

How to Make Speech Therapy Most Successful

A Parent's Role

Parents often ask me how long their child will need speech therapy; however, as a therapist this question is difficult to answer. Every child has their very own strengths and weaknesses and it is a team effort for everyone involved to support the child inside and outside the therapy room. Your therapist has carefully analyzed and developed a plan of care based on your child's needs. Once your therapist has recommended treatment, it's important for families to know how and what goes into making therapy most successful.

Consistency.

Bringing your child consistently to each scheduled session is the most important step in keeping them moving forward. This builds consistency for the child, allowing them to know what to expect each week. Therapy sessions pick right back up where they left off, enabling the family to let the therapist know of any changes or concerns. This ultimately helps the SLP more quickly understand what is and isn't working best for the child's success.

Homework.

A family's diligent involvement in a child's homework regiment is almost as important as the therapy sessions themselves. Just like playing sports or an instrument, your child needs to practice the skills learned in therapy every day. Everyone is busy, but communication is a constant.

- Make any experience with your child a learning experience (e.g. daily routines, visits to the grocery store, free time in the car).
- Take 10 minutes a day and work on the homework given.
- Repetition makes things easier, which makes the child feel more successful and willing to do work.
- Encourage the child to be responsible for their speech homework.

A therapist can typically tell if a child has been practicing the work sent home. Often re-teaching previously taught skills takes away any new stepping stones

the therapist had set out for the child that day. Generally, a child receives thirty to sixty minutes of direct treatment a week, which is such a small window of time outside a child's typical context. Repetitive practice in their natural environment is the most important step to help generalize their emerging skills in becoming second nature, thus progressing them towards their ultimate success. In my experience, children whose parents diligently target their goals outside the therapy room are ones that show the most success and progress.

Demonstration of Progress.

A large part of an SLP's job, especially in a private practice setting, is providing and maintaining current clinical documentation on your child's visits to multiple parties (e.g. physicians, insurance companies) (ASHA, 2011). This allows families to be approved for coverage for the recommended therapy sessions. Once insurance companies approve the need for services based on the child's evaluation results and individualized treatment plan, they periodically review the child's progress in therapy based on the number of allocated treatment sessions. If no progress is shown, insurance companies will no longer find speech language services necessary, as the services are not improving the child's ability to communicate.

Ask questions.

Never hesitate to ask your SLP questions regarding any aspect of your child's treatment. I am happy to answer any type of questions that a caretaker may have, from questions about the homework to what a certain diagnoses means. Questions allow me to know that I am on the same page as the family and working together as a team to help the child be as successful as possible.

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