



“Rabbit Hole” Techniques

The “**Rabbit Hole**” is our euphemism for the perseverative, repetitive, restrictive, and stereotypical behaviors characteristically exhibited by the child with autism spectrum disorders.

- The child in the “rabbit hole” seems like they don’t want to be part of our world.
- Perseverative and stereotypical behaviors are not ‘bad’. They are a form of comfort the child that the uses to stay in their Comfort Zone.
- These behaviors help child regulate a chaotic world. However, these behaviors may become habits & keep the child isolated. These are addictive for the child and need to be monitored.
- ‘Joining’ in these behaviors helps our engagement with the child. As our engagement with the child increases (FDL 2), the perseverative and repetitive behaviors naturally decrease!

There are 5 Rabbit Hole Techniques:

1. **Being With**: Simply *be* with the child and sit near him/her quietly, waiting expectantly for the child to engage or re-engage.
2. **Narrate**: Label and provide a running commentary. What you should do is focus on paying attention to what the child is doing. This means to watch and describe **out loud** what it is that he/she is doing. You may sound just like a sportscaster -- that's good! As an example, let's say he is coloring. You might follow what he's doing by saying, " ... and now you're coloring the hat red." Don't tell the child what to do. You should just describe their actions.
3. **Help him do it better**: For example, if the child is lining up cars you would begin to hand him or her additional cars to add to the line of cars.
4. **Imitate/Parallel Play**: Do something similar to what the child is doing (and see if he/she will imitate you). If the child is lining up his or her toy cars, you can begin to line up a set of cars next to them but add a slight variation (e.g., line them up facing in the opposite direction).
5. **Theme and Variation**: Do something different with the same activity. For instance, open and close a door. Sing a song while you open and close the door, hold the door closed until the child complains.
6. **Change the Sensory Mode**: If the child is “off in his or own world,” you can try to engage their attention with a really fun activity (e.g., bubbles or offer other sensory activities). **Keep in mind the child's primary/preferred sensory modality (i.e. visual, tactile, auditory, etc.)*