



RDI in the UK Newsletter

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The Dynamic Dance

Co-regulation is a term that is used a lot in RDI and it is one of the most important concepts to establish for a person to interact independently with others in a successful way. Co-regulation in simple terms is about people responding to each other in an ongoing and dynamic way. It is about the process not the outcome. It occurs without controlling another person or being controlled by another person. It is the way that the majority of typical interactions take place and feel successful.

Alan Fogel, a psychologist of today, describes co-regulation as a "continuous unfolding of individual action that is susceptible to being continuously modified by the continuously changing actions of the partner."

Because communication is a dynamic and continuous process you cannot tell exactly how your partner will respond or react to your action or communication. That is the beauty of co-regulation; it's the dynamic elements of it that make the interaction / engagement all about the process, interesting, experience sharing and motivating.

To effectively succeed in co-regulation there needs to be a certain amount of self regulation in place. As you can imagine it would be quite difficult to interact successfully with another person in a co-regulatory way if you have distracting sensory issues that you cannot ignore or need to deal with strong desires or emotions etc.

Editor's Note

This is The RDI in the UK newsletter first birthday! Elisa and Sharon began this newsletter in October 2009 and since then it has grown and includes more certified consultants and more articles for you! We hope you continue to enjoy the newsletters as they come and serve to inform, educate and remind you of RDI related topics! This RDI in the UK edition is packed full of information, examples and ideas of how to get you learning the dynamic dance; co-regulation. Although this provides you with lots of information and ideas establishing co-regulation can be tricky business and you may need the support of a Certified Consultant to help you and your child achieve it.

*by Elisa Ferriggi and
Sharon Bradbrook-Armit*

Project Corner

Psychologists have recognised familiar regulatory patterns that occur in typical interactions between parent and child that happen very early on in infancy and continue right through to adult interactions. These patterns help the child to make sense of the world, organise their interactions, understand their roles and are the foundation blocks for co-regulation.

Since co-regulation is an ongoing process of response to one another's actions and communication it is often referred to as a dance. Is your child dancing with you yet?

Alternatives to successful co-regulation include prompting, over prompting, over compensating, controlling, nothing, awkwardness, self involved responses. Often an easy way to tell if your child is not co-regulating is by assessing who is doing all the work in your interactions? Who is taking all the responsibility? Is it an equal partnership or not? Is it hard work in each interaction?

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Alysia's Story/ Our Journey Pt 7

I remember attending at least one of Dr Gutstein's talks in which he stated something along the lines of..... in order to be able to communicate / converse you have to be able to co-regulate with another.

My memories pre starting our RDI® programme consist of Lissi (Alysia) always needing to be instructed on how to do things, that was also our understanding (at that time) of how best to help her. She never really had her own role to fill, expectations of her being able to fully participate without an adult's on-going guidance was very low both in actions and when trying to communicate. She did have the basic understanding of turn taking

Project Elements

It's Halloween!

- Choose a pumpkin together; decide on its size, colour, shape etc.
- Create a design on paper; take turns to add and contribute one bit each.
- Draw the design onto the pumpkin; take turns to draw on one bit each (different than before if you want)
- Carefully carve it out; scoop the seeds out and give to child to put in bowl

Assess who is doing all the work in this interaction?

What opportunities can you see to provide your child with more responsibility

Have you established a familiar regulatory pattern throughout the activity?

Is your child clear of their role in the activity?

by Elisa Ferriggi

Interaction Corner

within board games, talking and some sport activities, but paid very little attention to those around her and rarely took their input into their role as an indication of what she should do next. Some examples of this....

Lissi would play games like Disney Trivial Pursuits, which she was very good at, being Disney mad!! If it was another's turn and they took a little while to get to the dice she would take the non-action to mean she needed to do something and would then throw the dice. At other times when it was her turn she totally missed the non-action clue and someone would quickly jump in and tell her to throw the dice, move her piece etc.

If playing ball games in a group she could catch and throw but had no real motivation or interest in what was going on and would therefore often need another to prompt her to get ready to catch or indicate whom she should throw the ball to next. Playing catch with one other person inevitably finished quickly too, again due to lack of motivation.

If cooking or doing craft she would wait to be prompted to carry out her actions, when doing semi-independently or as part of a dyad / team.

Conversations were normally started by another asking her questions and would come to an abrupt end as she gave a short, often automatic, reply.

Early into her RDI® Programme she developed a realisation of the need to take on a role in order to carry out an activity, whether that was to play or do household activities - more than that she began to develop the motivation to be a participant.

We started to use ball play as a way of helping Lissi to understand the need to partner with us in order to co-regulate our actions and keep the game going. She learnt within a couple of weeks to play catch properly, monitoring our actions in order to carry out her next action. If the ball went out of play she took on the responsibility of fetching it (making a

Authentic Roles

When thinking about roles within an activity it's important to ensure those roles are authentic roles i.e. if carrying a washing basket together full of clothes it could very well need two people due to the weight, but two people carrying an empty washing basket makes little sense.

The following are some ideas based on a **Sender / Receiver (Passer / Putter) Framework**. The first ones listed are different activities but with the same underlying Sender / Receiver theme - **Different but Same**:

- **Unloading the dishwasher** - with one of you being the unloader / Giver & the other the Putter. If your child has the Putter role they could just place on the table or kitchen side they do not necessarily need to be able to place in the cupboards.
- **Loading the washing machine / tumbler dryer / dishwasher** - one passing the items the other putting in the machine

repair) to continue the game. We started to add in slight variations (Just Noticeable Differences - JND's) to our pattern of my turn / your turn i.e. throwing slow or fast, bouncing high or low, rolling the ball, throwing it under or through our legs, all of which Lissi adopted and included within the way she got the ball back to us. A little further on she also began to initiate changes to the way the ball was passed when we indicated that she had the lead role.

With household chores we would name our roles i.e. 'I'll put the dishes away, you can pass them to me' while emptying the dishwasher, or 'I'll put the shopping away, you can pass the food to me'. When Lissi had mastered those areas we would then switch roles and we moved away from labelling her role but continued to name our own. Lissi also quickly latched on that there was a general pattern forming across these interactions - one of us was 'giving' and the other 'putting' we were then able to move on to totally different chores that had the same basic concept without the need to label who would be doing what and she began to easily step into the unnamed vacant role without any prompting from us.

As parents we learnt how to pre frame our chosen or needed to do activities so that we could include Lissi in interactions similar to above, but also within activities that needed us to have different roles in a turn taking way i.e. one sweeping the other collecting in the dustpan. Then we began to think about interactions that needed us to be doing things in parallel, but framing is for future newsletter, so I don't want to go into that too much now.

A few years on and how has all the co-regulation practice paid off.... Lissi can converse both verbally and non-verbally, she is interested in what her partners have to say and she is able to take their input to help her decide what she should or wants to add in order for the conversation to continue. Within teamwork interactions she can easily step

- **Putting the grocery shopping away** - one passing & one putting in the cupboards or on the side.
- **Putting clothes away** - as above
- **Setting the table** - moving around the table with one passing & the other putting the cutlery down.
- **Tidying up toys** - one picking up & passing the other putting into the toy box.

Once your child is competent in their role you could also try reversing your roles.

Same but Different - JND's - add small variations (when your child is ready)

- **Unloading / loading the dishwasher** - start by passing one type of crockery i.e. plates then after a few items switch to a different item i.e. cups, then back to plates again & so on.
- **Loading the washing machine / tumble dryer** - think about passing the item in a different way for a while & then going back

into a role, she is now able to pre plan and work out with others over who should do what i.e. when the kids set the table they all chip in over who needs to take on which job, clearing, cleaning and setting and those roles naturally change all the time.

Recently Lissi and I recovered some kitchen bar stools. We talked through what needed to be done, as equals, we reached a conclusion on what tools would be needed and the different things that we would need to work on to complete the job from start to finish. We then proceeded to step into different roles fluidly as we went along... roles that helped the other to be able to carry out their task... one held the stool while the other used a screwdriver, one used the screwdriver to remove staples as the other held the stool cushion in place, one of us held and stretched the fabric while the other stapled. We were able to easily go from one part to the next, sometimes keeping to the role we had started in and other times switching roles without the need to verbalise more than Lissi stating 'this is too stiff for me to do' then handing me the screwdriver while she switched into my role of being the holder, and then back again to her former role once I'd started the manoeuvre off and handed the screwdriver back to her. We made a great team!

Co-regulating has made such a big difference to what Lissi is capable of and is a major part of the RDI® Programme. Through on-going co-regulation Lissi has also learnt how to self-regulate as she has borrowed our thinking process, internalised this and learnt the basic rules needed in order to do so. As stated at the beginning of this piece, if you are unable to co-regulate then you are basically unable to truly communicate both with another, or with yourself.

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Residential Care Home and

to how you were passing or add in another change.

- **Putting the shopping away** - as above. You could also think about switching between items that belong in the cupboard vs fridge vs freezer.
- **Putting clothes away** - think about passing different items for different drawers, or the way in which you are passing.
- **Setting the table** - change the order in which you are passing i.e. knife, knife, spoon, spoon, spoon, tablemat, knife etc. or the direction you are moving around the table itself.
- **Tidying up** - think about the way in which you are passing, changes in speed of fetching & passing, or a few items that belong in one box for a while & then one or more that belongs in a different box & so on.

By Sharon Bradbrook-Armit

Further Reading on

Co-Regulation

Psychologist Alan Fogel described co-regulation as a "continuous unfolding of individual action that is susceptible to being continuously modified by the continuously changing actions of the partner."

This definition highlights the dynamic process that exists when co-regulation is established in constantly changing environments. Partners intuitively take on roles, time their actions and regulate their intensity to coordinate with partners. Monitoring and adjusting are fundamental in this creative, social process. But I believe co-regulation is more than that. Co-regulation is based on intrinsic motivation to share with other partners, is based on trust, on experience sharing rather than a discrete exchange of information.

Working and achieving co-regulation within residential care homes is always a challenge. To start with, there is no primary guides that can build a relationship with the service users. Care workers are usually employed to conduct "static" tasks such as doing the laundry, taking the service users out or giving them their medication. There is little time to build on experience sharing moments or to connect with services users in order to restore co-regulation. Adding to that is the ongoing problem that residential care homes face when it comes to keeping and recruiting staff. Therefore, relationships of trust are difficult to create and maintain.

Co-regulation as a process involves the dynamics of at least two people. Service users face challenges in achieving co-regulation for different reasons; 1-) Service users tend to feel comfortable in "static" environments where change, unpredictability doesn't occur. Therefore, they have a tendency to keep things the same and avoid variability. 2-) Service users normally have been moved from care home to care home. This makes them not willing to trust anyone, which is a key aspect in working on co-

Co-Regulation

The RDI Book
by Steven E. Gutstein

Developing Through
Relationships
by Alan Fogel

Other Info

Yahoo Support Groups

Join RDI-UK Yahoo support group. This is a parent-centered group for parents involved in, or wanting to learn about, a Relationship Development Intervention programme. Certified and trainee RDI® consultants are also welcome.

Join Autism remediation for our children Yahoo support group. This group is for both parents who are currently working with an RDI consultant, along with parents who are not working with a consultant at this time, who want to help their children by the philosophy of Relationship Development Intervention in a supportive atmosphere.

regulation.

Does this mean that co-regulation is a process that cannot be achieved in residential care homes? Obviously not. First of all, care workers need to believe that change can happen and need to work on re-establishing a relationship of trust with service users. This can be achieved by taking a more "guided" role with them than an instructional one. Secondly, they need to be realistic in their expectations and look for just noticeable differences (JND). Finally, slowing down and creating opportunities for engagement are essential aspects. Activities such as cooking, doing laundry, cleaning, etc are available on a daily basis, we just need motivation, time and positive thinking!

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RDI in Ireland – One Year On

RDI is now up and running in Ireland. A year ago, RDI was unheard of, apart from a few isolated, forward thinking families who were using internationally based consultants. We now have one certified consultant and two Consultants in Training and are serving families throughout Ireland.

Despite very difficult economic conditions, the future of RDI here looks positive. The biggest challenge ahead however is not the failing economy, although I can not underestimate the devastating impact this is having on many families struggling to find the right treatment and education for their children. The biggest challenge for RDI lies with the resistance of the very organizations and systems that are set up to serve and protect the interests of children and families impacted by ASD.

Facebook

Bright Futures facebook group, has information on RDI® as one of it's running topics

What's on:

Peterborough RDI Parent Support Group

Swansea RDI Parent Support Group

If you would like more information on support groups or would like one in your area please contact Elisa Ferriggi at elisa@thinkautism.co.uk

De Clutter

Have a clear out and with your unwanted items recycle them on the Autism Free Stuff UK yahoo group. The "Autism Free Stuff UK" group is open to families who have autistic children in the UK and are looking for related items or to get rid of items. This is a place to exchange and give

When I first came across RDI, it made complete sense to me and I am sure I am not alone in saying I had one of those eureka moments. I instantly knew, this is what families in Ireland needed and as nobody else has brought it here, I will do it. I had a clear vision for RDI in Ireland and off to Houston I went.

As a Consultant in Training fresh off the plane from Houston, I naively expected the professional autism community to listen and learn about the possible benefits that RDI could bring to families in Ireland. I did not expect their response. We are all well aware how the individuals we serve with ASD use avoidance techniques and control to distance themselves from uncertainty and change, well this is also very true for many who earn their living serving people with ASD. It was not that they did not like RDI, they did not want to hear anything about it. So much for others sharing that eureka moment!

I am delighted to say, the opposite has happened with parents in Ireland. We regularly see parents share that eureka moment and see their children benefit from their belief in their own ability. One year on, the RDI community is growing here. We are actively making RDI more accessible and affordable for families and we are confident that in the not so distant future, RDI will change the way Autism is understood and treated here in Ireland.

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Homeschooling Corner

At the start of a new home schooling year, it's useful to check that all the elements of co-regulation are in place and make the time to get it right:

- Do you take time to establish a shared focus of attention? It's always useful to review this

away.

Raise Awareness

If you would like some brochures, leaflets, or mini books of My Baby can Dance and The RDI Book for FREE to share with your friends, family or support groups, please send an email to elisa@thinkautism.co.uk stating how many you would like and where to send them to.

What does it all mean?!!

Jargon terms used in this newsletter explained...

Co-regulation - spontaneously responding to another person's actions / communication within the framework.

Role- the actions or 'job' that each partner has within an interaction.

Just Noticeable Differences (JNDs) -very slight variations to the underlying co-regulatory pattern.

Stop The Action (STA) - a technique used by guide to allow child to self regulate when overwhelmed.

regularly and perhaps wait that moment longer then observe the difference this makes to dynamic thinking. You want the child to be present in mind as well as body!

- Is he/she being passive/over compliant or are they oriented to the interaction? A slow deliberate pace gives you time to monitor this.
- What about your reaction to behaviours? Stopping the action and waiting remains the best way of dealing with this. Then re-orient to the interaction. Keep it slow and deliberate. Use your body to re-orient them. If they seem less focused then slowly move in closer and review if this helps.
- What do you do if he/she refuses to respond to your invitation to take part? Again wait for him/her to participate and making sure they don't go off and do anything else.
- Communication: are you using communication bandwidth throughout the day? You want your child to first understand that communication is about a back and forth meaningful exchange. So increase your non-verbal attempts to communicate with your child, making emotional connections and observing when this happens.
- When you and your child are engaged, slow down and make sure that you give him/her the time to take their role in the interaction. Give time for the back and forth pattern to develop.
- Use the start of the new term to reflect and adjust - we should all do that regularly.

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Communication bandwidth - includes body movement, facial expressions, gestures, vocal intonation, prior history with speaker, language.