



Snoozachair Case Study

The Snooza Chair and it's use with an Autistic Young Person

The Autistic Young Person's Perspective

The Snoozachair was trailed for 3 weeks by an 18 year old autistic female. She can get overwhelmed when too many activities are going on or too many demands are placed on her (there is a query whether she may have ADHD but no diagnosis has been given). She manages distress by self-harming, retreating into herself (often by secluding in her room and not interacting with her family), and can display verbal aggression when feeling overwhelmed.

This results in social isolation, social disruption, and potential physical harm to herself. When she is verbally aggressive, the perception of others is that the autistic person is going to be physically aggressive and so other people avoid her.



Positive Experiences



It's comfy. Normally, chairs are difficult to be comfortable in. I will choose a settee rather than a chair because I can lie on my side on it. This means others cannot sit down (on the settee). People don't like that so I take myself to my room instead.

With the zero-gravity design of the Snooza chair, the young person was able to sit in a position that allowed her to remain comfortable for extended periods of time. This enabled the young person to remain with members of her family and to socialise.

When feeling overwhelmed, the young person tried sitting in the chair rather than taking herself to bed. Bed is her standard way of managing being overwhelmed as she will take herself away from others and use items such as blankets to make herself feel secure. She would do this even if no-one else was within her home. The young person found that the comfortable position of the chair, combined with the chair "holding" her tight (the chair is available in a range of sizes so that the chair is a close fit for her) helped give her the sensory reassurance that she needed and, by placing blankets over her, she was able to self-regulate, calm down and, she says, "I fell asleep in it".

This meant that she could stay within the living room to self-regulate (providing other people were not around) and so limited her time being in her bedroom. This helped to make the distinction that her bedroom was for sleep and rest, rather than somewhere to isolate to.

Social isolation decreased, there were no expressions of self-harm and the incidents and lengths of verbal aggression decreased.

Points of Concern

"You need to make sure no skin is showing if you sit in it though as the sides attach to your skin and hurt a bit when you stand up otherwise". The chair has a wipe down material. Due to sensory reasons, the young person does not wear a lot of clothing at home. This leaves large areas of exposed skin. As the chair is designed to be a snug fit, this results in her skin sticking to the chair.

Overall Impression

The young person likes the chair and does not want to use other chairs as frequently as the Snooza. It allows the young person to participate socially with her family. It helped to manage episodes of distress.

The Occupational Therapist's Perspective

Qualified for 34 years, the occupational therapist has worked with adults and young people who are neurodiverse in a wide range of settings. The occupational therapist has lived experience of supporting autistic members of their family, including through periods of self-harm. They provide training and support to professionals, autistic people and their families.

Positive Experiences

The chair comes in a range of sizes. This means the seat can be designed around the occupant's physical needs. There are additional inserts and head supports available to ensure a good fit. The material is wipe clean so has advantages for infection control and general cleanliness. The chair is compact and fits easily into the home environment.



The angle of the seating and the range of sizes allow the occupant of the chair to sit in a position known as zero gravity. This is often used when managing pressure care and tissue viability issues but it is also a comfortable position to be in from a sensory perspective as it removes the physical distractions associated with seating and provides sensory support.

The angled seat can assist the user of the chair to achieve a comfortable sitting position.

Points of Concern

The chair that was used as part of this evaluation has a clinical look to it. This makes it stand out from standard furniture which may be a concern for some chair users and/or their families. The material results in skin sticking to it if someone has been sitting in it for an extended time.

The angled seat can make transfers difficult for those with mobility challenges.

Overall Impression

The chair has a role to play in managing the seating needs of autistic people. It is recognised that different autistic people will have different needs so it is acknowledged that the chair will not meet the needs of all people. It does, however, prove to be a good option when considering how to facilitate social interaction, how to assist somebody to self-regulate, and consequently as a way of promoting and maintaining family cohesion.

Conclusion

In this evaluation, the Snooza chair demonstrated clear benefits for the autistic young person using it. It enabled socialisation within the family, it assisted with the young person's self-regulation when they were overwhelmed, and this meant that the need to self-harm was reduced. The chair fits into the home environment easily due to its size. It looks different to other furniture within the home (not just because of the angle of the seat but because of the material design) and although this may be a concern for some people, in this evaluation it had the consequence of identifying it clearly for the one person using it with the result that the autistic young person felt ownership of the chair and so wished to use it more. The material is easy to wipe clean but can result in exposed skin being stuck to it.

From both a therapeutic perspective and from the chair uses perspective, this chair has potential to be a benefit to people who are autistic. It should be recognised that it is one possible option for autistic people to use and that it may not be suitable for all. For example, the angle of the chair can mean that people with physical challenges may find it difficult to get in and out of. The material for some people's sensory needs may not assist but may actually cause more distress. Careful assessment is, therefore, recommended.



Snoozachair Case Study

The Snooza Chair for patient with Athetoid Cerebral Palsy

Patient A's Medical History

- Athetoid Cerebral Palsy with high tone and dystonic episodes.
- Gastrostomy fed, blended diet with additional oral intake.
- Rare seizures (if very unwell)

Has had SOS Moulded seating as a child but as an adult it has taken up to 4 people to hold her in for the mould to be made. This type of chair was also too difficult for 2 people to get her into it due to high spasticity and spasm.

Since Patient A came to adult services and the SOS chair which she had as a child needed replacing we have tried other chairs.



Alternative Chairs Tried

SOS home care (moulded seat) and **Multi Adjust Plus chair** with Padded 4-Point Pelvic Belt (Medium), Stabilizer Belt, MultiAdjust Plus Lateral supports and Dynamic Chest Harness.

Both the above chairs were unsuitable due to:

- Straps causing marks on ankles from ankle huggers
- Marks of hips from pelvic strap.
- Spasms were still strong as she was pushing down through her feet on the footplate.

Snoozachair

The snooza chair was trialled and this has been the only chair Patient A has been able to sit in and relax.

There is only 1 standard lap belt but due to the style of the seat, and that there is no foot rest, she has been able to relax into the chair.

She is hoisted into the chair easily by parents and has felt more able to engage with family and friends.

When Parents saw the snooza chair initially they did not think it would be suitable however they have been amazed at how she has been in the chair from a posture and comfort point of view.



Snoozachair Client Testimonial

The Snooza Chair for Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy

Our daughter has a few diagnosis, the main ones being quadriplegic cerebral palsy, dystonia and non verbal.

Her previous chair was called Infant Saros tilt-in-space chair.

It wasn't suitable as even with a harness she was sliding down as she kicks alot. It's high up even higher than an average sofa so she was above everyone. It was heavy so hard to maneuver around the room/home.

The Snoozachair has been a great improvement from our previous chair.

It's low to the ground, which means my girl can properly engage with her younger siblings - something most other chairs don't allow. Because of that, their bond has been growing really nicely.

It's super comfy, she is genuinely happy and settled in it. I don't worry about her tipping out or leaning too far to one side thanks to the bonus side inserts, which give great support and reassurance. The material is also wipe-clean, which is a huge plus for everyday life.

Overall, a lovely, supportive, comfortable chair that really works for our family.

