



Newsletter ASDWT

January to March 2021

Message by Rukhsana Shah

C.E.O. ASDWT

Hello everyone

I hope that all is well with you and your families. In this quarter of the new year, there is some good news about the Covid-19 Pandemic: a) vaccines are going to be administered soon; b) there are signs of economic recovery; and c) many parents who had been forced to resort to home-schooling are now recognizing the benefits of this age old traditional system of education.

Many parents of children with Autism and related disabilities are finding out that they are able to provide a more holistic education to their children at home, including opportunities to practice living skills, performing everyday chores around the house, playing structured games and socializing more with family members. Parents are also able to monitor



their progress on a day to day basis and make changes in their teaching methodology as needed.

It was mainly through home-schooling that our grandparents and great-grandparents were educated—in South Asia at least—and in this environment, they imbibed not only academics but also our cultural values including deference towards elders, regard of teachers, relatives and neighbours, respect for family customs and traditions, kindness, politeness and courtesy towards all, cleanliness and order, and patience, humility and appreciation of the daily blessings of life.

Coming back to practical nurturing of children and adults with Autism and related disorders, we are showcasing Talented Young Persons on Zoom during the World Autism Awareness Month in April 2021. Please do get in touch with us soon if you have any inputs or nominations.

All the best and stay safe!



Inside this Newsletter

Online Workshops	1
Parent Support Groups	2
Trainings	3
Article	4
Office Location	5



Home Page

Online Workshops

Okara Workshop

ASD Welfare Trust, Lahore conducted a Workshop over Zoom for Government Special Education Center Okara on 4th January 2021. Ms. Farah Amanat presented the topic, "Understanding Specific Learning Disorders and Management Techniques." Assessment, criteria and types of Specific learning Disorders were explained along with management techniques. Concepts were explained through pictorial images and video modelling. Questions were satisfactorily handled by the presenter. In all 16 persons including Headmistress, Psychologist and Teachers of G.S.E. Centre Okara attended this online workshop and thanked ASDWT for holding the session.



Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) for Covid-19 Anxiety

What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

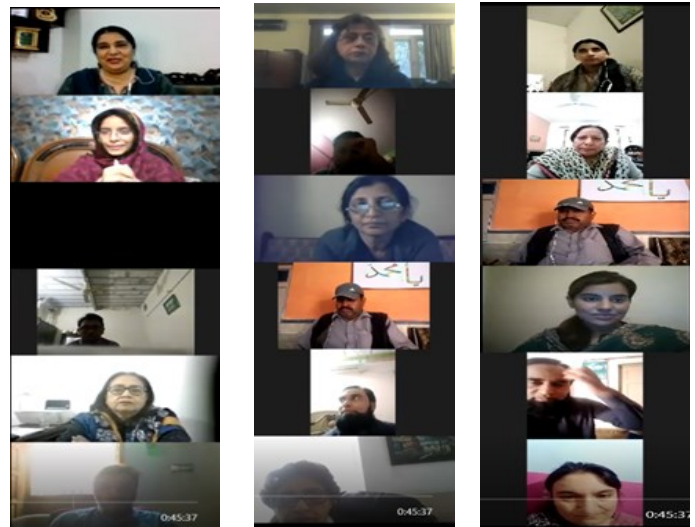
- Focusing on now
- Helps to identify and modify our negative distressing thoughts
- Help in regulating our emotions and behavior

On 5th January 2021, ASDWT Lahore organized an online session on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) with Dr Sara Subhan and Ms. Ayesha Jabeen, Assistant Professors at the Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Management and Technology (UMT). Ms. Ayesha said that the spread of COVID-19 has changed the entire world which is faced with new challenges every day. Therefore, the need is to understand unpredictable conditions and to respond to them effectively. Ms. Sara Subhan spoke on how to identify the negative stressors during COVID-

19 and ways to regulate them through emotions and behaviors. Real life examples and video modeling were used by both the speakers to explain Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for COVID-19 Anxiety. They interacted with the participants to get an insight into their difficulties, especially those parents dealing with ASD children in this pandemic. A total of 95 Professionals and parents, from Lahore, Karachi, Okara, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Sialkot and Swat joined this online platform.

Functional Living Skills in ASD

On 15th January 2021, ASDWT Karachi invited Ms. Sajida Ali, Senior Special Educator & Autism expert and Director Pakistan Centre for Autism (PCA), to talk about "Functional Living Skills in ASD." The presenter discussed various methods that are employed at the PCA to make ASD children independent. It was a very informative session attended by 83 participants. Ms. Sajida answered all the questions and queries of parents with practical examples.



Transition to Mainstream Schools

ASDWT Lahore arranged a zoom session on 18th January 2021 on "Transition to Mainstream Schools." The resource person was Ms. Ammara Sikandar, who has a Graduate Certificate in Autism & Behavioral Sciences and a Bachelor's Degree in Education from York University, Toronto, Canada. In her presentation she described different issues related to transitioning in to the mainstream setup. She said that the preparation for this change over has to be started at an early age for children to have a relatively seamless transition. Although it is a tedious task that requires a lot of patience and perseverance, nevertheless it has to be done for the betterment of ASD children.

Skills required for Schooling

- Basic functional communication
- Age appropriate Self-care
- Sitting quietly for longer hours
- Understanding Social cues
- Calming strategies
- Alternatives behaviours for stims

Recognizing personal feelings

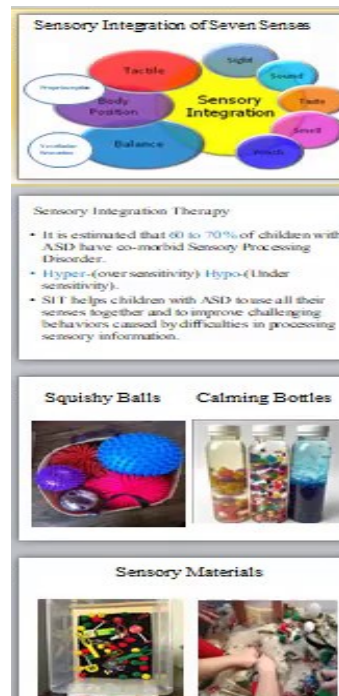
- Zones of regulation colours: green, blue, yellow, red.
- 5 point scale for feelings

The Zones of Regulation			
Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
Sad	Happy	Nervous	Angry
Upset	Excited	Surprised	Yelling
Hurt	Calm	Confused	Aggressive
Tired	Proud	Silly	Mad

Emergency Scale	
5	Angry
4	Upset
3	Nervous
2	Happy
1	Calm

Faisalabad Workshop

ASD Welfare Trust Lahore conducted an online workshop for Zunnorain Welfare Trust, Faisalabad on 3rd February 2021. Ms. Farah Amanat, Clinical Psychologist ASDWT Lahore presented home based management options for autistic children during the pandemic. She explained how to devise schedules, physical structures, task orientation and work systems by giving examples. She also elucidated in detail the management techniques that can be effectively used to improve learning outcomes for them. 50 participants including teachers, parents and professionals attended the session.



Social Skills Training



SOCIAL SKILLS:

- It represents a range of skills including:
 - Timing and Attention
 - Sensory Integration
 - Communication
- Training teaches strategies to help:
 - Interact with other
 - Make Conversation Skills
 - Manage Problem Solving Dilemmas

ASD Welfare Trust Lahore conducted an online session on 9th February 2021 on "Social Skills Training for ASD." The presenter was Ms. Sara Khan, a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst from USA. She described and explained the range of skills, tools and strategies used to help ASDs. Essential components of intervention and antecedent management control were also discussed, along with different behaviour modifications and skill acquisition strategies. She elaborated these concepts by using real life examples. About 93 parents and professionals joined the session and made it interactive through relevant queries and questions.

Childhood Schizophrenia & Autism

On 25th February, 2021 ASDWT Karachi invited Dr. Sidra Kaleem, Developmental Pediatrician at Aga Khan University Hospital Karachi to talk about Schizophrenia and other mental health problems confronted by children. She also talked about Autism, but separately. She answered to related questions of concerned parents and professionals. The session was informative and was attended by 55 participants.



Eight Essential Skills for ASD

Objective : What to do to reduce Reliance on Adults

- Enable them to access reinforcers themselves through social interaction

- *Teach them:*

- to wait
- to accept NO
- to have transition
- to share
- to take turns



ASDWT Lahore conducted two webinars on "Eight Essential Skills for Autism Spectrum Disorder." Sessions were held on 2nd and 24th March, 2021 and were attended by 152 participants including professionals and parents of children with Autism and other neuro-developmental disorders. Resource person was Director of Autism Care Centre Ms. Maliha Latif. During her presentation she shed light on the essential skills required to increase independence of ASD children at home, school and community. She elucidated crucial skills such as requesting, waiting, completing 10 consecutive tasks, following directions, per-

forming daily living skills and learning about health and safety, etc. She also stressed that it would be better to start practicing functional skills and vocational training plan by the age of 5-6 years of the ASD children so that they could successfully learn to do the assigned tasks.

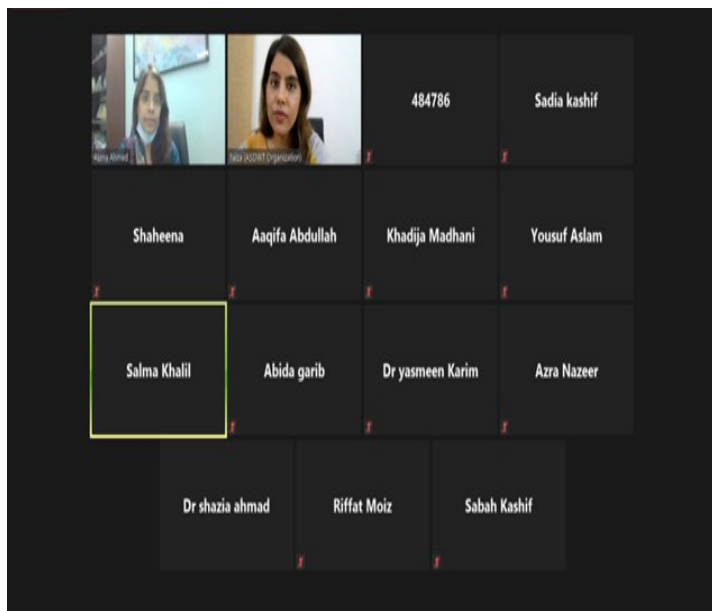
Gujranwala Workshop

ASDWT Lahore conducted a workshop on Zoom for the Caring Centre for Special Children, Gujranwala on 11th March 2021. Ms. Farah Amanat, Clinical Psychologist ASDWT, Lahore presented Home Based Management for Autistic children. By giving real life examples, she informed the participants as to how visual schedules, physical structure, task orientation and work system could be devised for these children. She explained the management techniques for ASD in detail. Later, an interactive question and answer session was held in which parents asked a number of pertinent questions. About 30 participants benefitted from the session.



Parent support Groups

PSG Karachi



On 4th February, ASDWT Karachi conducted a session of Parent Support Group on "Theory of Mind" for the parents of Karachi. It was a different and new topic for the parents. The session was attended by a large number of parents and professionals. Considering the interest and demand, another session on "Stages and Strategies of Theory of Mind" was conducted on 18th March, 2021 in which an in depth explanation of the Theory of Mind was given by Team ASDWT followed by a lively discussion.

PSG Quetta & Hyderabad

ASDWT Karachi conducted the last session of the Series on "Behavior Management" on 26th January, 2021. Behavior Analysis and Management Strategies were discussed in detail along with a demonstration of practice activities. In this session parents also shared the analysis charts and their observations with the Team of Clinical psychologists. Each case was discussed separately and management strategies were provided accordingly.



PSG KPK

On 20th January, 2021 ASDWT Karachi conducted a workshop for Parents Support Group in KPK on "Strategies for Developing Routines at Home". On 19th February, 2021, a new series on "Behavior Management" was introduced, wherein types of behaviour and analyses were discussed. Behaviour issues of children were discussed and addressed using behaviour analysis chart and relevant techniques.



Trainings

Trainings on Neurodevelopmental Disorders and their Management

To promote understanding and management of ASD children during the pandemic, ASDWT Karachi launched a series of training programmes for Therapists, Special Educators, Teachers and Social Activists from Sindh. First part of the series was conducted on "Autism Spectrum Disorder, Signs and symptoms" on 17th February, 2021. The second part was conducted on 10th March, 2021 on "Management of Autism Spectrum Disorder". Signs and symptoms, red flags and detail management strategies were discussed. The program was attended by participants from Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Azad Kashmir.



Girls and Autism

Autism is mostly viewed as a boys' disorder, and even the Centre for Disease Control in the USA states on its website that autism is four times more common in boys than in girls. However, recent studies are presenting another point of view, which is also supported by famous autistic women, such as Temple Grandin, Susan Boyle, Donna Williams, Valerie Paradiz and others, that since many women are more successful in "masking" their "typical" autistic traits such as anxiety and repetitive behaviours, it is difficult to diagnose them as autistic at a young age, and many are diagnosed later in life, some even in their fifties and sixties.

Another belief held by scientists and researchers is that autism, when it occurs in females, is more severe and mostly conjoined with significant intellectual disability. This means that clinicians may be missing out on girls who were high functioning or had Asperger's syndrome. Autism can have different symptoms in females: many a times parents report that their girls went undiagnosed, or were given other diagnoses such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and even anorexia.

In Australia, Jane McGillivray and her colleagues compared 25 autistic boys and 25 autistic girls with a similar number of typically developing children. On a measure of friendship quality and empathy, autistic girls scored as high as typically developing boys the same age—but lower than typically developing girls. They had learnt to "copy" typical behaviours of their peers and had a greater ability to hide their symptoms.

In fact, a recent study being carried out by Harvard, UCLA and the University of Washington has found that "girls with autism are not like boys with autism...In short, the brain of a girl with autism may be more like the brain of a typical boy than that of a boy with autism."

All this is very interesting, and parents and professionals in Pakistan should be wary of accepting the 4:1 ratio of boys and girls with autism on face-value. In fact, our psychologists and researchers should pay more attention to such studies so that they can come up with fresh findings especially in our cultural milieu where many autistic girls have no other option than to blend in with the expected norms of social behaviour and remain undiagnosed and misunderstood till they reach a crisis point in their lives.

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