



## A Note from Us...

This month, I'm excited to announce some new happenings. Our centre will be rolling out some new programmes. We will be collaborating with Lead Dietician, Karen Wright of the Food Clinic, Shona Lowes, Child Psychologist of Equilibrium and of Learn Different Occupational Therapist, Kasey Edmonds. We're looking forward to a one-stop team assessment so that your child will be assessed by the relevant professionals at one time. This is efficient and allows for professionals to identify and address problem areas in feeding effectively.

Other happenings, we will be rolling out a series of talks for pre-teacher teachers. "Toolkit for Preschool Teachers in Facilitating Speech and Language Development" aims to equip pre-school teachers with skills to change young brains.

New team members who have joined us include Rita Karina and Laretta D'Cruz. Rita joins us as our Educational Therapist for numeracy. Rita has a Bachelors Degree in Actuarial Science from the University of Melbourne and a postgraduate diploma in Dyscalculia Management from the Cambridge University. Using a sensory-based and visual approach, Rita addresses math difficulties using a bottom up approach, ensuring that the students build upon and strengthen their math foundation before moving to a more diffi-

cult level. Laretta D'Cruz is an Educational Therapist, trained in the area of Psychology (as a first degree). Laretta provides training to those who have phonological-based reading difficulties.

I hope you will enjoy our articles.

Have a wonderful month ahead,

Prudence Low  
Speech Language Pathologist  
Clinical Director



### THE LINDAMOOD PHONEME SEQUENCING (LiPS) PROGRAM FOR READING, SPELLING, AND SPEECH



**The Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing® (LiPS®) Program** successfully stimulates and addresses the development of phonemic awareness as a base for accurate reading and spelling. Individuals become aware of the mouth actions which produce speech sounds. This kinesthetic feedback becomes the means of verifying sounds within words and enables individuals to become self-correcting in reading and spelling, and speech.

Learning steps to develop phonemic awareness:

- Spelling
- Word Attack
- Pronunciation

The program begins with discovering how speech sounds are articulated, and extends into multisyllable and contextual reading and spelling. LiPS® uses a multisensory approach for increasing knowledge of letter symbols and their accompanying sounds. In particular, LiPS® teaches children to identify sounds from the feedback from the positions of their lips, tongue, and jaw to help them discriminate sounds from each other. Hands-on instruction with use of manipulatives is incorporated to assist children in combining sounds into words for reading and spelling.

## ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

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Keeping busy preschoolers occupied in a productive way can be challenging, especially when caregivers themselves are busy while at home.

Careful selection of materials and structuring of the home environment can help caregivers facilitate the growth of children's language, play, fine motor, and general cognitive skills, in a natural, child-led way. Rather than passively watching television programs or DVDs, children can use their time wisely in engaging, productive activities.

But remember, safety first!! Please, do be sure that your children are monitored as is appropriate for their age. Babies and toddlers will naturally need more supervision than older children, and some activities may not even be appropriate for them.

Here are some ideas for keeping little ones occupied:

**Dress-up.** Keep a number of scarves, small blankets, or other cloths around. While you may need to keep an eye to make sure no one is in danger of suffocation, these are great for "dress-up" and pretend play. With clothespins to hold together key places, cloths can easily become capes, shawls, skirts, togas... The possibilities are limited only by the child's imagination. Also, think twice before throwing away old clothes; torn or stained clothes may no longer be appropriate for Mommy and Daddy to wear in public, but they may serve the perfect purpose for the child's dress-up play.

**Strings and ribbons.** Children also seem to enjoy tying strings and ribbons together, to table legs, around toys (ex. A leash for a stuffed animal). Strings and ribbons can also be interesting for keeping fidgety fingers occupied, for exam-

ple in waiting areas or on public transport.

**Collect nature items.** Searching for items, such as stones and shells, can help make a short walk or trip to the neighbourhood park more interesting and purposeful. The items can first be washed off with water, then kept as a collection in a bowl, basket, or on a plate, in an area of the house where the child can access. Eventually, you can sort and categorize these items with your child, discussing colours, textures, shapes, and why some should be grouped together with others.

**Water play.** A bucket filled with water and some plastic cups can provide the perfect entertainment on a hot day. If your home has an outdoor terrace or garden, painting the house or fence with water is also a very enjoyable activity. And don't throw away those old soap and shampoo dispensers; children love to fill them, squirt out the water, and refill again.

**Creative activities.** Arts and crafts do not have to entail great expense or time spent shopping for items. Children are happy to use "scratch" paper from parents' place of employment for drawing or painting; "go green," right? It's also good to save junk mail, advertisement flyers, or newspapers for cutting and pasting. Children can look for specific types of pictured items to make collages or books (ex. Search for "red" items in a magazine and make a collage, or make a book of their favourite foods or toys). Naturally, it's keep to have pencils, washable markers, paints, crayons, chalk, child-safe scissors, and glue handy.

**Play-doh.** An investment in a few tubs of Play-Doh and some "tools"

is often well-appreciated. Look for a set with a rolling pin, scissors, cut out shapes, cutlery, and plates. When you start to notice the Play-Doh getting stiff, you can leave creations out to dry in the air, and they become small "statues."

**Building toys.** There are many types of building toys, such as wooden blocks or Legos. They are an excellent stimulus for creative play alone, or when combined with other items, such as small cars or plastic animals.

**Don't throw away those boxes!** From cereal to shoe to refrigerator, virtually every box can have a use for creative activities and play. Larger boxes can easily become doll houses or "cars" for small children. Shoe boxes can become "mailboxes" or places to keep small toys. That big, bulky piano or refrigerator box and become a play house for your child. It's also thrilling to use markers, crayons, or paints to decorate the outside of boxes.

Vanessa Nagy  
Speech Language Pathologist  
(CCC-SLP)



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT -FUSSY EATERS



"Eww, yuck! I don't want to eat that!" You know the kind who refuses to eat her vegetables, pouts at anything that

does not resemble his favourite fish and chips. Whatever the reason, you're not alone.

According to the American Dietetic Association, it's quite normal for kids to go through a finicky eating phase- it will pass. In fact, there are a variety of reasons why children may become picky with foods. Some possible explanations include unpleasant experiences, changes in routine, feeling tired or sleepy. New exposures to different textures, smells, temperatures may also be overwhelming for a child (Dodimead, 2008). Most of us dislike some foods- let your child develop his or her own preferences. Young children may need many experiences (10-15) with a new food before it is accepted. Don't give up too soon!

### **Here are some suggestions for the picky eater:**

- Refrain from force feeding your child
- Have a consistent meal schedule and mealtimes should be free from distractions (no TV).
- Cut down on snacks so that your child is more likely to be hungry during mealtimes.

You may wish to consult a dietitian or physician to ensure that your child is getting enough nutrition

### **During meal times:**

- Present your child with small portions on a small plate.
- Have your child eat together with the whole family.
- Make food aesthetically appetizing. The better the food looks, the more likely it will be eaten! Try making a face out of a pancake or a chicken salad (red capsicum strips for hair, cucumbers for eyes, baby carrots for mouth). Kids love

to dip food into sauces, so consider using salad dressings, salsas.

- Play around with textures, temperatures or tastes. Start with familiar foods, such as your child's favourite puree. Then introduce one new texture dipped or mixed in the puree. You could also hide healthy foods within other foods. For example, you could mix cooked broccoli in mashed potatoes or put baby carrots inside a burger. Picky eaters have to be taught and trained to try new foods so don't give up.

- Follow your child's lead and watch for cues. If your child retreats or goes "Uggh", gently pull away. When he/she moves towards you again, start trying once more. It's very much like a tango with your child.

- Praise your child for trying new foods and for good behavior. Give specific verbal praise such as, "I heard that crunch", "You made your tongue work!" with a smile or hand clap.

- Be patient but firm. If they choose not to eat the healthy meal provided, don't make a big fuss. You could provide a choice, e.g. "Chicken or fish?"

- At the end of the meal, remove any uneaten food without comment or reaction.

- Allow your child to 'fail' a meal to experience the natural consequences of hunger.

Be a good model! Young children model their behavior on the people around them, including eating. Thus, your children's food choices may be influenced by you- when, where and how much you eat and drink. If your diet and eating habits are healthy, your child's will be too.



Lisa Lim Su Li  
Speech Language Pathologist

### **Other food experiences:**

- Food play! Don't be afraid to create a mess! Cover the table with a splat mat and let your child enjoy exploring, touching food with his fingers or spoon and self feeding. You could also engage your child in a game, "Let's see how many crumbs stick to your mouth!"

- Ask your child to help you prepare food. It helps to keep kids entertained and encourages them to try new things. Have kids wash vegetables, stir ingredients in a bowl or sprinkle garnishing on a dish. Check out <http://www.kids-cooking-activities.com/> for fantastic ideas.

- Kissing games work well- Kiss a toy (e.g. strawberry) then change the toy to a real strawberry.

- Pretend play activities- Pretend to 'drink', 'feed' teddy or play 'cooking' with your child.

Feely bag game: Place a whole piece of food inside a clean shopping bag. Ask your child to put their hands in, without looking inside, and tell you something about the contents. E.g. *Is it hard or soft? Wet or dry? Hot or cold? Have they ever eaten it? Do they know its name?* Once identified, they may like to try some to eat.

The best way to get your child to eat something is to keep persisting. The more exposure they get; the more familiar the food will become and the more likely your child will be to try the new food. Consider spacing the new food out by a week or more so they don't feel like they're being overwhelmed. Finally, look at the big picture of your child enjoying his or her food, instead of how much food was consumed. You can make eating a delightful experience.

Here are some useful resources to aid in your child's mealtime experiences:

<http://w3.mealtimeconnections.com/> (Marsha Dunn Klein, MEd, OTR/L),

<http://www.new-vis.com/> (Suzanne Evans Morris, Ph.D.)

Dodimead, L. (2008). *How much is enough?* Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

## AUTISM AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Individuals with autism often present with a delay in language acquisition. In young children, a weak ability to establish joint attention often has repercussions on language development. With higher functioning children and adolescents, it is also common occurrence to see weakness in grasping full semantic connections of words and phrases, and weak perspective taking. Higher functioning children with autism may have difficulty in maintaining a topic of conversation, or have such tangential speech that they are deemed as being "odd" by their school mates.

To facilitate language learning in individuals on the spectrum, some strategies could be adopted.

### **Build on Prelinguistic Skills**

For individuals with poor joint attention, it is important first to establish pre-linguistic skills. Whilst it is understandable that parents could be anxious for their child to speak, they need to also understand that getting these critical skills on track are essential before effective communication emerges. Prelinguistic skills include:

- The ability to pay attention to sights and sounds in the environment and use these as information;
- The ability to imitate gestures and sounds;
- The ability to take turns;
- The development of an understanding that just because the object is removed from a location, it doesn't mean that it does not exist (object permanence);
- A knowledge of cause and effect relationships;
- The use of communicative gestures and an ability to associate a word a child hears with its meaning.

### **Pay attention to his/her eye gaze - Where is he looking?**

When attempting to facilitate interactions with young children, it is important to pay special attention to the child's own gaze and establish – what is he looking at, what do you need to spotlight in a "frame" of activity that both you and your child are involved in. If because of a lack of joint attention, the child is focusing on one other thing while you are busy making references about a different object or scenario, the interaction can't be counted as being effective.

If a child shows a lack of response to you saying "look", place his hands on the object that you wish him to pay attention to. Use words sparingly and meaningfully especially at the early stage when trying to establish joint attention. Choose quality over quantity.

### **Teach about eye gaze but don't just stop there**

With older, higher functioning children on the spectrum, one needs to go beyond teaching about eye gaze. You could point out in photos depicting people or animals looking at something. Some children become adept at pointing out what the subject is looking at. For individuals who are cognizant, go one step further and make the connections of eye gaze with thinking. Michelle Garcia Winner's social thinking programmes are full of tips on eye gaze and thinking. This is an important part of pushing the child to another level of awareness.

### **Play, Interaction –vs- Academics**

The common advice that one should balance interactive play with time devoted for static study is more than relevant with a child on the spectrum. We know from neuroscience research that the brain can be over-trained in one area, and undertrained in another. For this reason, it is important to make time at home, one in which interactions become more important. It is also important to know that building relationships and language learning occurs in a symbiotic way. One is never independent of the other.

### **Role Play**

Role playing are excellent for children and adolescents. Not only does it allow for one to think through possibilities in a scenario, individuals learn to problem solve under a dynamic albeit safe environment. Role playing allows for discoveries to be made – such as the discovery that one's feelings could change in a single interaction scene depending what each role player does.

### **Check for Understanding**

For school aged children, it is important for parents and teachers to check for understanding – particularly with word knowledge, or words that involve emotional states. You could do this by having the individual create a sentence when given a word of choice and gauging whether their interpretation of the word or accurate is accurate. Clarifications could be made by giving multiple examples. As therapists we have learned not to make assumptions at every stage of the client's development. A student with ASD with a very limited range of vocabulary for emotions was surprised that there were actually that many words to describe one's emotional status. He shared that he did not have the word for a specific emotion he was feeling. As therapists, and parents, we could assist by helping him link an emotional status to specific emotion. It is also worth remembering that just because he doesn't have the word for that emotion, it doesn't mean that he doesn't feel that emotion.

(The passage includes writer's own viewpoints in her encounter with working with students on the autism spectrum disorders).

Prudence Low  
Speech Language Pathologist  
Clinical Director

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Workshops			
Session 1	2 hours	<b>Oral Language and Literacy</b> Literacy, or the interpretation and production of written language, has its foundation in oral language skills. Even before print is introduced to children, they are well on their way to acquiring the skills needed for reading and writing. Learn how preschool teachers can pave the way for good literacy development while focusing primarily on activities of speaking and listening.	
Session 2	3 hours	<b>Let's Talk. Let's Play.</b> During the course of a busy day with preschoolers, adults can take advantage of non-structured activities, such as pretend play or conversations, to actively boost oral language development. Learn how "down time" with children can be used to increase utterance length and complexity, and how to incorporate language skills in the natural context of play. This workshop will help prepare preschoolers for more complex oral and written language tasks encountered later in the school setting.	
<b>Registration Form</b> Full name : _____ School Branch : _____ Mobile no. : _____ E-mail : _____  Please indicate your interest and we will contact you.			<b>TOTAL COMMUNICATION THERAPY PTE. LTD</b>  896 Duneran Road #03-03A Sime Darby Centre Singapore 589472  Phone: 65-6467 2995 Fax: 65-6467 1004 E-mail: totalcommunication001@gmail.com



**Prudence Low will be giving a talk on "Perspective Taking & Literacy Acquisition" at the Hands On Literacy Conference 2010, Tanglin Trust School—Saturday 13th November.**

Registration details:

<http://www.handsonlit.com/home/registration>