

Journey to Robust Communication for Children with Complex Support Needs: A Collaborative Approach

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Short Abstract

This presentation explores the journey of Theo, a determined and joyful child with high physical support needs towards robust communication. It highlights the importance of meeting families where they are, considering the emotional process of a disability diagnosis, and the vital role of comprehensive support networks. 4 year old Theo currently uses a PODD Communication Book accessed with his nose and sometimes his hand. Through collaboration and persistence, we aim to empower Theo and his family to on their way to robust and effective communication.

Long Abstract

This presentation chronicles the journey of Theo, a joyful and determined child with complex communication support needs and high physical support requirements towards achieving robust communication. Theo, experiences significant access challenges, currently beginning to communicate using a PODD Communication Book, often pointing with his nose and occasionally with his hand. This journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, a family's to willingness to learn and trust when results are hard to observe. The presentation explores the collaborative effort between the child, their family, and their speech pathologist.

Key themes of the presentation include:

1. Meeting Families Where They Are: Recognizing that every family's journey is unique, we emphasize the importance of understanding and supporting families through the emotional and practical challenges of a disability diagnosis. This includes acknowledging the varied pace at which families adapt and integrating their emotional needs into the communication support plan.

2. Comprehensive Support Networks: Highlighting the crucial role of a building a rich ecosystem of supports, we discuss how the involvement of extended family members,

including grandparents, contributes to the child's communication development. Collaborative efforts between professionals and family members ensure a holistic approach that addresses all facets of the child's needs.

3. Navigating Access Difficulties: Addressing the challenges posed by high physical support needs, we delve into the strategies employed to facilitate effective access to communication. This includes the innovative use of the PODD Communication Book and adapting communication methods to Theo's unique abilities.

4. Journey to Robust Communication: The ultimate goal is to empower children with complex support needs to achieve meaningful and effective communication. By sharing Theo's journey, we are motivated to provide practical insights to other families and professionals.

This presentation is a collaborative effort between a dedicated parent and Theo's speech pathologist, offering a dual perspective that enriches this narrative. Theo's story underscores the importance of patience, empathy, and unwavering commitment in the early journey towards robust communication.