



Going to the heart of Autism, Asperger's Syndrome & Pervasive Development Disorder

A Program to develop Dynamic Intelligence
Opening the Door to:

- **reciprocal communication,**
- **genuine friendships,**
- **school and workplace success &**
- **confident, independent living.**

Relationship Development Intervention®
Treatment Program for
Autism Spectrum Disorders
from the Connections Center

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www.RDIconnect.com



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A message from Dr. Gutstein

*“While traditional methods had been a useful and welcome relief to parents in their time, I realized advances in Autism **treatment** had not kept up with **research**.*

As a psychologist trained to fill the gaps between theory and practice, I just could not accept the consequences of waiting for others to do something about the tragedy I saw unfolding around me every day.”

Dr. Steven Gutstein

***B**y 1990, I had developed an excellent reputation in the Houston area for treating children and teens with Autism, Asperger’s Syndrome and PDD. I prided myself on keeping up with the latest treatments and my intervention methods were “cutting edge.” My patients achieved measurable results. They made more eye contact. They possessed a greater repertoire of social scripts. They were better socialized and better tolerated by their peers. They could follow rules and were motivated to make friends and achieve in life.*

Yet despite this apparent success, I increasingly felt like I was letting my patients down. Not one of the children I treated could maintain the topic of his conversation with a pal, or share a tender moment. None could read social cues or were socially spontaneous. None were able to rapidly adapt to new situations, were flexible, or had real friends. None felt that moment-to-moment emotional

connection the rest of us rely on and live for. Something was tragically missing.

I began spending hundreds of hours in libraries, reading everything I could find about typical relationship development as well as the development of people with Autism. I attended numerous workshops and spoke to leading world experts. I was determined to find the “missing piece” of the puzzle.

I soon realized how even the brightest children on the spectrum, those with high IQ’s and excellent language, those who achieved in school and seemed well-behaved, were missing skills that a typical six month old does so easily. I also realized that I could not teach even these “highest functioning” children age-appropriate skills because they were missing the early foundation that is essential for future success in the complex, always changing environments that comprise most of real life.



*T*ranslating the latest scientific research into a powerful program

We know from neuroimaging that children on the autism spectrum do not fully develop pathways in the brain between the Pre-frontal Cortex, the brain's "executive;" and the Limbic System, the emotional center of the brain. But we know from years of rehabilitation research that previously damaged and under used parts of the brain can be strengthened. What if there were exercises that created traffic to strengthen those pathways? That is what I set out to do in developing the RDI® Program.

Researchers had compiled years of findings which explained this issue clearly, but I was surprised to find that their hundreds of studies were not reflected in the traditional clinical methods that were available. There were no methods that carefully assessed each child's capabilities and taught them at their level of competence.

Imagine trying to teach a child with Dyslexia to read without first carefully understanding whether they had the foundations of reading, like decoding, in place. It would be an exercise in futility. The same applies to people on the autism spectrum.

Despite the intense desire of parents for scientifically proven treatment methods, clinicians, including myself, were not translating the wealth of research knowledge into a systematic clinical program to address the

core problems faced by all individuals on the autism spectrum. That is what I set out to do.

Now years later, I am now continually improving this new way. We have learned not only to teach the sophisticated skills which make a real difference, but have developed powerful tools to help parents teach these skills to their children. These days, I frequently hear comments like, 'This program speaks to a missing piece that we could all acknowledge but didn't have a name for.' This missing piece, I call Dynamic Intelligence; and the program, Relationship Development Intervention® Treatment Program for Autism Spectrum Disorders—the RDI® Program.

Steven E. Gutstein, Ph.D.
February, 2004

"Starting based on the needs of the child is the only way to respect the child."



A *about Steven Gutstein*

“The RDI® Program grew out of an integration of extensive research of both autism and typical relationship development.

I believe that most people on the autism spectrum are capable of participating as true partners in authentic emotional relationships, if only we provide a means for them to learn in a gradual, systematic way.”

Dr. Steven Gutstein

Prior to 1987, Dr. Gutstein was a nationally renowned developer of innovative clinical programs for children with high-risk conditions. In 1983, he received the largest grant ever awarded by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, to develop a family-based intervention program for seriously suicidal adolescents.

Dr. Gutstein earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Case Western Reserve University. Between 1979 and 1987 he served as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Medical School. During this period, Dr. Gutstein also served as the director of Pediatric Psychology for Texas Children’s Hospital.

He is currently Director of The Connections Center, and is on the clinical staff of the Texas Children’s Hospital, in Houston, Texas.

Selected list of Dr. Gutstein’s Publications

Gutstein, S.E. (2001): ***Autism/Asperger’s: Solving the Relationship Puzzle***. Future Horizons Press: Arlington, Texas.

Gutstein, S. & Sheely, R. (2002): ***Relationship Development Intervention Activities for Young Children***. Jessica Kingsley Publications: London.

Gutstein, S. & Sheely, R. (2002). ***Relationship Development Intervention Activities for Children, Adolescents and Adults***. Jessica Kingsley Publications: London.

Gutstein, S. (2003). ***Can my Baby Learn to Dance: Exploring the Friendships of Asperger Teens***. In Lianne Holliday Willey (Ed.). *Asperger Syndrome in Adolescence*. Jessica Kingsley Publications: London.

“The key is to begin by helping the child see how neat sharing is, in the first place.”



"I believe people on the autism spectrum have a right to the same pleasures and joys as anyone else; as much right to a good quality of life as anyone else.

I see my role as providing them with that opportunity."

Dr. Steven Gutstein

What quality of life do you want for your child in 5, 10 or 20 years?

Think about your dreams of a typical day in your child's future.

Do you hope someday, he or she will:

- Not only talk fluently, but engage in genuinely curious conversations?
- Delight in a true friendship?
- Feel a sense of pride in being able to contribute to his or her community?
- Enjoy the excitement and comfort of a boyfriend or girlfriend and maybe even get married and have children?
- Feel capable and confident living an independent lifestyle?
- Experience the satisfaction and rewards of successful employment?

There is now reason for hope:
the RDI® Program





Some people on the autism spectrum, those we think of as the “highest functioning,” learn the scripts, and some even blend in. The problem, is, faking never ceases to be work. They never learn the motivations behind the behaviors - the reasons why we work so hard to maintain a friendship, or to really understand what someone else is thinking and feeling. These skills are difficult enough for typically developing children. It is not surprising that as adults, people on the spectrum often stop putting on the show and lead isolated, marginal lives.

Why “social skills” and behavior modification are not enough

Prior to the RDI® Program, most intervention approaches taught children on the autism spectrum to perform scripted behaviors with limited value in many real-life interactions. For example, a child may be taught an opening gambit when approaching another child on a playground. However, if the rehearsed remark does not lead to acceptance, or even if it does, the child is left with no ability to participate in the spontaneous, highly fluid peer interactions of even a simple playground environment.

While they clearly have benefit, even the most widely used and most intensive intervention methods have not demonstrated their effectiveness in producing a high quality of life for people on the autism spectrum. We do not know whether any intervention programs, even those that claim to be “proven,” actually lead to the child’s ability to develop friendships, live

independently and obtain satisfying employment. We all hear about children who are “recovered” or who “look normal” but we never really know what happens to them in real life and whether the “miracle” of their progress was really due to any specific program or treatment.

We believe that to produce successful adults, a clinical intervention program must develop effective ways to address the debilitating core deficits of autism. These core deficits: rigid thinking, aversion to change, inability to understand other’s perspectives, failure to empathize, and absolute, “black-and-white thinking,” continue to plague people on the autism spectrum throughout their lives.

***The problem is,
faking never ceases to be work.***



The biggest problem of people on the autism spectrum is their limited motivations. They are often left with a tiny number of motivations and therefore become obsessed with them.

Why language and IQ are not enough

Scientists find that even those children who speak well and are high achievers in school, are at high risk for failure in life.

The largest study* ever conducted of high functioning adults with Asperger's Syndrome and Autism was completed in 2001. The researchers followed hundreds of young adults on the autism spectrum who had high IQ's and good language. 50% of these bright individuals went on to higher education after high school. Yet, at the time of the study:

- Only 12% were employed
- Only 3% could live independently
- Over 65% had almost no social contact outside of their family
- None were married or involved in a significant emotional relationship

Over 75% of children currently diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have at least average intellectual potential

and adequate language development, placing them on the "high functioning" end of the spectrum. Yet, as this and other studies clearly demonstrate, their academic achievement and language proficiency are not sufficient to attain a quality of life. Despite significant progress in evaluation and treatment of ASDs, the prognosis for quality of life for people on the spectrum remains poor.

Yet the myth that language and academic achievement equals success continues to be communicated even by some "expert" professionals. The following page illustrates just a few of the many misconceptions that continue to spread.

* National Autistic Society (NAS) of Great Britain. Findings in other studies conducted in the US, Ireland and Sweden have produced almost identical results. The NAS study is available on our web site, www.RDIconnect.com.

These findings profoundly make the case that one can only get so far on IQ.



“I knew each child could not make the same progress, or reach the same goals. But, regardless of his or her abilities and limits, there was something more I wanted to give each of them.

I wanted the children to smile when I walked into the waiting room, because they were happy to see me, not because they received an M&M as a reward.”

Dr. Steven Gutstein

T *True or False?* **Which of these are myths?**

- If a child is not functionally fluent by their 5th birthday, they will remain mute for their entire life.
- Teaching eye contact allows children with autism to have success in social relationships.
- If you teach a child enough rote language, he or she will be able to have reciprocal conversations.
- Social skills groups are effective in teaching people on the spectrum to have relationships.
- If a child can “fit in” and superficially appear normal, he or she will be able to make friends.
- If you teach the academic skills so that the child can get into college, they can go on to have a pretty normal life.
- Children who have undergone “proven” interventions and treatments have been followed to see how they do as teenagers and adults.
- If a child spends most of his time focused on developing his computer skills, someone will want to hire him someday, regardless of his or her ability to collaborate and work as part of a team.
- Children with Asperger’s Syndrome usually become highly paid and successful “nerds” and “geeks.”
- People with autism may not have the same emotional or social needs as everyone else. They might be happy living a life without friendships and intimate emotional relationships.

These are all false, all myths.

Myth: “If a child can function in a regular class, he or she will be successful in life.”



So then what IS Autism? What is Dynamic Intelligence?

Neuro-typical individuals seek out Dynamic Systems because they provide the novelty and variety in our lives that we so desperately need. They provide the meaning to our lives.

People with autism seek out the safety of "static" unchanging environments and miss out on learning the abilities needed to succeed in environments where change is constant and inevitable.

In his study of dedicated researchers throughout the world, Dr. Gutstein found a remarkable consensus among the scientists:

even the most capable individuals on the autism spectrum lacked certain abilities necessary for success in managing the "real-life" environments that are dynamic and changing. Dr. Gutstein discovered that six different abilities are essential for success in dynamic systems. He calls these the six areas of Dynamic Intelligence:

- ***Emotional Referencing:***
The ability to use an emotional feedback system to learn from the subjective experiences of others.
- ***Social Coordination:***
The ability to observe and continually regulate one's behavior in order to participate in spontaneous relationships involving collaboration and exchange of emotions.
- ***Declarative Language:***
Using language and non-verbal communication to express curiosity, invite

others to interact, share perceptions and feelings and coordinate your actions with others.

- ***Flexible thinking:***
The ability to rapidly adapt, change strategies and alter plans based upon changing circumstances.
- ***Relational Information Processing:***
The ability to obtain meaning based upon the larger context. Solving problems that have no "right-and-wrong" solutions.
- ***Foresight and Hindsight:***
The ability to reflect on past experiences and anticipate potential future scenarios in a productive manner.

While each person with Autism displays a unique set of symptoms, these six areas are universal to every person on the autism spectrum. Moreover, they have not been shown to improve with age, even following intensive intervention programs.



What does this mean in creating a **good quality of life?**

In treating Autism, Asperger's and PDD, we have to be careful that despite our good intentions, we do not wind up making things worse. Any intervention, no matter how well-intentioned, has just as much potential for harm as good. This is especially true if the intervention is applied in a "cookie-cutter" approach, without first carefully evaluating the "whole" child and family's needs.

If you can, sit quietly. Take a few deep breaths and let go of your immediate concerns. Think about the inner core of your child. No matter what other symptoms your child has, you can see problems in these areas of Relationship Intelligence. When you stop and think about it, you can see how crucial these abilities are to a future quality of life.

Without the foundations of Dynamic Intelligence, an individual with Autism or Asperger's will always be deprived of the relaxation of easygoing, back and forth conversations complete with surprises, jokes and fun; the happiness in being connected to another with a smile or intimate glance from across a room; the thrill of playing on a team, or the sense of competence and pride from working on community projects; the self-confidence in living independently, handling the practical matters with ease

while rising to unexpected challenges; and, the deep satisfactions of a healthy marriage.

Underlying their day-to-day issues, most parents we talk to have deep concerns about their child's future.

You may have heard some people say there is little hope. Or maybe you've heard others say that with enough social skills training, current supports and years to mature, your child can beat the previous statistics. But what research has consistently shown is that no behavioral, biological or psychological interventions and treatments have been able to impact the devastating consequences of a failure to develop Dynamic Intelligence.

So what is the solution?

The foundations of Dynamic Intelligence underlie success in life.



The RDI® Program is about improving the long-term quality of life for every individual on the spectrum.

* ADOS categories which provide hard numbers for researchers are not the same as diagnostic categories used by clinicians, so changes in ADOS results alone do not mean that the children are “recovered” or no longer on the autism spectrum.

The RDI® Program is a way to develop Dynamic Intelligence

The RDI® Program is:

- ***a parent-based clinical treatment program*** where parents are provided the tools to effectively teach Dynamic Intelligence skills and motivation to their child.
- ***about the joy in connecting:*** a path for people on the Autism Spectrum to learn friendship, empathy, and a love of sharing their world and experiences with others.
- ***about changing neurology:*** a way for people on the spectrum to become flexible thinkers and creative problem solvers who enjoy the challenges of change and who desire to expand their world.
- ***based on over 20 years of research*** by world’s experts on typical development as well as scientific studies on people with autism.
- ***developmental & systematic:*** a step-by-step program that focuses first on building the motivations so that skills will be used & generalized; followed by carefully and systematically building the skills for competence and fulfillment in a complex world.
- ***realistic:*** a program that can be started easily, and implemented seamlessly into regular, day-to-day activities to enrich the life of the whole family.
- ***precise:*** a method that measures and begins at the edge of each person’s capability and then carefully but continually raises the bar.
- ***effective:*** within 18 months, over 70% of children in our initial study improved their diagnosis based on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS*). The majority of children also moved from a special education to a regular classroom without needing an aide.

Going beyond short-term compensating to life-long solutions.



Children undergoing the RDI® Program show an amazing increase in the initiation of “joint attention,” the need to share objects of our attention with others.

“...Aside from the improvements in overall eye contact, Marshall is actually looking for our facial expressions for input. We’ve also noted improvements in behavior, transitioning and attempts at communicating his needs through speech vs yelling & kicking. This wouldn’t be possible without the RDI® Program.”

Marshall, age 7, California

What results can I expect with the RDI® Program?

Children who have undergone the RDI® Program show:

- Dramatic improvement in meaningful communication,
- Desire and skills to share their experiences with others,
- Genuine curiosity and enthusiasm for other people,
- Ability to adapt easily and “go with the flow,”
- Amazing increase in the initiation of joint attention,
- Powerful improvement in perspective taking and theory of mind,
- Dramatically increased desire to seek out and interact with peers.

“Jack was diagnosed with autism at the University of Chicago when he was four. He used to repeat scripted videos and books for long periods. He did not seek to share enjoyment with others. Jack preferred to play solitarily...”

After undergoing a year of the RDI® Program, a team of specialists at Yale Medical School evaluated Jack and reported they could find no evidence of any form of PDD... Jack is now showing typical 5 year old jubilation. He regularly invites his peers to play. His verbal communication is now typical. In Pre-school he is functioning like any other child. He has shown amazing flexibility. Conversations are highly reciprocal and meaningful.”

Jack, age 6, Louisiana

Dramatic improvement in meaningful communication and desire to interact with peers.



How does the RDI® Program work?

A critical part of the RDI® Program involves helping children increase the number of motivations available to them.

We do this by helping them encode, preserve, retrieve and share positive, emotion-based, episodic memories.

Motivations are memories we have of things that were exciting and felt good, that we want to experience again.

You find out the which ones the child is available for, and then you can slowly begin to build new ones.

While our research was done on the most intensive form of the **RDI® Program**, we know from our experience in working with hundreds of families that even using some elements of the **RDI® Program** will produce real benefits.

Parents can start simply, just by incorporating elements of the **RDI® Program** into their everyday life.

For example, it will help if you:

- change your communication (eg, asking fewer questions);
- slow down the pace of daily activities and create more opportunities for “productive uncertainty;”
- spend time doing enjoyable Experience Sharing activities;
- use photos, journals or memory books every day to reflect on a few happy moments.

In its most complete, powerful and effective form, parents:

- attend an intensive, limited enrollment 4-day Parent Training Seminar to learn how to run their program most effectively,
- participate in a comprehensive week of treatment planning - which includes the **Relationship Development Assessment™ (RDA™)** Planning Module,
- receive regular coaching from an **RDI® Program** Certified Consultant,
- engage in at least 3 hours a week of **RDI® Program** “lab time” with their child, along with numerous opportunities during the day to practice and refine skills,
- adopt an **RDI®** “lifestyle” that benefits the entire family,
- prepare regular videotapes for professional review and for ongoing help,
- receive re-evaluation and additional intervention planning every six months.



Parents find that everyday life becomes less stressful and more enjoyable for the whole family.

“... Daniel no longer prefers playing quietly alone during his down time. He actively engages us and other children to play with him all day! He truly wants to connect with us as much as we want to with him. The RDI® Program has helped us understand how to teach him about this and how much fun it can be!”

Daniel, age 4, St Louis

Why do parents like the RDI® Program? Because it's: *systematic, developmental...*

Parents have told us they like the RDI® Program because it is:

- Systematic but flexible
- Developmental
- Empowering
- Balancing and “Normalizing”
- Easy to carry over into everyday life
- Structured, with an emphasis on video-taped feedback and both professional and parent “peer” support:

■ **Systematic but flexible:**

Parents find that having access to over 300 step-by-step objectives linked to specific activities is critical in rendering the program “user-friendly.” Parents also gain the confidence they can carry out the **RDI® Program** without extensive involvement of therapists.

Parents also prefer elements of the program that allow them, with their professional Consultant’s guidance, to customize their style of involvement, communication, activities, scheduled intervention periods and settings based on the unique needs of their child.

■ **Developmental:**

Teaching parents to focus on the child’s current developmental functioning breaks the cycle of failure and feelings of inadequacy for both parents and child.

Setting careful, developmentally appropriate objectives gives parents and children permission to focus on skills that can realistically be attained, knowing that these simpler successes are laying the foundation for eventual competence in more complex areas.

***The RDI® Program breaks the cycle of failure ...
for both parent and child.***



Many parents tell us that the RDI® Program has boosted their confidence and helped them feel like a competent parent for the first time.

“...Doing the RDI® Program strengthens the bond between Erik and his father. He reads the nonverbal cues of situations much better. We see so much more flexibility with his dad. They resolve problems faster because they are connecting easier.”

Erik, age 10, Minnesota

E njoyable for the whole family, empowering, easy to use,

■ **Empowering:**

Parents recognize that the **RDI® Program** is not teaching them to be a therapist, but rather providing a means to more effectively guide their child's development. Many parents tell us that the **RDI® Program** has helped them to feel like a competent parent for the first time.

Once they have mastered the first few stages of the program, children begin to take on more responsibility for monitoring and regulating their actions in various settings. Parents and teachers report that after children in the **RDI® Program** had mastered social referencing (the second of twenty-six **RDI®** stages) they were no longer forced to constantly prompt and direct the child.

Finally, families reported that the **RDI® Program** model made it easier for both parents, but especially fathers, to participate and to accrue the benefits described above.

■ **Balancing and “Normalizing”:**

After several months of doing the **RDI® Program** parents report that everyday life becomes less stressful and more enjoyable for everyone in the family. Siblings do not feel excluded or neglected. Parents can move out of a state of “permanent crisis” and resume a more normal life again.

■ **Easy to carry over into daily life**

Parents are unanimous in praising the help they receive to translate program components into their daily lives. Elements of the program such as emphasizing declarative and non-verbal communication, practicing coordinated actions in everyday settings and creating opportunities for “productive uncertainty,” so essential for the development of Social Referencing, are incorporated into the family's lifestyle. Once embraced, these elements enhance the well-being of all family members and so become easy to sustain.

*It helps parents effectively guide their child...
so parents feel competent.*



Parents are encouraged to customize settings for their child and are unanimous in praising the help they receive to translate program components into their daily lives.

“Michael required a one-on-one aide in school until he started the RDI® Program. His actions seemed ritualized with objects. He was very involved with self-play and tuned out everything else. He never came running to me after school. Now he runs to see me after school. For the first time he tells me he loves me on his own.

Michael, age 7, California

Structured and supported

■ **Structured, with an emphasis on video-taped feedback and both professional and parent “peer” support:**

Parents report that the discipline of preparing and editing video segments helps them to allocate time for reflection and review of their communication and interaction with their child.

Parents new to the **RDI® Program** receive important psychological support from their more experienced counterparts who are willing to share their own experiences and knowledge through videos, specially constructed internet message boards, chat rooms and appearances at parent training workshops.

“Chris preferred to play in others’ presence using his own agenda. When interacting with adults he wouldn’t ask for responses or feedback, he would just tell a story or anecdote from start to finish.

Last year he would have watched the kids play, but would not have tried to join in, nor would he have been able to follow the fast-paced play of his peers. His initial response to stress was to withdraw and hide. Now he gets excited when he sees other kids. More play with his main buddies at school.

There has been a great improvement in social referencing. He is initiating joint attention all the time. He is more concerned with my feelings. He has acquired the desire to learn new things. He really gets along with his sister and actually plays really coordinated games for long periods of time with her.”

Chris, age 8, New York

The RDI® Program translates into day-to-day activities, so the whole family benefits.



Sounds good... but what about research?

70% of the RDI® Program group moved from a special education or home setting to a regular classroom setting without any special support.

(See our web site downloads page –RDI® Journal Article– to download the complete study. www.RDIconnect.com)

We recently completed a study comparing 17 children (ages 2-10) undergoing the **RDI® Program**, to 14 similar children who averaged more than twice the amount of intensive intervention services:

- **70% of children in the RDI® Program group improved their diagnostic category** on the most respected testing instrument for Autism, Asperger's and PDD - the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS*). Over 50% of the **RDI® Program** group scored in the Non-Autism category by the follow-up testing, just 18 months later.
- The percentage of **RDI® Program** children independently succeeding in regular classrooms went from 12 to 82% over the same period.

- Not a single child in the comparison group improved their diagnostic category. Similarly, not a single comparison-group child progressed into a typical classroom without needing a one-on-one aide.

This is an initial study and the research paper points out a number of reasons to limit conclusions. However, there is no doubt that the **RDI® Program** has been proven to be an extremely powerful method of addressing the core deficits of autism spectrum conditions.

* ADOS categories which provide hard numbers for researchers are not the same as diagnostic categories used by clinicians, so changes in ADOS results alone do not mean that the children are "recovered" or no longer on the autism spectrum.

*We found children improved dramatically within
18 months of starting the RDI® Program*



Parents like the RDI® Program but what do Autism Experts say?

“Steve Gutstein’s Relationship Development Intervention® Program is designed to encourage genuine reciprocal relationships ... Because his approach is quite different from conventional social skills programs, we benefit from not only new insight, but practical strategies for parents and professionals as well. ... Remarkable intervention program...”

Tony Attwood, PhD
*International Expert on
Asperger’s Syndrome*

“...I am greatly impressed with the theoretical foundation, pragmatic approach, and objectives [of the RDI® Program]. This intervention focuses on what others methods do not by targeting the core relational and cognitive difficulties faced by individuals with autism. The techniques are designed to foster social engagement, are sensitive, practical, and potentially powerful in their systematic application.

My knowledge of the Relationship Development Intervention® Program through the literature and personal experience, has led me to believe that the Relationship Development Intervention® Program may help change beliefs of what is possible for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.”

Nancy J. Minshew, MD
Associate Professor of Psychiatry;
Director, NICHD Collaborative Program of
Excellence in Autism, (CPEA),
University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine.

“Surprising though it may seem, until recently there has been striking neglect of the possibility that intensive and appropriately tailored social engagement with people with autism, carried out in a way that is respectful both of these individuals’ difficulties and potential, might promote vital aspects of their development.

The Relationship Development Intervention® Program provides such an approach. It has been designed with skill and originality. It is disciplined and circumspect, as well as ambitious and inspiring. It promises to change our view of what treatment may achieve.”

Dr. R. Peter Hobson
MA, PhD, MB, Bchir,
FRCPsych, Cpsychol.
Tavistock Professor of
Developmental Psychopathology,
University of London

***“It promises to change our view
of what treatment may achieve.”***



The RDI® Program has been developed for people of all ages, including teenagers and adults. Exercises and settings are always customized to create comfort and feelings of competence for the individuals involved.

Frequently Asked Questions: *Is the RDI® Program effective for...?*

Is the RDI® Program effective for everyone on the autism spectrum?

Yes. We find that all people on the autism spectrum can benefit from the **RDI® Program**. It appears to be effective regardless of IQ, language, gender or diagnosis.

The most important factor in determining the rate of improvement is the degree to which we have to overcome obstacles like the child's desire to control others, and the presence of co-occurring illnesses.

What about older children?

Early intervention always yields better results in every form of treatment. But, our methods have been developed for people of all ages, including teenagers and adults. The key is not the age of the person, but developing a customized program that reflects the unique obstacles and strengths of each person.

What about non-verbal children?

The **RDI® Program** should not be the sole intervention for any individual with severe speech and/or language development problems. However, our research demonstrates that the **RDI® Program** dramatically increases children's motivation to communicate and to use meaningful reciprocal language.

What about the other problems of children on the spectrum?

The **RDI® Program** can also be helpful with a number of problems like "stimming", limited motivation for communication and disorganized behavior. However, children can have Autism, Asperger's Syndrome or PDD along with other serious medical disorders. Part of developing a comprehensive program is evaluating these related problem areas and designing a bio-psychosocial intervention plan that, along with the **RDI® Program**, cares for the "whole" child.

The RDI® Program is all about little changes that create opportunities for making discoveries.



The RDI® Program is a marathon and not a sprint. You will always begin in a simple, though challenging manner and then systematically progress into more complex objectives that include almost all aspects of social/emotional development, and higher level executive functioning thinking.

(See our web site for more answers to Frequently Asked Questions, www.RDIconnect.com)

More Frequently Asked Questions *Is the RDI® Program...?*

Is the RDI® Program just for social development?

While social improvements are dramatic, children who succeed in their **RDI® Program** demonstrate dramatic changes in flexible thinking, pragmatic communication, creative information processing and self development.

Does the RDI® Program replace social skills training?

We view social skills as important but vastly different from Relationship Intelligence. Skills such as behaving appropriately, following rules, good hygiene and proper dress are essential for acceptance and success.

Does most of the work take place one-on-one or in group settings?

Your program will always begin by teaching you methods to effectively coach your child

in the foundations of Dynamic Intelligence. When the child is ready, we carefully match him with a peer at a similar level of relationship development and we form a dyad. Dyads are often the child's first meaningful peer relationship. Gradually we add other children to the pairing, and increase the number of settings in which children practice so that the child learns to form and maintain relationships in a number of different social pairings and contexts.

How long do individuals typically stay in the RDI® Program?

Treating the core problems of Autism and Asperger's Syndrome is a marathon and not a sprint. Many of our families continue working on higher level objectives throughout childhood and adolescence.

The RDI® Program is about finding meeting places that work for both people.



The RDI® Program is designed for life-long social and emotional growth.

We build functions in the “lab” and develop new skills, but daily life is where we practice, and the child needs so much practice.

Many families now start with the lifestyle changes, and then progress to the lab.

It works fine either way.

The objectives are the key. Keeping them in mind is so much more important than anything else.

Yes, I'm interested. How do I get started?

For families who choose to do the complete, intensive RDI® Program from the start, we will work with you from the outset, beginning with a phone consultation to answer your questions. We recommend parents start by attending a 2-Day Introductory Workshop (or by viewing the DVD if attending a workshop is not possible). Then, we recommend parents attend the small group 4-Day Parent Seminar, followed by the Relationship Development Assessment™ Planning Week and on-going support.

A growing number of **RDI® Program** Certified Consultants are providing care throughout North America. However, if you do not live near a Certified Consultant we will tailor an effective program for you through periodic visits and video consultation. The next pages outline the five steps we recommend for the most effective and complete **RDI® Program**.

If you are not ready to start a full RDI® Program right away, you can choose to add steps at your own pace, adding more training and customization as you go. You can start by using simple elements of the **RDI® Program**, just from information from our books, DVD, web site or Introductory 2-Day Workshop offered in many locations. (Check our web site, www.RDIconnect.com, for the one nearest you.) Then, as you progress, you can decide when and what next steps to take.

What we recommend is that you read over the various steps and see what feels most comfortable. The benefits of the **RDI® Program** are best achieved when done in a way which feels manageable and empowering. You can start slowly with the **RDI® Lifestyle** and add on the other steps for the complete **RDI® Program** at any time.

Start in a way which feels comfortable and empowering.



Comments from workshop participants:

“Great use of video clips. It was wonderful to see actual clients in specific stages.”

“The program is so realistic, down to earth and practical.”

“This is the first program I’ve seen that is based on science and not emotion in this area.”

“It fills the gap of relationship building that traditional methods leave behind.”

(See our web site to view sample video clips from the workshop, www.RDIconnect.com)

Step 1: Get introduced to the RDI® Program. Attend a 2-day Introductory Workshop

We want you to be thoroughly introduced to the **RDI® Program** so you are sure it is a good fit for you and your child. One of the best ways to start is by attending one of Dr. Gutstein’s 2-day Introductory Workshops offered regularly at different locations.

In the Introductory 2-day Workshop, you will get a good background about the **RDI® Program**, plus learn the latest essential elements in starting an **RDI® Lifestyle** to benefit your entire family:

- how to adapt your communication style to bring about dramatic changes in relating;
- how to help develop a new type of memory to create motivation for genuine relationships;
- how to adapt everyday activities so you can use **RDI® Program** concepts as a regular part of your daily life; and much more.

For more information:

See the web site for details about what the workshop covers, plus upcoming locations, dates, and fees.

If you cannot come to a workshop we recommend you:

- **View the RDI® Program DVD** with 5 hours of information, including more than 30 video examples (available for purchase on our site.)
- Explore our web site, **www.RDIconnect.com**.
- Read Dr. Gutstein’s first book, **“Solving the Relationship Puzzle,”** available for purchase on the web site.
- **Participate in our on-line Chats** or message boards.

**Attend a workshop, read the book, view the DVD...
Visit www.RDIconnect.com**



Step 2: Get started! **Create an RDI® Lifestyle**

Typical children obtain over 4,000 hours of practice in learning to function in Dynamic Systems by 36 months of age.

Review daily priorities and adapt schedules to allow for your child's (and your own) significant practice needs.

(See our web site downloads page –Living an RDI® Lifestyle– for more information on this topic, www.RDIconnect.com)

Once you've had a good introduction to the **RDI® Program**, you'll probably want to get started using some of the **RDI® Program** concepts right away. Many are easy to implement, bring immediate results and give parents the confidence to take their **RDI® Program** to the next level:

- **Simplify your life.** Minimize the number of different social groups your child must navigate daily.
- **Increase 1:1 time** that is mutual and playful (rather than instructional). Capitalize on 1:1 time.
- **Start a memory book** and review emotions often.

We also have a book of **RDI® Program** Activities which can help at this stage, plus we offer an **RDI®** Internet Support Package to help families get their questions answered and to share the process.

RDI® Internet Support Package:

- **On-line Message Board** to connect with other families. A place to share challenges, celebrations, ask questions and receive support.
- **Live internet chats** with Dr. Gutstein so you can ask specific questions.
- **Chat Transcripts** posted for later reading and review.
- **Article & Information Downloads:** valuable information about autism and the **RDI® Program** in one place.
- **RDI® Program Newsletter**, to keep up with the latest news, research, workshop dates, article downloads, etc.

Connect with others implementing the RDI® Lifestyle through our on-line message board.



Step 3: Personalized Training RDI® Program Parent Seminar

“Joy. The RDI® Program Parent Seminar brings back the feelings of joy you had when you anticipated the arrival of your child’s birth. Once again you experience the chance to help this new person enter the world. You are strengthened by the kindness of others who are experiencing the same fears for their children. When you leave the workshop you actually feel happy about the future and feel equipped to face it again.”

Karen B, New York

Personalized training is critical in helping parents create the optimal lifestyle and in deepening the process in their daily lives. Each month, Dr. Gutstein and his wife and partner Dr. Rachelle Sheely, conduct the Four-day Parent Seminar for small groups of parents, held at many different locations.

Before the training:

We recommend completion of the 2-Day Introductory Workshop or viewing of the RDI® Program DVD. Participants are also asked to prepare a recent 20-minute video of their child in a natural setting.

The Seminar includes:

- An entirely new perspective on Asperger’s, Autism and PDD.
- Learning to move past the crisis state and normalizing your life.
- Methods of changing your communication, your daily schedule and your

priorities to build the foundations of Dynamic Intelligence.

- Methods of teaching your child flexibility, creative thinking and executive functioning.
- Developing a new family “win-win” partnership.
- Developing customized activities tailored to your particular child.
- Designing a balanced program that addresses current needs while investing in future success.
- Becoming a sophisticated consumer of services.

You will leave the Seminar filled with hope, ideas and a sense of competence and excitement.

For more information:

See the web site or contact us for a complete Information Package of what is covered on each day, plus locations, dates and fees.

Over 4 days, you will leave behind a sense of crisis & prepare for a new, rewarding lifestyle.



The Planning Week is designed to completely customize the RDI® Program for your family. We will spend time with both you and your child during the week; and will collaborate with you in determining goals, anticipating obstacles, and finding the easiest ways to set up your environment. You will also receive one-on-one training so you can be the best coach for your child.

Step 4: Relationship Development Assessment™ **RDI® Program Planning Week**

The **Relationship Development Assessment™ Planning Module (RDA™)** is at the heart of the complete **RDI® Program**. This is a Planning Week where we spend one-on-one time with you and your child. By carefully assessing your child's abilities *and* level of motivation for participating in reciprocal relationships, we can pinpoint an exact starting place. You can then feel confident you are starting right at the edge of your child's level of competence, knowing you have not missed any critical, foundation steps.

During this Planning Week, we will also help you determine realistic, achievable goals, plus evaluate obstacles to progress. One of the most important aspects of the week is helping you find the easiest and best ways to set up your environment. We will carefully construct a program for your specific needs, and provide you with one-on-one training in methods of effectively coaching your child. If you are

doing the complete **RDI® Program**, we will then carefully match you with a Certified Consultant who is a good fit for you, for the ongoing, professional support which follows.

Before the Planning Week:

Based on feedback from participants, we now recommend that parents complete the 4-day Parent Seminar before the Planning Week, so they can participate more as partners during this time.

For more information:

If you are interested in the **RDI® Program Planning Week**, see the web site, email or call us for more details. We also recommend you schedule a telephone consultation with us. This will give you the opportunity to have all your questions answered, learn what the week entails, and determine if this program is right for you and your child.

The Planning Week will help you develop as a coach & meet your family's unique needs.



Step 5: Regular coaching Ongoing Professional Support

Ongoing support includes regular review of videotapes made by parents in the home.

“As for how the RDI® Program has made us feel, Maurice (husband) and I agreed that it has given us hope. I used to have constant anxiety about whether or not Patrick would be ‘OK’ as I didn’t feel that we were on a path that was making a difference...

Of course, we still have a long way to go, but I’m happy with the progress! ... Now I really think he might be ‘OK’.”

Patrick D, Age 9, Connecticut

Implementing an **RDI® Program** may look simple, but we find that in practice, parents require a good deal of initial coaching and education before the **RDI® Program** becomes a natural part of their lifestyle. Following the **RDI® Program** Planning Week, parents doing the complete **RDI® Program** receive ongoing support under the guidance of an experienced **RDI® Consultant**, certified by the Connections Center.

The Ongoing Support module consists of a customized mix of parent education, live “coaching” sessions with parents and children, and regular review of videotapes made by parents in the home.

Ongoing Support also typically includes bi-annual intervention planning weeks to evaluate your program and set new objectives. While you are working in the **RDI® Program**, we strongly encourage

you to communicate with other parents and to make use of the message boards and chat room.

For more information:

If you are interested in starting with the complete **RDI® Program**, we recommend you schedule a telephone consultation with us. This will give you the opportunity to have all your questions answered, determine if this is the right program for you, and help you decide how best to begin.

What is included in your Ongoing Professional Support will be based on your family’s unique needs and will be determined in consultation with you.

You can receive one-on-one support, so you feel confident every step of the way.



Why the RDI® Program will keep evolving. RDI® Program *advancements*

I know we are on the right track when I see people experiencing joy, enthusiasm, love, compassion, curiosity, delight at surprises ...

when I see the desire to expand their world, encounter new things, have new experiences, and meet new people,

when I see the desire to face new challenges, knowing they will eventually be mastered...

these are all universal human desires transcending every culture.

Dr. Steven Gutstein

While the first version of the **RDI® Program** was based on the latest scientific research available at the time, we live in a dynamic environment where change is constant. As a result of new research and new feedback from our successful families, the *methods* of the **RDI® Program** will keep changing and being refined to take advantage of this new information.

The RDI® Program now includes an emphasis on:

- user-friendly ways of developing mastery in current objectives during everyday activities;
- developing an appropriate mix of verbal and non-verbal communication, declarative, regulatory and self-regulatory and self-narrative language; and
- developing episodic memory, which is the foundation of building motivation.

What will not change about the RDI® Program are its foundations and values:

- the focus on quality of life;
- reciprocal, successful, genuinely fulfilling relationships;
- learning to enjoy living in a relative world, in dynamic environments where change is constant but can be enriching;
- a desire to grow and expand one's ventures out into the world;
- developing and maintaining everyone's feeling of competence and healthy empowerment.

We invite you to help us evolve the **RDI® Program** through the coming years and look forward to hearing about your successes. Please stay connected!

The reference point for RDI® Program success will always be quality of life.



The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Where to go from here. What do I do next?

I want to learn more:

- Sign up for a 2-Day Introductory Workshop (Check our web site at www.RDIconnect.com for dates, locations and current fees.)
- Order the **RDI® Program** DVD or book. (Order online from our web site or use the order form on page 33.)
- Ask your questions on our Message Board or join our next on-line chat. (Check the web site for dates and times.)
- Consider attending the 4-Day Parent Seminar Program. Email us at parents@RDIconnect.com, or call us at 713.838.1362 to receive the complete Parent Seminar Information Package.
- Schedule a phone consultation to have all your questions answered. Call our office at 713.838.1362 for information or to schedule your appointment.

- Visit our web site to see:

- the Events Calendar
- stories from parents
- information for professionals
- comments from workshop participants
- sample newsletters
- sample video clips
- articles
- research
- the on-line store
- and much more!

www.RDIconnect.com

www.RDIconnect.com

- RDI® Program DVD** (5 hours) **\$150.00**
"Going to the Heart of Autism" - includes more than 30 video examples.

RDI® Program Books:

- Autism/AS: Solving the Relationship Puzzle** **\$34.95**
- The RDI® Program with Young Children:** **\$25.00**
Social and Emotional Development Activities for Asperger Syndrome, Autism, PDD and NLD. Designed for younger children, typically between the ages of two and eight. Includes over 200 objectives to plan & evaluate a child's progress, each one related to a specific exercise.
- The RDI® Program with Children, Adolescents and Adults** **30.00**
Designed for children eight and up. Includes 298 objectives, each related to a specific exercise.

- The RDI® Program Newsletter (by email only)**
Stay current with the latest news & research (Sign up on the web site)

- Shipping & Handling (add \$5 per item)** \$ _____
(Texas Residents:
8.25% Sales Tax will be added to your total order.)

TOTAL (all prices in US funds) \$ _____

We can ship to virtually any address in the world with a street address. Any customs or duty charges are the responsibility of the recipient. Check our web site for complete shipping & return information, www.RDIconnect.com

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to:

Gutstein, Sheely & Associates, P.C.

Credit Card: Circle One: MC VISA DiscoverCard
Number: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Cardholder Signature: _____

Mail to: Connections Center, 4120 Bellaire Blvd,
Houston, TX 77025 Tel: 713.838.1362

FAX to: 713.838.1447

**For convenient, secure, on-line ordering:
visit our web site: www.RDIconnect.com**

If you would like to have information about the **RDI® Program** sent to other people in your community, please fill out the information below. We would be happy to send this booklet to your friends, members of your extended family, school personnel, professionals, clinics, support groups, your local autism society, etc. (Use a separate sheet if necessary.)

Your Name: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

For a parent For a professional # of copies: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

For a parent For a professional # of copies: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

For a parent For a professional # of copies: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

For a parent For a professional # of copies: _____

Please email, mail or fax to:

Email: parents@RDIconnect.com

Mail: Connections Center, 4120 Bellaire Blvd,
Houston, TX 77025 Tel: 713.838.1362

FAX: 713.838.1447



*Think about your dreams
of a typical day
in your child's future.*

*If you can, sit quietly.
Take a few deep breaths and
let go of your immediate concerns.
What quality of life do you want for
your child, in 5, 10, or 20 years?*



relationship development intervention

www.RDIconnect.com

713.838.1362

Learn why children with Autism Spectrum Disorders fail, and how they can succeed.

Often when parents are told their child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), no one sits down with them to explain what Autism really *is*. Is it just a collection of the symptoms and behaviors your child has? What does it mean to be on the autism spectrum? What quality of life can your child expect? What can you do *today* that will give your child the best quality of life possible in the future?

In this new Introductory Guide to the **Relationship Development Intervention® Program**, Autism Expert and Psychologist Dr. Steven Gutstein helps explain what Autism, Asperger's Syndrome and PDD really are, based on the latest scientific research.

He answers many questions facing parents, including:

- What is Autism?
- What are common Autism myths?
- What does research tell us about long-term prognosis?
- What is "Dynamic Intelligence"?
- How can you go beyond short-term crisis management to long-term solutions?

Learn how you can feel empowered today and hopeful about the future.