WORKING IN GROUPS

A handbook for people working with children with communication difficulties

Let's Communicate

Section 11

United Nations Children's Fund
New York

World Health Organization
Geneva

Rehabilitation Unit
Ministry of Health, Zimbabwe
In the last section we looked at communicating in everyday situations.

In this section we are going to look at organising and running groups for parents of children with communication difficulties.

By the end of this section you should be able to
- appreciate the benefits of working with parents in group situations
- organise and run parent and child groups, including planning a relevant programme and writing reports
- prepare and carry out appropriate teaching sessions for parents.
WORKING IN GROUPS

Parent’s views....

It used to be difficult for me having a child like Tendai because she wasn’t doing the same things as other children of her age, but now I know that if I see other children like her, I can advise their parents. I regularly go to the rehabilitation department now to talk to groups of mothers who have disabled children and I explain to them how I have helped Tendai. When parents meet together in this way no one can be shy or ashamed of their child and often our problems are the same. Together we can share ideas of how to solve our problems and we can help each other.

At times I felt frustrated. It took Simba such a long time to do anything. He was so slow and he lost concentration so quickly. It seemed so much easier and quicker for me to do things for him and other parents were doing the same for their children, but the R.T. discouraged us from doing this. She often sat with us for hours teaching us how to help our children to wash and dress themselves. It was so nice to see him smile once he had mastered something new. It helped me to continue with his programme, and it encouraged the other parents.

I will never forget my first visit to the rehabilitation department. I was expecting to be given some medicine that would make my child talk, so I was very disappointed when the rehabilitation staff told me there was no such medicine. Instead, they invited me to attend a group session at the department. Here I was shown ways that I could play with Memory that would particularly help her to learn to talk. I thought I should try the suggestions at home, so I showed my family what I had been taught and we decided to try to help Memory. Slowly, we started to see some improvement and so I kept going back to the groups at the rehabilitation department for more advice.

Caring for Sharon hasn’t always been easy. It has taken me many years of hard work, but my love for her grows stronger and stronger. It has got to the stage now where clinic staff send mothers — those who are ashamed of their disabled child or who don’t know what to do or how to care for their child — to me for advice and support. I believe that the support that mothers can give to each other is very important, otherwise a mother feels very isolated. I know that this makes some parents give up easily and lose patience with their child. So when a mother comes to me I comfort her and tell her “your problem is my problem”.

The parent groups run by our R.T. have been really good for us because I don’t think that disabled children should be put into institutions. I think that the child’s family should be helped to care for and love their child in the home. Parents must show more love for their disabled child and they must be patient, as change will probably be slow. They should keep talking to their child so that she or he comes to know their voices. Above all, parents of disabled children should share ideas and should never lose hope.

1. Rehabilitation Technician (R.T.) is the name given to Intermediate level rehabilitation workers in Zimbabwe.
It is sometimes thought that a child with a disability can only be helped if she is worked with individually. But in fact, working with disabled children and their parents in groups can be an equally — if not more — effective way of helping them.

Read on...

| Q: What do you mean by working in groups? | A: Well, rather than sitting alone with a child and her parents, we’re talking about inviting a group of parents, all of whom have a disabled child to come together in one place at a certain time. By working with parents and sharing ideas, each child can be helped individually within the group. |
| Q: Why is it good working in groups? | A: From the child's point of view it is good for her to be in a more natural situation, interacting with adults and children. From the parent's point of view it is important for them to see that they are not the only ones with a disabled child. Also a group situation provides an opportunity for the parents to support each other, to learn from each other and to share ideas. |
| Q: Who is involved in the group? | A: Parents and their disabled children, they are the most important people! Also, the people who have planned the group, along with the other people who have been invited to contribute to the programme. |
| Q: Where do the groups take place? | A: Ideally, at a central place within a community which can be easily reached by most of the parents attending. It is also very important that this place has adequate water, cooking facilities and shelter for the group. |
| Q: How can I organise and run a parents group? | A: There are many things to consider before running a parent's group. This whole section will give you ideas on how to go about it... |
First of all, you need to think about the aims of working in a group ... 

**Working in groups aims to:**

- bring parents of disabled children together, to share ideas and experiences and to support each other.

- bring disabled children together in a natural and relaxed setting where they can be observed playing and interacting freely.

- provide an opportunity for teaching parents so as to help them understand their child's disability and to give them ideas of how to help their child at home.

- provide an opportunity for observing and helping children in everyday activities, such as bathing, dressing and feeding.

- bring together other people relevant to the child's development for the benefit of the parents e.g. advisors on education, nutrition; disabled adults etc.

Now, you need to think carefully about how you will organise your group. There are different ways of running parent and child groups and different factors that you will need to take into consideration ...
Do I have the support of my colleagues? Do they agree with the idea of holding a group? Can any of them contribute to the group?

Is there money available to run a workshop? Have I planned a budget that includes cost of:
- food and drink
- accommodation
- transport
- helpers
- fuel
- materials

Which kinds of children will attend the group? All children with the same disability, e.g. hearing impairment? Or a mixture of children with different disabilities?

What are my aims in running this particular group?

How often should I hold the groups? Will parents have money for transport? Every week? Every month? Every 3 months?

What place is available for me to use? Is there enough space, shelter and overnight accommodation?

What staff will be available to help me? Will there be enough staff for a large group?

How much time can I spend on each group? Half a day? Whole day? Three days?

How many children can I invite? How much food and accommodation is available?

What is the long-term future of the group?

Are certain times of the year better - either for me or for the parents - for holding a group? For example, school holidays? Public holidays? End of month? Rainy season? Dry season?

The above points are for you to consider. I hope they will help you to decide what sort of parents group you will run, and how you will organise it!
The advantages of working in groups are:

- They provide a more relaxed and natural situation where children can interact more freely with each other.

- The child's opportunities for varied communication are greater.

- Children can be seen individually within the group setting.

- Parents are encouraged to take a more active role in helping their child.

- It provides opportunities for parents to meet together and support each other.

- Other people who are involved in helping the child can be invited to attend the group, for example, pre-school teachers, special education teachers, relevant non-governmental organisations, other rehabilitation workers, etc.
Try not to feel too overwhelmed. Here are some hints of things you need to do when planning and running a communication group ...

1. Be sure to inform and involve all the relevant people, especially the parents, in your plans to run a parent and child group.

2. Discuss with them the dates when you would like to hold the group.

3. Arrange food, lunches, teas etc. Organise and write requisitions where necessary.

4. Make arrangements for accommodation, for parents and children, and for visiting staff.

5. Make any necessary transport arrangements.

6. Plan a relevant timetable. Write it down and file it.

7. Invite any visiting speakers — 6 weeks ahead, in writing, and confirm by telephone, 1 week ahead.

8. If helpers are needed, make necessary arrangements.

9. Write to the parents, 2-3 weeks ahead of the meeting date, to remind them to come.

10. Prepare any necessary materials, for example, for toy making, teaching etc.

11. Make a poster of the timetable for the group.

12. Make a poster of the aims of the group.

13. During the group ensure things are running smoothly, for example, that there is enough food, bedding etc.

14. Find out from the parents what they want to see included in the next group.

15. Give the date of the next group and ensure that it is written on all parent’s cards.

16. Write letters to thank the visiting speakers for their contribution.

17. Write to each parent with a summary of the goal plan for their child.

18. Think for yourself how the group went and identify any areas that could be improved next time.

19. Write a report on the group and send it to the relevant people.

20. Start thinking and preparing for the next group!
O.K. - so far so good! But I'm a bit worried now about all the teaching that's involved. I haven't had much experience of that.

Right - try not to worry too much about that, it's easier than you think, but let me give you some hints...

Teaching hints...

- Be well prepared! Make sure you know what you are teaching and why you are teaching it. Have all the materials you will need close at hand.

- Before you start the session, introduce it clearly to the group - tell them what you are going to talk about, and why.

- Respect the group and talk to them as equals.

- Take your time! Explain things slowly and clearly so that the group will understand. Don't rush.

- Gently, lead any discussion in the direction you want it to go. By carefully wording what you say you can help the group to come up with their own answers.

- Give each parent a chance to answer or to take part. Remember those who are quiet have just as much to contribute as those who are more outspoken. Try to encourage everyone!

- Before you finish the teaching session, revise with the group the main points that you want them to remember.

- Make the place in which you are teaching comfortable. If there are chairs or mats position them so that everyone can see you. Make sure everyone feels part of the group.

- Adjust your language to the level of the parents. Use words that they will understand. If you use technical words, explain them.

- Present yourself in a lively and enthusiastic way so that the parents can see that you are interested in what you are doing.

- Encourage the parents to take an active part in the session. Ask them questions; encourage them to do role plays etc.

- Show that you value any contribution made by the parents, however small or inappropriate it may seem. The group needs to feel confident in being able to contribute.

- At the end of the teaching session, always leave time for the group to ask you questions about what has been covered.

- Make sure that any materials you use either during the session or as handouts can be easily understood by the group. If they are written, are the groups able to read?
Putting it all into practice...

On the following pages we are going to describe two different types of group which are known to be effective in helping children with communication difficulties and their parents. This is intended just to give you an idea of actually how a group might run~ adapt the information to suit your own situation, and add your own ideas!

Weekly group with 3 month review

- This is a group which runs for one day a week for 6 consecutive weeks, followed up by a one-day review every 3 months.
- It is for young children with any type of communication difficulty.
- Up to 10 children can attend.
- Before attending the group every child must have a completed assessment form and goal plan.
- The timetable for each week remains the same:

08.00-08.30 am — Parents and children arrive

08.30-10.00 am — Individual reviews

10.00-10.30 am — Tea

10.30-12.30 pm — Teaching session with parents

12.30-01.30 pm — Lunch

1.30-03.30 pm — Individual reviews continued

3.30 pm — Parents and children leave

3.30-5.30 pm — Staff continue to write up children's records. Also do any evaluation of teaching sessions.
The **teaching sessions with parents** cover a different aspect of communication difficulties each week:

**Week 1**
- Outline aims of the group and the 6 week programme.
- Introductory song.
- A parent who has previously attended a group shares her experiences with the new parents.
- A detailed explanation is given on the causes of communication problems in children.
- See teaching aid, "The causes of communication problems", Section 1.

**Week 2**
- A detailed explanation and discussion of all the skills needed for communication.
- See teaching aid, "The Communication House", at the end of this section, page 21.

**Week 3**
- Low cost toy making and discussion on the importance of play.
- See Section 9 on "Play".

**Week 4**
- Teaching language in everyday situations, and practical bathing and dressing session.
- See Section 10, "Everyday Situations".

**Week 5**
- The "do's and dont's" of talking to a child.
- See teaching aid, "The Do's and Dont's", at the end of this section, page 22.

**Week 6**
- A quiz to revise what has been learnt over the last 5 weeks
  See example at the end of this section, page 24.
- Revision of individual goal plans with parents.
- Another parent from a past group shares experiences.
- Parent’s evaluation of the group.
- Giving of dates to each child for review in 3 months time.
Three day group, every 3 months

- This is a group which runs for 3 consecutive days, for example, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, once every 3 months.
- It is for young children who have the same disability.
- Up to 15 children can attend.
- Before attending the group every child must have a completed assessment form and goal plan.
- The timetable for the 3 days is drawn up at least 6 weeks in advance of the group taking place, to give time for the necessary preparations to be made.
- Each day runs from 8 am to 4 pm and follows a similar format, but the specific content of each day will depend on the needs of the particular group of children attending.

The programme below shows the general outline for a 3 day group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome</td>
<td>Practical everyday situations</td>
<td>Practical everyday situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of programme</td>
<td>Toy making</td>
<td>Individual reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual reviews</td>
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</table>

**Tea**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of group</th>
<th>Individual reviews</th>
<th>Teaching session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching session</td>
<td>Visiting speaker</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Lunch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visiting speaker for example – special school teachers, pre-school teachers, parents, disabled adults</th>
<th>Teaching session</th>
<th>Parents’ evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Date of next group</td>
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</table>

On the following pages we will give suggestions of 3 day programmes made to meet the needs of children with each of the specific disabilities we have looked at in this handbook. These suggested programmes might help you in planning and running your own groups. Give it a try!
Suggested programme for a 3 day group for children who are developmentally delayed

(For more details about how to help a child who is developmentally delayed, see Section 4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing specifically related to the previous day teaching session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of programme — make a poster of the 3 day programme and go over it with the parents. Give a brief explanation of what will take place in each session.</td>
<td>Involve the parents in low cost toy making, (see Section 9). Withdraw parents and children one by one for individual reviews.</td>
<td>Continue individual reviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tea

| Aims of group — make a written poster of your aims and explain them to the group. | Continue individual reviews. | How to talk to a child — the do's and don't's (see page 23 of this section). |
| A clear explanation of the causes of developmental delay. Answer parents' questions (see Section 4). | Invite a relevant person to advise the group on good nutrition and child care. | Group review of each child’s goal plan — parents to feedback to group their child’s goal plan. |

Lunch

| Invite a parent (who is known to you) who has a child who was developmentally delayed and who has made good progress. Encourage the parents to share experiences and ideas. | Discuss how a child’s communication skills can be built up during everyday situations. Use role play and encourage the parents to take an active part. (see Section 10). | Ask the parents what they have found useful in the programme, what has not been useful and what they would like to see included in future groups. |
| Discuss how a child’s communication skills can be built up during everyday situations. Use role play and encourage the parents to take an active part. (see Section 10). | | Give the parents the date of the next group. |
Suggested programme for a 3 day group for children who have a mental handicap

(For more details about how to help a child who has a mental handicap, see Section 4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing.</td>
<td>Brief discussion on learning in everyday situations, followed by practical bathing and dressing (see Section 10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of programme – make a poster of the 3 day programme and go over it with the parents. Give a brief explanation of what will take place in each session.</td>
<td>Involve the parents in low cost toy making (see Section 9). Withdraw parents and children one by one for individual reviews.</td>
<td>Continue individual reviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tea**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of group – make a written poster of your aims and explain them to the group.</th>
<th>Continue individual reviews.</th>
<th>How to talk to a child — The &quot;Do's&quot; and &quot;Dont's&quot; (see page 22 of this section).</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A clear explanation of the causes of mental handicap. Answer parents’ questions (see Section 4).</td>
<td>Invite a local pre-school teacher to advise on preparing a child for pre-school (see Section 12).</td>
<td>Group review of each child's goal plan — parents to feedback to group their child's goal plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lunch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invite a parent (who is known to you) who has a child who has a mental handicap and who has made good progress. Encourage the parents to share experiences and ideas.</th>
<th>Discuss how a child's communication skills can be built up like building a house — &quot;The Communication House&quot; (see Section 1 and page 20 of this section).</th>
<th>Ask the parents what they have found useful in the programme, what has not been useful and what they would like to see included in future groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invite an adult with a mental handicap to talk to the parents about herself.</td>
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<td>Give the parents the date of the next group.</td>
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</table>
Suggested programme for a 3 day group for children who have cerebral palsy

(For more details about how to help a child who has cerebral palsy, see Section 5.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome. Outline of programme - make a poster of the 3 day programme and go over it with the parents. Give a brief explanation of what will take place in each session.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing. Involve the parents in low cost toy making (see Section 9). Withdraw parents and children one by one for individual reviews.</td>
<td>Practical feeding session, specifically related to the previous day's teaching session. Continue individual reviews.</td>
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**Tea**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims of group — make a written poster of your aims and explain them to the group. A clear explanation of the causes of cerebral palsy. Answer parents' questions (see Section 5).</td>
<td>Continue individual reviews. Invite an adult who has cerebral palsy to talk to the parents about him/herself.</td>
<td>Discussion and demonstration of how signs and pictures can be used as an alternative means of communication. Group review of each child's goal plan — parents to feedback to group their child's goal plan.</td>
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**Lunch**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invite a parent (who is known to you) who has a child who has cerebral palsy and who has made good progress. Encourage the parents to share experiences and ideas.</td>
<td>Discuss the importance of good feeding skills, emphasising how a child's communication can also be built up in the situation (see section 5).</td>
<td>Ask the parents what they have found useful in the programme, what has not been useful and what they would like to see included in future groups. Give the parents the date of the next group.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Suggested programme for a 3 day group for children who are hearing impaired

(For more details about how to help a child who is hearing impaired, see Section 6.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome. Outline of programme — make a poster of the 3 day programme and go over it with the parents. Give a brief explanation of what will take place in each session.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing. Involve the parents in low cost toy making (see Section 9). Withdraw parents and children one by one for individual reviews.</td>
<td>Discuss further the importance of using speech and signs. Revise any signs taught by the deaf adults, practising them in real situations. Continue individual reviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tea**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims of groups — make a written poster of your aims and explain them to the group. A clear explanation of the causes of hearing impairment. Answer parents’ questions (see Section 6).</td>
<td>Continue individual reviews. Invite local deaf people to tell the parents about themselves. Introduce the idea of using signs to communicate (see Section 6).</td>
<td>Invite a representative from the local special education department, to discuss with the parents, school facilities for hearing impaired children. Group review of each child’s goal plan — parents to feedback to group their child’s goal plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lunch**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invite a parent (who is known to you) who has a child who is hearing impaired and who has made good progress. Encourage the parents to share experiences and ideas.</td>
<td>Discuss how a child’s communication skills can be built up like building a house — “The Communication House” (see Section 1 and page 20 of this section).</td>
<td>Ask the parents what they have found useful in the programme, what has not been useful and what they would like to see included in future groups. Give the parents the date of the next group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggested programme for a 3 day group for children who are multiply disabled

(For more details about how to help a child who is multiply disabled, see Section 7.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and welcome.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing.</td>
<td>Practical bathing and dressing, specifically related to the previous day's teaching session.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline of programme — make a poster of the 3 day programme and go over it with the parents. Give a brief explanation of what will take place in each session.</td>
<td>Involve the parents in low cost toy making (see Section 9). Withdraw parents and children one by one for individual reviews.</td>
<td>Continue individual reviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tea**

| Aims of group — make a written poster of your aims and explain them to the group. | Continue individual reviews.                                    | Parents share experiences and ideas of how to care for their disabled children. |
| A clear explanation of the causes of multiple disability. Answer parents' questions (see Section 7). | Invite a representative from the social welfare department to talk to the parents about resources available. | Group review of each child's goal plan — parents to feedback to group their child's goal plan. |

**Lunch**

| Invite a parent (who is known to you) who has a child who has multiple disability and who has made good progress. Encourage the parents to share experiences and ideas. | Discuss how a child's basic communication skills can be built up during everyday situations. Use role play and encourage the parents to take an active part (see Section 10). | Ask the parents what they have found useful in the programme, what has not been useful and what they would like to see included in future groups. Give the parents the date of the next group. |

This is very helpful, but will I need to come up with a new programme for every group I hold in the future?

Well, that depends. In my experience I have found that parents benefit from having sessions repeated from one group to the next so don't be afraid of some repetition. But make sure there is also some variety so that you keep the parents interested.
And remember! After each group that you run, it's important to make a report - this should include your list of expenses and will be your record of what went on. In writing a report, here are some ideas of information to include …

GROUP FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN – SHASHA DISTRICT, 7-10TH OCTOBER 1991.

Venue: Shasha Secondary School

Accommodation arrangements: School classrooms

Catering arrangements: Food provided by local stores, on requisition, and prepared by mothers present

Staff present: 2 Rehabilitation Technicians. (R.T.’s)
2 R.T. students
1 Occupational therapist
1 Red Cross volunteer

Visiting staff: Special School teacher
Remedial tutor
Deaf adults
1 Speech/Communication therapist

Total number of children: 23

Aims: • To help the parents understand about hearing impairment, and to give them ideas of how to help their child at home.
• To provide an opportunity for parents to meet together to share ideas and experiences.
• To review each child’s progress.
• To involve other people relevant to the child’s management, and to work together with them.

Programme: See attached sheet

Register of children attending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of birth</th>
<th>Postal address</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blessing Chidonga</td>
<td>5/3/87</td>
<td>P. Bag 112, Shasha</td>
<td>Letter to pre-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Masambo</td>
<td>23/10/89</td>
<td>Gonzo Farm, Shasha</td>
<td>Support mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Bhebhe</td>
<td>9/7/85</td>
<td>P. Bag 357, Shasha</td>
<td>Refer to special education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

etc...........

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Continued on Page 2...
Parents evaluation:

• Meeting the deaf adults was very interesting. They have given me hope.
• I now understand what is wrong with my child and how I can help him.
• All husbands should be encouraged to come.
• There should be more schools for our children.

Staff evaluation:

• The number of children and staff attending was good.
• The involvement of visiting staff was good, especially SPS and the deaf adults.
• Catering and accommodation arrangements were good, but there was not enough food.
• The programme was well-planned.

Problems: Amount of food.

Special school teacher failed to attend on first two days.

Suggestions for next group:

• Special school teacher to come for full 3 days
• More food needed
• Deaf adults to be invited to every group
• Low cost toy making
• Social welfare to be invited

Date of next group: 3rd-5th February 1992
Same venue

Today’s date: 23/10/91

Signed: Machinga Marufu
R.T.

List of Expenses
(Total people attending - 50)

- Food and drink $600.00
- Accommodation $400.00
- Transport $200.00
- Helpers $150.00
- Fuel $60.00
- Materials $50.00
- Miscellaneous $100.00

Total Expenses $1560.00

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So you see - if you plan well, your group is more likely to be a success. Try it - you will enjoy it and the parents, children and staff will really benefit from it. Go on - give it a go!
Important points to remember about working with parents in groups

- Working with parents and children in groups can be an effective way of helping disabled children.

- We need to work together with parents as our equals and encourage them to take an active part in the management of their child. They are the most important people.

- Working in groups requires thought and organisation.

- There are many advantages of working with groups of parents, and individual work can be incorporated into it.

- Often parents themselves are the best people to provide support to other parents, and group situations are an ideal opportunity for this.

- There are different ways of organising groups for parents.

- A group can either be for children who have different disabilities, or for children who share the same disability.

- In order to plan future groups, we need to keep good records of each group, the programmes followed and children’s progress. The parent’s evaluations should be used to help in future planning of groups.

- We must try to understand the difficulties that a family with a disabled child might face and not be critical or impatient with a parent who is struggling to cope with the demands of their child.

- Use local resources to help you in running groups for parents.
Here are instructions for making three of the teaching ideas covered in this section.

• "The Communication House"

• "How to talk to a child — the Do's and Don'ts"

• Communication quiz
The communication house

This is a set of posters which fit together to show each skill involved in communication, and how these skills are built up. The aim is to explain to parents all the different skills a child needs to develop in order to be able to communicate well.

You will need: Scissors, card or paper, stickystuff and pens (coloured if possible).

To make the posters:

1 Cut out two posters each approximately 15 cm x 90 cm.
   Label one “Attention” and the other “Play”.

2 Cut out three posters each approximately 15 cm x 30 cm.
   Label them “Listening”, “Imitation” and “Turntaking”.

3 Cut out one poster of 30 cm x 110 cm.
   Cut off the corners to make a roof-like shape as shown in the picture. Label the lower part “Understanding” and the upper part “Gesture”. Cut this in half to make two labels.

4 Cut out one poster of 30 cm x 20 cm.
   This is the paint pot, label it “Speech”.
   If you want to, cut out a paint brush, too!

5 Cut out another two posters for the door and the speech bubble. Write on it “Hello there!”
Before you use this teaching aid be sure that you yourself understand what skills are needed for communication, and how they are built up to form the communication house (see Section 1).

To use this teaching aid:

- Explain to the parents that there are many different skills that a child needs to be able to communicate well. We can think of these skills being built up, as we would build up a house.

- Ask the group “What is the most important part of a house?” When they say “The foundation”, agree and explain that the foundation of the communication house is “Attention”. Without "attention" the other skills needed for communication cannot develop. Give examples of what we mean by "attention", and explain exactly why it is so important.

- Do the same with each of the other bricks in turn, and with the roof, being sure to explain clearly the importance of each of the skills.

- When all the bricks and the roof are in place ask the parents “Can a child communicate with these skills?” The answer to this question is “Yes”. Explain why.

- Now ask “What communication skill is missing?” When they say “Speech,” agree and explain how we can see this as being like the paint of a house. Speech is not essential for communication but it is a more usual way of communicating. Similarly, paint is not essential for a house to stand, but it is more usual for us to paint a house.

- Once the house is complete, with speech as the paint, explain that it is only after a child has developed all these skills that he is able to communicate using spoken language. Stick on the door and the speech bubble saying “Hello there!”

When the display is complete, revise each of the skills in the communication house and discuss them. Answer any questions. Stress the fact that it is most important to develop the skills of the main house, instead of just concentrating on speech.
How to talk to a child — the do’s and don’t’s

This consists of matching pairs of cards. Each pair shows a good way and a not-so-good way of talking to a child. The aim is to remind parents how best to communicate with their child.

You will need: scissors, ruler, card, stickiestuff and pens.

To make the cards:

1 Cut out two cards, each approximately 28 cm x 20 cm. On one card draw a happy face. On the other card draw a sad face.

2 Cut out twelve cards, each approximately 12 x 15 cm. Sort these cards into 6 pairs.
   - Pair 1 — to show the importance of getting down to the same level as the child.
   - Pair 2 — to show the importance of getting the child’s attention before you talk to her.
   - Pair 3 — to show the importance of using simple and clear language.
   - Pair 4 — to show the importance of talking to a child during everyday activities.
   - Pair 5 — to show the importance of praising the child when she tries, and not criticizing her.
   - Pair 6 — to show the importance of responding to the child whenever she tries to communicate with you.
Before you use this teaching aid be sure that you yourself understand how best to communicate with a child.

To use this teaching aid:

- Explain to the parents what this activity is about.

- First stick up the posters showing the happy face and the sad face on the wall to give two columns.

- Divide the parents into six groups. Give each group a pair of cards.

- Each group must discuss their pair of cards, decide which card shows the good way of talking, and which one shows the not-so-good way.

- Now each group must take their turn to go up to the front and explain to the whole group which of the two cards they have chosen as being the good way of talking, and why.

- Ask the group to stick up their two cards in the relevant column, that is, the good way of talking under the happy face; the not-so-good way of talking under the sad face.

- Discuss the group's decision and check that everyone agrees.

- Ask the group to do a role play of the good way of talking to a child as shown on their card.

When every group has taken their turn, go back over all the good points. Stress that the way we talk to a child can strongly influence the development of that child's communication skills. Remember — it is not how much we talk that is important, but rather how we talk.
Communication quiz

This is a quiz aimed at revising all the information covered during the course of the group. It is not a test for the parents. It is a game.

You will need: your question paper, stickistuff, a pen and a surface on which to write the scores.

To do the quiz:

- Explain the aim of this activity to the parents.

- Divide the group into smaller groups of 4-6 people.

- Give each group a number and write these on the score sheet in columns.

- Work through your question paper asking each group a question in turn. If the group answers the question correctly, they get one point. If they do not answer the question correctly, they do not get a point.

- As you go through each question discuss any issues arising from it.

- When all the questions have been answered add up the points scored by each group.

Now look on the next page for ideas for quiz questions. This quiz asks questions related to communication in general. For questions related to a specific disability, see the relevant section.
Suggested quiz questions:

1. Who can help a child with a communication problem most?  
   [Answer: The family.]

2. Give 2 reasons why a child might have difficulties with communication?  
   [Answer: Problems with hearing; learning; behaviour; understanding; muscles.]

3. Tongue tie is a cause of communication problems. True or false?  
   [Answer: False.]

4. Are there pills or an operation that can make a child talk?  
   [Answer: No.]

5. What is the foundation stone of "The Communication House?"  
   [Answer: Attention.]

6. Give 3 other skills that are needed for communication.  
   [Answer: Listening; turntaking; imitation; play; understanding; gesture; speech.]

7. Why is speech like the paint of a house?  
   [Answer: Because just as paint is not essential for a house to stand, speech is not essential for communication.]

8. Without the foundation (attention) will the communication house be strong? Explain your answer.  
   [Answer: No. If a child has difficulty concentrating or attending to an activity it is hard for him to learn.]

9. Can we communicate without speech?  
   [Answer: Yes.]

10. We need expensive toys to help a child learn. True or false?  
    [Answer: False.]

11. Which situations are the best for teaching a child communication skills?  
    [Answer: Everyday situations.]

12. Why are everyday situations the best?  
    [Answer: Because they are a natural part of a family’s routine and take place many times during a day.]

13. Why is play important?  
    [Answer: Because through play a child learns about people and the world around him.]

14-19. Give an example of good ways of communicating with a child.  
   [Answers: (i) Get down to the level of the child.  
             (ii) Get child’s attention before talking.  
             (iii) Use simple, clear language.  
             (iv) Talk during everyday activities.  
             (v) Praise the child when he tries.  
             (vi) Respond to the child.]

20. All children can learn to speak. True or false?  
    [Answer: False.]