

IMAGINATION, MEMORY, AND ATTENTION
DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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Annotation. This article analyzes the characteristics of imagination, attention, and memory in children with autism. The peculiarity of attention is that involuntary attention may manifest with high intensity, but its prolonged duration can lead to emotional distress and affective outbursts. The formation of voluntary attention occurs with significant difficulty. In the memory process, children with preserved intelligence may have well-developed involuntary auditory and visual memory, especially in remembering logical symbols and formulas effectively. Logical voluntary memorization, however, depends on the child's interests and level of motivation.

Keywords: *autism, imagination, creative activity, attention, memory, involuntary attention, voluntary attention, auditory memory, visual memory, motivation.*

Imagination

The characteristics of imagination in children with autism are uniquely expressed in their play and creative activities. Their drawings are filled with movement. While static images are typical for preschool children with normal development, autistic children often do not find them interesting. Instead, they are drawn to the rhythm of coloring, playing with colors, their brightness, and avoiding monotony and precision. The fantasies of autistic children maintain a balance between reality and imagination. Recording sensory perceptions in rhythm helps form their fantasy world, while drawings serve as a means of expressing their inner concerns and interests. Their play activities include autistic fantasies, often revolving around animals. Other groups of children, in contrast, tend to develop interests in exact sciences and computer technologies.

The imaginative and creative expressions of children with autism manifest in unique ways. In their drawings, movement, color variation, and rhythmic expression often dominate. Unlike traditional representational expressions, they tend to avoid precision and uniformity, preferring to experiment with colors and shapes. Their fantasies maintain a balance between the real and the unreal, which helps develop sensory imagination. The play of children with autism is also distinctive, often featuring animal-related themes and strong expressions of their fantasies. This serves as an important medium for expressing their inner world, anxieties, and interests.

Attention

When directed toward identifying high-intensity stimuli or potential dangers, involuntary attention is observed to manifest with heightened intensity. However, prolonged exposure to such tension can lead to emotional distress, resulting in affective outbursts (such as crying or withdrawal from communication). All of this contributes to the instability of involuntary attention. Voluntary attention, which is associated with learning activities, develops with significant difficulty. Challenges in the development of attention are characterized by a lack of goal-directedness in activities. Deficits in attention stability are observed, where fear and negative consequences in perceiving stimuli play a significant role. The child shifts from one algorithm to another without registering the actions they are performing.

Although the heightened manifestation of involuntary attention is noticeable in the process of identifying dangers, its prolonged duration can lead to emotional disturbances and affective outbursts. This, in turn, causes involuntary attention to remain unstable. The formation of voluntary attention, on the other hand, is fraught with difficulties and directly impacts learning activities. Impairments in the development of attention negatively affect the child's ability to direct their activities toward a goal. Additionally, deficits in attention stability are exacerbated by fear and the perception of negative stimuli. As a result, the child quickly shifts from one activity to another without controlling their actions, which may hinder their overall development.

Memory

In children with preserved intellectual abilities, involuntary auditory and visual memory may be well-developed, particularly in retaining logical signs and formulas. Sometimes, elements of mixed-type fantasies emerge to aid in recalling what they are expressing. Logical voluntary memory, on the other hand, develops depending on the child's interests and their motivational capacity to retain information. In summary, children with preserved intellectual abilities may exhibit well-developed involuntary auditory and visual memory, especially in effectively retaining logical signs and formulas. They might occasionally incorporate elements of fantasy into the process of recalling their thoughts. Logical voluntary memory, however, depends on the child's interests and the level of motivation directed toward retaining information, making this process highly individualized. Therefore, enhancing children's motivation and aligning approaches with their interests can significantly strengthen their memory retention abilities.

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