



SING TO SPEAK™ NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #2 MARCH, 2005

TAKE ONE

EDITORIAL by Will Kantz

Welcome to the second edition of the Sing to Speak Newsletter! It has been an incredible year since the last edition. Our vision has enlarged, our understanding has increased, our product line has expanded and our family has been blessed immeasurably thanks to a little boy with autism named Willson.

Psalm 18:11 reads, "He made darkness his covering" (NIV). This verse speaks to me as I recount the many blessings that have come from what I once considered a dark and disturbing challenge. With the report of Willson's diagnosis, we felt lost and haunted by worries about the future.

We then went through a time where he was destructive, aggressive toward other kids, prone to wander off and unresponsive to any of the parenting skills that had worked so well with our other children. Personally, I was reluctant to give up a father's dreams for his first born son. Yet from the darkness has emerged hope and an exciting future we never anticipated.

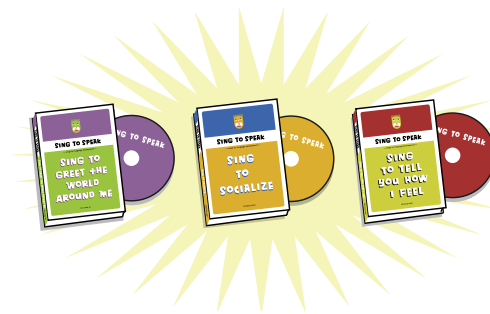
If you are new to this diagnosis, let me encourage you. By accepting the challenges before us, we have come to embrace this wonderful child and appreciate the hand of Providence. A divine hope fills each day as we face new challenges. It is truly an exciting journey.

Along this journey, it has been a joy to share with you the things we have learned as music continues to be a vehicle of unexpected benefit. What began as a simple attempt to teach our son language, has emerged into a passion to turn ABA lessons into therapeutic songs. In this issue of the Sing to Speak newsletter, I'll be sharing with you some recent research into the awesome power of music when strategically applied to children with autism.

ABA AND MUSIC?

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is the process of teaching small, measurable units of behavior, information or skill to a child. When a specific prompt achieves a desired response, the teacher or therapist reinforces the desired response with something pleasurable to the child. All reinforcement is positive with a high priority on making learning fun.

Treatment for autism by an ABA professional involves frequent teaching sessions in which desired responses are often prompted many times, often in rapid



succession, until the child is able to eventually perform the behavior. Prompting is then faded until the behavior stands on its own in an unstructured environment. When applied to autism spectrum disorders, an ABA therapist is able to measure progress and design treatment that is specific to the unique strengths and needs of each child.

The blending of developmental ABA curriculum with enjoyable music is the strategy behind Sing to Speak.

For many children, this musical compliment to ABA therapy helps speed progress. It strengthens the key elements of review and repetition in a relaxed setting with the self-reinforcing element of song. Because drills can be tedious, we make special effort to make our music pleasing and fun - even to adult ears!

RESEARCH TO DATE

In our next newsletter, we will have the opportunity to present the results from current research that are based on clientele who are using our CD and picture book, "Sing to Greet the World Around Me." Behavioral Innovations of Dallas is testing the effectiveness of this musical strategy. Their first phase of this research looks at the rate of acquisition of new information when the songs are used as a generalization tool. Their second phase examines using the materials in conjunction with current programming as a means to enhance motivation.

We look forward to publishing the results! To our knowledge, this is the first researched effort to combine music and ABA.

Until then, here is a review of two other research reports that focus on the effectiveness of music...

Music in Intervention for Children & Adolescents with Autism: A Meta-Analysis (Whipple, 2004)

In a detailed review of research literature, Whipple reports that the body of literature describes the following benefits regarding music in intervention for children and adolescents with autism:

- Increased appropriate social behaviors and decreased inappropriate, stereotypical, and self-stimulatory behaviors
- Increased attention to tasks
- Increased vocalizations, verbalizations, gestures, and vocabulary comprehension
- Increased echolalia*, moving toward increased communication, and decreased echolalic percentage of total utterances

(continued from page 1) **ABA AND MUSIC?**

- Increased communicative acts and engagements with others
- Enhanced body awareness and coordination
- Improved self-care skills and symbolic play
- Anxiety reduction

Whipple states that, "Music appears to be so powerful a tool with this population that regardless of its purpose or how it is used for a particular client, it achieves positive effects" and that "All effects were in a positive direction, indicating benefits of the use of music in intervention with this population...."

Music in the Assessment and Treatment of Echolalia (Bruscia, 1982)

After defining and theorizing about the origins of echolalia, the author presents a case study that used music to treat a 14 year old mentally retarded male with "autistic tendencies" (referred to as M.). Initial assessment stated M's problem as follows: "the most pervasive problem was that over 95% of his verbal responses to others were echolalic".

The author, "along with two speech therapists and another music therapist designed an interdisciplinary treat-

ment for echolalia using music." They designed a three stage strategy for eliciting a response from the client using a two part song. Stage three involved the therapist fading out of the second part leaving the client to complete the song.

The case study then proceeds to describe additional phases where the gains are broadened with new responses. The final stage was "aimed at eliciting the completion response in a different setting." In the summary of the case study the author presents the following results:

After approximately 30 sessions consisting of 5 to 8 minute routines, M.'s echolalia was reduced from 95% of the total utterances within verbal interaction settings to under 10% in any setting... In speech therapy situations, M's echolalia was reduced to zero.

Both articles emphasize the importance of further research. Still, to date, music seems to be a powerful tool for enhancing verbal expression especially in children with autism.

**Echolalia is the repetition or echoing of verbal utterances made by another person. According to Prizant (1983) up to 75% of verbal persons with autism exhibit echolalia in some form.*

RESEARCH WITH MUSIC AND AUTISM

Music in the Assessment and treatment of Echolalia Bruscia, K. (1982). *Music Therapy*, 2 (1), 25-41.

Local and Global Processing of Music in High-functioning Persons with Autism: Beyond Central Coherence? Mottron, L. (2000). *J. Child Psychol. Psychiat.* 41(8), 1057±1065.

Music in Intervention for Children and Adolescents with Autism: a Meta-Analysis Whipple, J. (2004) *Journal of Music Therapy*, XLI (2), 90-106.

The Effects of Signed and Spoken Words Taught with Music on Sign and Speech Imitation by Children with Autism. Buday, E. (1995) *Journal of Music Therapy*, XXXII (3), 189-202.

Musically Adapted Social Stories to Modify Behaviors in Students with Autism: Four Case Studies Brownell, M. (2002) *Journal of Music Therapy*, XXXIX (2), 117-144.

SING TO SPEAK (songs for language development)

Using a four step method, Sing to Speak uses music to teach.

Our first CD, **SING TO GREET THE WORLD AROUND ME**, contains our trademark personalized song in which a child is trained to answer common social questions based on an individualized questionnaire.

Our second CD, **SING TO TELL YOU HOW I FEEL**, aides children in recognizing and understanding emotions

both in themselves and in others.

Our third CD, **SING TO SOCIALIZE**, teaches the first steps to understanding social complexities.

Sing to Speak's **four-step method** is simple yet effective.

First, a vocabulary-building song is presented in its entirety.

Second, the same song is repeated with strategic omissions in the lyrics.

Third, topics in the song are then spoken in a question/answer format.

Fourth, the same questions are spoken again omitting the answers. This four-step method is repeated with every song on the CD. Read what others are saying, hear our music samples, and find out how to order CDs for a child you love at singtospeak.com.

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