AN ITERATIVE APPROACH TO BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATION IN SELF-ABUSIVE AUTISM

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Our client is a thirteen-year old autistic boy with self-abusive tendencies that cause injury to the client’s neck. Our goal is to restrict our client from harming his neck without limiting our client’s ability to function in everyday activities. Through a non-restrictive, safe, and drug-free therapy, we have provided an evolution of devices to redirect our client’s self-abuse. Over the course of five months, our client has been provided iterative devices to achieve exposure to stimuli such as pressure, vibration, audio, etc and to allow the opportunity for us to gauge our client’s response to such stimuli through observations in order to ultimately modify behavior through gradual redirection. The first iterative device acclimated our client to the presence of a device but caused skin irritation while the second iterative device solved the issue of skin irritation but did not prevent slapping and slipped down the client’s arm. The third iterative device presented slapping with a wedge encased in an arm sleeve and deterred slipping down the client’s arm with a compression sleeve underneath, but self-abuse was redirected to other parts of our client’s body. The fourth iterative device transgressed from restricting behavior to behavioral modification in that it contains a button-activated neck vibrator that alleviates client’s stress in order to reduce slapping. The observations and evaluation of this iterative device is ongoing and currently being modified to achieve the most effective results for our client.