

Relationship Development Intervention (RDI)

Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Based on the work of psychologist Steven Gutstein , Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) focuses on improving the long term quality of life for all individuals on the spectrum. The RDI program is a parent- based treatment that focuses on the core problems of gaining friendships , feeling empathy , expressing love and being able to share experiences with others. Dr's Gutstein program is said to be based on extensive research in typical development and translates research findings into a systematic clinical approach. His research found that individuals on the autism spectrum seemed to lack certain abilities necessary for success in managing the real life environments that are dynamic and changing. He calls these abilities dynamic intelligence and describes six aspects as follows:

- 1) Emotional Referencing: The ability to use an emotional feedback system to learn from the subjective experiences of others.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Flexible thinking: The ability to rapidly adapt, change strategies and alter plans based upon changing circumstances.
- 5) Relational Information Processing: The ability to obtain meaning based upon the larger context. Solving problems that have no "right-and-wrong" solutions.
- 6) Foresight and Hindsight: The ability to reflect on past experiences and anticipate potential future scenarios in a productive manner

Dr Gutstein , who along with Dr. Rachelle Sheely , formed the Connections Center For Family and Personal Development based in Houston Texas in 1995, says, " We are challenging families and professionals to think beyond achieving mere functionality as a successful outcome for individuals with autism; our reference point for success in the RDI program is quality of life," The goal is social improvements as well as changes in flexible thinking, pragmatic communication, creative information processing and self- development. The program offers training workshops for parents as well as several books that offer step- by step exercises building motivation so that skills will be utilized and generalized. The program is said to be able to be started easily and implemented into regular, daily activities that enrich family life.