

A case study examining the difficulties faced by care givers to stimulate children with multiple disabilities.

What can be done to allow children with disabilities the right to play?

Background

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Children learn through play and play is crucial to all aspects of a child's development, but most children with disabilities are not granted opportunities to play or explore the world around them.

During clinical observations of 6 centres caring for children with multiple disabilities, in the Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal, it was observed that: **Children with multiple disabilities in care centres receive little or no structured stimulation.**

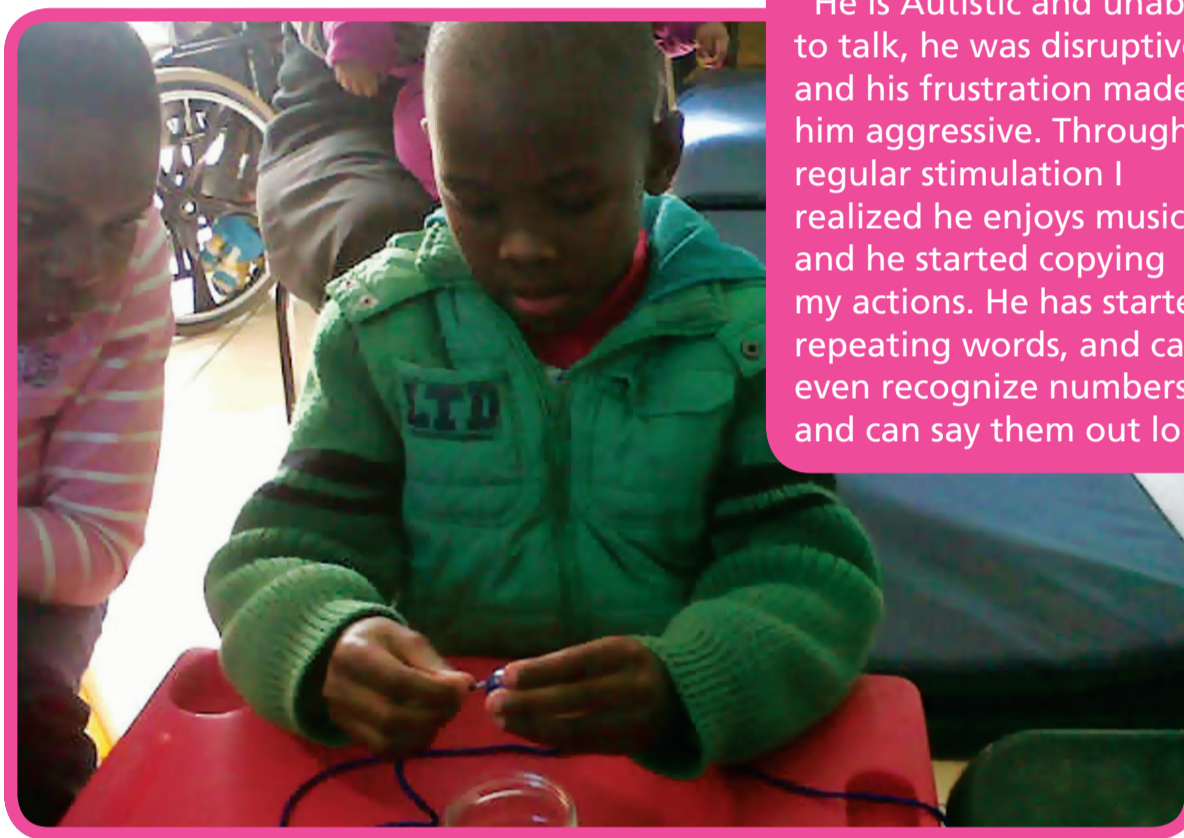
The South African Convention of Rights of the child (Article 31) states that all children have the right to relax and play and to join in a range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. These rights include the right to opportunities and stimulation, to promote their optimal development and realise their full potential.



The Benefits of a Structured Stimulation Program

A case study conducted in a day care centre in Mfuleni, in Khayalitsha, over a period of 8 months, indicates that:

By incorporating a structured stimulation program into the centre's daily program, stimulates children's learning and development, improves responsiveness, and reduces sensory and behavioural problems.



The difficulties faced by caregivers:

- Caregivers don't know **how to play** with children with disabilities
- There are **no resources** available
- The **toys** at the centre are not appropriate for children with disabilities
- Caregivers don't know **how to position** children to optimise function
- Caregivers don't know that **play is important** for children with disabilities
- Caregivers do not know that children with disabilities **are able to take part** in activities or learn
- There is **no time** scheduled for play
- There are **too many children** and not enough time for playing
- Some children **don't respond** at all
- Care givers have a **high burden of care** and don't have the energy to play

I can play



Solutions to allow all children to play

- An **understanding** that children with disabilities do have the ability to learn skills through play, but may participate in different ways.
- To **make time** for stimulation and play every day.
- A **safe play area**.
- Some **interesting resources** (such as the **Ndinogona Kit**), toys (that can be home-made) and activities.
- An understanding of **how to adapt an activity** to allow each child to participate and learn from it.
- An understanding of **how to position** each child correctly to optimise their function.
- Enthusiasm** and **patience**!
- The carer who is enthusiastic and energetic and creates a **loving, stimulating environment**, will be rewarded by a child who is happier, more alert and more able to take his place in the activities of the family and community.

"That kit has done wonders in the life of my child."



The Ndinogona Stimulation Kit

a product developed by the Uhambo Foundation, was introduced to the children and care givers at the Lonwabo Centre, in Mfuleni. The care givers received training and were supported by a volunteer, who attended the centre on a weekly basis.

The Ndinogona Kit is a stimulation kit for children with disabilities, to assist carers, to play with and stimulate children, allowing them to participate in everyday activities.

"He spent most of his time lying in front of the TV, his brother did not know how to play with him. Now he sits up in his wheelchair and his brother can play with him with the home kit"



With simple, appropriate resources, and training and support of caregivers, all children with disabilities can be granted the right to opportunities and stimulation to promote their optimal development and realize their full potential.



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