



Dear Parent:

Thank you for contacting me about **Relationship Development Intervention® (RDI)**, a parent-driven approach to promoting developmental progress. Enclosed is information for you to review. Feel free to contact me or my office manager if you would like more information or clarification. You may schedule an intake appointment to discuss your situation with me personally, to determine what services or next steps might be most appropriate for your circumstances.

RDI® (**Relationship Development Intervention®**) is a highly effective, parent-driven clinical treatment program that focuses on improving foundations for learning, such as motivation, flexible thinking, self-regulation, and quality of relating with others. This approach empowers parents to effectively guide their child to be more competent, and you can expect to see significant improvements in the quality of your child's functioning and interactions with you. Whether you are already committed to the RDI® Program for your family, or are just curious about RDI® and would like to learn more, please keep in mind that RDI® is a long-term lifestyle commitment rather than a short-term therapy approach. Before beginning a customized RDI® program and working with a RDI® Program Certified Consultant, please consider the following.

Required prior to beginning with an RDI® Program Certified Consultant (completion of at least ONE of the following):

1. Read *The RDI Book* by Dr. Steven Gutstein, PhD (available at www.rdiconnect.com).
2. View the DVD entitled *Going to the Heart of Autism: the Relationship Development Intervention Program* (available at www.rdiconnect.com)
3. Complete all of the basic e-learning courses online through the RDI online learning system, available by subscription (ask me to email you an invitation to join).

Thank you for your interest in these services. Since I see individuals of all ages, across the lifespan, and all levels of functioning, I am truly concerned when any part of your child's complex brain development becomes stuck and growth is delayed. Fortunately, your child has you. My goal is to provide you with useful strategies, information, and support so that you may successfully guide your child past obstacles. I'd like to support you to impact such quality-of-life issues as future employability, safety, capacity for relationships, and emotional stability. I hope that we will have an opportunity to discuss your child, your specific concerns, and the resources and services that may be useful for you.

Sincerely,

Carrie Sheppard M.Ed., LMHC

What is RDI®?

The RDI® program is a family-centered approach that supports parents in building closer relationships with their children. Parents guide their children in “real life” activities that build competence and self-confidence and become the foundation for their children’s development into independent, productive and emotionally connected adults.

RDI and the brain

The brain has the ability to change and grow new neural connections. Think of stroke victims learning to use new parts of their brains to recover lost speech or motor functions. RDI focuses on building neural pathways in people affected by autism. Rather than teaching skills that give *the appearance* of typical development, RDI actually restarts the natural course of development where children left the track or became stuck.

With parental support, children can continue to progress and learn how to think for themselves. This is much different than teaching your child *what* to think, since critical thinking skills are necessary to being kind and caring, managing money, driving a car, being employable, and so on.

The key to RDI is *you*, the parent. There are no therapists involved in treating your child in an RDI program. Children learn best through relationships, and you are more important to your child’s brain growth and development than any therapist ever will be.

Benefits of RDI®

How RDI can help you and your child

Children on the autism spectrum miss out on or fail to master many of the early developmental stages that typically-developing children learn effortlessly. RDI teaches parents to provide opportunities, in the context of daily life, that offer their children a second chance to master these stages.

The main goal of RDI is to engage your son or daughter in a guided relationship with you that increases your child’s capacity for learning. The program is customized to the age and



abilities of children so they can be carefully and systematically supported through a “re-do” of the process of typical development.

My first RDI workshop was a real eye-opener. I was stunned by Dr. Gutstein’s videos of children before, during and late in treatment. I never would have guessed they had autism if I had seen the ending videos first! Nine years later, I’ve seen these same results in many more children.

RDI® In Your Home

First of all, there are no therapists. You, as the parent, get all the training and tools you need to develop your child’s potential. It starts with parent training, a combination of e-learning, hands-on practice, and videotaping in your home with feedback from your RDI consultant to guide your progress. After you complete training, your RDI consultant will assess your child and design a program that fits his/her needs as well as your family’s.

The step-by-step program starts by building on your child’s natural motivations, such as a natural desire to learn and participate in challenging activities. This ensures that new learning will extend to different settings and situations. You provide your child with opportunities during the day to use her mind productively, think and solve problems, read and respond to social cues, and recognize and repair communication failures.

Your subscription to the RDI online-learning system connects you with your RDI consultant, the RDI parent community, ongoing learning tools and opportunities to view RDI video footage. (Videotaping is essential to evaluating and sharing your progress with your consultant for feedback.) As your skills grow, your RDI consultant will play less of a role and you’ll eventually be able to do the program independently.



What does an RDI® Program treat?

RDI addresses what are known as “core developmental deficits”. You should see progress in these areas of your child’s development:

- **Dynamic Appraisal:** This involves paying attention to the most important details and shifting attention continuously as priorities change. Dynamic Appraisal plays an important role in learning, personal safety, job performance, reading social cues, and other life skills.
- **Autobiographic Memory:** Personal memories of coping strategies that were successful help your child overcome obstacles and anxiety, increase self-confidence, and plan ahead. Autobiographic Memory is important in the development of self-regulation skills and a sense of self.
- **Self-Awareness:** An accurate sense of self is key to being able to monitor your emotions, regulate yourself, make decisions, and learn from life experiences.
- **Experience Sharing:** Being connected with others in emotion, attention, thought and understanding is not only meaningful in close personal relationships, it’s central to all communication. Others can quickly sense when a person is following a conversation and cares about what’s being said.
- **Other skills:** Resilience, social referencing, critical thinking, problem solving and flexible thinking are all part of the RDI program and important for future success.

What’s Next?

To learn more about RDI® visit the Connections Center website at www.rdiconnect.com. You may also email us at help@mindsourcecenter.com or call us at 253-639-7146 with your questions, or to request a free information packet.

