

When speech therapy is temporarily unavailable...we embrace caregiver-mediated intervention

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Tips for Parents:

1. Don't attempt to "do therapy" with your own child; it doesn't work. Therapy can only be done by a therapist. Your role, as the parent, is to embed therapeutic strategies into daily routines and interactions with your child.
2. Collaboration between the parent and therapist (via phone, not in person during this Covid-19 pandemic) is the key to successful caregiver-mediated intervention.

Suggested strategies to support emergent speech in minimally verbally young children:

- Limit the number of test-like questions...life is not a quiz! Instead of asking, "How many are there?" or "What color is it?" just tell your child, "You have 3 crackers" or "You found the blue ball."
- Focus on teaching your child powerful words that will help him or her communicate basic wants, needs and feelings. Don't worry too much about letters, numbers, shapes and colors.
- When talking to teach a child HOW to talk, use less language (i.e., fewer words) so the child can focus on each sound and syllable that you are saying.

For example:

When looking at a book about farm animals, instead of saying "Do you see the cow? Where are his eyes? Do you see his tail? It's a brown cow. He says moo."

Try just saying, "Moooooo" or "Cooooow" (elongating the vowel to make the speech production sound more interesting and salient to the child).

- Interact face to face with your child when talking or reading books. Your child needs to SEE how you move your lips, tongue and jaw when you talk.
- Read books and sing songs with repetitive text. When it's time for the last word of the repetitive phrase, pause for 3 seconds and allow your child to fill in the word. "Brown bear, brown bear what do you _____?" or "5 little monkeys jumping on the _____."
- When your child doesn't verbally respond as hoped, then become his or her voice and say the desired word(s). But PLEASE avoid instructing your child to say words. Increased pressure to speak can actually decrease verbal attempts.
- The SLP and parent should select 5 speech targets for the family to focus on each week at home. Speech targets may include 5 sound effects (see *Cari's Silly Sounds* cards for specific ideas), 5 words, or 5 functional phrases, depending on the child's current level of functioning.