
COMMUNICATION WORKS NEWSLETTER

HELPING PEOPLE COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT

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BABY SIGNS[®] PROGRAM

SIGN, SAY AND PLAY CLASSES

The *Baby Signs Program*[®] provides techniques to engage in early communication with your infant. Babies can use signs earlier than they can talk. Speaking requires the type of motor skills that babies only begin to master around their first birthday. It is much easier for babies to move their hands than it is to move their mouths to speak. Studies have shown that while babies may lack the speech motor skills, they do have the ability to understand and use language well before they can speak.

Using signs at a young age can make it easier for your baby to get his or her message across which can lessen miscommunications and frustrations. Simply put, they may cry less and get their needs met quicker. Babies who are taught simple signs not only speak earlier than non-signers but can also have larger vocabularies and become better readers.



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APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

EARLY WARNING SIGNS FOR AUTISM

Autism is a neurological disorder characterized by social, behavioral and communication impairments. It is America's fastest-growing serious developmental disorder, with a new case diagnosed almost every 20 minutes. Autism affects 1 in every 110 children. This is why it is so important for parents and professionals to learn the critical milestones for social, emotional, and communication development. Even before warning signs appear, parents should chronicle the milestones and share them with their pediatrician.

At four months, is your child...

- Following and reacting to bright colors, movement, and objects?
- Turning toward sounds?
- Showing an interest in watching people's faces?
- Smiling back when you smile?

These are a few of the early milestones that are critical to the foundation of healthy development.

Autism costs America an estimated \$90 billion annually. The cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

If your baby shows any of these signs, parents should ask their physician for an evaluation.

- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by six months or thereafter
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions by nine months or thereafter
- No babbling by 12 months
- No back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, showing, reaching, or waving by 12 months

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BABY SIGNS...

The visual stimulation provided by sign language activates the same centers in the brain that are activated by speech. It also provides more joint attention exchanges with actual items between you and your child. Research has illustrated that signing babies achieve higher scores on future I.Q. tests than children who learn to speak in the traditional manner.

One word of advice, don't start too early. While it won't do any harm to your child, if you start before your baby is ready, the danger is that you will become bored with their lack of progress and be less likely to follow through.

How do you know if your baby is ready to sign?

- If your baby can wave "bye-bye"
- If they can hold a rattle
- If your baby drops something and then looks to see where it went

CW's *Baby Signs Program*[®] consists of a series of six, theme based classes over six weeks. The 45-minute sessions are designed for both parents and babies. Classes provide simple ways to support your baby's communication development. Useful signs are taught through fun songs, books, and activities. Participants are given resources to help them continue learning language development at home with the "Sign, Say and Play" Kit (included in the program fee).

Call (510) 639-2929 for more information, classes are forming and filling fast.□



SENSE-ational CONNECTIONS

SENSORY PLAYGROUPS - YEAR ROUND & SUMMER

SENSE-ational Connections helps children experience the importance and joys of having friends and being part of a group, while identifying individual regulation strategies. Sessions are designed to allow students to explore different avenues to meet their various sensory needs. In this nurturing environment, activities are designed to promote self-regulation, as well as support children in learning how to be more respectful of others and grow in their ability to be flexible in their actions and decisions.

Groups are geared for children beginning at 3 years old or older who have near average cognitive skills and some awareness of others around them. Children may have a lack of motor coordination, sensory regulation disorders, and/or social cognitive challenges. This group is designed to meet the needs of the kids who are often described as "always on the go" or "driven by a motor".

Each group includes two to four students and meets for 45 or 60 minutes, once a week, under the supervision of a registered and licensed pediatric occupational therapist. A 10-minute parent wrap-up and discussion is also included within each session.

While the program explores a wide range of topics, a central focus of the program includes understanding emotions and **The Zones of Regulation**. Students are taught how to identify their own feelings, as well as in others. Students learn how to categorize their emotions and states of arousal into four Zones that they can use to describe how they are feeling. Tools for each Zone are explored in order to support their sensory needs and aid in emotional regulation.

SENSE-ational Connections Enrollment

Groups form throughout the school year along with a 6-week summer session option. Please call the office at (510) 639-2929 to begin the intake process or visit our website for more information.

SUMMER CONNECTIONS

Communication Works is offering 2 valuable social learning programs this summer for students who need help with social skills and self-regulation.

MAKING CONNECTIONS SUMMER PROGRAM

A six-week summer program for children Pre-K to teens. Participants learn to cooperate, communicate and **connect** – giving them a social boost for fall. Groups offer a fun and safe environment to practice social thinking and social skills and are run by licensed speech pathologists.

- Six week session from **June 21st to July 30th**
- 1.5 hours a week, once or twice per week
- Groups consist of 3-4 children at matched social levels
- For ages 3 to adults
- Includes community outings to practice learned skills
- Weekly parent education

SUPERFLEX™ ON STAGE SUMMER DRAMA CAMP

CW's therapeutic drama-based summer camp designed to foster social learning and self-regulation for children. Children learn perspective taking, negotiation and collaboration skills.

- Session dates: **July 5th to July 16th**
- Sessions are daily from 9am to 1pm
- For ages 7-10
- Production of a theatrical play

ENROLLMENT

To enroll or inquire for more information, visit us at www.cwtherapy.com or call 510-639-2929 and complete an intake form to begin the registration process.

Early registration ensures a spot for your child in one of our summer programs....space is limited.

A deposit must be included with the registration form, but it will be refunded if an appropriate group is not available.

BEING A PEER MENTOR

CHILDREN THAT LEARN TOGETHER, LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER

For the socially challenged child and young adult, peer mentors provide a diverse stimulating environment, enhances self-esteem and acts as an affirmation of their individuality.

But what about the mentor?

Peer mentors develop respect and appreciation for others with diverse and unique characteristics. Mentorship develops empathetic skills and sensitivity towards others' challenges. Being a peer mentor develops feelings of empowerment and the ability to make a difference.

Peer Mentors Needed

Earn Volunteer, Merit or Citizen Credit

Communication Works (CW) is recruiting peer mentors for our social learning and play groups. Peer mentors will be integrated into select groups that we determine will benefit from having a peer to model "expected behaviors" and social learning skills.

Peer mentors gain leadership skills as they work with and lead other students. They also improve their own ability to work in a group setting.

Groups are held at our Center in Oakland. They take place after school for one hour, once a week. A certificate of completion will be provided, which can be used toward citizen credit, volunteer or merit hours.

If you know of an interested peer model, that are 3 years to adolescent age, please contact Communication Works, at (510) 639-2929 ☐



*Communication Works ... Helping Others
Communicate and Connect*

SOCIAL LEARNING TIP

TAKING TIME TO TALK

Opportunities for “teachable moments” with your child occur throughout the day in more ways than you think – driving in the car with them, stuck in traffic, meal preparation, shopping for groceries, bath time, bedtime routines, etc.

The point is that whether you have a lot of time or just a snippet, it will be appreciated by your child and demonstrates that open communication is encouraged.

Don’t know what to talk about? Think about social challenges that have come up throughout the week and how you went about solving them. Be descriptive about how it made you feel and what you did about those feelings. Be a role model for your child on how you decided what was the best plan of action and how it affected those involved. □

AUTISM EARLY WARNING SIGNS...

- No words by 16 months
- Loss of speech
- No two-word meaningful phrases (without imitating or repeating) by 24 months
- Any loss of speech or babbling or social skills at any age. Any regression of any skill should be evaluated immediately.

If a child shows any of the red flags or early indicators, then that child should be evaluated by a developmental specialist – developmental pediatrician, or pediatric neurologist, psychiatrist, or psychologist – who has expertise in diagnosing and treating autism spectrum disorders. □



RED FLAGS FOR SOCIAL CHALLENGES

PRESCHOOL- RED FLAGS

- Often seems alone, “in his own world”, “doing his own thing” even around others
- Turns his back on others frequently
- Doesn’t make eye contact while interacting – if culturally expected
- Avoids others often
- Uses others in a functional but impersonal way – e.g. leading an adult to the refrigerator without looking at the adult
- Doesn’t seem to have favorite adults (such as Mom or Dad)
- Hugs or touches others rarely, or with little emotional or physical contact
- Often rejected by other kids
- Doesn’t try to communicate with others, even with gestures or sounds
- Seems emotionally disconnected – e.g. responds to others’ smiles with a blank look
- If speaking doesn’t use or remember names of family members or peers

GRADE-SCHOOL AND BEYOND

- Gets mad or angry too easily at others, turning small issues into bigger battles
- Shows little or no empathy towards others
- Displays odd social skills, such as trying to pet others or touch their hair
- Doesn’t follow unspoken social rules, stands or walks too closely
- Focused on details and can’t see the “big picture”
- Poor planning, organization and/or academics that relate to perspective taking (i.e. reading comprehension, writing and/or problem solving challenges)
- Is inflexible or has difficulty with transitions □

CW IS HONORED TO HOST - KARI DUNN BURON

CELEBRATED AUTHOR OF "THE 5-POINT SCALE" AND
"WHEN MY WORRIES GET TOO BIG"

WHEN: **Thursday May 13th, 2010**
6:30pm-8:30pm

WHERE: Communication Works Center
4400 Keller Ave., Oakland 94605

This presentation will address specific issues related to the impact of social anxiety on students with social learning challenges. It will cover how anxiety and the lack of social skills can lead to challenging behaviors and difficulty building relationships. Teaching strategies and tools will be introduced and discussed.

Parents, professionals and interested community members should RSVP by emailing rsvp@cwtherapy.com to reserve spot. Space is limited. \$20.00 for parents and \$30.00 for professionals.

Please visit our website at www.cwtherapy.com for other mini-workshops or presentations.□

MAY IS BETTER HEARING & SPEECH (BHS) MONTH

FREE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SCREENINGS

WHEN: **Saturday, May 22nd, 2010**
10am – 4pm, **by appointment only**

WHERE: Communication Works Center
4400 Keller Ave., Oakland 94605

To honor Better Speech and Hearing Month (May), Communication Works will be providing free speech-language and social screenings for children ages 18 months to 18 years.

Information, practical tips and resources for encouraging language development in your child will be available.

Call 510-639-2929 to schedule for your free screening now!



4400 Keller Avenue, Suite 200
Oakland, CA 94605

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Thank you so much
for all of your hard work
and passion!
We couldn't have asked
for more dedicated volunteers
and words cannot express
how grateful we are to have you
as part of our team.
It is a pleasure and a privilege
to work with you.
Many Thanks!