

Five Ways to Get Siblings Involved in Speech Therapy

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1. Siblings can be an excellent speech and language model

Older or even younger siblings can serve as excellent speech and language models. During games or conversation, using this speech and language model can help facilitate the child receiving services involved with a desired activity.

Share speech and language goals with the sibling in a simple way (e.g. we are working on getting Tom to use longer sentences) and ask them to help you. Siblings can be very motivating which can be very beneficial for all parties, therapist included!

2. Siblings can help with a turn taking task

When playing a simple turn taking game, get the sibling involved with taking turns appropriately with their brother/sister. Taking turns appropriately can help siblings get along better during therapy and outside of therapy. Share these strategies with parents so they can carry them over when you are not present.

3. Siblings can help set appropriate goals

I will often ask a sibling about speech challenges at home. Children are extremely honest, which can help create functional goals at home. For example, you may ask a sibling, "When is it really hard to understand your brother's speech?" He or she may respond, "When we are all at the kitchen table, it's hard to hear him because his voice is so low".

This may help you in creating goals and giving strategies to help the child improve their speech and language abilities at home. This particular strategy should be shared with a parent and possibly done together.

4. Siblings can be ideal for practicing social skills

Siblings can be very helpful to try out appropriate social skills with, since they are closer in age and are generally non judgmental. He or she can help your role play different situations and practice appropriate conversation, staying on topic, etc.

5. Siblings are excellent for carryover

If a sibling is in the session with you, then they can help carry over the goals at home, school, etc. Siblings are around each other for many hours of the day and we need to use that to our advantage.

Other Ways to Get Involved

Other ways that I have involved siblings are getting them to record a communication device for their sibling who is nonverbal. I had one particular client whose brother took this job very seriously. He recorded all of the necessary phrases on the device which made the communication device extremely motivating for my client who respected his older brother.

I hope you find these strategies helpful.