

Review

OT For Children with Autism, Special Needs & Typical

Jennifer Twachtman-Reilly, M.S., CCC-SLP

“Occupational therapy was hands down the greatest thing that ever happened to my son and family. My son is now in a typical kindergarten (with an aide) and doing . . . way better than I could have ever hoped and dreamed. Because of that, I used my skills as a filmmaker to make a DVD with occupational therapist, Britt Collins, M.S., OTR/L, for families like myself.”

Jackie Olson, mother of Odin

It is said that “Necessity is the mother of invention”, and Jackie Olson is living proof of that! The DVD that this mom and others at TRP Yoga have produced is a treasure! In only 45 minutes, occupational therapist, Britt Collins, M.S., OTR/L, covers each of the following topics in nine brief, but jam-packed chapters:

- ◆ Tactile Defensiveness
- ◆ Auditory Processing
- ◆ Proprioceptive Dysfunction
- ◆ Visual Motor
- ◆ Gravitational Insecurity
- ◆ Motor Planning
- ◆ Vestibular Dysfunction
- ◆ Organization of Behavior
- ◆ Oral Motor


If that list reads like a “short course” on sensory integration (SI) and occupational therapy (OT) for children with autism, that’s because it is exactly that and more. As the title clearly indicates, this DVD is appropriate for children with a variety of special needs, and for typical children, as well. If you’re thinking that the activities in this DVD would be good for children with autism to do with their neurotypical siblings and peers, you’re absolutely right.

The DVD features three children, all approximately five-and-one-half years of age: Emma, a neurotypical child, and Odin and Tyler, two boys with autism. Ms. Collins introduces each of the segments with a brief overview of the sensory issue that will be addressed in that chapter, and she does so in easy-to-understand language for those that may not be familiar with the terminology. She then demonstrates a variety of procedures to use to address the specific sensory problem under discussion, using engaging activities and easily accessible materials such as hula hoops, rice and beans, and shaving cream. All the while, she is careful to caution against forcing

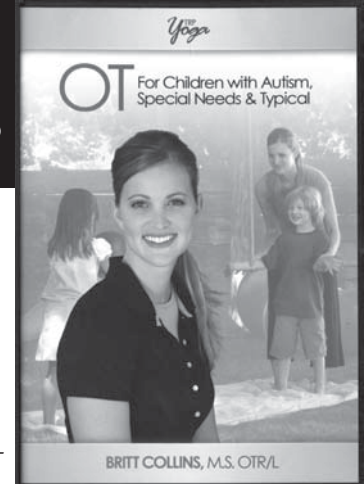
the child to participate, and she stresses the need for supervision.

I had an inkling from the very first segment on *tactile defensiveness* that I was going to like this DVD, when Ms. Collins backed up her statements against forced participation by following Odin’s lead with the shaving cream activity. I’m not a fan of heavy-handed teaching, so this was really nice to see. In addition, as a speech-language pathologist, I especially liked the chapter on oral-motor defensiveness, as it not only clearly illustrates the types of problems that can occur, but also demonstrates easy-to-replicate activities to address them.

There are helpful hints for parents throughout the DVD, such as ways to provide calming activities prior to stressful and/or unfamiliar situations, as well as activities to engage in before the child is asked to perform tasks that require concentration. In the last chapter on the organization of behavior, Ms. Collins pulls it all together as she discusses—and all three children demonstrate—the various elements of sensation that are involved in typical childhood activities.

All in all, *OT For Children with Autism, Special Needs & Typical* is a superb way to introduce parents and professionals from a variety of fields not only to the topics of sensory integration and occupational therapy, but also to the many ways in which SI and OT can help children with autism achieve greater success and be more available for learning. Furthermore, this DVD will be especially helpful to both parents and professionals in rural settings where direct services are often sporadic. Finally, occupational therapists themselves will find this DVD particularly useful as an in-home teaching tool and adjunct to their direct services. 

Editor’s Note: As we went to press we learned that TRP Yoga has produced three new DVDs that build on the one reviewed here. For additional information, log onto: www.TRPyoga.com



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