

Communication Disorders Activities

Remember to incorporate a warm-up period to allow them to hum and warm up physically in a non-threatening manner. Following the warm-up period, begin by requiring only a few sounds and gradually build your activities to require more complex expressive communication. Whether or not you use a cool-down for their physical mechanisms depends on what activity they have scheduled after you.

The Characteristics of Music Which Benefit People with Communication Disorders:

- A song structure using rhyming words at the ends of phrases allows for vocabulary as well as articulation work using a fill-in-the-blank structure for these rhyming words.
- Prosody is the rise and fall of the melodic line embedded within a rhythmic framework.
- Relaxation effect of the music itself.
- Rhythm itself serves as a cueing mechanism.
- Variation of frequencies.
- Motivation which is derived from the musical context.
- Multiple verses of songs and sequential items within phrases and verses target memory sequencing skills.
- Breath control is developed through humming and singing activities as well as through playing wind instruments.
- Lip closure may be developed through use of slide or penny whistle, kazoo, and harmonica.

Stuttering

Three reasons why stuttering is decreased in the context of singing:

1. Vowel sounds are elongated during singing. Consonants frequently trigger stuttering.
2. Prosody.
3. Relaxation – The music itself serves as a stimulus for relaxation. The opposite of relaxation, anxiety, may trigger stuttering.

Playing Wind Instruments

Playing wind instruments helps to develop breath control and support and also improves oral motor musculature.

Increasing Vocal Range

Siren sounds and singing warm-up exercises may be used to increase vocal range in both directions.

Use of Taping for Objective Self Critique Work

Taping may be used to assist the student in objectively assessing language work. While engaged in communication work, the student may need to focus all attention on the expressive language production itself. Listening to a tape allows student to focus on problem areas and to actually hear what others hear. Audio taping is preferable over video taping to target focus of attention on the auditory arena without the distractions presented in a visual arena.

Chunking

Breaking down vocal work into small units and focusing on one unit initially, then gradually chaining the sounds together one unit at a time is called chunking. This technique requires patience but is crucial for success in expressive language tasks. For example, to work on the blend "BL" in the word black or blue, break the sound up into three separate sounds:

Buh uh lack or lu

Separately work on each sound. Separately work on each combination of two sounds. Ultimately chain all three sounds together. Gradually speed up the rhythm as three sounds are performed in sequence. The ultimate goal is to be able to segue all three sounds at a singing tempo.

Remember not to require or expect continuous verbal participation for people who have problems in this area. Instead, structure each session to include a time period for work, remembering to incorporate warm-ups and preparation time.

Variations for Vocal Singing Warm-ups

- Use a warm-up that ascends step-wise for five notes and then returns in a descending pattern for the next four notes. Sing the entire pattern on one vowel sound at a time.
- Add an 'H' in front of each vowel sound and sing entire pattern through for each vowel.

i i i i i i i i i hi hi hi hi hi hi hi hi
ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee ee he he he he he he he he
oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo oo ho ho ho ho ho ho ho ho

This exercise may be used to target oral-motor musculature. Becoming aware of where the air is centered when producing each of these different sounds and of how to hold the mouth to clearly articulate each sound helps isolate different areas involved in sound production within the oral-motor musculature and develops the oral-motor mechanism. For example, tongue elevation, velo-pharyngeal closure and glosso-pharyngeal may be targeted through specific exercises.

Hissing

Breath support may be developed through the use of hissing to perform a song. For example, perform the song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” by hissing the melody line on a ‘sss.’ Encourage maintenance of a full hissing sound at the end of each phrase instead of running out of air and dropping off the sound so that it becomes thinner.