Submission for Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development

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Activities of Daily Living

Synonyms

Self-care behaviors

Definition

To participate in regular activity associated with independent living. Activities completed on a regular basis that involve self-care and self-management (examples include: bathing and dressing). Daily living activities entail the person's involvement in personal care of intellectual, physical, psychological, and social needs.

Description

Activities of daily living include routines integral to self-sufficiency. Evaluations of daily living activities generally involve psychological determinations of the person's ability to care for self on a day-to-day basis. Focus on daily living activities is a consideration in the assessment of adaptability to determine cognitive function and self-sustainability.

Physical Daily Living Activities

Daily living activities are developmentally appropriate for both sophistication and social expectations and are influenced by intellectual capacity. During infancy and early childhood, daily activities are moderated and managed externally by care-givers. As normal child development occurs, greater autonomy results in increased responsibility for daily activities. By the age of seven, daily living activities usually include: bathing, dressing, toilet management, eating, and sleeping. It is from school age that capability for daily living activities become a consideration in assessing normal development.

Psychological and Social Daily Living Activities

Psychological and social daily living activities also increase with maturation, experience and direct instruction. As the child grows, (culturally/socially) appropriate patterns of interaction with others and the environment are reinforced adding to the child's daily living activity repertoire. Some of these include: taking turns when speaking, managing expressions of emotion, learning about conduct which is appropriate for particular place (e.g. school or church) smiling at a friend, shaking hands when meeting someone for
the first time, and excusing self when leaving the table. The child who fails to exhibit behavior appropriate to social expectations is placed in a vulnerable position that may lead to mistreatment by others.

Also by school age, children should be aware of their ability to self-manage. Teachers are active participants in modeling and teaching appropriate daily living activities. Children learn through school activities self-control, and self-management. Classroom examples may include: waiting to be recognized before speaking, interactive play and conflict management using appropriate language rather than fighting.

Relevance to Parent-Teacher Relationships

Early childhood programs working with parents in partnership with teachers to prepare the child for school daily (life) activities may provide an advantage to young children by providing for the child a basis of understanding the core values (expectations) and importance of particular daily living activities as they apply to the school environment and can be extended to the home.

In sum, activities of daily living can be described as those critical skills that address self-care in a variety of setting. The goal in teaching daily living activities is individual self-sufficiency.

References


