Speech Development Information & Tips

What is "speech" and how is it different from "language"?

Speech consists of the SOUNDS and SYLLABLES we use to speak, and how our voice sounds (loud, quiet, soft, rough, fluent or stuttered). Language consists of the WORDS and SENTENCES we use (including word choice, grammatical elements, social communication) and how we use our words (e.g. asking/answering questions appropriately).

How can I support speech sound development?

Be aware of typical and delayed/disordered skills

- Certain sounds are developmentally appropriate for children to have trouble with and may correct themselves on their own.
- It is not productive to expect sounds that are not yet emerging when it's age appropriate
  - However we MAY work on a sound earlier when there are MANY sounds in error, or if they are sounds in the child's name and the sounds are 'stimulable' (i.e. can be produced with a bit of help)
- Contact a speech-language pathologist for assessment if your child displays any of the following:
  - Child 2-3y not accurately producing p, b, m, n, h, w, t, d (not including consonant blends)
  - Child 3y or older who deletes syllables or sounds (not including consonant blends)
  - Child 4-5y not accurately producing the former sounds plus k, g, ing, f, v
  - Child 6y or older with any sound difficulties, including s, z, ch, j, th, l, r, and consonant blends

Be face to face

- This is important so your child can see how you produce sounds accurately. It gives them a clear model to imitate. Try holding a toy to your face to encourage them to watch your mouth.

Repeat with emphasis and continue on

- If you hear a mis-pronounced sound, repeat what the child said, emphasizing the error *corrected*, and then continue on with your conversation. If you can get 2-3 repetitions of the word that's helpful!
- For example, the child says "Look a pish!!" You can say "A ffffish?? Wow ya it's a fffffish! Let's go see!"
- Moving on afterwards is helpful to avoid any unwanted pressure of having to repeat you, correct themselves, etc. Many kids will pick up on this modeling indirectly and begin to correct themselves.

Use visuals

- Especially if speech clarity is low, visuals are a great way to reduce frustration when trying to communicate
- Provide the child visual options for pointing to indicate what they're talking about
- Continue verbally modeling. Visuals do not hinder spoken speech development!
- Bonus: visuals can help build understanding of language as well

**Important: have your child's hearing tested by an audiologist to ensure no sounds/frequencies are being missed!

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