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STARR: Strategies to Enhance Language Development

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>> All right. We'll get started in another minute.

 We'll get started in just another minute. There should be evaluator forms on the chairs near you. Please fill it out, and either leave it on your chair or leave it up‑front on one of the tables or in the table in the back. My name is Cindy. I'll be the room moderator. If you need anything, please let me know. And if you have any questions, please wait for the microphone so we can get it on the CART, fully accessible.

 Also, if you have not, make sure you get a raffle ticket.

>> All right. Well, let's get started. I'd like to thank everyone for being here because this afternoon for our presentation, Star, strategies to enhance language development. My name is Annabel Noyola, and with me is Ann Sei. We are both parent infant advisers in the parent in grant program at Sunshine cottage school for deaf children in San Antonio, Texas. So I guess two quick things before we get started. Like we mention the, please grab a raffle ticket. If you haven't, just raise your hand and we'll come and get one for you.

 The second thing, we'd like to take just a quick poll of our audience, by a show of hands, do we have any speech pathologists in the room? Okay. Wonderful. Any audiologists? Sweet.

 Teachers of the deaf, early interventionists? Okay. Yay. Parents in the room? Wonderful. Okay, well thanks for joining us. Let's go ahead and get started.

 So STARR is an acronym for five strategies that are used to facilitate listening and spoken language development. It's a natural and versatile tool used to coach parents to implement effective strategies, to create a language rich home environment. It's a simple way to maximize learning opportunities within your every day routines. Our five strategies include stay close, talk, talk, talk, auditory environment, reciprocity, and repeat routines.

 So why STARR? STARR is parent focussed and child driven. When a family first enrolls in our program, we discuss family goals. Where does the parents ‑‑ or where does the parent desire their child to be in five years, in 15 years? What are their goals for their child? Whatever that goal is, we honor their decision and we come up with a game plan to achieve set goal.

 It's not enough for parents to simply desire a specific outcome. There are behavioral changes that must be present along with the willingness to create change. And this is necessary on behalf of not just the parents but the family as a whole or any caregivers that are involved. Our role as therapists, as professionals, is to model that change. STARR is used as a clear script to guide parents, to make these changes, to hold them accountable, and to achieve their end goal.

 So our hope today is to encourage you to empower your families, empower yourselves as parents to foster if your capabilities or your family's capabilities to make the every day, mundane tasks, extraordinary using STARR.

 So STARR enhances parental sensitivity by fostering a heightened awareness of engagement and attentiveness. Parents must actively engage and be attentive to the desires and the needs of their children or their child. Now, parents are often consumed with the tasks of day, you know, rightfully so, and sometimes as we're professionals we're consumed with our daily task as well. And it becomes easy to just go through the motions of the day and miss those learning opportunities.

 STARR strategies, our goal is so that for these strategies to complement those natural interactions that are already happening. There isn't anything else required, but the tasks of everyday life. All five strategies transcend parental barriers, and they can be used with any activity or any toy, but, as most ‑‑ as hopefully all of us know, we don't need Lakeshore materials to teach our children.

 STARR allows parents to think outside the box. We want to avoid advertising a single toy or activity for a particular strategy. Instead, we coach parents attorney driven by their routines. The point is that the strategies can be used with anything. These strategy are often introduced in isolation for the sake of explanation and modeling, but they're used simultaneously. We can't use them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all at United States with. But whatever that family needs is what we're shooting for. We are meeting the parents where they are, taking them with their strengths and then adding to enrich that home environment. All right. So we are going to start. Oh, one last thing. So we actually just translated STARR in to Spanish, so one of the fabulous things we like about this is that it can be modified to meet the needs of a family, in this case, you know, of speaking Spanish or also families who are pursuing total communication or ASL. So there are ways to modify based on the needs of the family.

 (Speaking a Foreign Language), so this encompasses the same five strategies that STARR has but they're not in the same order. So this acronym here stands for (Speaking a Foreign Language), staying close; (Speaking a Foreign Language), repeating routines; (Speaking a Foreign Language), reciprocity; (Speaking a Foreign Language), talk, talk, talk; phone is our auditory environment.

 I bet you weren't expecting Spanish. Thanks.

 So both STARR and (Speaking a Foreign Language) are used to coach but also to cheer on parents to say that you are the primary facilitator of your child's listening and language development. So let's start by breaking down staying close. So the first thing to keep in mind with all of these strategies is that they will and they should evolve over time. For example, staying close is fairly simple when you're caring for an infant. You have no choice but to stay close. As toddlers learn to walk and learn to run, parent will need to put forth more of an effort to stay close.

 This natural progression requires parents to be cognizant of their child's age and stage. And so it holds us as professionals accountable to teach, to share the wealth of knowledge of these gross motor or overarching milestones and language development.

 As agents of change, parents must know the why and then the how. Adults are driven by the why. They want to know the rationale behind it and the end goal. And they're more likely to do what is recommended when they have that information versus when they're doing something just because the therapist told them so.

 It includes them in a partnership rather than just doing it because they feel like they have to. So thinking about what are they exposing their child to, should what should they expect from their child, and not only that, but where are these goals taking their baby, because of this, we know that that wealth of knowledge has to be and should be shared.

 So staying close is not only about staying close in proximity, but it is about how you're showing a child that they are valued and that we're listening. So get down to a child's level and make eye contact. The strategy, we know, builds a healthy bond between parent and child. This bond creates a foundation for a child's emotional regulation, cognitive abilities, and social skills.

 STARR fosters nurturing parents, and this is why we were driven to create these strategies.

 So being prepared to follow your child if he's on the go is fairly similar for professionals because when we are present, they're confined to a therapy room. Not necessarily the same case with parents. Because it is not easy when children are on the go at home. That's okay, it's a good problem to have, we want our children to be active and on the go. And the main idea here is that staying close should not be a chase. Children desperately need and thrive in routines, and we have to establish those routines. Routines for mealtime, routines for putting technology on, retunes for taking a bath, and Ana is going to cover are you repeating retunes later on.

 Instead of raising your voice to get your child's attention, move closer. And we so often do this as therapists without even realizing it, but this is why where we have to make sure we're explaining why we're moving closer. If you need to and the parents are ready, dive in to speech acoustics. Discuss why that speech signal is so critical and why what happens the further that we move away.

 We're always remaining parent focussed. What do parents need to know to expose and expect developmentally appropriate behaviors and language. And this is going to be a recurring theme within each strategy.

 Our next strategy talk, talk, talk. So you might notice or may have already caught that the first bullet on every slide is going to say, ensure hearing technology is functioning and worn all waking hours. The key ingredient is full time use, and we can't do much without it. Nothing works without adequate access to sound. So if we're expecting parents and children to thrive without adequate access to sound, we're setting them up to fail. Full time use is critical.

 So along with full time use, we're thinking about building a foundation for language, right? So super segmentals is super important, especially if a child is in a pre linguistic phase or regardless, we're creating a foundation for language, so thinking about a child who has been identified at birth and a child who is identified as three years of age, we cannot negate the work of those super segmentals of that duration, that intensity, and that pitch.

 And so in comes parenties. This can be tricky because we have found that it is either natural or it is really not. And so we can not be afraid of practicing parent ise and it gets uncomfortable and it is often a skill that we, as professionals model beautifully but, again, we have to break it down. Why are you holding the duration of that particular sound? Why are you leaning in? Why is your voice so high‑pitched? Dialogic reading and picture walks is a great way for parents to practice parenties or narration, as you model, don't forget to break it down. Don't just leave them assuming that they know what you're doing.

 So singing songs is another awesome way to implement talk, talk, talk, because it gets parents thinking of a melody. I want those parents to always have that medically in their minds.

 Just like a child with hearing loss is rewiring his or her brain to listen with hearing technology, parents have to do the same. They have to rewire their own brains to think about and create the changes that are needed to meet the needs of their child.

 It doesn't cost anything to talk, but it does take effort to make it a habit.

 Extra talk is better than business talk, and extra talk is rich, it's engaging, and it's expansive. An environment that's defined as language rich is when a child is listening to 20,000 words a day. Now, all of these suggestions barely scratch the surface, right? We know that there are numerous listening and spoken language strategies that can help facilitate talk, talk, talk. So Ana will now continue with our next strategy, auditory environment.

>> All right. So we as adults are experienced listeners, right, and our brain is capable of tuning out background noises. However, children with hearing loss who have recently been aided don't have the brain so he fission fist did I indication yet to tune out all of those background noises. The microphones on their hearing technology are picking up all of the sounds around them. So and again, they're new listeners, their brain can't tune out all of those background noises to be able to concentrate and clearly hear their caregiver's voice or overhear conversations around them. And so in order for parents to monitor and adapt the auditory environment, we, as therapists, need to point those sounds out, those background noises to parent so then they can work on ensuring the back access to sound for their kids.

 So a way to do that, for example, would be to record a small video clip in one of your sessions and listen to the recording together with the parent and so the microphone on your phone on your iPad is similar to the microphone on their hearing technology, in the sense that it is picking up all of the sounds. And so by listening to the recording, home hopefully parents can pick up and notice oh, I didn't realize the fan was on, I didn't realize the noise coming from the computer or other electronic noises. Once the parent is conscious of background noises present in their environment, then they can work on ensuring the best access to sound for their kid, so just as I was saying, turning off the television, turning off other background noises. Their brain was tuning out and they didn't even realize. Parents can also adapt the auditory environment to help with room acoustics by adding a rug, adding drapes to help with sound reverberation. They can close doors, they can move away from sound to a quieter room when interacting with your child.

 Using a personal FM system or a remote microphone can give the child better access to their caregiver's voice, and so when parents are ‑‑ they're in the car, when they're outside when, they go to a restaurant, when they go to the store, those are really noisy environments, and sometimes parents can't eliminate all of those background noises or reduce all of those background noises so they're using an FM system or using a remote microphone and pairing it to the child's hearing technology will ensure the child the best access to their caregivers voice. And then parents also need to know at what distance their child breaks down and experiences difficulty understanding speech and language. This is what we call the child's listening bubble. Once the child's listening skills mature, then parents can work on expanding that listening bubble by practicing a noise so that that the child can also learn to understand speech and language in or at a distance, right, in noisy environments.

 So now, moving on to reciprocity. Yes, talking is very important to expand the child's vocabulary, but it is not just about talking more. When a parent engages in turn taking with their child, they are positively impacting their language and their cognitive skills. Adapting a responsive style of parenting involves sharing the responsibility of communication with the child, and they're learning through a partnership. Turn taking is a preverbal skill that toddlers need to master before words emerge, and it can begin as a nonverbal activity. So it is important for parents to be aware of the appropriate developmental expectations for turn taking. Turn taking can range from rolling a ball back and forth. It can range from imitating facial expressions. It can range from cooing or babbling to gesturing and eventually to using spoken language. Parents can set up a turn taking opportunity by not only waiting for their child to take a turn but also waiting expectantly and being expect ant of a turn means leaning forward, widening your eyes, maybe raising your eyebrow.

 I don't know what I clicked.

>> Oh, no.

>> Sorry.

>> Okay. There we go. And wait time is so, so important for children with hearing loss because it provides their brain that extra processing time they need. And it also teaches them communication is a two‑way process. Somebody says something, I say something back, and this is how we communicate. And know that we also keep ‑‑ have to keep in mind that joint attention is also key when working on reciprocity. For communication to be meaningful to the child. So parents can point out sounds, they can point out objects, they can follow the child's lead, they can share a book, they can sing songs to establish joint attention and for communication to be meaningful to the child.

 That was reciprocity. Moving on to repeating routines. So all families have a routine even when they think or they say they don't. How many times do they change their child's diaper or feed their child throughout the day? A lot, right? As therapists, we can help families realize just how many times they do certain things so that they can enrich those routines. So we can help parents identify and establish daily routines just by simply asking them to share what a normal day for them looks like. So what do parents do from the moment their child wakes up to the moment their child goes to sleep. Do parents mention hearing technology. Do parents have a routine for turning on or taking off the hearing technology? Do parents have a routine for sharing books? And if they don't, then with the parent, you can create a new routine and think about the language they can use or they can add to those routines you just talked about.

 Sometimes when parents do things so many times throughout the day, it's like it becomes automatic for them, and they don't even realize that they totally missed an opportunity to say something or to sing a song. At least for me, I'm catching myself all the time, I'm changing my daughter's diaper for the seventh time that day and I didn't seen say a word and I was right in front of her. And so when a parent is aware that they need to talk throughout every day routines, with their child, then they can catch themselves what they're not modeling language enough.

 And remember that repetition builds memory when a parent uses the same language or song for a specific routine. You know, the child is hearing that language over and over again, and eventually, they're able to incorporate that in to their receptive and expressive language.

 So now the question is, how do we, as therapists, coach families to implement these strategies throughout the day?

 Well, first of all, like Annabel mentioned, parents need to truly understand why it's important. If parents have a rationale for doing things, then they can be aware of how they need to adapt a responsive parenting style and, in turn, they can catch themselves when they miss opportunities to embellish a routine, to say something, and they're also able to recognize when they need to improve on something.

 We also need to make sure that all of the family members directly involved with the child are on the same page. So this includes siblings and grandparents. They need to understand how and why to implement these strategies. Sometimes when a child with hearing loss has an older sibling, they can get their needs met without a need to say anything. I mean, I see that with my youngest daughter, she'll grab a snack, take it to her older sister, her older sister opens it, she doesn't say a word. And so and grandparents, grandparents tend to simplify things for their granddaughter or their grandson with hearing loss. They tend to give in to avoid seeing them struggle even more. And, so again, everyone needs to be on the same page and well informed.

 The goal as therapists, we also need to make sure that we're not talking over in ‑‑ we're not taking over in therapy. The goal is to guide families so that they are able to carry over these strategies throughout their day. And we also need to make sure we're modeling best practice, so this means practicing what we preach. If we're coaching the parent on using wait time, then we need to make sure that we're modeling that throughout the session.

 Now, is it ‑‑ if you guys have any questions, then we'd love to chat with you outside. We want to quickly raffle. So if you guys do, are any of you interested in the Spanish version of the STARR strategies, raise your hand.

>> Let's pick three and then we'll see. So last four, 7365. Woo. Yay. Are you interested in the Spanish content? Okay. Perfect. Let's do, we have two more. 7624. Yay. Okay. So what we're handing out is a set of ten magnets with the strategies, and then this booklet walks through kind of what we did in our presentation, some tips for you.

 And then the last ticket, 7622.

 Yay. All right. Thank you all so much for your patience and for being with us. We appreciate it. Thank you.