



## Talking More

The largest population seen in the speech/language department is speech-language delay in toddlers and preschoolers. Most of the time, we talk about possible contributors when discussing what may have caused these delays or interfered with ideal speech and language development. Some factors are physical, e.g. existing from birth; some are related to illnesses or reduced stimulation from peers; some factors are unknown.

With the young child, most of the work is with the caregivers, showing them what can help their children talk or talk better. In many of the cases, there is a marked improvement in speech and language development in a very short time – between the first and second visit of the evaluation. Usually this is in a one to two month period.

In the 2- year to 4- year range, frequent existing conditions are:

- Using a bottle;
- Not looking at caregivers; instead, getting items on their own or “looking” at the desired objects;
- Getting things mostly by whining, crying, fussing, and grunting;
- Not imitating or talking willingly, when to “Say\_\_\_” or “Talk”.

Following are four examples of impressive improvement, when the aforementioned conditions were thought of as “possible contributors.”

1) G., a 3 year old girl, was saying only a few words and an occasional two-word phrase. One suggestion was to gradually reduce or stop bottle use “cold turkey” (whichever would work better for G.). One month later, the mom was excited. She had reduced the bottle use from 5 to 4 bottles a day. Per the mother’s report, “the next day” G. began talking better – more words, phrases, and short sentences. When last seen, G.’s mother was working on reducing bottle use even further. She was then going to enter G. in preschool, for stimulation from her peers.

2) Two-year old L. had only a few single words; he did not look at people and did not imitate what his mom said. Various suggestions were given, e.g. imitating his actions and play. According to L.’s mom, the “key” suggestion was to have him look at her.

After working on this, with play techniques shown here, L. began talking more. In the mother’s words, some told her it was “unbelievable.” The “few words” had grown to almost 100 in a 5- week period.

Three-year old J. was using mostly jargon or crying to communicate. Two months later, after the family stopped “giving in” to the crying, J. immediately began verbalizing more, and pointing plus using his “words” more to make his wants known and to get attention.

3) When first seen, C’s family had been requesting him to “Say\_\_\_” or “Talk.” These reminders had resulted in his “resisting,” and then he stopped talking to the family. When seen one month later, C. was talking “a lot better” e.g. he was willing to repeat everything and was using sentences.

The mother of C. said that the most helpful suggestion was saying to him, “Use your words” (which can mean anything from babbling to using words or sentences).

Whenever a family or other caregivers have concerns about a child’s speech and language development, we suggest they have the child evaluated by a speech and language pathologist.

In many cases, startling results can occur with home follow through, using a few, seemingly simple techniques.