



The Power of Play:

“If you can’t play it you can’t say it”

Barb Meyers M.A. Ed., CED
Lexi Newman M.S.D.E., CED
EHDI Conference 2025



Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will recognize the significance of play and how the child with hearing loss's language, cognition, and self-regulation skills are impacted by the development of play.
2. Participants will identify the stages of play and determine how to embed the child's individual developmental goals into each stage of play.
3. Participants will examine a variety of materials representing each stage of play while incorporating listening and spoken language strategies.

Benefits of Play

- Through play children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.
- Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.
- Play is important to healthy brain development.
- Through play, children experience others' points of view by working through conflicts about space, materials, or rules.
- Through play, children practice verbal and non-verbal communication skills.



The Biggest Challenges of Play for Children with Hearing Loss is:

Initiating and maintaining social interactions with their peers

Difficulties in communication and understanding play cues





Theory of Mind

Theory of mind (ToM) refers to the cognitive ability to understand that other people have their own thoughts, beliefs, desires, and intentions, which may differ from your own. (NIH 2013)

Listening & Spoken Language Strategies

- Auditory First
- Broadcaster
- Singing
- Acoustic Highlighting
- Expectant Look
- Wait Time



Modeling/imitation
Auditory Sandwich
Auditory Closure
Expansion
Sabotage
Auditory Bombardment

Types of Play

- Non-play
- Solitary
- Parallel
- Group—associate play/cooperative play

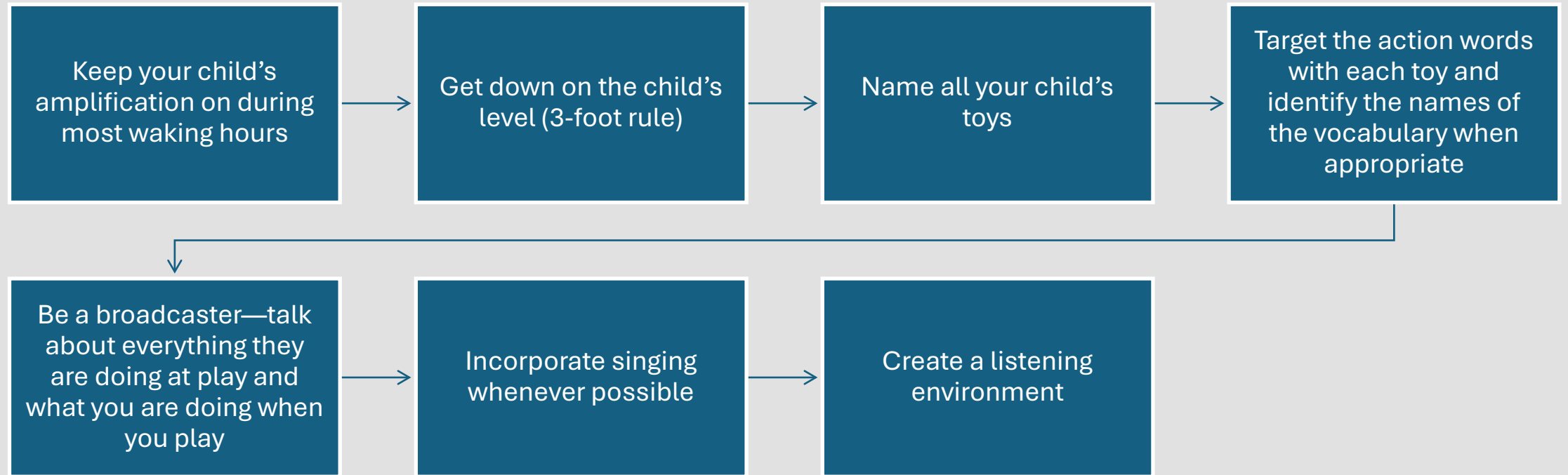


Stages of play



- Functional—begins in 1st year of life and peaks between 2-3 (repetitive motor movements)
- Constructive—begins 2nd year of life and peaks between 3-4 (creates and builds something from a plan)
- Dramatic—begins 2nd year of life and peaks between 6-7 (acting out real life situations using language to create play scenarios)
- Games with rules—The highest level of play –can start simple games at 3 (memory, games with spinners) board games 7-12 (Piaget)

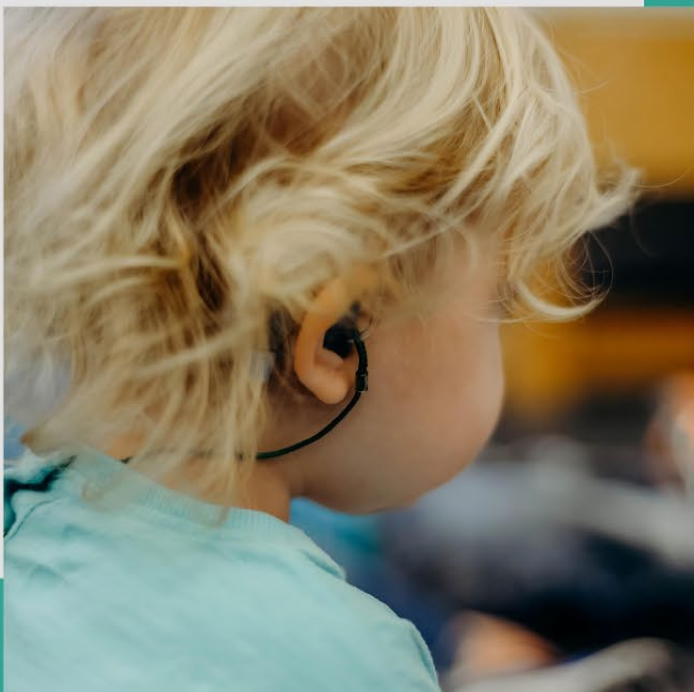
Where do we begin?



Creating a Listening Environment

“Normal conversation levels are somewhere between 50-65 dB at a distance of three feet. For a child with hearing loss, that same conversation decreases in clarity and intensity when there are competing sounds present. Try to imagine what it’s like for your child when they’re trying to process language that’s mixed with sounds in the home that are louder than the normal conversation level.”
(Hearing First 2023)





How babies listen and play

- 0-3 months:
 - They respond to sounds by smiling, turning their head, startling, recognize caregiver's voice
 - They are aware of familiar people/situations and look at objects/faces briefly. They begin to anticipate daily routines—diaper changing, being fed
- 4-6 months:
 - Sounds begin to have meaning, listening more acutely, may begin to respond to their own name occasionally, respond to changes in vocal inflections, and begin to listen to their own voice
 - Looking at objects & reaching for them, beginning to learn about cause & effect, plays with a rattle, & brings objects to mouth
 - Introduce Learning to Listen Sounds around 6 months

How babies listen & play

7-9 months infants:

- Localize sound
- Discriminates suprasegmental aspects of speech
- Imitate physical actions
- Place an object in one hand, then another
- Smile at themselves in mirror,
- Finds hidden objects
- Gives, points, shows
- Pulls rings off stacker
- Have longer attention span & associate meaning to words



How babies listen & play

9-12-month-olds:

- Associate meaning to more words
- Monitor own voice
- Localize sound from a distance
- Discriminate speaker's voice from competing stimuli
- Enjoys games & initiates them
- Match two identical objects
- Attempt to build a two-block tower
- Relate an action with an object—
spoon/stirring, car/pushing



How toddlers listen and play

1 -2 – year olds:

- Understanding more words related to toys, body parts, food, clothing
- Imitate words heard
- Process simple language
- Discriminate between familiar phrases through audition
- Attention span has increased for interest in an object/toy
- Demonstrates functional use of objects/toys
- Follow one-two step familiar directions through audition
- Auditory memory is getting established



How do you store your toys?



Options for Storing Toys



How toddlers listen and play

1 -2 – year olds:

- Beginning to understand “wh” questions (Where’s ___? that?)
- Retrieves a desired toy behind an obstacle
- Turns container upside down to obtain toy
- Points to pictures in a book & begins to turn pages
- Demonstrates object permanence
- Categorizes objects in play
- Enjoys going outside
- Recognizes shapes & sizes (big/small)
- Beginning to initiate pretend play about *familiar* situations
- REDUCE SCREEN TIME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE



W



How a 2–3-year-olds listen & play

- Use toys appropriately
- Comprehend longer utterances from adults and peers
- Follow multi-step directions at play
- Sequential play takes effect
- Continue symbolic play
- Shows interest in how & why things work
- Share toys (closer to 3)
- Plan their play with peers with a variety of play scenarios, taking on roles about social situations



Questions



Presenters' Contact Info:

Barb Meyers—bmeyers@sjid.org

Lexi Newman—lnewman@sjid.org

314-918-1369

Resources

- Netten, Anouk P.¹; Rieffe, Carolien^{2,3}; Soede, Wim¹; Dirks, Evelien³; Korver, Anna M. H.⁴; Konings, Saskia¹; Briaire, Jeroen J.¹; Oudesluys-Murphy, Anne Marie⁴; Dekker, Friedo W.⁵; Frijns, Johan H. M. (2017) Can You Hear What I Think? Theory of Mind in Young Children With Moderate Hearing Loss; *National Institute of Health*
- Blank, A., Holt, R.F., (2022) Association Between Parental Play and Executive Function in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children; *Department of Speech & Hearing Science Ohio State University*
- Antia, S.D., Kreimeyer, K.H., Social Competence of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children; (2015) *Oxford University Press*
- Batten, G., Oakes, P.M., Alexander, T., (2013) Factors Associated with Social Interactions Between Deaf Children and Their Hearing Peers: A Systematic Literature Review . *The Journal of Deaf Studies & Deaf Education*
- Muppalla, S.K., Vuppalapati, S., Pulliahgaru, A.R., Sreenivasulu, H.,(2023) Effects of Excessive Screen Time on Child Development: An Updated Review & Strategies for Management; *Cureous Beyond Open Access*



St. Joseph

HEARING + SPEECH