

Strategies to Support Young Children with ONH

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Strengths of Students with ONH

Love of music

Great interest in letters/numbers/shapes/colors

Rote memory and imitation

Many are mobile

Challenges for Students with ONH

Developmental delay (wide variations across areas and level)

Mood, temperature, sleep issues

Health issues and medication side effects

Behavioral challenges

Atypical reactions to sensory stimuli

Categories of Intervention

Behavior Strategies

Social Skills Strategies

Language Strategies

Visual Strategies

Behavior as Communication

Physical/medical

Developmentally appropriate

Boredom

Routine

Sensory/environment

Physical

Chronic condition (e.g, allergies)

Pain

Positioning discomfort

Hunger/thirst

Constipation

Medicine side effect

Sleep



<https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Challenging%20Behaviors%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>

Medication Side Effects

Growth hormone

- Fluid retention
- Muscle and joint aches

Thyroid hormone

- Headache
- Sleep problems
- Feeling nervous or irritable
- Appetite changes
- Weight changes

Antidiuretic hormone

- Headache
- Nose bleeds
- Dry mouth
- Constipation

Cortisol

- High or increased blood pressure
- Fluid retention
- Build up of fat in different areas of the body
- Bruise easily
- Prone to infections

Developmentally Appropriate

Does the task match the child's developmental level?

- Does the child have the motor ability to complete the task?
- Does the child have the receptive language to understand the request?
- Does the child have the expressive language to respond?
- Does the child have the social/emotional skills to interpret the communication
- Is the task too easy...

<https://activelearningspace.org/principles/key-points-overview/developmentally-appropriate/>

Social/Emotional Development

Social/emotional developmental level may be different than physical, cognitive, and/or motor levels

It is important to recognize your students' behaviors in the context of their social/emotional developmental level.

- Ex: 0-2 months grabbing/pinching is a request for contact, not aggression
- Ex: 10 months: may hit adult with object to get attention (also not aggression)



<https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pdf/complet/emotions>

Boredom

Child not interested in “too-easy” task

Child not aware of opportunities to explore due to visual impairment

Child not able to access materials due to motor challenges

Child IS able to access his/her body to provide entertainment/sensory input

Activity	Non-disabled	disabled
ADLs		X
Gross motor activities	X	
Fine motor activities	X	
communication	X	
therapy		X
Doctor's appointments		X
playing independently	X	
Playing with adults		X
Playing with children	X	
Spending time alone		X

<https://activelearningspace.org/principles/how-special-needs-children-spend-their-day/>

Providing Access to Materials

Active learning environments

Stay put materials

Predictable environment (knows where toys are)

Routines (so the child knows what to do)



<https://ohiodeafblind.com/tools-and-resources/ocdbe-products/4-hold-everything-2004>
Activelearningspace.org

Routines

New environment, staff changes, family changes?

Time of day?

Structure and predictability are important

- Give the task a clear beginning and end (mini routine)
- Incorporate new activities into routine slowly, teach laterally
- Incorporate breaks in between challenging tasks

Transitioning in and out of routines can be difficult (unpredictable)

- Give the child a warning that transition is coming (countdown timer, etc)
- Give the child time to adjust to the new activity/routine before placing demands on the child

Music

Helps children to process receptive language

Helps with transitions

Helps with concept development

Provides structure/routine

Song boxes



Sensory

What is the child's response to sensory information

- Sounds
- Smells
- Textures
- Light
- Temperature

Does the child become overwhelmed by sensory stimuli?

Does the child seek additional sensory input?



Sensory Strategies – Removing Stimuli

Reduce the complexity (Tiejen)

- Task
- Environment (don't forget smells and temperature)
- Both

Sensory break

- Space: tent, parachute, blanket fort
- Activity: walk, errand

Low and slow (Pawletko)



<https://pcvis.vision/educators-and-therapists/the-whats-the-complexity-framework/>

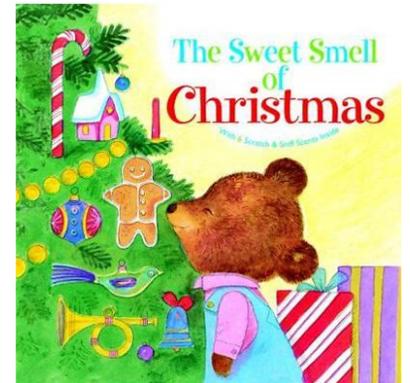
Sensory Strategies – Add Stimuli

Sensory break/sensory diet (OT collaboration)

- Vestibular/proprioceptive: Bounce, jump, swing, heavy work, etc
- Tactile: vibrating toothbrush, ice roller,
Other? Look at sensory diets

Add sensory to task

- Scent based story box
- Foam letters or sandpaper letters



Parent Education

Sensitivity of the child's hands (HUH, etc)

- Try other parts of the body
- Gradually increase complexity of textures

One sense at a time

- Beware of overwhelming environments
- Toys may light up and sing and vibrate and roll

Sensory breaks as part of the daily routine

Social Skills Strategies

Many children with ONH have a delay in social skills development

In addition to missing out on incidental learning opportunities, children with ONH have additional social challenges (receptive language, sensory integration, perseverative behaviors)

Many excellent social skills strategies for young children with ONH have come from the field of DB education

Five Phases of Educational Treatment

Offering

Imitation

Interaction

Sharing the work

Consequence

For students at developmental level under 24 months, only first 3 phases are used

Lilli Nielsen, 1990, SIKON: *Are you Blind?*

Offering

Playing near the child

Make no demands of the child

Goals:

- Increase awareness of social interactions
- Teach the child that he/she can initiate interactions
- Build trust
- Learn likes/dislikes



Image from activelearningspace.org

Examples of Offering

Sitting and playing an instrument (drum, harp, bells)

Playing with a noisy toy (crinkly, squeaky, etc)

Exploring a texture blanket





Co-Active Movement

Based on the work of Jan van Dijk

- Gains the trust of a child
- Do WITH not FOR

“Moving together with the child”

Children learn new activity when someone does it WITH them

Best if parent/caregiver is the adult play partner

- Need to be able to read child’s behaviors and emotions
- Engagement cues vs. Disengagement cues

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/resources/1316-conversations-without-language-building-quality-interactions-with-children-who-are-deaf-blind>

Co-Active Movement

Promotes conversation with limited language skills

- a short turn-taking format in which the adult and child alternately engage in actions with or without objects;
- following the child's lead in terms of interest or joint attention to objects;
- a playful atmosphere, in which both adult and child are enjoying the time spent together;
- modeling communication for the purpose of "commenting," "describing," or "requesting information"

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/resources/1316-conversations-without-language-building-quality-interactions-with-children-who-are-deaf-blind>



Dr. van Dijk and Tabor





Co-Active Movement

Hula Hoop – make a game (also helps with grasp)

Row Row Your Boat

Drumming

Walking

Rocking

Bouncing



More Social Skills Strategies

Social games or playing with a toy

- Also encourages turn taking and speech

Pretend Play

Model appropriate play and social interactions

- Waving bye-bye
- Facing Speaker

Describe what is happening around them

- Why is the other child crying?
- What are the other children doing on the playground?

Providing choices

Giving age and skill appropriate chores

- What they do does affect others



Language Strategies

Daily routines

- Incorporate speech and language practice into all interactions
- Learn language when it is heard over and over throughout their day
- No need for “extra” activities

Self Talk

- Describe what you are doing
- Describe what is happening around the child
- Use appropriate pronouns (“I am playing”, not “Mommy is playing”)

Parallel Talk

- Describe what child is doing
- Use appropriate pronouns (“You are getting dirty”, not “Sara is getting dirty”)

<https://anchorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Speech-and-Language-Strategies-at-Home.pdf>

Language Strategies

Give Choices

- Gives them independence
- Can make choice by using a word, sound, pointing, moving toward an object, touching an object cue...

Have Fun

- Sing
- Use funny voices
- Be playful (make animal sounds, make sound effects, act out stories, play “Mommy Says”)

Follow the child’s lead

- Encourages independence
- Give them choices or
- Join in what they are doing (banging blocks, crinkling paper, coloring)

<https://anchorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Speech-and-Language-Strategies-at-Home.pdf>



Language Strategies

Wait

- Give them time to process and respond
- May need 10-20 seconds or more
- Watch for a response (may not be verbal) before repeating or assisting

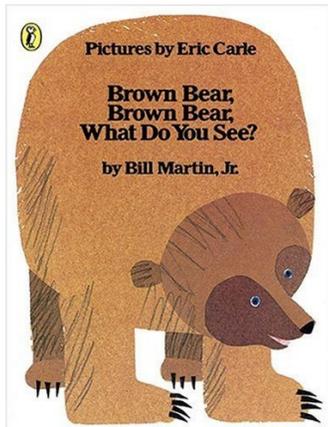
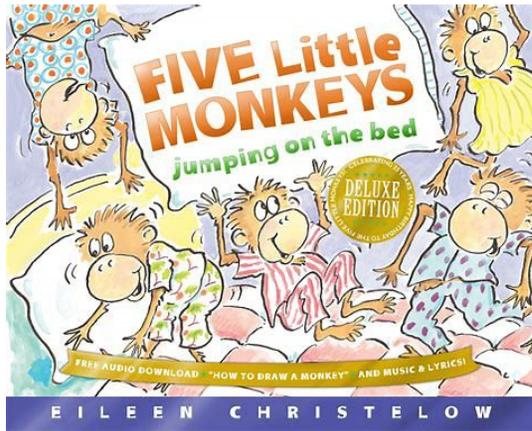
Limit Questions

- Children may tune out lots of questions or imitate the pattern themselves as a primary form of communication
- Rephrase questions into comments when possible
 - Instead of “Is that pudding good?” say “That pudding looks delicious!” or
 - Instead of “Are you playing with a truck?” say “You have a blue truck”

Specific Language

- Use specific nouns and descriptors (“get the soft blue blanket” rather than “get that one”)

<https://anchorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Communication-Hints.pdf>



Predictable Books

Rhyme, rhythm, and repetition

- Children fill in the repeated or rhyming word
- Can sing and act out the story

Examples:

- Brown Bear
- Five Little Monkeys
- Goodnight, Moon
- Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes

Story Boxes/Bags/Buckets/Boards/Bars



- Use actual objects to illustrate the story
- Let your child explore that object
- Have your child find that object
- Concept based
 - Seasonal
 - Objects of interest (dinosaurs)
 - Special Event (birthday party)
 - Letter
 - Color
 - Shapes
 - Textures
 - Holidays

Visual Strategies

Visual environment MUST promote visual performance

Depending on visual acuity, braille and tactile materials may be needed

Present materials within the child's visual field

- Encourage child to turn his/her head to look for people and objects outside their visual world

Increase print size

- Enlarged print
- Magnification

May need high contrast background





Visual Strategies

Minimize visual complexity

- Images and objects should be simple
- Present in isolation or one at a time

Lighting

- Adjust light levels
- Wear tinted lenses
- Minimize glare on surfaces
- May need high illumination

Learn depth perception

- Fine and gross motor activities
- Stacking, nesting, container play, ball tossing/rolling, stairs

Conclusion

Children with ONH have a variety of unique strengths and challenges

Strategies can be implemented to help with

- Behaviors and sensory needs
- Social skills development
- Language development
- Visual needs in the home and classroom

Collaborating with other professionals is critical

- ONH is a complex diagnosis
 - Children with ONH need all disciplines to understand the diagnosis and their unique needs
 - Implement strategies to help the whole child
- 

Resources

www.anchorcenter.org

<https://anchorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Communication-Hints.pdf>

<https://anchorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Speech-and-Language-Strategies-at-Home.pdf>

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/resources/1316-conversations-without-language-building-quality-interactions-with-children-who-are-deaf-blind>

www.blindbabies.org

www.pathstoliteracy.org

www.tsbvi.edu

Dennison, E. and Klair, V: Eye Conditions in Infants and Young Children that Result in Visual Impairment and Syndromes and Other Conditions that May Accompany Visual Disorders. VIISA Project (2003).

Questions?

SAVE THE DATE!

- Part 3: Collaboration
 - September 12 @ 1pm CT

CONTACT INFORMATION

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