



Research by Ron Davis Autism Foundation

We are currently gathering data in relation to the Davis Autism Approach Program. As this program can take up to a year to administer, data gathering and analysis can be slow. The participants in this study are age from 8 years to adult.

Results so far are showing that changes are seen in social skills, a person's ability to manage change and transitions, their self-awareness and their awareness of others.

Changes in our autistic clients are monitored by use of well-established questionnaires completed by parents/carers before and after the program.

The two questionnaires that research team are using are: The Autism Quotient devised by Simon Baron-Cohen et.al and the Social Communication Disorder Checklist devised by Skuse. The questionnaires are given pre-program, immediately post program and 6 months postprogram. Variables such as the scheduling of the program over time and age are also taken into account. Further information regarding experiences encountered during the six months post program and anecdotes of change are recorded.

Davis Autism Approach Program

Brief summary of results gained from the Davis Autism Approach program

Outline of research:

Parents/carers were invited to complete two questionnaires at three time points; pre-program, immediately post-program and 6 months post program. Participants did not make comparative reference to previous

responses but rather assessed the autistic individual as they seemed at that moment in time. The questionnaires used were the Autism Quotient (Baron -Cohen available from the Cambridge research centre) and the Social and Communication Disorder Checklist (Skuse).

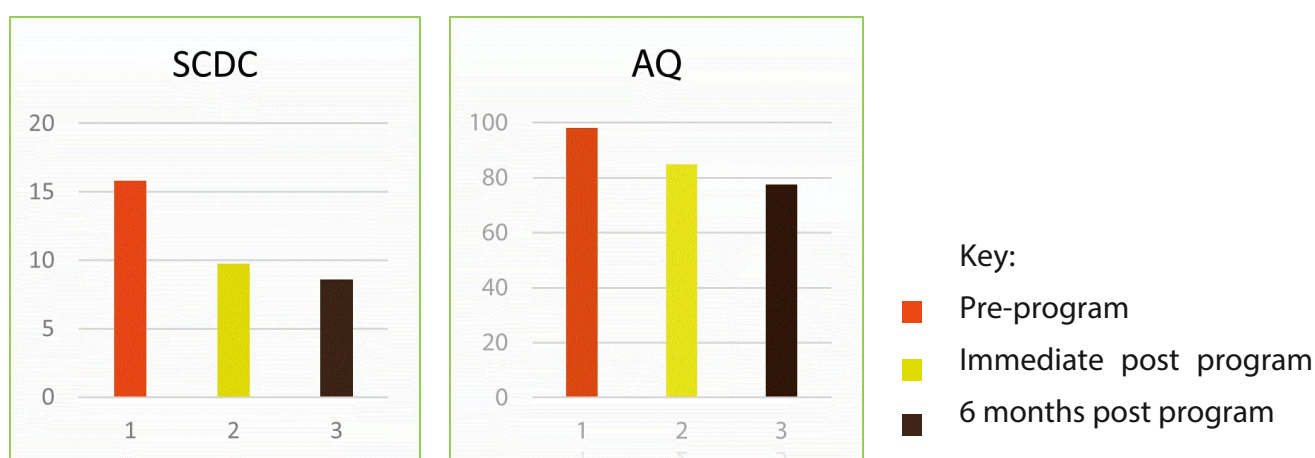
Those parents/carers who chose to participate came from 7 countries across the world (America, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, England, Holland and New Zealand).

The autistic individuals were predominantly male and ranged in age from 8 – 52 years old.

Results:

Both the AQ and SCDC recorded statistically significant ($P=0.001$) reduction in scores using paired t-tests between the pre-program and immediate post program, and the six month post program.

Bar charts of mean scores



Key points:

1. This is a preliminary study that we hope will attract funding and interest from others for a more rigorous randomised trial investigation.
2. Regardless of age, ability or nationality clients have all improved their ability to self-regulate their levels of anxiety and stress. They have become more aware of others and can manage their relationships more effectively. Fear and resistance to change has reduced and flexibility has increased. Other executive functioning skills such as planning and time management have been reported to develop too.
3. The positive changes experienced as a result of the program persist and continue post program.
4. At the moment variables in scheduling are not significantly affecting outcome but reportedly the opportunity to explore concepts does.

Davis Stepping Stones – beginning steps to the Davis Autism Approach program

Reported Changes:

Better self awareness and self regulation – eg expressing appropriate pain when injured, able to use tools to calm down, fewer melt downs.

Awareness of others - increased eye contact, adjusting to others needs, sharing, turn taking, start to approach other children to play or invite others into play.

Ability to manage change, less resistance to change of activity or place (will try new activities).

Better attendance at school - one child had not attended a full school day for two terms was able to stay at school following first two concepts, he has been able to maintain the change since then (0% before intervention, to 98% post intervention).

Increased understanding of cause and effect - able to identify what caused behaviour, or see their role in a situation.

Before and after - able to follow 'first, then' and responds well to this as guide for activities.

Usually we see a new ability to refer to self in first person (me, I), or an increase in this.

Have always seen a growth in language generally (length of mean utterance and vocabulary size).

Pretend play and role-play begins or increases.

Independent Research – A clinical psychology feasibility study

Research into the effectiveness of DAA Case studies are showing that the Davis Autism Approach Programs are particularly helpful in improving sense of self, cognitive flexibility and focus, ability to initiate and adapt to change and to be more equipped in relationships.

A clinical psychology feasibility study under the guidance of Clinical Psychologists Dr Jacinta Ryan has been examining the benefits of the Davis Autism Approach.

Initial qualitative results of participants in this study indicate the following trends:

- Less overall Anxiety
- Marked reduction in clinical symptoms (OCD, Anxiety Disorders), Greater and Deeper sense of Self,
- Less Fear of Life and worry about 'what will happen next'
- Increased functional capacity (able to create order in their daily life, attend new appointments,
- Try new things, use public transport, ask for help in shops)
- Increased cognitive flexibility
- Greater capacity to cope with change
- Reduction in Sensory Overload symptoms associated with Autism
- Reductions in Meltdowns associated with Autism

