

What is DIR®?

DIR® is an abbreviation for Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship-based. DIR® is a model—a framework—for thinking about a child’s complete development, from infancy into whole joyful personhood. While DIR can be a helpful way to think about any child’s development, it is particularly useful in working with children with developmental delays. The model was developed by Stanley Greenspan, M.D. and Serena Wieder, PhD, with contributions from professionals in a variety of fields, among them speech and language specialists, occupational and physical therapists, educators, audiologists, and neurologists.

The D: The model focuses on the functional developmental levels a child must master including: Shared Attention, Engagement, Two-Way Purposeful Communication, Two-way Problem-solving Communication, Emotional Ideas and Abstract thinking.

The I: Because processing difficulties can be at the root of a child’s problems with relationships, learning, and interactions, the child’s unique biology and processing capacities are considered and addressed.

The R: Underlying the DIR® model is the conviction that social and intellectual development are based on a foundation of intimacy and joy, and that a true measure of development is found in the depth and complexity of a child’s interactions, particularly with his caregivers. Special emphasis is placed on developing and strengthening the child’s special relationships.

What is Floortime?

One important component of the DIR® model is Floortime, a strategic, goal-oriented, emotion-driven way of playing and interacting with a child that helps a child initiate and respond at higher and higher developmental levels. Many children require numerous Floortime sessions each day.

An Introduction to DIR®/Floortime For Parents

Course Information

This course is offered by the Astra Foundation in partnership with Acton-Boxborough Community Education. For information on course dates and times, please check the Astra Foundation website: www.astrafoundation.org, or the Community Education website: <http://comed.ab.mec.edu/>.

Location: 524 Main Street, Acton, MA
Cost: \$90/individual or \$110/couple
Day/Time: Tuesdays, 7 pm—9 pm
Length: 6 weeks
Sessions Offered: Spring, Fall

The six week course will consist of short presentations, video to illustrate topics, lots of examples and lots of discussion in a supportive environment. We will be using the book, The Child with Special Needs, as a starting point for our discussions, with suggested readings each week.

Parents will:

- Learn the basic principles of DIR®
- Acquire basic knowledge of six functional developmental levels a child must master
- Learn about Floortime, and how to begin using Floortime with their child.
- Learn about the importance of “cues” and “circles” as they interact with their child
- Learn about the importance of understanding each child’s unique sensory profile and how to incorporate this knowledge into Floortime sessions.



The skills and techniques taught in this course constitute an introduction to methods that have been successful for other families. Nothing in the course is intended to be or shall constitute medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Weekly Topics

(May be revised at instructor's discretion.)

Week 1

Our focus will be understanding the basic structure of the model, the importance of the “gleam in the eye,” and why relationships pave the way to higher learning.

Week 2

We’ll talk about functional developmental levels 1—6 and take a look at how to determine where your child might be functioning. We’ll look at different ways children can communicate and discuss the importance of “circles” and “cues”.

Week 3

Getting Started with Floortime. We will look at: the basic principles of Floortime, how to help a child move up the levels of development, and some of the challenges we face in doing Floortime well.

Week 4

We will briefly introduce the topic of Sensory Integration. We’ll talk about how to adapt play to better fit a child’s unique profile and will reflect on our own play style and preferences, strengths and weaknesses.

Week 5

We’ll explore 24 strategies you might choose from when interacting with your child to help him become calmer, more focused, and more engaged, while communicating and thinking with greater complexity. We’ll talk also about using everything the child enjoys and expects throughout the day to promote interaction, engagement, motor planning and language.

Week 6

Finally, we’ll look at how symbolic play can help your child become more flexible and adaptable and better able to understand and express his own emotions.