



PEDIATRIC SPEECH THERAPY NEWSLETTER



WORKING SPEECH INTO DAILY ROUTINES

Practicing with speech and language skills can be easily integrated into the routines children and their families already have, such as getting ready in the morning or sitting at the table during mealtimes. Some fun and easy methods include making a picture chart, playing a verbal game with your child, or asking your child to think ahead.

A picture chart is simply a list of pictures accompanied by descriptions that describe a routine. For instance, one step on the list might have a picture of a toothbrush accompanied by the sentence “Brush your teeth.” As you go through the routine with your child, be sure to read each step of the chart to reinforce the routine.



A simple verbal game you can play with your child is “your wish is my command.” Instead of bringing your child his or her usual food, drink, and utensils, have your child request every item that he or she needs. This method can work for other routines as well, such as getting dressed in the morning or preparing for your child’s favorite activities.

Finally, help your child learn to think ahead by having him or her predict all of the items he or she will need for the next activity. You can tell your child, “It is time to start our bedtime routine, and the first step is to change into pajamas. What will you need to change into pajamas?” You can vary how far ahead you want to challenge your child to think, based on their planning skills.



HOW DOES AUTISM AFFECT A CHILD'S CONVERSATION SKILLS?

There is no one way that autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects a child’s speech and language skills. As we continue learning about autism, we find that there are many ways the disorder affects communication and conversation abilities in children. The degree to which language skills are impacted also varies among children, as some children with autism may not use verbal communication while others may have highly developed verbal communication (and everywhere in between). Some areas of conversation that autism can affect include repetition and rigidity in language, nonverbal cues, and ability to navigate new topics (American Speech-Hearing-Language Association).

...Continued On Page 2



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

p.2 Ask A Therapist

p.2 Cover Story

p.3 Spotlight

p.3 Additional Copies

p.3 Schedule a Screening

p.4 About Us

ASK A THERAPIST



WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO TEACH VOWEL SOUNDS?

Parents can help their children master vowel sounds through easy activities that engage several areas across the brain, not just the region that primarily controls language. By engaging several areas of the brain at once, your child will gain a deeper understanding of the sounds he or she is hearing and using. There are two easy ways you can help your child with vowel sounds: visuals and motion.

You can help your child remember what sound “a” makes through visual association. Seeing the letter “a” alongside pictures of apples, ants, and alligators will help your child’s brain associate the letter with the sound found in those words.

Visual aids you can provide your child include books about the alphabet, posters you can hang up in home, or coloring pages. Visuals are most effective when introduced by an adult who can help the child identify the sounds they are hearing.

Additionally, you can teach your child to identify different sounds using motion. For example, you can teach your child to cup their hands when you say the soft “a” sound. As your child learns hand motions for a few important vowel sounds, you can begin to play word games with your child. Slowly say a word to your child (such as “astronaut”) and see if they can identify the initial sound using the hand motions they have learned. Start with easy vowel sounds, such as soft vowels, before progressing to more difficult sounds.

APP OF THE MONTH:

Choiceworks



Ages 4+

Target Skills

Education



About The App

This app helps children build positive behaviors related to daily routines.

How does autism affect a child’s conversation skills? Continued...

Repetition and Echolalia

Some children exhibit repetition in their speech and language, which can affect communication skills. For example, a child might hear a phrase in school and continue to repeat that phrase for the remainder of the day. This repetitive language is also referred to as “echolalia.” While there are cases in which echolalia is not used interactively, there are also times when children will use echolalia interactively or as a way to help process information. In order to better understand why a child with autism is presenting with echolalia, it is important to understand the function of the behavior (American Speech-Hearing-Language Association).



Nonverbal Cues

Nonverbal cues may also present challenges for children with autism. This is an aspect of conversation you may take for granted, yet nonverbal cues significantly influence social interactions and conversations. When speaking with another person, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language are often just as important as the words spoken. Nonverbal cues can also signal when the person you are speaking with is losing interest in the topic, confused about something you said, or is trying to switch topics. If a child with autism has trouble interpreting nonverbal cues, holding a conversation can be extremely confusing and challenging (American Speech-Hearing-Language Association).

Specific Interest Areas

Some children with autism may have specific areas of high interest, such as trains or a specific animal. As a result, children with autism may frequently talk to others about their areas of high interest. While this is not necessarily problematic, children with high interest areas may struggle to hold conversations about other topics. They may also have trouble understanding when others are no longer interested in the topic of conversation. For example, if a child is highly interested in trains, they may start speaking to a classmate about this topic. While the classmate may initially be engaged and interested in the topic, a child with autism may not notice if his or her classmate becomes bored or attempts to switch topics (American Speech-Hearing-Language Association).

How speech-language pathologists can help

Speech-language pathologists can help children with autism develop functional language and conversation skills to use at home, school, and in the community. Children with autism can present a wide variety of speech and language concerns, so treatment plans are individualized to meet their unique needs (American Speech-Hearing-Language Association).

References

American Speech-Hearing-Language Association. (n.d.). Autism (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/autism/>

SPEECH THERAPY SPOTLIGHT

Kristin Flannigan

About Kristin Flannigan

Kristin Flannigan was born and raised in Missouri and moved to California in August 2014. Her first love was the Spanish language which prompted her to pursue a bachelor's degree in Spanish at Truman State University. After graduating in 2003, she went on to work in the community, soon after returning to the university to work. In 2011, she found her next love in communication disorders. Graduating in December 2014 with her master's, Kristin hit the ground running at Aspire Speech and Learning Center. She has continued to hone her skills as a clinician and has found areas of professional interest in childhood apraxia of speech, early intervention, working with individuals that have Autism, augmentative and alternative communication, bilingualism, and working with Spanish speakers. Outside of work, Kristin enjoys spending time with her church family, singing, visiting the coast or the mountains, crocheting, reading, and relaxing.



Three words Kristin uses to describe herself

Empathic, Positive, Includer

Why Kristin loves being a speech therapist

I love being able to see clients do what they didn't think was possible, and to change how they think about themselves. Seeing them excited about their successes makes my job worthwhile.

Kristin's favorite things

Some of my favorite things are a job well done, the smell of rain before you see it, a good book, and time spent with friends and family.

What people are saying about Kristin Flannigan

"Kristin is a very wonderful speech therapist, who is always finding creative ways to keep my son engaged in therapy. She has been a valuable asset."

"Kristin is awesome! How she works with my son is amazing. We appreciate her patience and love the activities she does to grow my child's pragmatic language."

"I couldn't be happier with Kristin! We see so much progress through my son's work at Aspire Speech and Learning Center."

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If so, email us at:

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Please include the address of your office & how many additional copies you would like.



Concerned About Your Child's Speech or Development?

**Call us today
for a free consultation
(559) 228-9100**

About Aspire Speech & Learning Center

Aspire Speech and Learning Center, formerly Center for Communication Skills, is a premier provider of speech therapy services and academic support in the greater Fresno area. Kathryn Wage and her team of experienced speech therapists have a long-standing and well-deserved reputation for providing services that improve the lives of their clients. The therapists are well known for supporting parents in improving optimum functional outcomes for their children. The practice has grown rapidly since moving to the California Learning Connection and provides services through a wide range of payer options, both public and private, and receives referrals from top pediatrician practices and elite preschools around Fresno. We offer free consultations to prospective clients to help determine the best fit for our offerings.

Contact Aspire Speech & Learning at Grow@AspireSpeech.com or call (559) 228-9100

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