

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: TEACHING LANGUAGE TO AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Childhood Autism: A developmental disability. Lack of normal, basic social responsiveness, interaction, communication. Majority are mentally retarded. Incidence: 1-2 per 1,000. More common in males. Heritable. No known psychogenic cause.

Lovass' program (UCLA)

Use operant conditioning techniques to develop normal social behavior. Focus on developing spontaneous social speech.

Food as primary reinforcer. Attention, praise as secondary reinforcers.

Example: get an autistic child to answer the question "What is your name?"

Problem: child ignores the question. Have to prompt/force attention.

Then use successive approximations, using prompts when necessary. "Fade" the prompts over time.