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HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

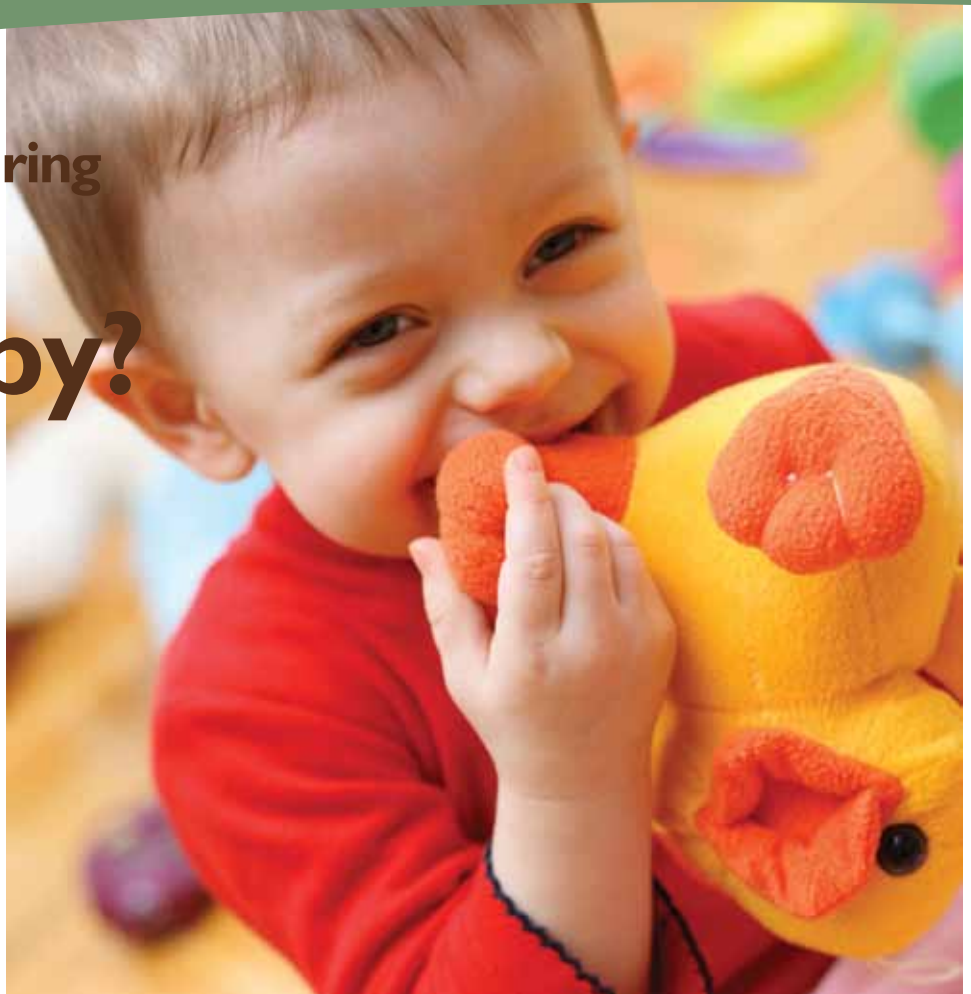
A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS AND CAREGIVERS OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.

What Happens During Speech Therapy?

This issue is the third in our series on the variety of therapy types offered by our team. We started with "Individual Intervention" (when you join your child for a private session with one of our team members). Last spring, we featured "Home Programming" (where your child's Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) designed a specific, individualized program for you to carry out with your child at home). In this issue, we'll tell you about another intervention type called, "Parent Training."

Every intervention that we provide centres on your child and on YOU. As your child's parent or primary caregiver, you are his or her first and most important communication partner. Whether your child is receiving "Individual Intervention," "Home Programming," or any of our other interventions, your presence and full involvement are critical.

In "Parent Training," that focus becomes very clear and specific. "Parent Training" means that we provide you with education that follows an outlined curriculum. It involves sessions with parents alone, as well as practice sessions with your child. The goal of "Parent Training" is to give you the tools, knowledge and confidence to support your child's growing



communication skills.

Whenever possible, we provide "Parent Training" to a group of up to eight families at a time. One or both parents of a child may attend. Groups are great because the participants learn from each other, in addition to the information and support offered by the group leader. When group training isn't feasible, individual parent training sessions may be scheduled.

"Parent Training" programs may follow a curriculum that has been designed by one or more of our team members, or that we have obtained from colleagues

in the field. We may also use curriculum that has been created by outside agencies. The best examples of these are the "Hanen® Parent Training Programs."

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An Introduction to the Hanen Centre

The Hanen Centre is a Canadian centre of excellence in child language that is recognized throughout the world. Founded in 1975 by Ayala Hanen Manolson, and now based in Toronto, the centre's mission is:

“...to provide the important people in a young child's life with the knowledge and training they need to help the child develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills.”

(Hanen Centre website, www.hanen.org).

The focus of every Hanen program is to help parents and other caregivers learn how best to promote children's communication and language development during everyday activities. SLP's, Support Personnel and other community professionals can access training from the Centre in order to lead Hanen Programs for parents and teachers and to use the Hanen approach in their day-to-day clinical work. We are proud of the fact that all of our SLPs have been certified to lead several of the Hanen programs. Our Support Personnel have also attended Hanen training, and are well-prepared to assist in parent groups and to use Hanen strategies in their day-to-day contact with clients. We have found that the Hanen Centre's teaching approach and materials are of the highest quality, user-friendly and grounded in leading-edge research.

Hanen Parent Programs



All the Hanen Parent Programs:

- Build from the philosophy that parents are their child's first and best teachers.
- Help parents use typical, everyday situations as opportunities for the child to learn to communicate.
- Provide parents with high-interest, relevant information.
- Combine anywhere from five to eight group sessions, three or four individual videotaping and feedback sessions for maximal learning and practice.

Specific programs address the communication needs of individual children.

More Than Words® - The Hanen Program® for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

“More Than Words” is a family-focused program that gives parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other social communication difficulties, practical tools to help their children communicate.

Autism is now recognized as the most common neurological disorder affecting children and one of the most common developmental disabilities. The Autism Society of Canada reports that approximately one in 165 children have ASD, with a total of approximately 190,000 Canadians across all ages.

In a “More Than Words” program, parents learn about many of the same topics covered in “It Takes Two to Talk,” with a specific focus towards social interaction.

In addition, “More Than Words” helps parents discover:

- How to use pictures and print to help their child's understanding.
- How to develop their child's play skills.
- Why their child behaves in certain ways and what they can do about those behaviours.
- How to help their child make friends.

The program is organized around four major goals:

- To improve two-way interaction.
- To develop more mature and conventional ways of communicating.
- To develop better skills in communicating for social purposes.
- To improve understanding of language.

Target Word® – The Hanen Program for Parents of Children Who are Late Talkers

“Target Word® - The Hanen Program for Parents of Children who are Late Talkers” is designed for parents of children formally identified as late talkers. “Target Word” teaches parents how to use everyday routines and activities to help build their child’s expressive vocabulary.

Research has identified a specific group of children called late talkers. Parents of late talkers are concerned that their children have fewer words than expected for their age, but aren’t worried about any other area of these children’s development. These are the children whose parents ask SLP’s, “Why isn’t my child talking?” and SLP’s say, “We don’t know!”

A child is considered a late talker if he or she:

- Has fewer than 10 words and is between 18 and 20 months of age; or
- Has fewer than 25 words and is between 21 and 24 months of age; or
- Has fewer than 50 words or no two-word phrases and is between 24 and 30 months of age; or
- Has relatively good comprehension, play, social, motor and cognitive skills.

It Takes Two to Talk® – The Hanen Program® for Parents

This was the first Hanen Parent Program and remains the best-known. “It Takes Two to Talk” is for parents of children (birth to five years of age) who have language delays. It helps parents identify how their child currently communicates, what motivates their child to communicate, how to turn everyday activities into language learning opportunities, how to be a responsive communication partner and how to talk so that their child can understand them and learn new words and ideas.

What Parents Say About Parent Training

Parents often tell us that they were initially nervous or intimidated by the idea of participating in “Parent Training.” We hear things like:

- “It’s such a big responsibility!”
- “Do I have to be in the videotape?”
- “Can’t you just teach him to talk for me?”

We understand! Attending a “Parent Training” program is a big commitment of time. It’s a big commitment of one’s self. You take a risk when you enter any group or start any new enterprise. What if people don’t like me? What if they judge me, or worse, judge my child? What if I don’t “do well?”

Our “Parent Training” programs are designed to very quickly calm those fears. Ground rules of respect and confidentiality are always discussed and implemented. Group sessions are comfortable, with easy discussion and lots of laughter. Parents quickly discover that the process involves not just learning new skills, but identifying skills they already have. Group members support, praise and advise each other. You quickly realize that YOU are the expert on your child. Parent training simply helps to sharpen your expertise to your child’s benefit.

Here’s what parents have said after attending



“Parent Training” sessions:

“I always tried to make my child talk to me. Now I know how to be his communication partner, and we can share our world.”

“My son used his first sign because of this program. I learned how to WAIT until he showed me what he wanted, instead of thinking I had to get everything for him because of his autism. I waited and he signed cracker! Now he has five signs he uses all the time. It may not sound like a lot,

but to me it’s everything.”

“I love that book (the More Than Words Parent guide). It’s like my bible.”

“This program was great. I found out I wasn’t the only one whose child didn’t talk. I feel better about the ways I teach my child, because now I see what works.”

Whether you access “Parent Training” in a group or in individual sessions with your child’s SLP, we know you’ll find it a valuable experience.

You're the One!

Nobody does it better.

- You know your child better than anyone else ever can.
- You are your child's best communication partner.
- You hold the key that opens the world of language for your child.

We're here to help.

Our staff of registered Speech-Language Pathologists and Support Personnel will provide you with the ideas, strategies, and materials you need to help your child. It's up to you to use them.

You can do it!

Nobody does it better.

Be our partner in enriching your child's world. The Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Program.



Communication Matters is published biannually by the Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language program. It has been developed to increase awareness for services available and tips on the prevention of speech, language or hearing disorders in the preschool population. This newsletter is intended for parents, teachers and caregivers of preschool-aged children. You are invited to contact the Health Unit with your articles and ideas.



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