Perseveration on Image and Food: Eating Disorder, ASD or Both?

Amy Robinson, Kristi Swenson, Jayme Baden
Getting to know you
And what you know!
Core Characteristics - ASD

- Social challenges
- Communication difficulties
- Restrictive/repetitive behaviors

ASD

Eating Disorder
Core Characteristics - Eating Disorder

ASD

Eating Disorder
- Restriction of food intake/use of food as a coping strategy/compensation
- Overfocus of body shape, weight on self-evaluation
- Feeling out of control
- Impact on relationships
WHAT THEY SHARE

- Perseveration/attention shifting
- Social isolation
- Sense of lack of control
- Anxiety
Attention Shifting (perseveration)

ASD

- Characteristics of food
- Sensory/biological impact of food (eg pain)

ED

- Consequences of food
- Feelings surrounding food
- Food rituals
- Food rules (eg can’t eat after 7pm, only eat __ calories a day)
- Food as coping skill
- Food “causes” anxiety, depressed mood, etc.
Social Isolation

ASD
- limited interest in others
- challenges with social skills
  - perspective taking
  - initiation

ED
- fear of breaking food rules
- not wanting to get “caught”
- perception of being monitored
- Eating behavior impacts self-worth
FEEDING DISORDER/SENSORY

Sensory Experience

Meal Time in America
What do we know

➢ In eating disorder samples, ASD diagnoses and traits are higher than those of the general population (22–24% to about 2% in the general population)
➢ ED and ASD share social skill and attention shifting differences (including fixation on details)
➢ 72% of children with ASD were reported to eat a narrow variety food
➢ All of the studies concur MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED!!
Differentiation and Comorbidity

- Developmental History
  - MEDICAL
  - SOCIAL
  - SENSORY
  - FAMILY HISTORY

- Client Interview
  - NON-VERBALS
  - LEVEL OF INSIGHT
    - Concerns
    - Ideas about food (rules and rituals)

- Parent Interview

- Observation of client with food (if possible)
Best Practice

ASD
- Schedules
- Rules
- Parent Involvement
- Skills Building

Eating Disorder
BEST PRACTICE

ASD

Eating Disorder
- Dialectic Behavior Therapy
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Family-Based Treatment
Case Studies
SYNTHESIZING BEST PRACTICE-ASD AND ED

- Behavioral Therapy
  - CBT/DBT
  - ABA
- Family Based Treatment
- Environment
  - Visual supports
  - Routines
  - Structure
- Medical
  - Psychopharmacology
  - Regular check ups
  - Dietician
  - Occupational therapy
Resources

Autismspeaks.org
Nationaleatingdisorders.org
Emilyprogram.com
Fraser.org


