Prompting
for Autistic Persons

ATM4RC
AUTISM TRAINING MODULES FOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION · UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Module developed by Dr. Marjorie Bock, Ed.D. and Dr. Jessica Stallings, ATR-BC, LIMHP, LMHC
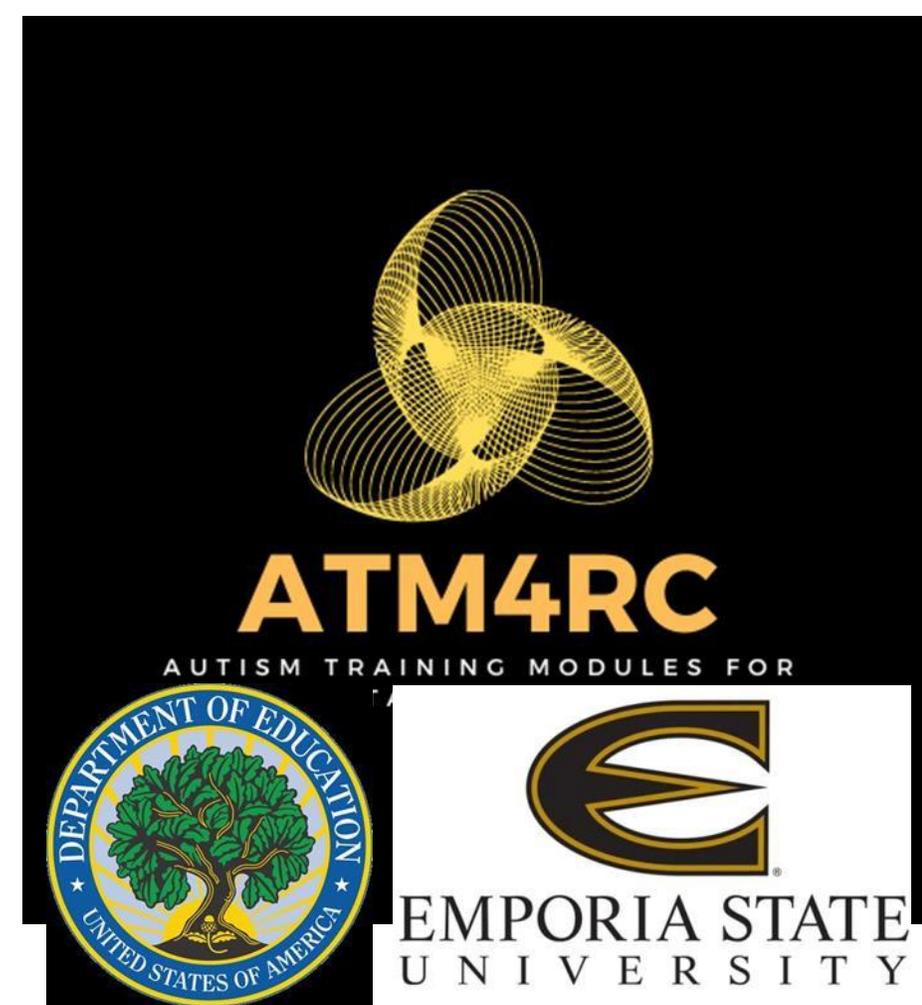
Prompting: Introduction
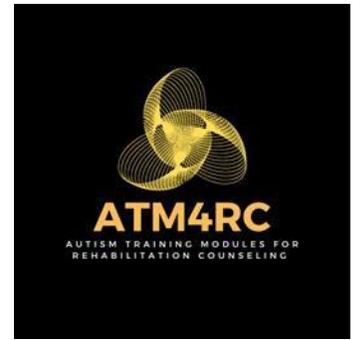
- Prompting provides cues, clues or hints regarding performance of a task or answering a question (Sam and AFIRM Team, 2015)

- Many of us use prompts or cues in our daily lives such as setting a timer for when something will be finished in the oven or placing a note on the bathroom mirror to remind of a task that must be done

- In our daily lives prompts come in many forms and may include things like pictures, lists, notes, or assistance from others in our lives providing reminders

- Prompting is used to reduce mistakes and inaccurate responses when learning new skills and materials

Prompting- A successful strategy with autistic individuals
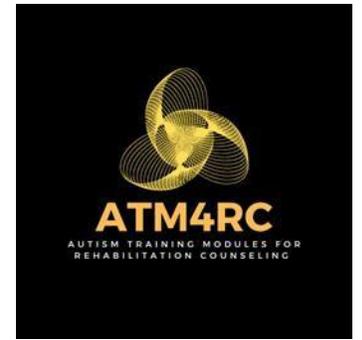
Based upon the 2023 updated review (Steinbrenner, et al., 2023) prompting is defined as

- "Verbal, gestural, or physical assistance given to learners to support them in acquiring or engaging in a targeted behavior or skill," (see Table 2 in Steinbrenner et al.) and is supported by 140 studies.

- Preschoolers (ages 3 to 5) through young adults (ages 15 to 22) have benefitted from the use of prompting procedures, which have improved social, communication, behavior, vocational, and play skills for autistic persons.

- There are fewer studies involving the use of prompting with young adults with autism, however they have shown to improve adaptive, communication, academic, behavioral, and vocational skills.

Potential benefits

- Prompting is paired with other evidence-based practices such as reinforcement to teach skills in a wide variety of areas such as academic, daily living, social and vocational

- Prompting can be used across settings and by both professionals (therapists, teachers, supervisors, etc), family members and friends.

- Promotes success and independence in teaching new skills through providing high success learning opportunities.

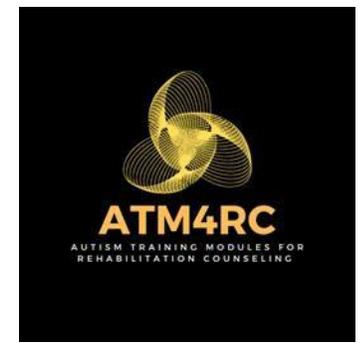- Can be used before or during a task or skill to improve success.

(Sam and AFIRM Team, 2015)

Types of Prompts (slide 1 of 2)

- View this video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5S1_Ni2dRbk, for brief explanations and examples of prompts.
    - Although child centered this provides clear, concise explanations and examples.

Types of Prompts (slide 2 of 3)

- Visual – picture, written word, or another cue such as a colored index, that serves as a reminder.

- Proximity – place a cue of the correct or desired response nearest to the person to be easier to choose. For instance, if asking an individual which broom is best to use for cleaning a small mess, place the desired broom close to person and other options further away.

- Verbal – providing verbal cues such as repeating a question, providing the first letter of the response or other verbal cue, may be non-preferred as it may be considered intrusive and to lack privacy (Cengher et al, 2017; Sam & Afirm; 2015)

Types of Prompts (slide 3 of 3)
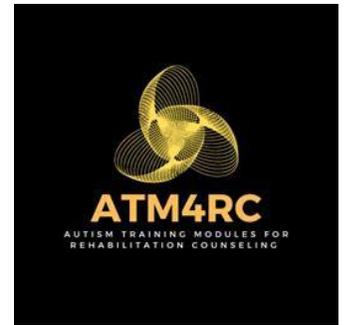
- Gestural – physical gesture such as pointing or nodding toward desired or correct or desired response.

- Modeling – perform skill and encourage person to do the same simultaneously, may include words such as "do this" or "like this"

- Physical – hand over hand, physically direct task completion, in its most intrusive form this involves physically moving the body of the client to complete task. This form of prompting does not respect the autonomy of the client and may trigger sensory sensitivities. Should be avoided. (Cehnger et al, 2017; Sam & Afirm; 2015)

Prompt Hierarchy

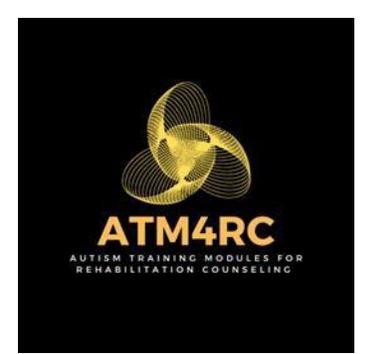None or natural environmental cue

Independent / Least restrictive

(Cengher et al, 2017; Sam & Afirm; 2015)

Visual

Proximity

Verbal

Gestural

Modeling

Physical (not recommended)
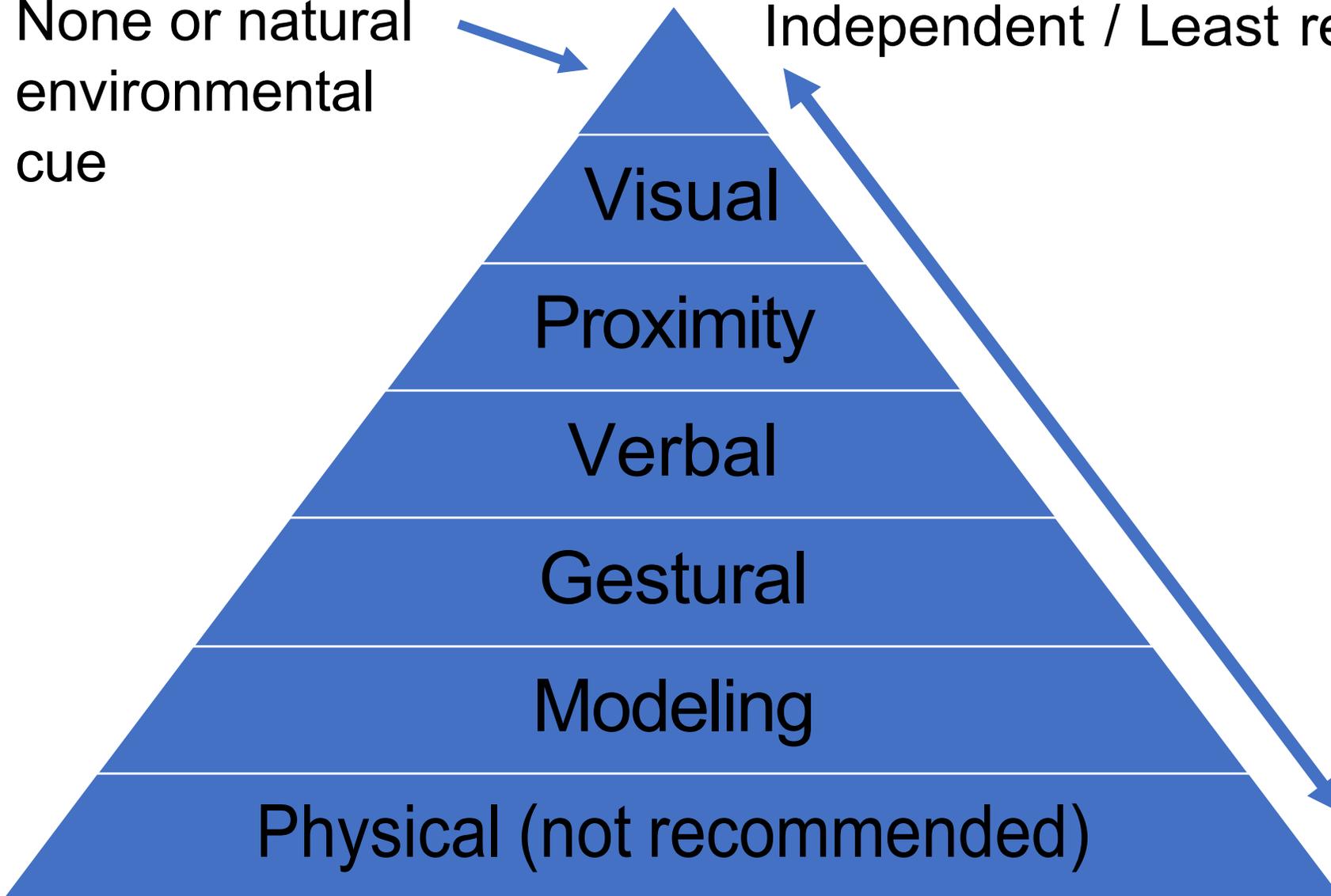
Dependent / Most restrictive

Self Questioning Activity

- In this picture, what prompt(s) is the woman is using to teach the next step in food preparation?
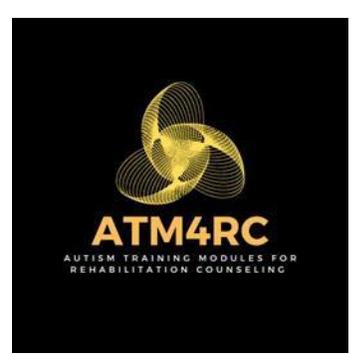
Verbal, visual, physical, or gestural?

(Answer: gestural, visual)

Image from https://freepik.com/free-photo/front-view-woman-looking-at-man-cooking_6121060.htm

Self Questioning Activity

- In this picture, which prompt is the woman using to teach the man how to fold a blanket?
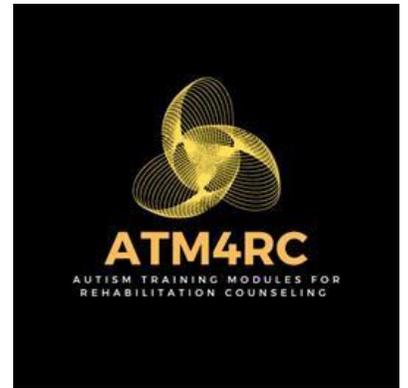
Verbal, physical, modeling, or gestural?

(Answer: modeling)

Image created by Dalle2 AI
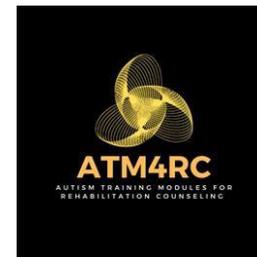
Prompting Procedures

These can be used with most types of prompts

- Errorless Learning/Simultaneous Prompting

- Least-to-most Prompting

- Graduated Guidance

- Fading

(Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup, 2017; Neitzel & Wolery, 2009abc)

Simultaneous Prompting and Errorless Learning (1 of 2)

- Simultaneous prompting – when teaching skill/requesting a skill give instructions with a "controlling prompt" or prompt that will always lead to successful completion of skill
  - For more information and example read https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/sites/csesa.fpg.unc.edu/files/ebp briefs/Prompting_Steps-Simultaneous.pdf

(Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup, 2017; Neitzel & Wolery, 2009)

Simultaneous Prompting and Errorless Learning (2 of 2)

- "Errorless learning" similarly includes a prompt immediately following the instruction/request

- Read https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/errorless-learning for more information and examples

(Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup, 2017; Neitzel & Wolery, 2009)

Least-to-most prompting
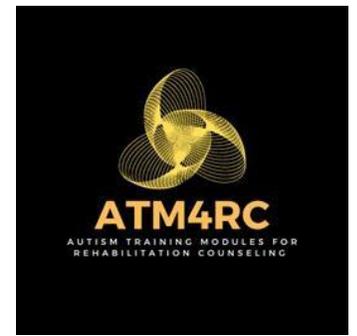
- Starts with attempting task with no or minimal prompting and increases prompt intervention as necessary for successful task completion. Follow this link for a demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qr65FnMs5xk

- For detailed instructions and examples read: https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/Prompting_Steps-Least.pdf

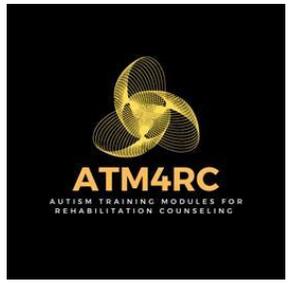(Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup, 2017; Neitzel & Wolery, 2009)

Graduated Guidance

- Initially for new tasks prompts are provided, prompts are then slowly faded until prompting is no longer necessary for successful task completion.
  - Prompts may be re-introduced as needed and then faded again to avoid prompt dependence (inability or difficulty completed task without prompt).
  - For detailed instructions read https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/Prompting_Steps-Graduated.pdf

(Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup, 2017; Neitzel & Wolery, 2009a)

- Three most types of fading (Cengher, Budd, Farrell, & Fienup; 2017).
  - Reducing prompt intensity
    - For ex: Move from touching item to pointing when using gestural prompt
  - Changing type of prompt
    - Moving to a less intense part of the hierarchy
  - Reducing frequency of prompt
    - Instead of prompting every time, prompt on a variable interval schedule- ex every 3 to 7 times (varying number of prompts)
  - Remove prompt entirely
    - Discontinue use of prompt

- To learn more read
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4893031/
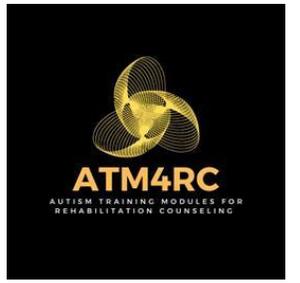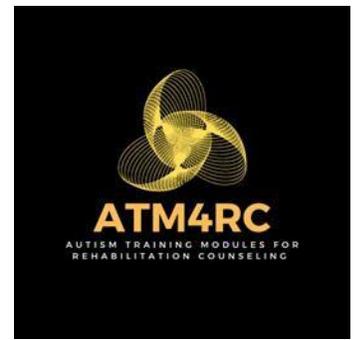
  and

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320563906_A_Review_of_Prompt-Fading_Procedures_Implications_for_Effective_and_Efficient_Skill_Acquisition
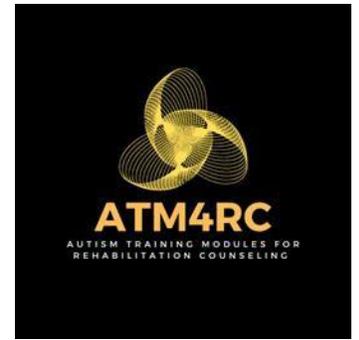
Prompting Tips

- Be consistent. Provide instructions and prompts in the same or similar ways-this provides structure and ability to anticipate what is expected.

- It is important to begin fading prompts and encouraging independence.
  - Prompting can be faded by reducing frequency or by successively using less intrusive prompts until none are needed (see previous slide on fading)

Prompting Tips

- Provide positive reinforcement for success
  - By definition, jobs already do this with paychecks and vacation accrual, however clients often need more frequent reinforcement, this could come in many forms such as:
  - verbal praise (good job, well done),
  - tangibles (stickers, tokens),
  - physical (high five, fist bump)
  - or other such as being able to play games on phone or game system at break time or being encouraged to spend some time talking about a preferred interest.

  See https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/aba-prompt-hierarchy#:~:text=Modify%20the%20Task%20or%20Behavior,to%20make%20it%20more%20manageable.

What if the Prompt Isn't Working?

- Change level or frequency of prompt—consider is prompt/frequency too intrusive or is client not ready for less intrusive/less frequent prompting

- Consider the activity-can it be broken into smaller steps? Is the client in need of something simpler or more complex?

- Provide positive reinforcement for success (one should always do this)
  - You may need to change type of reinforcement- reinforcement can be verbal, physical (such as high five), tangible (such as sticker or other small token)

See https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/aba-prompt-hierarchy#:~:text=Modify%20the%20Task%20or%20Behavior,to%20make%20it%20more%20manageable

Implementing prompting

| Plan	Use	Monitor
• Identify target skill • Collect baseline data on skill ability • Start with least intrusive prompt when teaching skill	• Allow independent start • Give consistent cue or instruction • Provide least intrusive prompt first • Reinforce correct responses • Go to next prompt level if errors • Fade prompting as soon as possible	• Collect data on skill • Document type and frequency of prompts • Create plan to make Modified from Sam & Afirm team (2015)

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AUTISM TRAINING MODULES FOR
REHABILITATION COUNSELING

Data Collection Chart
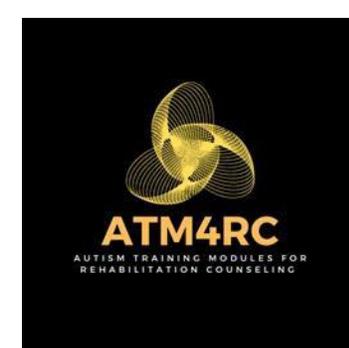
Goal or Task	Prompt	# of prompts	Type of Prompt	Errorless learning
	Y/N		Visual/proximity/verbal/ gestural/modeling/ physical	Y/N

Prompting Activity (slide 1 of 2)
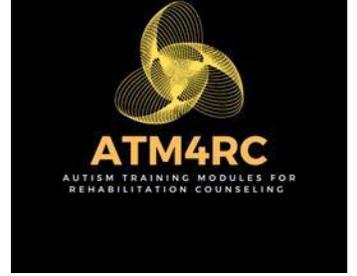
- Prompting Activity: Creating a Prompting Plan for Autistic Adults

- Purpose: To create a prompting plan for autistic adults.

- Description: Using the Data Collection chart, you will create, implement, and evaluate a prompting plan for one of your autistic clients.

Prompting Activity (slide 2 of 2)
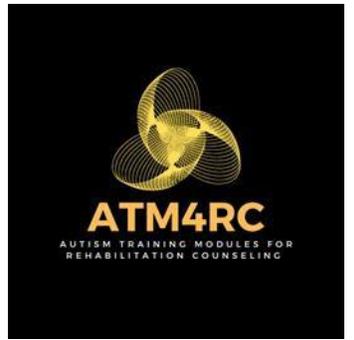
Directions:

1. Select one of your autistic clients for whom you think prompting will improve their performance at work and identify the skill they need to work on.

2. Assess the client (baseline data) to determine levels of proficiency and independence for the chosen task.

3. Identify the least intrusive prompt level to start with, and create a plan for giving task directive, prompting levels, and plan for fading.

4. Using the Data Collection chart, create, implement, and monitor implementation of the prompting plan you created, including fading.

5. Evaluate the overall efficacy of the plan you created.

References (1 of 3)
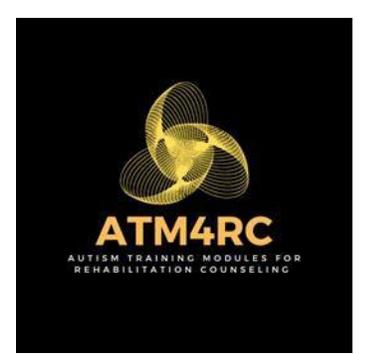
- American Psychiatric Association (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed, text rev) (DSM-5TR). American Psychiatric Association Publishing.

- Cengher, M., Budd, A., Farrell, N., & Fienup, D. (2017). A review of prompt-fading procedures: Implications for effective and efficient skill acquisition. Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 155-173.

- Golden Steps ABA. (2023, June 25). ABA Prompt Hierarchy: Examples and Types. https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/aba-prompt-hierarchy

- Golden Steps ABA. (2023, Aug 3). What is errorless learning in ABA therapy. https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/errorless-learning
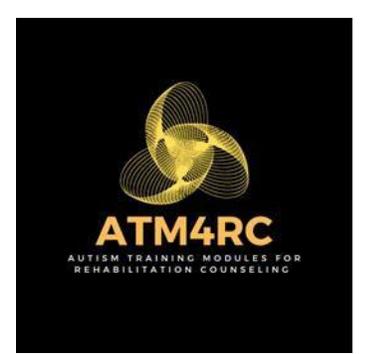
- Neitzel, J., & Wolery, M. (2009a). Steps for implementation: Graduated guidance. Chapel Hill, NC: The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, FPG Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina. https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/Prompting_Steps-Graduated.pdf

- Neitzel, J., & Wolery, M. (2009b). Steps for implementation: Least-to-most prompts. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina. https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/Prompting_Steps-Least.pdf

References (3 of 3)
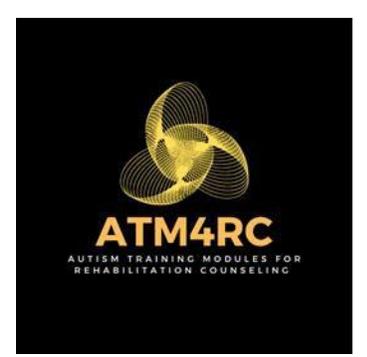
- Neitzel, J., & Wolery, M. (2009c). Steps for implementation: Simultaneous prompting. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina. https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/sites/csesa.fpg.unc.edu/files/ebpbriefs/Prompting_Steps-Simultaneous.pdf

- Sam, A., & AFIRM Team. (2015). Prompting. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. Retrieved from http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/prompting
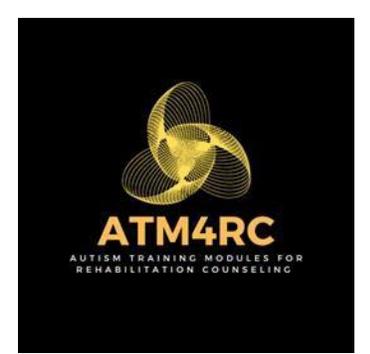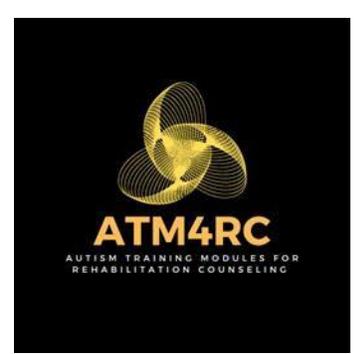
Additional Resources

Sam, A., & AFIRM Team. (2015). Prompting. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North.
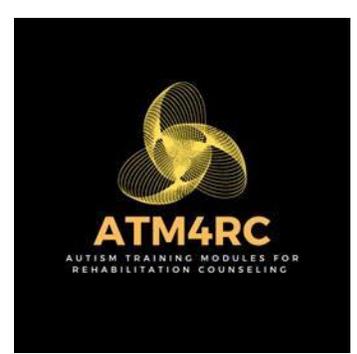Carolina. http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/prompting.   (Modules teaching EBPs)

Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., Odom, S. L., Morin, K. L., Nowell, S. W., Tomaszewski, B., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N. S., Yücesoy-Özkan, S., & Savage, M. N. (2020). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team.

Additional Resources-Websites

- Autism classroom news & resources. https://www.discover-autism-help.com/prompting.html#:~:text=Prompting%20is%20a%20technique%20that,cue%2C%20or%20reminder%20to%20action

- Christine Reeve. https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Autism-Classroom-Resources-christine-Reeve

- Golden steps aba. (2023). https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/

- Least to most prompts. (n.d.) https://www.unr.edu/ndsip/english/resources/tips/using-the-system-of-least-to-most-prompts

- The autism helper. (2023). https://theautismhelper.com/use-prompts-effectively-efficiently/

Data Collection Resources

- 10 best aba data collection software (2023) - https://behavioralcollective.com/tools/best-aba-data-collection-software/

- ABA data collection software - https://www.rethinkbehavioralhealth.com/our-solutions/aba-data-collection/

- Data collection sheets for prompting - https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?gclid=Cj0KCQjwhfipBhCqARIsAH9msblu1M1JV_hhLm5FB9tDMOqOkYAIoV7cW2q_ryquiJcbSI3CBIXUVe0aApnHEALw_wcB&search=data%20collection%20sheets%20for%20prompting