

Listening and Spoken Language Strategy:

Sabotage

Definition: Sabotage creates an unusual or unexpected situation with familiar items or routines which is contrary to the child’s expectation or understanding (Winkelkotter & Srinivasan, 2012).

How is this strategy done?

One way to use *sabotage* is when the adult creates an element of surprise with a purposeful mistake or contrived situation (Estabrooks, MacIver-Lux, & Rhoades, 2016). This starts a “cause and effect” cycle of intentional communication. The adult can elicit language from the child if they place materials just out of reach, provide fewer materials than the child needs, or “forget” materials or parts of a routine. It is then up to the child to bring the need to the adult’s attention and the dialogue continues until a resolution occurs.

Why is this strategy important?

If a child’s every want is provided for without spoken language, the child will have little to no need to learn to communicate.. Therefore, contrived situations, in which something essential is absent or out of order, are helpful to practice certain words, phrases, and skills (Ling, 1978).

Sabotage situations create valuable moments of joint attention during which the adult can encourage a child to react and verbalize by modeling the appropriate language (Moharir, Barnett, Taras, Cole, Ford-Jones & Levin, 2014).

This Auditory Verbal strategy helps build the following Listening and Spoken Language skills:

- ✓ joint attention
- ✓ attention to auditory information
- ✓ length of utterance
- ✓ opportunities to practice using spoken language

Discussion

Sabotage creates more opportunities to increase conversations as well as opportunities for a child to practice a skill.

Garber, Nevins (2012) pointed out that the key to effective use of the *sabotage* strategy is awareness of the child's listening and language abilities. Verbal sabotage ("I'm going to put my ducks on my feet before we go outside.") should always be used with skills which the child has already had success. For example, if the child cannot comprehend a sentence of that length or does not have the vocabulary of "ducks", "feet" or "outside", the sabotage will not be effective.

Another way to use sabotage is to do something silly or unexpected like trying to pour the juice or distribute crackers for snack while the container is closed. Then pause, wait (with an expectant look) for the child to respond (Srinivasan, retrieved December 10, 2016 from www.evdcweb.org). The surprise of the adult's silly error typically elicits some verbal response, making the child think about what went wrong and how it can be fixed. If the child says nothing, prompt them with, "Uh oh", "What do I need to do?" , or "What happened?" and pause for a verbal response from the child.

Alternatively, sabotage can be used to teach self-advocacy skills in relation to the child's hearing equipment. After a listening check, hand the student their equipment but leave it powered off. See if they notice that something is wrong and ask for assistance. If they don't say anything, prompt them with a question such as "Can you hear me?" "What did I say?" or "Is your hearing aid/CI working?".

Example

An adult and a child are dressing to go outside to play. The adult uses *sabotage* and attempts to put the child's coat on.

Child: laughs

Adult: What's so funny? I can't get my coat on!

Child: laughs and says "my coat"

Adult: Huh? (continues to attempt to put coat on)

Child: (pulling at coat) my coat.

Adult: Oh no! I have your coat? You could say 'that's my coat'.

The adult has used sabotage to create a need for communication and cooperation.

References

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