



FALL 2013

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

# COMMUNICATION MATTERS

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

## THE POWER OF PARENTS!

Finding out you will become responsible for the life of a child is one of life's most exciting moments. Your heart swells to consider the hugs, kisses and pride you will experience. But it is overwhelming to consider the job you will soon face. It will not be ALL "hearts and flowers".

It is inevitable that you will face health, behavior and development challenges. No parent emerges unscathed: babies cry, get sick and require you to stay awake at night. Later on, your child may have difficulty communicating, walking, toileting, or coping with separation and frustration. You may face the heartbreaking news that your child has an illness, hearing loss, or developmental disability such as autism. Your school-age child may struggle academically or socially, and require extra help.

The reason parents (or primary caregivers) are ready for these challenges is simple: they want what is best for their child, love them and want to see them succeed. This drive helps parents

conquer their own fears, "get over" hearing the bad news and move towards the solution. It may mean hearing aids, or weekly visits to speech therapy. Whatever it takes, the parent pursues it, because it's their job.

The outcome for the child, and whether it is positive, depends on the response of their parent. Their role should be held up as the most important by all the experts in the land!

### Staff in the Haldimand Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Program (PSL) believe that:

- No child is too young to benefit from having a responsive communication partner
- Parents are a child's most important communication partner
- Parents are the best teacher
- Parents have the most opportunities to help a child learn about communication
- We can help parents make the most of these opportunities
- We need parents to be fully involved in order to build a child's communication skills.

We see it over and over again: a child whose parents are engaged and participating in all aspects of intervention have the best outcomes!



# Tips for parents

## LEARNING TO TALK

### 1. *Don't Wait and See*

Long before a child starts to talk, she is learning about communication. The sooner we see a child with delayed speech and language, the more we can help! Early detection of difficulties is crucial for later success in school and in life.



### 2. *Get Face to Face and Imitate*

Get down on the floor and imitate your child's sounds and actions.

Get nose-to-nose during diaper changes and copy her sounds and the faces she makes.

Play Simon Says with actions like jumping, spinning, rolling. Take turns being Simon.

Turn your child to face you when reading a book. Rhyming books help kids learn about sounds.

Copy what your child says and say it correctly: Child: "Bid dodd." Adult: "Yes, that is a big doggie."



### 3. *Join In!*

Join in your child's play and talk about what your child is interested in.

Join in your child's bath time! When your child splashes, splash back! Use words like splash, wet, water, wave, fun.

Run, jump, swing and climb with your child. Use words like slow, fast, run, and fall.

Let's Pretend! Have a tea party, play school, or act like animals!

Look at a book together. Wait and see what interests your child and then talk about it. You don't have to read the words.



### 4. *Repeat*

Say the same words again and again in different situations.

Repeat favourite nursery rhymes and sing songs during everyday activities.

Play Follow the Leader. Use words like under, over, through, behind, in front of. Help your child write the letters of his name and say each letter as you write it.

Help him find these letters on signs, menus and in books.

Sing songs like Head and Shoulders and the Hokey Pokey! It's a fun way to learn the names of body parts.





## 5. Keep it Simple

Use simple words to talk about what you are doing while you are doing it.

Use simple words at mealtime. "Do you want milk or juice?", "I love spaghetti!", "What a mess!"

Go for a walk together and tell your child the names of things he notices: "Look! A bird." "That bird is making a nest."

Say rhymes and make up your own silly rhymes together:

"Tickle your neck, tickle your nose. Tickle your tummy, tickle your toes!"

Add simple words to any game: stop, go, my turn, your turn.



## 6. Don't Force It

Don't try to make your child talk... WAIT, then say what she would say if she could, then WAIT some more.

Wait for your child to make a choice by reaching, pointing or using words. Give your child a choice of things to wear, eat or do.

Instead of telling your child what to say, try filling in the blank.

For example in a chase game, say, "I, 2, 3..." then WAIT. If your child doesn't say GO - you say it.

Look at a book together. Instead of asking "What's that?" "What colour is that?" try openended comments like: "I wonder what will happen next."

Do the dishes with your child. Say something like "I need more soap." WAIT and see what your child does or says.



## 7. Limit TV and Computer

Turn off the TV! Children are going to learn to communicate and interact by being with other people and not by watching TV or a DVD.

Research on early brain development shows that babies and toddlers have a critical need for direct interactions with their parents and caregivers. Their brains are not wired to take in fast-paced language and visual images.

There are so many other fun things your child could be doing.



## 8. It's Never Too Early to Read

Research shows that children get ready to read before they start school. From 0 -3years, children develop knowledge of the spoken language, the sounds that form words, letters, writing and books.

### What you can do at home:

- Make book sharing a part of your everyday routines starting at birth. You don't have to read the words. Talk about the pictures to see what interests your child.
- Make book sharing time special between you and your child.
- Read labels, signs, lists, and menus out loud!
- Let your child hold the book and turn the pages.
- Point out and name letters when reading books together.



**Websites for more tips:** Hanen <http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Parent-Tips> and [http://www.familydacyare.com/oeyscentres/being-the-bridge\\_resources.html](http://www.familydacyare.com/oeyscentres/being-the-bridge_resources.html)

The importance of parents is a message that bears repeating, especially given the PSL's current predicament.

## INCREASED WAIT TIMES

**Did you know?** New families entering the Haldimand Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Program are waiting much longer for service than they did in 2008. The costs of delivering the program (staff salaries and benefits, rent, insurance) keep increasing, while the funds provided by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) do not. As a result, staff time has been reduced.

The table below provides the details on the predicament:

	2005 - 2006		2009 - 2010		2012 - 13	2012 - 13
Service	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Number of children waiting for assessment	38	27	46	25	114	110
Wait time between referral and treatment	7 weeks	9 weeks	19 weeks	22 weeks	27 weeks	30 weeks

### What can you do?

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