Engendering Change in Non-verbal Adults with Autisms

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Autism is a developmental disorder that is pervasive across many areas of an individual’s life. It affects communication, emotions, and cognitive abilities. In a prior study, 5 individuals with low-functioning autism were given 48 video-taped sessions of the Feldenkrais Method. The Feldenkrais Method is a somatic therapy, which some researchers suggest can help individuals with autism break down old patterns of thought and behavior and reorganize to allow for more effective and improved functioning. In the earlier study, participants showed significant improvement in communication and self-regulation. In this study, the videos of those sessions are being coded for emotional episodes. The participants’ emotional episodes are coded as either being positive or negative. A Chi Square Test showed that 2 out of the 3 participants significantly increased in number of positive emotional episodes, also they significantly decreased in number of negative emotional episodes. One out of 3 participants showed similar improvement and was approaching significance. Currently plans are being made to code the other 2 participants, similar findings are anticipated. An increase in the number of positive emotional episodes suggests that the participants are experiencing more positive emotions. Experiencing positive emotions is an important factor in determining an individual’s quality of life. Hopefully this research will bring attention to developing effective modes of treatment for a population who are commonly thought of as having few options for a meaningful life.

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