



# What is DIR®?

The Developmental, Individual Difference, Relationship-based (**DIR®**) Model helps clinicians, parents and educators understand and promote child development. DIR provides practitioners a framework to conduct comprehensive assessments and develop intervention programs tailored to the unique challenges and strengths of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) as well as other developmental challenges. DIR is the theoretical model behind the DIRFloortime® (Floortime) technique.

*The objectives of the DIR® Model are to build healthy foundations for social, emotional, and intellectual capacities rather than just focusing on skills and isolated behaviors.*

## The **D** (*Developmental*) part of the Model

The **D** describes the building blocks of the DIR model. Understanding where the child is developmentally is critical to planning a treatment program. The Six Functional Emotional Developmental Levels (FEDLs) describe the developmental capacities that children learn as they grow emotionally and intellectually. This includes: 1) Developing capacities to attend and remain calm and regulated; 2) Engaging and relating to others; 3) Initiating and responding to all types of communication beginning with emotional and social affect based gestures; 4) Engaging in purposeful problem-solving and intentional behavior involving a continuous flow of interactions; 5) Using ideas (symbols) to communicate needs and think and play creatively; and 6) Building bridges between ideas (logical thinking). These developmental capacities are essential for spontaneous and empathic relationships as well as the mastery of academic and life skills.

## The **I** (*Individual-differences*) part of the Model

The **I** describes the unique biologically-based ways each child takes in, regulates, responds to, and comprehends sensations. Sound, touch, and the planning and sequencing of actions or ideas are areas where individual differences are often evident. For example, a child may be hyper responsive or under reactive to touch or sound and as a result either seek or avoid environments rich in these sensations.

## The **R** (*Relationship-based*) part of the Model

The **R** describes the learning relationships with caregivers, educators, therapists, peers, and others who tailor their affect-based interactions to the child's individual differences and developmental capacities. These relationships enable progress in the child's overall functional and emotional development.