

Handy Handouts®

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Communication Takes Care: Better Hearing & Speech Month

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May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. It is a time to raise awareness about communication disorders (problems with speech, voice, language, and/or hearing) and the roles Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Audiologists play in treating them. (For more information about SLPs and Audiologists, see Handy Handout #162 *What is a Speech-language Pathologist?* and #163 *What is an Audiologist?*)



The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services reports:



- Eight to nine percent of young children have speech sound disorders.
- By first grade, approximately five percent of children have noticeable speech disorders.



- More than three million people in the United States stutter.
- Stuttering occurs most often in children between the ages of two and six.



- Boys are three times more likely to stutter than girls.
- Six to eight million Americans have some kind of language impairment.

The primary way children learn is through verbal communication and social interaction with others. During these face-to-face interactions, children learn how to take turns, interpret nonverbal signals (such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions), create strong relationships, and develop empathy (the ability to understand and feel other people's feelings). This year the theme for Better Hearing and Speech Month is Communication Takes Care. If we care about our children, we need to take time to have the face-to-face interactions that are critical to our children's social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Suggestions for Parents



- **Unplug.** Show your child that you want to spend quality time with him/her and that time is important to you by putting away your smartphone, tablet, TV, and other devices.



- **Engage.** Take advantage of the time you have with your child. Talk and interact with him/her at meal times, in the car, at the store, etc.



- **Read.** Reading with your child can help build the foundational skills he/she will need to experience success in school.



- **Play.** Playing with your child develops communication skills and cultivates family relationships.



- **Move.** Physical movement is critical to your child's development. Take a bike ride, play ball, or go to the park.



- **Ask.** If you think your child may have a problem with his/her speech, language, or hearing, seek help from a Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist.

Resources:

"Better Hearing & Speech Month 2016," accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.asha.org/bhsm/>

"Quick Statistics About Voice, Speech, and Language," last modified April 15, 2016, accessed April 25, 2016, <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-voice-speech-language>

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