



celebrating Culture - Improving Clarity

Communication, Language, Speech and Voice

There is nothing more elemental in all existence than communication, it is the very essence of life. To communicate is to care, and connect with each other. An individual whose communication ability is impaired or hampered is socially and emotionally isolated. All living creatures are connected through communication, yet it is in humans that we see its ultimate expression in the marvellous vehicle of language.

The two important constituents of language, the sending and receiving of spoken messages, is our most frequent and important way of sharing our minds and relating to each other. By means of an incredible swift and complicated process, humans translate ideas into the magic of speech.

Because speech comes so easily to most of us we fail to understand its miraculous nature. It seems as natural and as easy as breathing. We, who work with people with communication difficulties are constantly aware of the extent of the deprivation these people suffer. Our task is no small one. It is to help these persons gain the tools they need to fulfill their potential, to help them join the human race. Effective speech is of utmost importance if one is to gain status and material possessions. Most humans place a premium upon effective communication. Verbal skill is greatly rewarded in most societies.

Voice is a fundamental component of oral communication. Because of their dynamic vocal mechanism, humans have an impressive range of vocal behaviours. Without voice, communication is limited to non oral modes of signs and symbols. The human voice is capable of variations that create diversity in communication as well as many aesthetic effects. It can give information over and beyond the words spoken. The tone with which someone says something is often as important, if not more important than what is said. The voice can express anger, disappointment, joy, or love without using words that express such emotion.

Normal voice and the acquisition of speech and language are not sufficient to communicate effectively. To communicate effectively, one must also be fluent. Fluency is a characteristic of both speech and language. It refers to the easy, smooth, flowing and effortless speech. Non fluent speech does not necessarily suggest a lack of language competence. However, fluent speech is, especially when it makes sense, it almost always suggest a high level of competence.

There are many specialists who have studied oral language, yet Speech-Language therapists are the only professionals who are qualified to address all four areas of communication, that is, Speech, Language, Voice and Fluency difficulties.

Published in Take Control –hold the future in you hand magazine, Issue 3 June/July 2008

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