

## Listening and Spoken Language Strategy:

# Self Talk/Parallel Talk

**Definition:** **Self-Talk** and **Parallel Talk** are indirect language stimulation techniques that do not require a response from the child.

**Self-Talk:** an adult talks to the child about what the adult sees, does, or hears at any particular moment in time.

**Parallel Talk:** an adult talks to the child about what the child does, hears or sees at any particular moment in time.

### How is this strategy done?

*Self-talk* is often described as a narration of one's day. This means an adult talks about their actions as they perform various daily tasks.

*Parallel talk* is narration of the actions of another person, typically that of the child.

The adult follows the child's lead and describes in short phrases of 3-6 words what the child sees, hears, or touches (*parallel talk*) or what the adult sees, hears or touches (*self-talk*). (Weybright, 1985).

### Why is this strategy important?

This strategy provides an abundant source of language input for the child who is deaf or hard of hearing. It challenges the adult who is with the child to remember the need for exposure to new vocabulary and grammatical structures throughout the child's day. A child's rate of vocabulary growth is directly related to the amount of time a parent has spent talking to that child (Hart & Risley, 1999).

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

- ✓ parents' ability to interact with their child
- ✓ receptive language
- ✓ expressive language
- ✓ ability to use grammatically correct structures
- ✓ conversational skills (Raver et al, 2012)

## Discussion

Play is the primary mode of learning and social exchange for a young child. Adults have the opportunity to use *self-talk* and *parallel talk* during play and daily routines, to model vocabulary, grammar, and social interactions. Since a child needs to hear language in order to learn it, adults who utilize *self-talk* and *parallel talk* become natural language models for their child and increase a child's exposure to language.

Remember, "Grammar is more caught than taught." (Trelease, 2006)

When these strategies are utilized during meaningful interactions, the experience of what the child can see, touch, or manipulate is enhanced by simultaneous spoken language input from an adult (Ling, 1989). *Parallel talk* and *self-talk* provide opportunities to directly label materials and actions which will help increase vocabulary for a young child. The child is able to link the object or action with words heard which increases the likelihood that the spoken word will have meaning attached to it.

The key to these strategies is the adult does not require the child to answer direct questions or produce comments. Instead, joint attention, which is a basic component of conversation, is created between the adult and child and discussion relates directly to the objects and actions at hand. Adults must also remember to keep their comments within the child's syntactical level.

Hart & Risley's landmark study points to the link between literacy success in school and the amount of talk a child heard before the age of three. The parents that reached the highest number of words spoken to their child were those who had the tendency to narrate their day (Hart & Risley, 1995).

## Example

Self-Talk (the adult talks about what they do)

I'm putting on my coat. It is cold outside. I will zip my coat.

I'm washing my hands. First, I'll turn on the water. Now, I'll get some soap.

I like blue blocks. I am building with blue blocks.

Parallel Talk (the adult talks about what the child does)

A child and her caregiver are playing with baby dolls:

Caregiver: You are hugging your baby. What a lovely baby!

Now you are putting your baby in her bed. She must be tired.

# References

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