

# Conversations

A newsletter for families



## The Speech Pathology Group

(925) 945-1474

www.speechpathologygroup.com

2021 Ygnacio Valley Road, C-202  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

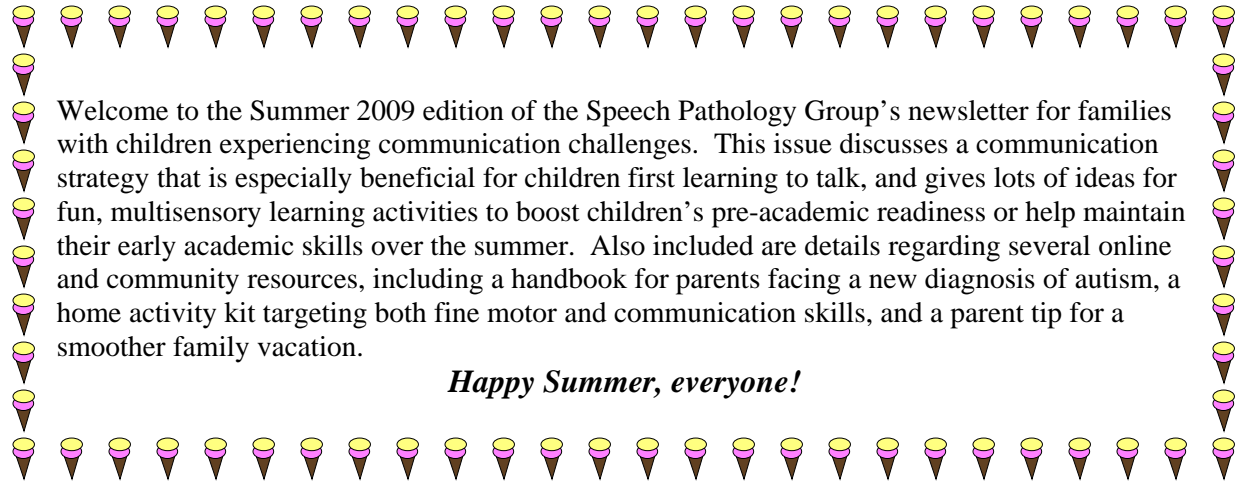
3021 Telegraph Avenue, Suite D  
Berkeley, CA 94705

Summer 2009



### Editor's Note

By Pamela Bloch, MS, CCC-SLP  
Speech-Language Pathologist



Welcome to the Summer 2009 edition of the Speech Pathology Group's newsletter for families with children experiencing communication challenges. This issue discusses a communication strategy that is especially beneficial for children first learning to talk, and gives lots of ideas for fun, multisensory learning activities to boost children's pre-academic readiness or help maintain their early academic skills over the summer. Also included are details regarding several online and community resources, including a handbook for parents facing a new diagnosis of autism, a home activity kit targeting both fine motor and communication skills, and a parent tip for a smoother family vacation.

*Happy Summer, everyone!*

## Eliciting Language Through Our Comments

It can feel natural to many people to ask questions when interacting with a child. **Many young children, however, particularly those with speech and language difficulties, do not respond best to questions as a way to elicit language.** Questions might feel like too much pressure, or too open-ended and difficult to answer. For some children, it is harder to understand and respond to specific questions than it is to simply use familiar words on their own terms. Others do understand and respond to a variety of questions, but may actually have come to over rely on them as a way to use their language, rather than learn to spontaneously express their own ideas.

In our attempts to elicit language from children just learning to communicate, we want to be careful not to overuse our questions, but, **instead,**

**offer plenty of language models of what we'd like them to say.** A great way to do this is to **put into words what we think the child is thinking about or is trying to tell us.** When we model words or simple phrases that he/she is capable of understanding, tap into his/her ideas in the moment, and are at his/her particular language level, **the child will be more likely to imitate our words immediately, expand on them, and/or use them at a later time.**

Parents often are unaware of just how many questions they use with their child, and, as with our clients, it often takes a lot of practice and conscientious effort to learn new ways of talking. Here are some common "Yes/No" and "WH" questions, and examples of how we might rephrase them into comments from your child's perspective and at his/her language level:



*Continued on next page*



**Questions**

**Comments**

“Is that a dog?”	→	“Dog! Hi doggie! Woof!”
“Do you have red?”	→	“You have a red cow! Cow goes ‘Moo!’”
“Oh no, did your ball roll away?”	→	“Oh, no, ball! Ball’s rolling! Come back!”
“Is the cat going night-night?”	→	“Night-night, cat. Time to sleep. Sshh.”
“Did your car get stuck?”	→	“Car’s stuck! Get out car. Out out!”
“What happened?”	→	“Uh-oh, the hat! Hat fell off.”
“Where’d your ball go?”	→	“Hey! Ball’s gone! Ball! Ball!”
“What’s it doing?”	→	“Jump, frog, jump! Frog’s jumping.”
“What is it?”	→	“Mmm, apple. Yum. Eat yummy apple.”
“What color it is?”	→	“Blue! Blue ball! I want blue ball.”

We often find that our interactions with children keep going when we make comments and show how to keep expanding on them, whereas once we get a response to our question, the verbal exchange, unfortunately, stops right there. Maintaining a balance between questions and plenty of comments allows children to not only better understand and imitate our words, but also to recognize that we don’t just wait to respond to questions to talk, but, rather, we take turns making spontaneous comments to one another. With this understanding, children come to be true communicators, who do not rely on us to use their developing language.

   **The Five Senses: Making Learning Fun**  

Are you looking for fun, creative ways to engage your child in learning activities at home this summer? Whether you have a very young child who enjoys playful, sensory interactions with you, or you want to help inspire or maintain your elementary school aged child’s interest in early academics during the summer break, involving all of the five senses (touch, sight, smell, sound, and taste) can make playing with sounds, words, letters, and pictures extra fun for both of you. Multisensory activities, in fact, are known to improve focus and memory, especially for children with learning challenges, and to enhance learning in a variety of skill areas, including letter formation, handwriting, spelling, and reading. Experiment with how your child learns best: actively engage his or her sense of touch,

play around with visual stimulation, and above all, be imaginative!

**Touch**  
Use lots of different writing tools and surfaces to practice ABCs and spelling words, numbers and shapes, or pictures: Spread shaving cream on a dry erase board, large pan, or mirror and create letters in the foam (you can even add a few drops of food coloring for extra visual flair)...Use finger paint on sandpaper... Write with your finger in the sand...Form letters out of playdoh...Make a large pan of jello and “finger paint” with whipped cream on top of it.

**Sight**  
See what happens when you use markers on aluminum foil... Write with 3-D chalk on the sidewalk...Dip a paintbrush in water and watch it disappear from the pavement.





**Smell**

Add a few drops of scented oil to finger paints, or write with scented markers. It has been found that scented markers may actually increase levels of alertness, and, because of the close connection in the brain between smell and memory, can help students remember letter formation and sound-symbol relationships.

**Sound**

Attach bells to the end of a paintbrush as you draw or write...Play back your voices singing

songs, making rhymes, or spelling words on a tape recorder.

**Taste**

Find a recipe for edible playdoh and make letters... Drip chocolate sauce or squeeze frosting onto a pan and practice identifying letters, sounds, or pictures (“Eat the letter A!” “Eat something that starts with the ‘a’ sound!” “Lick the apple!”).



**Fine Motor And Communication Together: F.A.C.T. Kit**

SPG’s very own speech pathologist Jill Walson and Orinda-based occupational therapist Gail Gordon have developed an activity kit to help support therapeutic home programs and kindergarten readiness by promoting fine motor and speech-language skills in children age four years old and above. Their multi-disciplinary **Fine Motor And Communication Together Kit (F.A.C.T. Kit)** includes hands-on manipulatives, reproducible worksheets, and a booklet of interactive activities that jointly address fine motor and communication skills necessary for academic and everyday success. Please visit [www.factkitforkids.com](http://www.factkitforkids.com) for more information. Online ordering will be available Summer 2009. Current inquiries and orders may be made by emailing [info@factkitforkids.com](mailto:info@factkitforkids.com) or calling (925) 457-5733.

**“Autism Speaks” 100 Day Kit**

Currently one in 150 children in the United States is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. When parents face the news that their child is being diagnosed with autism, it is, quite understandably, often a tremendously overwhelming and scary time. There may be an intense range of emotions to try to cope with, and certainly a lot of new information to suddenly manage. It can be very difficult not only to feel ready to seek help, but also to know how and where to get help. The “Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit” was created specifically to help guide newly diagnosed families in their first steps towards this journey, and to make the best possible use of the first 100 days after receiving a diagnosis of autism. The handbook helps families understand what a diagnostic label of autism means, explains terminology, and discusses different treatment options and how to access services. It also directly addresses possible effects on the whole family, and offers both coping strategies and practical tips for getting organized. This comprehensive support tool can be accessed at the Autism Speaks website at [http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family\\_services/100\\_day\\_kit.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/100_day_kit.php).



**Parent Stamp of Approval:**

**Disabled Person's Pass at Disneyland and California Adventure**

For those of you considering a trip to Disneyland this summer, a parent recently shared with us that children with Autism, Down Syndrome, and other developmental disabilities may be eligible for the Disabled Person's Pass at Disneyland and California Adventure. The pass allows families of children with special needs to use the Disabled Person's Line to get on rides, thereby reducing the long, crowded waits that can be particularly challenging for some kids with special needs. Parents may go to City Hall at Disneyland or the Guest Relations Lobby at California Adventure to get the pass. If long lines, over-stimulation, or behavioral meltdowns are holding you back from planning a family vacation, this may be an option worth checking out!



**Have you discovered a community resource, particularly helpful product, or other tip that you think would be of value to our SPG families? If so, we would love to include direct suggestions from you in our newsletters, so please send an email to [Pamela@speechpathologygroup.com](mailto:Pamela@speechpathologygroup.com) or talk to your child’s therapist about submitting a recommendation for “Conversations.”**



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### Working Together to Make a Difference



#### Group Speech/Pre-Literacy Therapy: Special Summer Rates



The Speech Pathology Group is offering **special rates for summer group therapy** at our **Berkeley Clinic**. Weekly groups focus on either speech/articulation or pre-literacy skills, are limited to 3-4 students per group, and are led by experienced, licensed Speech-Language Pathologists. We still have openings for our final summer sessions, each of which lasts four weeks (**\$200 for 4 classes**):



**Pre-Literacy Group** (appropriate for ages 4 ½ to 6 years):

**Wednesdays, 1-2 pm: July 15, 22, 29, and August 5**



**Articulation Group** (appropriate for a variety of age levels):

**Mondays, 11-12 noon: July 13, 20, 27, and August 3**

**Tuesdays, 11-12 noon: July 14, 21, 28, and August 4**



Please call (925) 945-1474, extension 0 if you are interested in more information.

