

ABSTRACT

Since autism is affecting the following three main areas of a child's development: communication, socialization and behaviour, it causes some important adaptation problems for children with PDD.

In conjunction with conventional methods, interventions known as alternative therapies target the development of better behavioural responses and a better adjustment of the subjects.

This study analyses the impact of the Harmony program, combining several alternative methods, on the adaptive behaviours of a subject with pervasive developmental disorder. Art therapy, music therapy, massages, animal assisted therapy and the opportunity to swim with wild dolphins are used to stimulate the development of adaptive behaviours. The first part of this study defines the problems of autism and the targets of intervention arising from the predictive chain relating to the possible problems of adaptation specific to this syndrome. Conventional methods of intervention adapted to this kind of clientele are presented before a review of the studies on the different alternative methods of intervention used during the Harmony Program. The second part of this study outlines the methodology of the research project as follows: a description of the program and of the subject matter, the research protocol, the tools used for evaluation, the results and a discussion of the results. The results show improvement of the receptive language and imitation and a decrease in self-stimulation.

Key words : autism, alternative methods, dolphin assisted therapy, music therapy, touch therapy, massage, art therapy, animal assisted therapy, hydrotherapy.