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Talking to your Child about Autism: When, How Often, and How

Introductions



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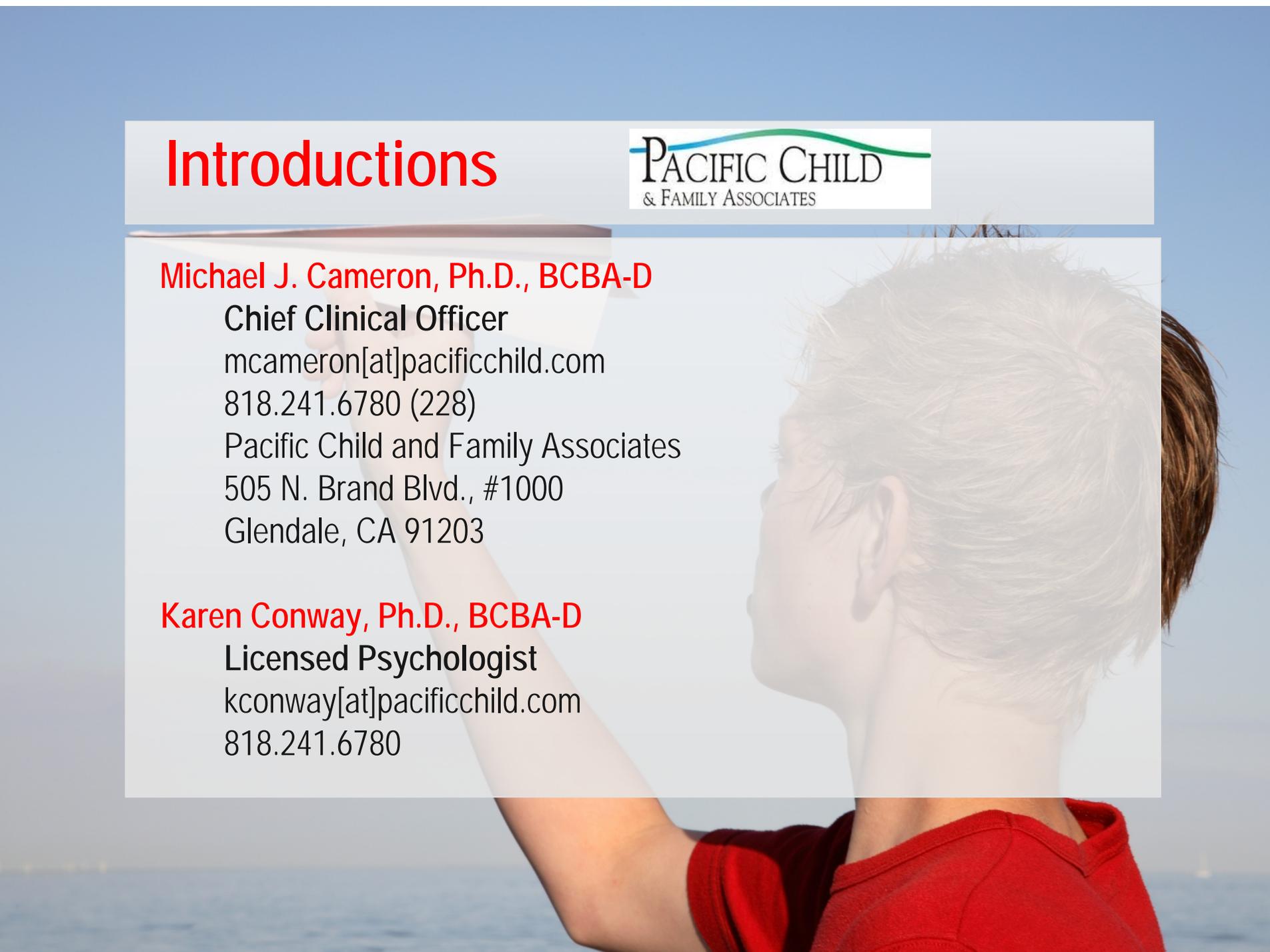
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Agenda

- 1 Reasons to talk about autism
- 2 Conversation guidelines
- 3 **Pyramid of topics**
- 4 When to have a conversation
- 5 Theory of Mind and its relevance
- 6 Discussion under non-emotional states
- 7 Strengths, perspective talking, and care



Reasons to Talk about Autism: Why it Matters

Family

- 1 Support the development of children, regardless of ability, disability, language capacity, or diagnosis. Support by authentic and developmentally appropriate communication.

Guidance

- 2 Children will be guided and influenced by the family and people in an educational role with kind intentions, or children will be impacted by the careless and indifferent, or people with ill intentions.

Education

- 3 Children need to receive appropriate information regarding their personal strengths as well as all factors (medical, physical, perceptual, or developmental) that will affect their personal growth and development.

Conversation Guidelines

Match your language to the child's development

Use language that is appropriate to the child's developmental age. Obviously, all children require communication, but the nature of the communication should be influenced by your assessment of expressive skills, receptive skills, and listening literacy (comprehension) abilities.

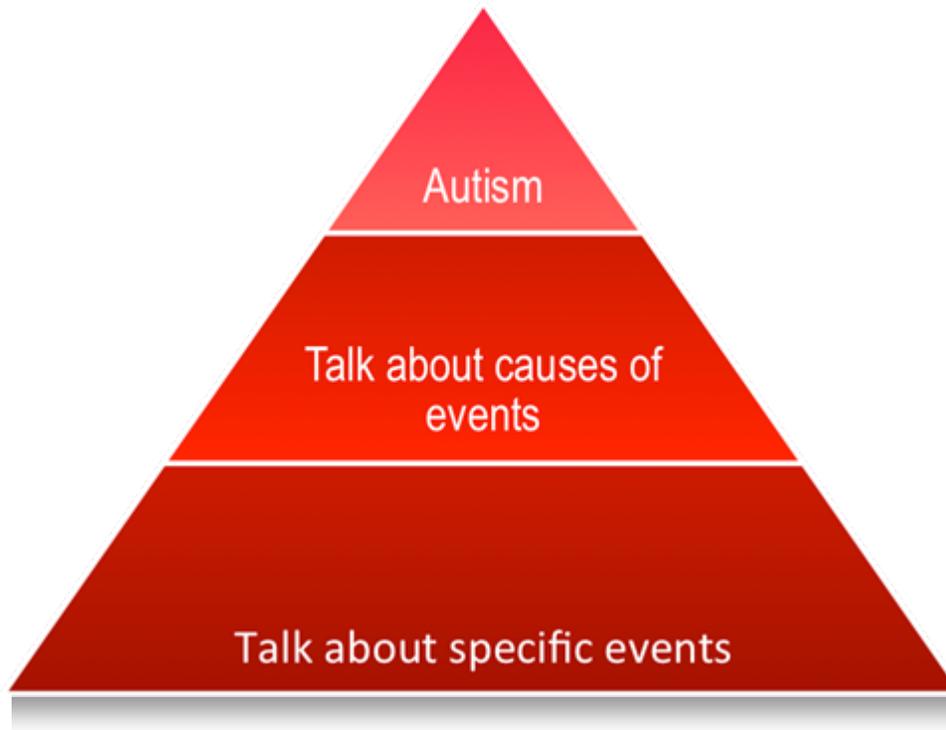
Link discussion to concrete information

It is helpful when communication is supported by multi-modal formats including speech, text, video, and pictures.

Contextualize and "mind the threshold"

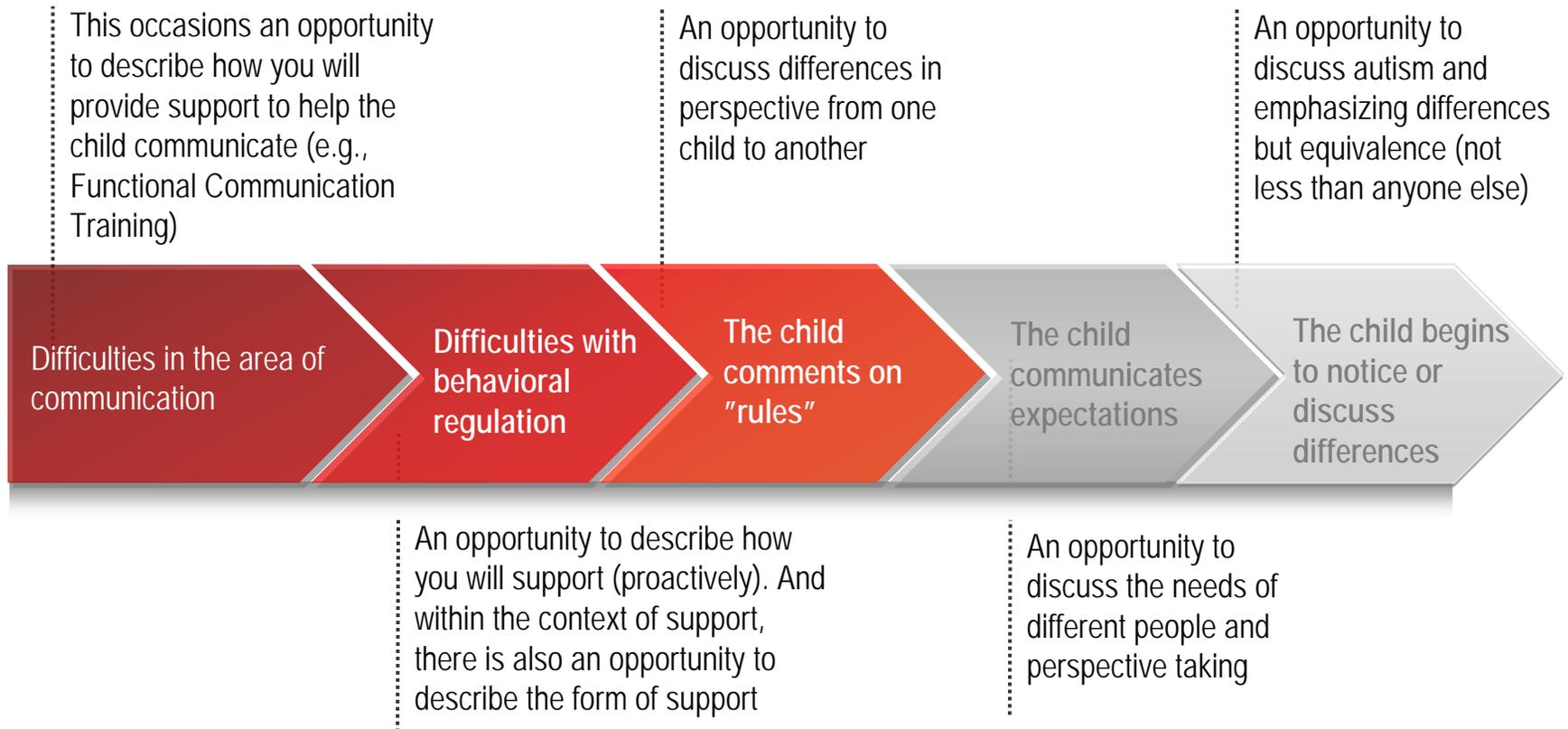
Parents and teachers report that many meaningful conversations occur within the context of activities the child enjoys. Moreover, it is helpful to know a child's personal threshold for crucial conversations and to avoid exceeding the threshold.

Pyramid of Discussion



1. Identify and talk about strengths (parity)
2. Although you may not necessarily talk to a child about autism, you may talk about frustrations and struggles
3. You may talk to a child about differences
4. You may talk to a child about their actual diagnosis
5. Reciprocity will influence the depth and breadth of conversations

When to Initiate Discussions



How to Discuss Autism: Implications of Theory of Mind Instruction

What is it?

1

Theory of Mind (ToM) is the ability to attribute mental states, beliefs, intent, desires, and knowledge to oneself and others and to understand that others have beliefs, desires, and intentions that are different from one's own.

Why does it matter?

2

In brief, having a theory of mind is to be able to reflect on the contents of one's own and other's minds (Baron-Cohen, 2001). It creates the opportunity to understand personal intentions and the intentions of others.

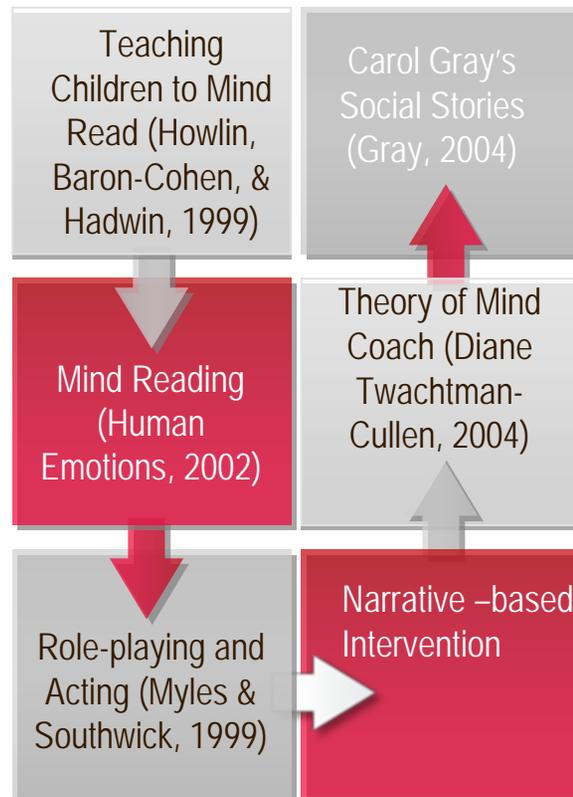
How does this relate to talking about autism?

3

ToM instruction relates to talking about autism because the child needs to understand their strengths and how they learn. If the child understands how to stay regulated and if they understand how their behavior impacts others, they will be more successful from a social standpoint. If they understand the intentions of others, they will be safer in their environments.

Resources

Theory of Mind



How Often?

A dynamic process

- Opportunities will occur naturally
- Discussions should be on-going
- Need for redundancy
- Progressive conversations

Please contact us anytime.

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