LET'S TALK: COMMUNICATION IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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About Me

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Agenda

Speech, Language, & Communication

Common Differences in Autism

Resources
SPEECH, LANGUAGE, & COMMUNICATION
Speech, Language & Communication || What's the difference?

- **Speech**: How we say sounds and words.
- **Language**: Words we use & how we use them to share ideas.
- **Communication**: How we combine words, gestures, body language, eye gaze to share ideas.

COMMON DIFFERENCES IN AUTISM
Speech, Language & Communication || Individuals with Autism

Differences in use & understanding of social behaviors

Differences in expression & understanding

Differences in the "rhythm of speech"

Speech Considerations || Prosody

• Prosody is often considered the "rhythm" or "melody" of speech
• Can be used to convey:
  • Meaning
    • I want the BLUE shoe
    • I want the blue SHOE
  • Emotion & Attitude
    • Good for you
"Sing-Song" or Exaggerated
- Great changes in pitch
- Abnormal emphasis
- Sometimes associated with scripting

Monotone
- Very little inflection change
- Can be difficult to follow conversationally

No difference
- Can be perceived fairly typically by communication partners

Speech Considerations || Prosody

• Difficult to formally assess
• Overall, under researched, but IMPORTANT!
  • "May be one of the main barriers to social acceptance for individuals with autism"

Speech, Language & Communication||
Individuals with Autism

- Differences in use & understanding of social behaviors
- Differences in expression & understanding
- Differences in the "rhythm of speech"

https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/language_speech.htm
Language Considerations ||
Expressive & Receptive Language

• Differences and/or delays in language are often one of the first abnormalities noticed by parents
• Less speech-like vocalizations overall in childhood
• May exhibit a characteristic expressive and receptive language regression (mean regression age around 22-26 months)


Language Considerations
Expressive & Receptive Language

Expressive
Production of language

Receptive
Understanding of language
Language Considerations || Expressive & Receptive Language

- **6 months**
  - Responds to name
  - Babbling

- **12 months**
  - Responds to 1-step directions
  - Says first word

- **18 months**
  - Understands "no" and shakes head
  - Says several words

- **24 months**
  - Knows body parts & familiar people
  - Combining 2+ words
Language Considerations || Expressive & Receptive Language

Signs of language problems include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Signs of Language Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth–3 months</td>
<td>Not smiling or playing with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–7 months</td>
<td>Not babbling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–12 months</td>
<td>Making only a few sounds. Not using gestures, like waving or pointing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 months–2 years</td>
<td>Not understanding what others say</td>
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<tr>
<td>12–18 months</td>
<td>Saying only a few words</td>
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<tr>
<td>1½–2 years</td>
<td>Not putting two words together</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Saying fewer than 50 words</td>
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<tr>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>Having trouble playing and talking with other children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2½–3 years</td>
<td>Having problems with early reading and writing. For example, your child may not like to draw or look at books.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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5 Stages of SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

1. SILENT OR RECEPTIVE PHASE
   
   In this first stage, second language learners dedicate time to learning vocabulary of the new language. They may also practice saying new terms.

2. EARLY PRODUCTION
   
   This second phase involves the second language user beginning to “collect” new words. During this time they may also start to say some terms and may even begin forming short phrases of early word combinations.

https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Learning-Two-Languages/
Language Considerations || Minimally Verbal Individuals

• 25-40% of individuals with autism can be described as "minimally verbal"

• Can be a concern for safety—Tune in to next week's session on Thursday, April 16th at 1 for more information on safety
Speech, Language & Communication || Individuals with Autism

- Differences in use & understanding of social behaviors
- Differences in expression & understanding
- Differences in the "rhythm of speech"

Communication || Social Communication

- Use of gaze
- Joint Attention
- Understanding & use of facial expressions & gestures
- Conversational skills

Communication || Social Communication

- Commenting
- Story Telling
- Needs
- Answering & Asking Questions
- Feelings
- Opinions
- Choices
- Requesting
What is challenging behavior?

- Challenging behavior is any that is “disruptive, offensive, dangerous, or destructive” (Katz, 2014).
Communication||
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

• For individuals who can't meet all their communication needs through speech

• The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) as “all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas.”
Communication || AAC

Types of AAC

AAC ranges from low-tech symbols such as picture choices, mid-tech recordable devices such as a Big Mack switch, and dynamic display high-tech devices such as a Saltillo NovaChat, PRC Accent, or Tobii Dynavox Indi.
Communication || AAC

- Won't stop speech development
- Helps language development
- Can reduce challenging behavior
- Improves social, academic, and communication skills
RESOURCES
Supporting Communication at Home

**Birth-2 Years**
- Talk to your child as you feed them, bathe them, dress them, etc.
- Add on to what your child says

**2-4 Years**
- Help your child learn new words
- Look at pictures of people and make up stories

**4-6 Years**
- Talk about where things are
- Watch movies or tv together

Typical Speech & Language Development Information

• Typical Communication Development Resources
• ASHA's Communication Milestones: https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/
• Center for Disease Control Learn the Signs. Act Early Campaign: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html
More Information about Communication in Autism

• ASHA's Information on Communication & Autism: https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Autism/

• Center for Disease Control Autism Information: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html
Resources for COVID-19

• Waisman Center
  Resources: [https://www.waisman.wisc.edu/covid-19/](https://www.waisman.wisc.edu/covid-19/)

• Autism Society of America
  Resources: [https://www.autism-society.org/covid-19/](https://www.autism-society.org/covid-19/)
Virtual Learning Opportunities

• **Waisman Center Autism Facebook Live Series**
  • April 16th: Autism & Anxiety
  • April 23rd: Autism & Safety
  • April 30th: Behavioral Supports

• **ECHO AAC**: email aacpartnershipprogram@waisman.wisc.edu to sign up
  • Needs Assessment for Families who use AAC: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeriisXwUKQJ2uUUhNKY8md00jFJOa7kJbJDuJBS1GEJCQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

• **Autism Society Facebook Live Series**
  • https://www.autism-society.org/covid-19/