



WHY FAMILY-CENTERED CARE IS IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DISORDER

Family-centered care focuses on involving the family system in assessments and interventions for the individual. The family-centered care approach is concerned with respecting the family and their preferences when conducting assessments and developing intervention plans. Speech therapists believe that families play an essential role in all aspects of therapy services. With this, it is important to provide learning opportunities for families. This includes providing information, teaching strategies, and giving feedback to families on the progress of the individual.



In family-centered care, it is important for therapists to build rapport with families and individuals. Speech therapists will teach families skills to help manage an individual's behaviors and their communication and language development. Family-centered care reflects the fact that family and individual beliefs vary based on culture, preferences, and history. Consequently, family-centered care values respecting each family's views and preferences. Family-centered care also understands that family relationships are dynamic rather than static, meaning the needs of family members and individuals will change over time.

Family-centered care plays a vital role in social communication disorder. With this approach, the speech therapist will be able to identify how family interactions and relationships impact social communication. A family-centered approach will also engage the family in therapy sessions and use items that are familiar to the family during therapy sessions and evaluations.



WHAT IS SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DISORDER, AND HOW DOES SPEECH THERAPY HELP?

Social communication is the use of language in social contexts. Eye contact, facial expressions, and body language are all forms of social communication behaviors. These skills are necessary for language expression and comprehension for both spoken and written language. A social communication disorder is defined as difficulty with spoken and unspoken language in social contexts. This disorder can affect a child's ability to socialize, form relationships with peers, achieve academic success, and perform daily occupations.

Deficits in social communication may present as challenges with communication in social situations, following rules of conversation and storytelling, changing communication to match the context or needs of the communication partner, or understanding information that is not explicitly stated. Some specific social behaviors that may be affected by this disorder can be seen in using appropriate greetings, telling and understanding stories, initiating conversation, and making and keeping close friendships.

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ASK A THERAPIST



HOW DOES THE WAIT TIME STRATEGY BOOST YOUR TODDLER'S SPEECH?

The wait time strategy is important for developing a toddler's speech. This strategy involves waiting (about 3 seconds) after asking a child a question to allow them time to respond without receiving more verbal input. When a toddler is developing speech, it takes them time to process what is being asked of them and to process how to respond.

When the child continues to receive verbal input, it makes it difficult for that child to process all of the spoken information. By refraining from adding more verbal input and waiting, the child is allowed to process the spoken language and receive a social cue that it is their turn to speak.

After waiting a few seconds, it is appropriate to repeat the question, offer a few choices on how to respond, or give other clues. Giving choices involves providing the child with two verbal choices and encouraging the child to respond with the item they want.

This helps model a verbal word that a child can then imitate after hearing. It is good to use the wait strategy at any time when conversing with a toddler and trying to elicit speech and language.

Some natural times to work the wait strategy are meal times, storytelling, and playtime. For example, you could ask your child, "Would you like to play with blocks or dinosaurs?" Then, wait a few seconds to give your child an opportunity to respond independently.

References

George, K. (2018). *Tips to Jumpstart your Toddlers Speech and Language*. Chicago, IL: Pediatric Publishing.

APP OF THE MONTH: Endless Alphabet

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About The App

This app is a great way to promote language use with your child!

What Is Social Communication Disorder, and How Does Speech Therapy Help? Continued...

Speech therapists play an essential role in the screening, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of social communication disorder. The speech therapist will recommend ongoing therapy services if they are necessary. They will also counsel individuals with social communication disorder and their families by offering resources and education that can improve communication in daily life. They will collaborate with individuals and families to form an appropriate intervention plan that is focused on functional outcomes. A speech therapist can also advocate for individuals with social communication disorder at the local, state, and national levels.



Speech therapists will conduct a screening for social communication skills if social communication disorder is suspected or if there are any communication concerns for an individual. This screening would include interviews, observations, questionnaires, and norm-referenced report measures by parents or teachers. The hearing of the individual will also be tested to ensure a hearing loss is not a factor affecting social communication. If an individual is suspected to have a social communication disorder following the screening, the speech therapist would then conduct a comprehensive speech and language assessment.

The assessment is culturally sensitive and involves families, caregivers, teachers, speech therapists, special educators, psychologists, and other professionals if needed. From this assessment, a speech therapist will conclude whether the individual has a diagnosis of social communication disorder along with a description of the characteristics and severity of the disorder, recommendations for next steps concerning intervention and support, and referral to any other professionals if needed.

Speech therapy can help treat social communication disorder. The treatment focuses on increasing engagement and teaching independence in natural communication environments. A speech therapist will focus on social understanding and social interpretation, helping the individual understand social context cues and emotional cues. Speech therapy will also aid in pragmatics, which will teach the individual to manage conversations and take turns in conversation. Speech therapy will also focus on improving language processing by working on narrative construction and understanding of nonliteral language.

References (For both articles beginning on page one)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2019). *Family-Centered Practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Autism/Family-Centered-Practice/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2019). *Social Communication Disorders*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Social-Communication-Disorder/>

SPEECH THERAPY SPOTLIGHT

Debbie S. Lombardi, AuD, CCC-A/SLP

Debbie Lombardi is the owner and provider at Premiere Speech and Hearing with offices in Collegeville and Lancaster. Debbie has a license and certification to practice audiology and speech language pathology. She has worked in a variety of settings but loves private practice and the attention and care she can provide to the patients. Debbie provides services to both children and adults. She has expertise in the area of childhood speech and language development including articulation, language, auditory processing and aural rehabilitation. Audiologic areas of expertise include diagnostic evaluations, hearing aid fitting and service and assistive listening technology. Debbie is a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. In 2019 she will serve as the VP of Publications for the Pennsylvania Academy of Audiology.



Kristin Park, MS, CCC-SLP

Kristin Park is a certified and licensed clinical Speech-Language Pathologist. Kristin has had clinical experience in a variety of settings, but has extensive experience with childhood expressive and receptive language, fluency, and articulation disorders. In addition, she has expertise in the areas of cognitive rehabilitation, verbal apraxia, oral motor planning, and voice assessment and treatment. Kristin works with infants, school-age children and adults. Recently, Kristin completed a certification in the LSVT Loud program that is designed to treat patients with Parkinson's disease and other neurologic conditions. She is a member of the following organizations: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association.



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"My son has been a client here for 2 year and we have seen an incredible improvement in his speech. Sue Levy makes therapy fun and exciting, and my son loves coming here!" – Jen

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