
- \* *high family commitment:* and
- \* well-trained professional therapists."

(Italics added)

Regular readers of this newsletter will not be unfamiliar with the conditions listed above, and will have heard a lot from ISADD about the need for family

commitment and “parents as partners”. We don’t just say this for the sake of saying it – we keep saying it for the sake of the children whom we serve – if there are any parents out there who don’t believe us, will you believe Margot Prior?

Reference: Prior, Margot 2005 Update on Autism *InPsych The Bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society* Vol 27 Issue 5, October. Adapted from Dr. Prior’s Keynote Address to the National Autism Forum, Parliament House, Canberra.

## **MISCONCEPTIONS**

Despite our best efforts, there always seem to be misconceptions about ABA/DTT, and what ISADD as an organisation actually offers.

I guess that there always will be some people who misread, misinterpret or otherwise misunderstand the information we provide in various forms, but nevertheless, efforts to educate those who need to know need to continue. So here, I want to try to clarify a couple of misperceptions about ABA/ISADD programs which have recently come to my attention.

### **1. ISADD’s program is limited in its’ scope.**

An ISADD program addresses ALL aspects of a child’s functioning, capitalising on strengths, strengthening weaknesses. Areas include: cognitive/conceptual skills, socialisation (play), communication and speech, fine and gross motor skills – and more.

The misperception probably arises because ISADD does not have children seen regularly by various specialist therapy professionals. This is because the programs are designed by psychologists with specialist experience in designing comprehensive ABA programs, and the programs are delivered by personnel specifically trained to do so.

There is no academic training specifically for professionals wishing to practice in the field of ABA for autism, the knowledge required crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries: the best foundation on which to build the necessary knowledge and skills is psychology, which is why most ABA for autism specialists come from this discipline (a few come from occupational- or speech – therapy backgrounds).

### **2. ABA/ISADD programs are done on a table-top.**

It is often the case that in the early stages of an individual child’s program, formal teaching sessions will take place at a table-top, for a variety of reasons. However, as the child makes progress, the program will be delivered in a variety of ways, and in a variety of settings, both in the home and in the community. In any event, ABA/DTT should not be restricted to formal teaching (or therapy) sessions, but should be utilised (as the Yanks would say) 24/7, that is, every waking moment of the child’s life (this is part of the family commitment referred to in another article in this edition).

## **WELCOME BACK**

To Program Manager, Lisa Cleary who has returned to work, babe-in-arms, on a part-time basis.

## **CONGRATS SECTION**

Congratulations to:

Tanya Williams on her engagement.

## **FAREWELL TO:**

Sarah Davies who has left to work as a volunteer in Indian orphanages.

## AUTISM AND SUPERNANNY

### WA PARENT NIGHT

A meeting for all WA parents was to be held at our Shenton Park rooms on Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. Jura Tender was to speak about the 2005 ABA Conference in Chicago

Also, a Therapy Materials “swap meet” was planned, so parents could sell, buy or exchange materials.

Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled, as only one “rsvp” was received by the due date!

When Jura travels to ISADD’s other centres of operation, her “Parent Nights” are always well attended, with at least 50% of client families represented. If the same applied in WA, we would have had at least 50 people attending.

So why the difference? .....

I would love to hear anyone’s ideas about this.

### NEW CASE MANAGER TRAINING

The next Case Manager Training Course is scheduled for the first two weeks in February. As usual, this will be a multicultural event, with participants from New Zealand, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore attending.

### CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED!

The editor appreciates all contributions. News, gossip, happenings, funny stories Etc. Email to [daryl@isadd.org](mailto:daryl@isadd.org) or post to PO Box 255 Kelmscott, W. Australia 6991.

I wonder how many of our Australian families tuned in to the television show “Supernanny” on November 14? (For overseas readers who may not know, “Supernanny” is a TV series in which the “supernanny” goes into homes where parents are having difficulties with their children’s behaviour, and “tames” the children).

In the November 14 episode “supernanny had to deal with twin pre-school girls and their younger brother who has autism. No doubt thousands of families with a child with autism tuned in.

In this episode, Supernanny enlisted the assistance of Dr. Lynn Koegel, a psychologist well-known as a researcher and practitioner in the field of Autism (she and her husband are regular contributors to the annual ABA conference in the USA).

The strategies Supernanny uses on children, and teaches parents to use, are based on ABA – guess what? – she is very successful at changing children’s behaviour! In this episode, Dr. Koegel also used ABA techniques to effect some very positive changes in the behaviour of the sibling with Autism. Once again, the power of ABA was demonstrated.

But more importantly, the program also demonstrated how easily the parents reverted to their previous (non-ABA) child-rearing practices when the “experts” withdrew and were no longer available for support and guidance. The family were seen deteriorating into their former dysfunctional state (– of course another visit from the experts set them back on track).

The lesson here for ISADD personnel, and for client families, is that, once positive changes have occurred, you cannot just relax and not worry; ISADD personnel need to continue to monitor progress, and to support

and encourage parents and siblings to keep using ABA principles. Parents need to be on guard against falling back into old (bad) habits, and to make use of the professional support and guidance available.

If anyone is interested in knowing more of Dr. Koegel's work, they could read her book:

Koegel, Lynn Kern and LaZebnik, Claire: *Overcoming Autism*, published by Viking Penguin, 2004.

(ISADD Case Managers note – the above is available to you on loan from the ISADD library)

## **SINGAPORE**

We welcome Vyda Chai as a new executive Case Manager. Vyda, a qualified psychologist, has been with ISADD several years and completed her Case Manager training in January 2005.

Despite being Malaysian born, Vyda has lived, studied and worked in Perth from early childhood, and sees Singapore as an exciting new cultural experience, rather than it being simply the country next door to her birthplace!

## **INDONESIA**

We are delighted to announce Dini Oktafik's accreditation as Program Manager. Over a number of years as Case Manager, Dini has shown dedication and enthusiasm for her work, which has also translated to an eagerness to learn, and develop her skills: this she has done to the extent that she now has skills more than commensurate with her new level of accreditation.

This marks a significant milestone in the development of YISADDI, giving client families greater access to high-level consultative services than was previously possible.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

A temporary farewell to Wellington Case Manager, Rebecca Thomson who, someone said, has gone off to learn empathy with brass monkeys – I've no idea what they're talking about - actually she is visiting Antarctica. We look forward to welcoming her back sometime mid-2006.

Amy Brownson is leaving Queenstown and will be moving to the North Island, where she hopes to establish an ISADD presence.

From the perspective of HQ here in Perth, New Zealand operations, at least on the organisational level, appear to be functioning very well. This is in no small part due to the efforts of our NZ Coordinator, Ann Cowan. Thank you, Ann, for a job well done, keep up the good work!

## **CASE MANAGER TRAINING**

As well as providing annual Case Manager training fortnightly courses, ISADD also runs in service sessions. These happen from time to time and are an important part of keeping in touch with each other, sharing ideas and ensuring that services remain consistent. There were a number of these recently.

## **EASTERN STATES**

Case Managers from Melbourne and Hobart met in Adelaide on the weekend 23-23 October. This was only a small group, but the mutual support such meetings provide was appreciated. Among the topics covered was self care and the importance of avoiding burnout, analyzing the cause for compliance breakdowns, advanced language and the need to address grammatical rules. The group designed a simple instrument to help assess and measure social behaviour when observing our children interacting with peers.

## PERTH

The Perth Case Managers met on November the 17<sup>th</sup> for an in-service day at Roleystone. We started with a team building game and then a discussion of the roles one chooses to play in a team, and why. We also discussed team development and the stages teams go through as they evolve, with disorganization as new people or tasks impinge and a regrouping takes place, leading towards efficient running. Advanced language skills were also discussed and tasks which need teaching listed. There was also much discussion and sharing of ideas and opportunity for a relaxing lunch in the sun on the verandah. Case managers went off with the task of compiling lists of generalization tasks and engineered situations which they could give parents.

## SINGAPORE

Singaporians met on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and started a document which could prove most valuable as a training tool. Prerequisite skills for common drills were listed, as were the extensions, together with the skills required for them. The task is long and the group will continue with it in their regular monthly meetings.

## JAKARTA

Tania Dawson will facilitate a session for the local Case Managers in mid December.

## **Autism Video CD Released in Indonesia.**

Following hard on the heels of the release of her book, Gayatri Iskandar has been collaborating with Indonesian Health Authorities to produce a Video CD aimed at parents; educating them about autism.

Using VCD's to reach the tens of thousands of parents of children with Autism across the scattered islands of Indonesia is potentially one of the most effective interventions possible. It makes information available and accessible and it is cost effective. We know that parents are the first to note a problem in their child's development, and thus they are in the best position to make a tentative diagnosis and start on the intervention which, as parents they are also in the best position to carry out. Sometimes we tend to rely too heavily on the expertise of professionals and forget simpler solutions. With Autism the earlier we can start to help the child learn, the better the effect will be. By empowering parents to take on the responsibility of helping the child, this project will make an earlier start possible; and in places where there is no professional service available, make a considerable difference to the child's outcome and the family's well being. ISADD commends Gayatri for instigating this project, and are proud to have the opportunity to be associated with it. It is an example which, even the richer countries would do well to follow.

The launch, on December 15 in Jakarta will be attended by ISADD psychologist Tania Dawson.

## PHOTO CORNER



Recent November CM Training in Perth



ISADD Therapy Team Training in South Australia