

What Can Parents Do to Help their Children's Speech Therapy?

This article is from the following website: <http://www.speechdisorder.co.uk>

Speech disorders and difficulties are relatively common in the United Kingdom with some estimates as high as 50% of all children entering school suffering from a speech or language difficulty that impedes age appropriate communications. Many children grow out of these difficulties naturally, though some may need more help to improve their speech and language skills.

Speech therapy is one means of providing these children the support they need to develop ways to cope with, and improve upon, their speech and language abilities. If a child has difficulties with speech and/or language, he or she should be formally evaluated by a speech language therapist and speech therapy should be commenced as recommended and continued for as long as is needed.

Attending Speech Therapy

Children attend speech therapy for a variety of reasons, most basically to improve their speaking, listening, reading and/or writing skills. Children do not need to be diagnosed with a formal speech, language or communication disorder in order to attend speech therapy. Speech and language therapy can be beneficial even to those having relatively minor difficulties.

A few of the reasons a child may attend speech therapy session include:

- due to voice problems
- having trouble understanding spoken or written communications
- difficulty learning the alphabet and/or the sounds of particular letters, syllables or words
- difficulty learning or using new vocabulary
- due to a stammer, stutter or cluttering when they are speaking.

Other children who might benefit from speech therapy include those who were born with a cleft lip or cleft palate (or who have slight impairments left after surgery for these conditions), those who suffer from learning disabilities, those with impaired hearing and those who have already been diagnosed as dyslexic, autistic or dyspraxic. Sometimes schools or GPs recommend that children attend speech therapy, though a concerned parent could also access this treatment privately if desired.

Speech Therapy Sessions

Speech therapy sessions include a wide variety of activities and speech drills, though what specifically happens in any given session will depend upon many variables. The length of the therapy session (usually between a half hour and one hour), the location of the therapy session (whether at home, school or a private facility), the age of the child

involved, whether the therapy session is private or involves a group, and the type of speech difficulty or disorder that is being treated will all affect the content of these sessions.

Sound or word repetitions, rhymes, tongue twisters, clapping and rhyming games, conversational activities, reading and comprehension activities, word or letter puzzles, word or sentence scrambles, and reading aloud are just a few of the activities that may take place during a speech therapy session. Depending on the age of the child involved, playtime activities or assigned schoolwork may also be undertaken regularly in sessions.

Parental Support of Speech Therapy

It has been proven that the children who make the greatest strides in speech therapy are those with interested, supportive and involved parents. Sometimes parents are invited into speech therapy sessions to engage in particular activities, to discover what the child is learning, and/or to familiarize themselves with the activities that might be assigned as a child's "homework" until the next session.

In order to best support their child's speech therapy, parents should always attend sessions when invited and familiarize themselves with their child's speech disorder or difficulty as well as the means by which the therapist and child are working to overcome it. Parents should also ensure that all homework is carried out, and carried out as often as instructed by the speech therapist. Therapists may teach parents particular games or other fun activities that will also support their child's speech and language abilities, and parents should be open to these instructions and endeavor to engage in these games regularly at home.

Further Information and Support

A number of organizations exist to support individuals with speech disorders in the United Kingdom, and many parents turn to these organizations for further information and advice regarding their child's speech disorder or difficulty. The British Stammering Association (www.stammering.org), Speakability (www.speakability.org.uk) and Talking Point (www.talkingpoint.org.uk) are all organizations that can support the parents of children with speech difficulties.