

Information Processing

A child may have problems with forming words and/or saying what they mean (articulation). The child might talk too quickly, interrupt or mumble or be noticed to use patterns in speech which seem wrong. NB: This speech pattern may be expected with young children but would be expected to develop as the child ages.

Information processing abilities are not easily noticed. Children may appear to be processing information and this can result in unrealistic (and unachievable) expectations of the child. Often older children are noticed to be articulate and compliant. This may be “defensive”¹ and mask an underlying struggle to understand meaning but on the surface, meet others expectations.

Connecting information with a subsequent action is missing. Hearing information and repeating information does not mean the information is understood. As McCreight (1997:18)² advises: “Information goes in the ears and out the mouth without any stops along the way.” Even if remembered, this child seems to have an inability to generalise information from one situation to another, identifying any similarities and/or differences.

Strategies

- Check for understanding. If you have asked the child to do something this may mean asking the child to tell you the action they are going to do rather than just ask them to repeat your request back to you.
- Use literal language – say what you mean. Rather than ask them to tidy their room ask them to pick up the toy dolls and put them back into the doll box. Teach using calculators/digital watches and clocks/computers.³
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- Look for misinterpretations of words or actions and discuss when this occurs.
- Do not use metaphors, similes or clichés.^{5 6} Instead, think about what you would like to say in the clearest terms. Here are some examples:
 - “It looks like rain” – “I think it will rain”
 - “A little bird told me” – “my friend Mary told me”
 - “He’s a sitting duck” – if Ben goes out in the rain, he will get wet.”
 - “I’m all ears” – “I am listening to you.”
- Avoid sarcasm
- Take care when making a joke with the child

¹ Malbin, D. *Trying differently, Not Harder*

² McCreight, 1997:18

³ VON Report

⁴ VON Report

⁵ VON Report

⁶ Sharing Stories, Finding Hope.

- Think first about how what you say could be misunderstood
- Talk to the child, read books, sing songs, listen to CDs and DVDs.
- Make sure you have the child's attention before speaking. Speak to their eyes.
- Use concrete language, repeat using different words and speak slowly – they may only pick up every third word of a normally paced conversation.
- Emphasize use of certain words together with gestures and sounds.
- Encourage others in the family or friends to talk with the child.
- Ask the child to draw a picture to express an emotion.
- Minimise background noise when talking with the child.
- Ask the child what they just heard to gauge what they think you said and how much has been actually understood.
- Break down instructions into simple parts. Offer these one at a Time.
- Have hearing checked by a professional, especially an assessment for Central Auditory Processing. Children with FASD may have perfect hearing but are unable to process everything they hear.