



More Than Words: Parent Training to Support Communication in Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Purpose

To address early intervention training needs for parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) using the *More Than Words* parent training program through the Hanen Center.

Background

Hanen *More Than Words* (MTW) program provides parents of children with ASD strategies to help their children communicate.

Utilizes everyday activities and interactions as the context for learning communication

Organized around four major goals

- Improving two-way interaction
- Increasing social communication skills
- Using more conventional means of communication
- Improving language comprehension.

MTW incorporates best practices in treatment for children with ASD including structure, use of visual supports, predictability, and stresses the importance of affect.

Research examining the effectiveness of MTW suggests:

- > parents learn and apply the strategies learned to facilitate their child's communication development
- > children increase their vocabularies & social interaction (Girolametto, Sussman, & Weisman, 2007; McConachie, Randle, & Le Couteur, 2005)

Procedure

4 families (8 parents) were self-referred to the program

Sessions:

- Pre-program home visit with pre-testing
- 8 sessions (2 ½ hours each) of parent training
- 3 Home visits with videotape feedback (concurrent with parent training)
- 3 months post program home visit with post-testing and videotape feedback

During home visits, strategies taught during parent training were implemented by families. Hanen certified SLPs provided verbal, written, and videotape feedback about strategy use. Home implementation plans were developed collaboratively with families.

Strategies included:

OWL Strategy: Observe, Wait, Listen

Four "I" Strategy: Include interests, Interpret, Imitate, Intrude

ROCK Strategy: Repeat, Offer Opportunities, Cue to take a turn, Keep it going/fun

Four S's Strategy: Say less, Stress, Go Slow, Show

Measures

Mullen Scales of Early Learning (Mullen, E., 1995)

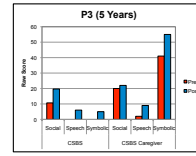
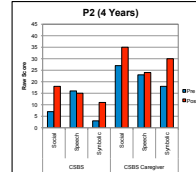
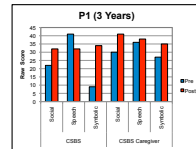
Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales-Developmental Profile (CSBS-DP): Test and Caregiver Questionnaire (Wetherby, A. & Prizant, B., 2003)

MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories (MCDI) (Fenson, L. et al., 1993)

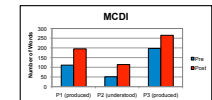
Subjects

Child	Pre-test Age (months)	Communication Stage	Post-test Age (months)
P1 (3 Years)	37	Requester	44
P2 (4 years)	53	Own Agenda/Requester	58
P3 (5 years)	65	Own Agenda/Requester	72
P4 (5 years)	68	Partner	74

CSBS-DP Results



MCDI Results



Parent Feedback:

"Being taught strategies to maximize time with our child... experiencing other families with kids on the spectrum... working with other couples using hand on activities... learning to say less and listen, go slower, stress the important stuff and show"

"More Than Words had a profound impact on [our son]. Not only do [we] have considerably more skills for communicating with him, which helps to head off meltdowns or deal with them if they happen, but he's come so far... He's listening to chapter books! He's playing board games! He's participating in play with his peers!"

"Several strategies were, and continue to be useful to us... The OWL strategy reminds us to get face to face with our daughter, and to follow her lead during activities. Often when we 'wait' her out, communication will occur either verbally, with her go-talk, or with an approximation or point."

Suggestions for Training SLPs

SLPs can support parents' interactions with their young children with ASD by teaching them how to:

- Facilitate their child's ability to pay attention;
- Engage their child in two-way communication;
- Help their child imitate and understand what others say and do;
- Show their child how to interact with people and have fun doing it;
- Practice what they learn using structure, repetition and predictability

SLPs can help parents understand what communication is, what learning style best characterizes their child & what function their child's communication serves

SLPs can use the MTW training strategies not only to teach families but to utilize in their own interventions with this population

Next Steps

More Than Words (MTW) training for 14 SLPs to occur in Spring 2011

Participating SLPs to implement parent trainings in their home community within one year of their training

Rotate sponsorship of It Takes Two To Talk (ITTT) and MTW each year to prepare all VT SLPs serving children birth to 5 to implement parent trainings to support vocabulary development and social communication

References

Girolametto, L., Sussman, F., & Weitzman, E. (2007). Using case study methods to investigate the effects of interactive intervention for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal of Communication Disorders, 40* (6).

McConachie, H., Val Randle, V., Hammal, D., & LeCouteur, A. (2005). A controlled trial of a training course for parents of children with suspected autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Pediatrics, 147*, 335-340.

Sussman, F. (1999). *More than words: Helping parents promote communication and social skills in children with autism spectrum disorders*. Toronto, Ontario: A Hanen Centre Publication.

Contact information

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