



Episode 33: Another Look at Praxis: Stories from the OT Clinic

Hosts: Tracy Stackhouse · Michelle Maunder · Cory Dundon

LISTENER NAME

DATE LISTENED

TOTAL LISTENING + REFLECTION TIME (MINS)

CPD HOURS CLAIMED

Episode Summary

We promised more terminology and then did what we always do, followed a real child instead. Cory brings a three and a half year old who was stuck with dressing, flooded easily, and sat a beat behind socially, and what looks at first like a praxis problem turns out to be an autonomic one. When the nervous system is that loud, there is no room for praxis to build. This is sensory integration and polyvagal theory working together, with a Lycra sheet, a dinosaur puppet and a claw grabber doing the heavy lifting. We trace the clinical reasoning from the dressing breakdown through to the moment skills begin to emerge, and sit with what it means to trust the theory when the path forward is not yet clear.

Resources & Mentions

- The SPIRIT model (Sensory, Affective, Motor), Tracy Stackhouse
- Polyvagal theory, Stephen Porges
- Ayres Sensory Integration
- Interpersonal neurobiology
- Praxis, and acting on the affordances of an object
- **DFX Learning Journeys**, build your clinical reasoning skills

Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet minutes to consider each prompt and write freely.

- 1 When a child is stuck on a skill like dressing, how do you decide whether you are looking at a praxis difficulty, an autonomic one, or both?

2 Tracy noted that when the autonomic nervous system is really loud, it does not make space for discrimination. Which child on your caseload does that reframe change for you?

3 Where in your sessions do you lead with relational, somatosensory play to access ventral safety before you target a specific discriminative skill?

4 Think of a quiet, compliant child who is meeting goals. How do you tell genuine engagement apart from a freeze or appease response?

5 What is one session you could record and reflect on this week, to catch a moment of praxis or another capacity unfolding that you might have missed live?
