

A Perfect Partnership: Therapists and Parents

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When a child is first diagnosed with a speech or language delay, fine/gross motor deficit, or another kind of delay or disability, it can be very overwhelming for parents and caregivers. Suddenly their schedules are filled with meetings, therapy appointments, and paperwork. There are also a variety of specialists that may be working with them and their child, such as speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), physical therapists (PTs), psychologists, and/or other special educators. (For more information about specialists that work with children, see Handy Handout #108, “Roles of Specialists in Relation to Preschool and School-Age Children”)

Why Do Parents Need Therapists?



Therapists are experts in their respective fields. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are experts in communication and use their knowledge of speech and language development to help children learn to communicate more effectively. (For more information about SLPs, see Handy Handout #162, “What is a Speech-Language Pathologist?”) Occupational Therapists (OTs) use their expertise in physical development to help children become more independent in their daily lives. (For more information about OTs, see Handy Handout #165, “What is an Occupational Therapist?”) All therapists use their knowledge to diagnose delays and disorders, develop goals and learning objectives



that are specific to each child, and plan activities to help children meet their goals. As children grow, as their skills improve, and as they make progress with their goals/objectives, therapists reevaluate, develop new goals/objectives, and plan new activities.

Why Do Therapists Need Parents?



Parents are experts about their children. They know what their children like and dislike. They know their children’s strengths and weaknesses. They know what motivates their children. Parents also spend quite a bit of time with their children – more than a therapist does or can! Because of this, parents can provide their children with additional opportunities to work on their goals/activities outside of the therapy room. Taking all of these factors into consideration, it’s easy to see why parents are a critical part of a child’s development and success in therapy.

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(cont.)

How Can Parents Get Involved?

Here are a few ways for therapists and parents to work together to help their children make progress in therapy:



- **Develop goals together.** Goals need to be age-appropriate and relevant. Therapists know what goals are appropriate and parents know what is important for the child and family.



- **Ask Questions.** Parents and therapists should ask questions of each other to make sure therapy activities are provided in a consistent manner that engage and motivate the child.



- **Communicate.** The line of communication should remain open between parents and therapists so they can share successes and discuss areas of treatment that may require some tweaking.



- **Parents should be an active part of treatment.** Sometimes this means that parents should be physically present and participating hands-on in activities during therapy. Other times this means that parents should be continuing therapy activities at home.

Therapists and parents both play an important role in a child's growth and development. Incorporating some of the strategies above can help to increase parents' participation in therapy goals and activities. When therapists and parents work together, children benefit!



Recursos:

"My 4 Favorite Tips to Involve Parents in Treatment," accessed April 13, 2020, <https://blog.asha.org/2017/08/17/my-4-favorite-tips-to-involve-parents-in-treatment/>

"The Importance of Parent Involvement in the Speech Therapy Process," accessed April 10, 2020, https://www.apraxia-kids.org/apraxia_kids_library/the-importance-of-parent-involvement-in-the-speech-therapy-process/

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