

March 1 Guest : Dr. Debby Hamilton

Conversation: Mood and Behavior in ASD

In children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or ASD, mood and behavior issues are very common. These can range from anxiety, rage, aggression and the very concerning self-harm behaviors. In integrative medicine, our goal is to find the reason behind a behavior and treat the cause of the behavior and not just the symptoms. Many children and adults with ASD are either non-verbal or have limited verbal ability to communicate what they are feeling.

When a child is having behavior issues, I think about the multiple medical problems that are common, especially the ones that may cause pain. Many children with ASD have chronic digestive issues and pain associated with these issues. Treating the cause of the digestive issues causing pain for example can help decrease or eliminate the behavior. Sensory processing issues are also very common. Sounds may be louder and unfamiliar places can cause a lot of anxiety and fear so working with a behavioral therapist can help with transitions and decreasing sensory issues. I also find different nutritional deficiencies that can contribute to mood and behavioral issues and use specific nutritional and herbal supplements to help with stress and mood responses.

Dr. Debby Hamilton, MD, MPH is a Pediatrician with experience in primary care, integrative medicine, research, speaking and writing. Her education includes an undergraduate degree from Wesleyan University followed by a medical degree from Chicago Medical School, where she graduated with honors. She is board-certified in Pediatrics, Physician Nutrition, and Integrated/Holistic medicine (AIHM), and has a Master of Science degree in Public Health (MPH) where she did research in nutrition. Dr. Hamilton founded Holistic Pediatric Consulting in Colorado in 2005. Her practice focuses on treating children with chronic diseases such as autism and ADHD and preconception counseling based on her book, *Preventing Autism and ADHD: Controlling Risk Factors Before, During & After Pregnancy*. Her book led to her collaboration in the writing of *The Healthy Child Guide* through the Neurological Health Foundation. She has also contributed chapters for *Child Decoded: Unraveling Learning and Behavioral Disorders*. In 2017, Dr. Hamilton joined Researched Nutritional's, a nutritional supplement company, where she focuses on clinical research, product development and education of healthcare professionals. She continues to see patients through Holistic Pediatric Consulting in Colorado and through telemedicine consults.



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