
COMMUNICATION WORKS

WORKING TO HELP PEOPLE COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT

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SCERTS® – not just a breath mint

Now available through Communication Works

SCERTS® is an innovative educational model for working with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and their families. It provides specific guidelines for helping a child become a competent and confident social communicator, while preventing problem behaviors that interfere with learning or the development of relationships. It also is designed to help families, educators and therapists work as a team, in a coordinated way, to maximize progress in supporting a child.

The acronym “SCERTS” refers to the program’s focus:

“SC” - Social Communication – developing spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression, and secure and trusting relationships with children and adults;

“ER” - Emotional Regulation – developing the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state and cope with everyday stress, to be available for learning and interacting;

“TS” - Transactional Support – developing and implementing supports to help partners respond to the child’s needs and interests, modifying and adapting the environment, and

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Get into The Zone!

Self-Regulation – How and Why

The Zones of Regulation is a curriculum developed by CW’s newest therapist, Leah Kuypers, M.A. Ed, OTR/L, to help foster skills in self-regulation. Self-regulation can be defined as the optimal state of arousal for the given situation. For example, when playing on the playground, it is appropriate to have a high state of arousal. That same state of arousal would not be appropriate in the library.

The ability to self-regulate is dependent on three neurological components that need to work together in order to attain the appropriate level of arousal. The first is sensory processing. We need to perceive and process information correctly so we can direct our behaviors appropriately.

The second component necessary for self-regulation is being able to regulate one’s emotions. It is human nature to have an automatic emotional reaction to events, but the degree to which we display that emotion is dependent on external factors, such as what is socially appropriate for the setting.

The third component is executive functioning, which describes the higher level brain skills used for organization and problem solving, such as working memory, impulse control, internalization of speech (self-talk) and attention shifting. These skills help us determine if something is a big versus little problem and helps us clear away hurdles in order to attain our goals.

The Zones of Regulation curriculum is a cognitive behavior management approach that entails lessons and learning activities, designed to help students recognize when they are in the different zones (states of arousal) as well as learn how to use strategies or tools to regulate the zone they are in. Calming techniques are explored as well

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providing tools to enhance learning (e.g., picture communication, written schedules, sensory supports). Specific plans are also developed to provide educational and emotional support to families, and to foster teamwork among professionals.

The SCERTS Model was developed by a team of collaborators, including Barry Prizant, Amy Wetherby, Emily Rubin, and Amy Laurent, who have training in speech-language pathology, special education, behavioral and developmental psychology, occupational therapy and family-centered practice.

SCERTS principles such as collaboration are a priority for all of our therapists and we work hard to communicate with every child's team members to effectively address his or her needs. CW is also working toward a multidisciplinary approach as Leah Kuypers, M.A. Ed., OTR/L, joins us, providing collaboration and consultation to our therapists for kids with ASDs who have sensory integration, emotional regulation, and other occupational therapy needs.

Many aspects of the SCERTS curriculum for *Social Communication* and *Emotional Regulation* are incorporated into group and individual therapy for children with ASDs at CW. Goal targets include sharing attention, increasing reciprocal interaction, communicating for a variety of functions, repairing communication breakdowns, understanding nonverbal communication and non literal language, understanding and using early emotion words, using behavioral and language strategies to regulate arousal, etc. In addition, CW supports parents, teachers, paraprofessional aides, and other professionals by training them to provide children with ASDs with *Transactional Supports* at home and at school to work toward their *Social Communication* and *Emotional Regulation* goals. ♣



A recent film "Adam" portrays the developing relationship between a young man with Aspergers Syndrome and his neighbor.

Awareness of Flirting, Dating & Relationships

Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome/high functioning autism (AS/HFA) or other social-cognitive deficits often lag in emotional or social development, although their biological drives continue to develop on schedule. This can create an inconsistency between natural desires and the ability to sustain control and inhibitions in a socially appropriate manner.

At CW, we see many clients with social-cognitive deficits, ranging from preteens to young adults, who are challenged by this conflict. In the past year alone, we have observed several incongruous behaviors from these clients, including inappropriate innuendos, comments about body parts and misuse of cyberspace.

As a result, we created a curriculum based on Michelle Garcia Winner's *Four Steps of Communication*, to help our clients with concrete rules and guidelines for engaging people to whom they are attracted.

The four basic steps are (1) thinking about others, (2) being aware of your physical presence, (3) using your eyes to think about others, and (4) using your words to relate to others, and are utilized to break down the abstract social cues that are involved with flirting, dating and relationships.

Lessons for the curriculum are tailored to high-school aged students who are showing an interest in dating, as well as for clients whose parents or teachers were reporting inappropriate sexual gestures or interactions.

Flirting, dating, and relationships are difficult situations to negotiate for an adolescent. For most teens, understanding and mastering the unspoken rules and skills of courtship are challenging but made easier by observing others around them. But for adolescents with AS/HFA or other social cognitive deficits, the ability to learn these skills is often surpassed by their bodies' developing biological drives, making the complexities of romance all the more overwhelming.

CW's curriculum helps clients organize their thoughts and actions related to relationships, and provide them with guidelines and tools they can call upon outside the therapeutic milieu. The curriculum provides a neutral ground from which the therapist can work, and helps make a sensitive subject more approachable by providing concrete, logical, and effective steps for dealing with romantic and sexual situations.

Since the program began in fall 2008, it has received positive feedback from both the parents and students involved. ♣

Hanen at Communication Works (CW)

It Takes Two to Talk[®]

The Hanen Program[®] for Parents is a well-known model of family-focused early language intervention for young children with expressive and/or receptive language delays.

The goal of *It Takes Two to Talk*[®] is to enable parents to become their child's primary language facilitator, thereby maximizing the child's opportunities for communication development in everyday situations. *It Takes Two to Talk*[®] is designed for toddlers and preschool-aged children with specific language impairment, as well as to children with cognitive and developmental delays under age five.

It Takes Two to Talk[®] has three objectives: parent education; early language intervention and social support.

1. Parents learn basic concepts about communication and language that are essential in helping their child's communication develop.
2. Parents learn to apply language facilitation strategies flexibly across contexts so that intervention becomes a natural part of their daily interactions with their child. Strategies highlighted by the speech-language pathologist (SLP) for individual parents are specific to supporting their child's communication goals. These goals are developed collaboratively with the parents and modified over the course of the program. Since effective and consistent strategy use by parents is critical to the child's progress, video feedback sessions play a major role in helping parents see and modify their interactive behavior with their child.
3. Parents gain both formal and informal social support. The SLP, whose multi-faceted role includes that of group leader, interventionist, coach and counselor, provides more formal support. The parent group itself provides informal support through the sharing of experiences with individuals in similar situations. Parents report that this constitutes a vitally important component of the program. ♣

*Communication Works is excited to offer Hanen services!
Parent groups currently forming.*

Please call 510-639-2929 or email hanen@cwtherapy.com for more information.

*Communication Works is working to help people
Communicate and Connect*

More than Words[®]

A family focused program that gives parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and related social communication difficulties, practical tools to help their children communicate.

More than Words[®] comes from the same social interactionist perspective as *It Takes Two to Talk*[®]. Like this program, it emphasizes the child's everyday activities as the context for learning to communicate. In addition, *More than Words*[®] incorporates current best practice guidelines, highlighting the importance of affect, predictability, structure, and the use of visual supports to enhance learning for children with ASDs.

The program is focused on four major goals:

1. Improved two-way interaction
2. More mature and conventional ways of communicating
3. Better skills in communicating for social purposes
4. An improved understanding of language

More Than Words[®] recognizes the unique needs of children with ASDs and helps parents understand their child's sensory preferences and sensitivities so these can be accommodated during everyday interactions. Most importantly, *More Than Words*[®] builds positive interactions between parent and child, reducing frustration for both and increasing the child's opportunities to learn to communicate in real life situations.

Several Hanen principals are incorporated into both our individual therapy services and preschool social groups (Playful Connections) at CW. Foundational components of language are emphasized prior to targeting expressive language. Those components include tuning into what the child is interested in and following his lead to increase reciprocal interaction, increasing the child's ability to jointly attend to activities, imitating gestures and play schemes, and making nonverbal requests (e.g., pointing, using eye gaze, handing an object to a partner to request opening it). In addition, parent wrap-up time is included in all sessions at CW to educate and empower parents to use strategies to enhance communication in everyday routines at home. ♣

New Services at CW:

Individual and Group Occupational Therapy:

- Sensory integration
- Emotional regulation, Zones of Regulation (ZoR)
- Executive functioning
- Traditional OT therapy

Continued Services:

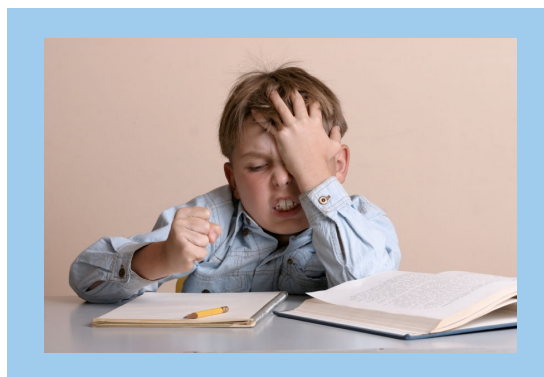
- Individual speech and language therapy
- Individual and group social learning therapy
- Comprehensive speech, language, social assessments
- Clinic, school based, in-home therapy
- Parent trainings
- Paraprofessional aide trainings
- Professional education, training, consultations
- School and home based observations and consultation services

Specializing in Treating

- Autism, Asperger syndrome, Pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS)
- Selective mutism, social anxiety
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Attention deficit disorder (ADD), emotional regulation
- Non-verbal learning disabilities
- Early intervention

as sensory diet supports so students have a toolbox full of strategies from which they can choose to help self-regulate. To further explore the concept of self-regulation, the students gain an increased vocabulary of emotional terms, skills in reading facial expressions, perspective on how others see and react to their behavior, insight on events that trigger their behavior and problem solving skills. When children's regulation skills are challenged, it is hard for them to interact with others and be comfortable in a social setting.

CW is honored to have Leah on board and we are thankful for her help with infusing the zones into CW clinic services. Her book on the subject, "The Zones of Regulation," will be published by Think Social Publishing and should be out next year. ♣



Communication through Play

For children with language delays, look for toys that offer repetition. Books that have repetitive phrases or toys that continually repeat concepts and directions are great choices.

Suggested types of toys by age:

Preschool: 3-5 years. Introduce toys that inspire pretend play/imagination and allow children to imitate mom or dad to practice life skills. Examples include cash registers, toy telephones, make-believe town sets, doll houses, furniture, games that require turn-taking and story games.

Children in this group are fascinated with how and why things work. Construction sets, washable crayons

and markers, paints, modeling clay, books, and simple board games encourage creativity.

School Age: 5-9 years. Encourage children to share and introduce toys and games that teach both team playing and independence. Consider toys that boost self-esteem and allow children to use their personalities.

Choose hobby sets, sports toys, computer software, problem-solving math toys, construction sets with detailed elements, and storybooks with valuable messages. Games are available to help children learn specific skills, including counting, matching, and problem solving. Board games are now available that offer the

opportunity to think and make guesses about the other participants.

Preteen: 9-12 years. Acceptance from friends and self-esteem are very important to this age group. Toys begin to seem less interesting to children of this age. Complex construction sets, multi-level board games, strategic puzzles, science toys, and activity kits are the best choices. Active and physical play should be an area of focus through team and group sports. Social and intellectual skills are refined through board, electronic, and card games.

Always supervise your child's play and play with your child often! Those memories will last a lifetime. ♣

Pre and Post Data

Fall groups have started and as we pass out this year's pre group social responsiveness scale (SRS) forms, we thought you may be interested in last year's results from the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS).

2008 reporting measured social skills and unwanted behaviors. Data was collected from the client, parent and teacher. Ages 3-5, grades K-6 and 7-12 were evaluated.

Outcome:	Social	Unwanted Behaviors
3-5 yrs	↑18.6%	↓2.6%
Grd K-6	↑ 8.2%	↓2.9%
Grd 7-12	↑11.4%	no change

Delays Not Flagged

Even though most children visit pediatricians for routine check-ups, a recent study found that a lack of standardized screenings hinders identification of many developmental delays. Compared to full-term children, children born 34-37 weeks were twice as likely to qualify for early intervention, but many were not identified. Physicians who use only their professional impressions fail to detect up to 60%-80% of children with delays. The study is available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/123/6/1516>



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