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THERAPY TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING AUDITORY SKILLS

A variety of practice activities can be used to improve auditory skills of children with auditory processing disorders. The goals of training are

1. to improve listening in noise
2. to improve auditory skills at increased distance
3. to increase auditory memory
4. to improve auditory skills with distractions

Materials

Use sentence and paragraph material that is within the child's language level but difficult enough so that the child has to attend to it. In other words, not so easy that the child can use context to guess what you are saying.

To work in background noise you will need a radio set to talk station or a tape recorder with a multi-talker babble tape. The advantage of using a multitalker babble tape is that the signal is at a consistent intensity level. Tapes can be obtained from Auditec of St. Louis.

Covering Your Face

Auditory training should be done so that the child cannot see the clinician's face. This can be accomplished by having the clinician seated next to or slightly behind the child. If the clinician is seated opposite the child s/he should cover her/his face to prevent the child from using visual cues. The best thing to use to cover the face is a large embroidery hoop (which can be purchased at many sewing stores). It can be covered with wide weave fabric or loudspeaker fabric which can be obtained at a store like Radio Shack. If this is not available use a piece of paper. However, paper will move as you speak giving some clues about the message and it may also muffle some of the sounds.

Speech Tracking

Speech tracking is a good technique for improving listening skills. The clinician reads to the child and the child is asked to repeat exactly what s/he has heard. If the child misses part of the phrase or sentence, the clinician repeats it. If the child continues to miss it try a shorter phrase, reducing your rate, or alter your pitch. If the sounds missed are high frequency (sibilants and fricatives) try increasing your pitch. If the sounds missed are low frequency (vowels) try lowering your pitch. The material selected should be within the child's language level, interesting, but not too difficult or too simple. If it is too simple the child will be able to guess too easily at material s/he misses auditorily. If the language level is too high, the child will become too frustrated. Speech tracking is scored in number of words correctly repeated per minute.

Techniques for Improving Auditory Skills at a Distance

Using speech tracking or any other technique with which you are comfortable, begin working with you and the child seated fairly close to each other. When the child seems to be doing well, try increasing the distance between you. As you increase the distance it may be necessary to shorten the length of the material or use less complex materials. With practice you should be able to increase the complexity again.

Techniques for Improving Auditory Memory

Begin with a short phrase or sentence and gradually increase the length of the stimulus as the child's skill improves. When auditory memory has increased you may want to try working on it at increased distance or in noise. This may require returning to shorter phrases.

Techniques for Improving Listening in Noise

Begin by sitting next to the child with the radio or tape recorder about 3 feet away. The noise should be softer than the speech stimulus. Start using short phrases or sentences. As the child's skill improve sit so you and the competing noise are both the same distance away from the child (like a triangle). Gradually increase the competing noise so that the noise and your voice are the same loudness. As the child's skills continue to improve increase the complexity and length of the material, and increase the distance between you and the child keeping the noise about 3 feet away from the child.

For more information, please contact
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