

# Self-Stim Behavior

## 6 Things You Need To Know

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## 6 Things You Need to Know About Self-Stim Behavior

1. Always start with an **assessment of stim behaviors** (as well as other problem behaviors) and language. What does the stim look like? What is the rate (estimate or count the stims in a short time interval)? When is the stimming most likely to occur? Are there any activities where stimming doesn't occur? What other problem behaviors does the child exhibit? I also recommend a language assessment.

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2. **Make a plan** to decrease problem behaviors and to **increase language and learning skills**. If the stim behavior is dangerous, **contact a BCBA** to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) or Functional Analysis (FA).

3. If the stim behaviors are just disruptive but not dangerous, make a plan to **work on language** and social skills and **avoid working directly on stimming**. Ignore minor stimming by waiting 5 seconds until the child is still/quiet then redirect to an activity and engage your child or client.

4. When you have no one to engage with your child and you are busy (need to cook dinner or take a phone call), pick **stim activities and toys that are as safe and as age-appropriate as possible**.

5. We can sometimes **use the stim to our advantage** to **teach the child language** and embed ourselves into something fun for the child. Let's say their self-stim behavior is spinning around. Instead of staying, "Stop it. Stop spinning. You'll get dizzy. You're going to fall down," which isn't very positive, you can model, "Spin" and they can have one spin in the office chair with you controlling that amount of spin. **You being added to that spinning activity makes it more fun.**

6. **Teach your child or client to mand for items/activities** that are similar to his or her self-stimulatory activities. If the child likes to rock, for instance, then you could teach him the sign or vocal request for rock. I like to incorporate oversized rubber balls into the rocking because sensory input is sometimes very reinforcing. While on the larger rubber ball, you can even further utilize this sensory input by incorporating even more language by modeling words such as "rock," "bounce," "roll," etc.

**The key** to stopping a stim behavior is recognizing that you cannot, in fact, simply STOP any behavior. **Any behavior that is to be reduced must be replaced by an equally valuable or functional behavior.** I have found that the best way to replace stim behaviors is to teach your client or child to use language and social skills and to teach them leisure/play skills that are safe and fun!



I am Dr. Mary Barbera and it is my mission to help parents and professionals around the world. My first born son, Lucas, was diagnosed with autism a day before his 3rd birthday and since then, I have become a BCBA-D, best-selling author, and online course creator. I have also created The Barbera Method™ so that other parents and professionals have the road map I wish I would have back when I was feeling lost in the developmental delay and early autism maze.

Through my work and experiences as a parent and professional for more than two decades, I have created valuable resources and the The Barbera Method™ to help teach others to implement proven, child-friendly strategies and programming within homes and schools around the world. Participants from 6 continents and over 100 countries have taken advantage of my work, and I want to help you too!

***“I was able to get my son the early intervention he needed 6 months before services were available. Today we are six months ahead because of you, Mary, and I am forever grateful.”***

***- Jannette, program alumni***

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