

Program Summary

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 disorders. The goal of *It Takes Two to Talk* is to empower 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 offered to late-talking toddlers and preschool-age children with specific language impairment, as well as to children with cognitive and developmental delays under age five (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2006).

Program Features

The *It Takes Two to Talk* Program has the following features:

- It is led by a Hanen Certified speech-language pathologist (SLP), who has received specialized training at a Hanen certification workshop
- It is offered to groups of parents (up to eight families per program)
- It has three major components:
 - ◆ a pre-program assessment and baseline videotaping of parent-child interaction
 - ◆ a minimum of 16 hours (six to eight sessions) of group training for parents; and
 - ◆ three individual video feedback sessions for each parent attending the program (parent-child interaction is videotaped by and reviewed with the SLP)

- It is supported by a user-friendly parent guidebook, as well as a companion DVD and detailed leaders guide for use by the SLP

Program Objectives

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

- **parent education** — parents learn some essential, basic concepts about communication and language — e.g., the development of communication; differences between expressive and receptive language; the importance of the child's active participation in frequent, extended turn-taking episodes. This knowledge helps parents better understand their child's stage of communication development and facilitates the setting of realistic communication goals. It also enhances parents' responsiveness to their children's communicative attempts.
- **early language intervention** — parents learn to apply language facilitation strategies flexibly across contexts so intervention becomes a natural part of parent-child interactions. Strategies highlighted by the SLP for individual parents are tied to their child's communication goals, which 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 modify their interactive behaviour. The focus of these



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sessions is on a) the SLP coaching the parent “on-line” to help her/ him apply strategies successfully during interactions with the child; and b) the shared viewing of the videotaped interaction, with the SLP guiding the discussion to increase the parent’s awareness of her/his own interactive behaviour and its impact on the child. In addition, the SLP provides feedback on the parent’s use of strategies and helps her/him identify metacognitive techniques that will facilitate consistent strategy use. These help parents “remember to remember.”

of the family system in that any action or event affecting one member of the family unit affects them all (Brown, Thurman, & Pearl, 1993; Donahue-Kilburg, 1992). The *family* is considered to be the client in an *It Takes Two to Talk* Program since it is widely recognized that without family involvement, intervention is unlikely to be successful and any short-term positive effects erode quite rapidly (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). In the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program, a collaborative, respectful partnership is built with parents, who are acknowledged as knowing their child best. Empowerment of parents involves supporting and strengthening their capacity to access knowledge and gain practical skills, which in turn, bolsters their sense of self-efficacy in relation to fostering their child’s development (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004). This is the focus of *It Takes Two to Talk*.

In addition to having a family-centered focus, *It Takes Two to Talk* provides a **naturalistic approach to intervention**, which draws upon “strategies that identify and use opportunities for learning that occur throughout the child’s natural activities, routines, and interactions; follow the child’s lead; and use natural consequences” (Sheldon & Rush, 2001, p. 2). By learning to communicate in real-life situations, a child is better able to generalize newly learned communication skills to other situations. In addition, in contrast to direct treatment which is time limited and time specific, *It Takes Two to Talk* enables parents to make intervention a continual and ongoing process (Rossetti, 2001).

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- **social support** — this has been shown to have a positive impact on the well-being of the child and family when the child has a disability (Crnic & Stormshak, 1997). In *It Takes Two to Talk*, parents gain both formal and informal social support. The SLP, whose multi-faceted role includes that of group leader, interventionist, coach and counsellor provides more formal support. The parent group itself provides informal support through the sharing of experiences with individuals in similar situations, who can genuinely empathize. This constitutes a vitally important component of the program. The results of a study of consumer satisfaction by Girolametto, Tannock & Siegal (1993) confirmed the value parents place on the support they experienced during *It Takes Two to Talk*.

Theoretical Basis

Philosophical Foundation

It Takes Two to Talk reflects a **family-centered model of intervention**, recognizing the child as part of a dynamic social system and the family as the most important element in a child’s life. This philosophical orientation recognizes the interrelatedness

Theoretical Foundation

It Takes Two to Talk is based on a social-interactionist perspective of language acquisition, which views the development of communicative competence within a framework of early caregiver-child interactions (Bohannon & Bonvillian, 1997). This perspective views language acquisition as

an interactive process in which the communicative behaviour of the parent influences the behaviour of the child and vice versa (Sameroff & Fiese, 1990). This interactive system may either encourage or inhibit the child's communication development, depending on many factors including the child's ability to provide clear behavioural cues and the responsiveness of the parent to the child's cues (Barnard, 1997; Stock, 2002).

The approach parents learn in an *It Takes Two to Talk* Program is based on the *responsivity* hypothesis. This hypothesis maintains that responsive language input which is contingent on the child's focus of interest and/or communicative behaviour, is simplified and has exaggerated prosody, is more easily processed, thereby permitting the child to redirect more cognitive resources to language learning (Dominey & Dodane, 2004; Girolametto & Weitzman, 2006). In addition, the adults' use of responsive language may promote the child's intrinsic motivation to interact and learn to communicate because responsiveness fosters a child's experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness — psychological needs that fuel intrinsic motivation (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Weitzman, Girolametto & Greenberg, 2006).

Responsiveness, which is reflected in the caregivers' prompt, positive and sensitive contingent input has been consistently associated with optimal child language outcomes (Stock, 2002) including greater receptive language at one year (Baumwell, Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein, 1997; Rollins, 2003) superior speech and vocabulary development and receptive language

in the second and third year of life (Olson, Bates & Bayles, 1986; Rollins, 2003) and larger receptive vocabulary at age 12 (Beckwith & Cohen, 1989).

There are three clusters of **Responsive Interaction Strategies** that are associated with the social interactive model of language intervention and which parents learn in *It Takes Two to Talk*: **child-oriented behaviours**; **interaction-promoting strategies** and **language-modeling strategies** (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2006).

Responsive Interaction Strategies Parents Learn in *It Takes Two to Talk*

1. **Child-oriented behaviors** are designed to encourage the child to initiate interaction, thereby fostering frequent episodes of joint interaction around the child's interests — strategies include Observe, Wait and Listen; Get Face to Face; Follow the Child's Lead.
2. **Interaction-promoting strategies** are designed to foster balanced turn-taking between caregivers and children — strategies include Match Your Turns to Your Child's Turns; Cue your Child to Take a Turn; Ask Questions that Keep the Conversation Going.
3. **Language-modeling strategies** are designed to expand children's receptive and expressive language skills — strategies include Interpret; Highlight Your Language; Expand on What the Child Says; Extend the Topic.

Note: In addition to incidences where referenced, much of the information from this summary was adapted from: Girolametto, L. & Weitzman, E. (2006). *It Takes Two to Talk* — The Hanen Program® for Parents: Early Language Intervention through Caregiver Training. In R. McCauley and M. Fey (Eds.), *Treatment of language disorders in children*, pp. 77-103. New York: Brookes Publishing.

Summary of Empirical Research

Four randomized controlled intervention studies have been conducted on children and their mothers who attended *It Takes Two to Talk* — The Hanen Program® for Parents.

The principle investigator for these studies was Dr. Luigi Girolametto, Associate Professor, Department of Speech-Language Pathology, University of Toronto.

Studies #1 and #2

Study #1	20 preschool children (22-62 mos) with developmental delays of mixed etiology, and their mothers (Girolametto, 1988)
Study #2	32 preschool children (14-60 mos) with developmental delays of mixed etiology, and their mothers (Tannock, Girolametto & Siegel, 1992)

In these two studies, changes in the interactive behaviour of mothers and children who had participated in *It Takes Two to Talk* (experimental group) were compared with those of a matched group of mothers and children in a delayed treatment control group, who were wait-listed for the *It Takes Two to Talk* program.

The following results were obtained from Studies #1 and #2:

- ***Decreased directiveness and increased responsiveness in mothers in the experimental group***

Mothers in the experimental group decreased their directiveness and increased their responsiveness, including use of commenting and contingent labeling. Follow-up measures used only in Study #2 found that, four months post-treatment, mothers in the experimental group maintained their gains.

- ***Increase in responsiveness, assertiveness and verbal turns of children in the experimental group***

Children in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in their social assertiveness and joint attention when compared with children in the control group. They also showed an improvement in their ability to take turns, both verbally and non-verbally, compared to the control group.

- ***Mother-child interactions in the experimental group were more balanced, frequent and longer-lasting***

Interactions between mothers and children in the experimental group were more balanced (mothers took fewer turns), lasted longer and occurred more frequently. This change was linked to changes in the mothers' interactive behaviour as a result of attending *It Takes Two to Talk*.

The changes in length and duration of interactive episodes have implications for vocabulary development since mothers' labeling during extended episodes has been shown to lead to growth in their children's receptive vocabulary, and to a much greater expansion in expressive vocabulary in older children (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).

- ***Reports of improved family well-being***

Data obtained from parent questionnaires indicated secondary treatment effects on family functioning. These included positive changes in the children's behaviour and an enhanced parent-child relationship (Tannock & Girolametto, 1992).

Study #3

A Two-Year Study on the Efficacy of It Takes Two to Talk — The Hanen Program® for Parents

This study investigated the efficacy of *It Takes Two to Talk* — The Hanen Program® for Parents, adapted to include focused stimulation. It involved 32 children aged 2 to 3^{1/2} years, all of whom had severe expressive language delays, and who had no more than 50 single words in their vocabularies (most had significantly fewer than 50 words). The study utilized a pre-test post-test control group design, with random assignment to an experimental group. The mothers in the experimental group participated in an *It Takes Two to Talk* Program (only mothers' data was used, although some fathers attended) and a delayed treatment control group was wait-listed for the program.

The program, which included parents' learning the same responsive strategies as in the other studies, included the assignment of ten target words to each child. These words represented objects or function words that were relevant and motivating for the child, had an initial phoneme the child could say and were developmentally appropriate. Parents were taught to use these words repetitively with their child during everyday interactions and daily routines. They also learned to set up and create new routines in which the words could be used repetitively.

The following results were obtained from Study #3:

- ***Mothers in the experimental group used target words spontaneously and repetitively, while reducing mean length of utterance***

Mothers who attended *It Takes Two to Talk* used the target words spontaneously and repetitively during interactions with their child compared with mothers in the control group. They also used fewer words per minute and shorter sentences. These changes in the mothers' interactive behaviour and language use were related to significant improvements in their children's language skills.

- ***The children in the experimental group demonstrated accelerated vocabulary and language development, compared with the control group***

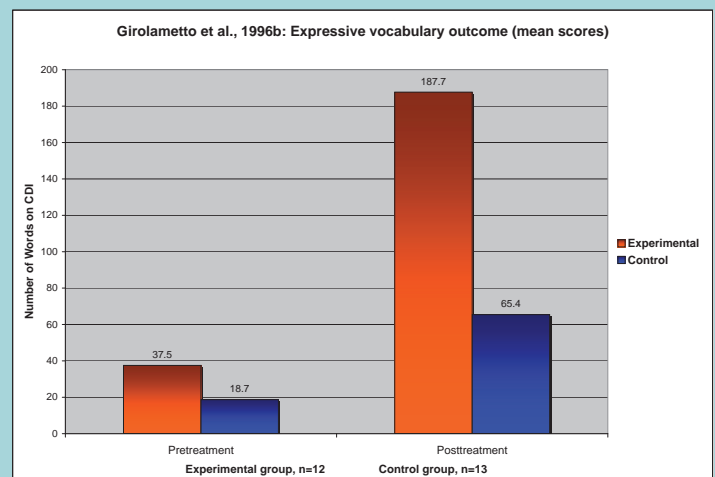
Compared with children in the control group, children whose mothers attended the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program demonstrated the following:

- ◆ Use of significantly more utterances and a higher rate of words per minute

- ◆ Larger vocabularies and a greater variety of words
- ◆ Use of more target words in structured and play situations
- ◆ Greater spontaneous use of words that had not been targeted
- ◆ Use of more sentences containing two or more words

These results demonstrate unequivocally that the changes in both mothers and children were a result of their participation in the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program. The program served to “kick start” the children's language development in that once the children were primed to learn new words, they learned the targeted words as well as other words to which they were exposed incidentally. In addition, once the children began to talk more, they progressed rapidly to using longer phrases, suggesting continuity in development from single word use to the acquisition of word combinations (Girolametto, Pearce & Weitzman, 1996a, 1996b).

This study provides strong evidence of the short-term efficacy of this indirect model of service delivery (i.e., parent training using *It Takes Two to Talk*) for late talkers. The findings indicate that mothers' interactive behaviour may be optimized to provide an enriched language-learning environment for late talkers, thereby accelerating the children's vocabulary and language development (Girolametto et al., 1996b). Given that early oral language abilities influence the acquisition of reading and that children who exhibit early oral language delays are at risk for reading delays (Curran, 2004), the results of this study confirm the importance of early intervention and that parent-focused intervention is an effective and ecologically sound approach to the provision of such intervention (Girolametto et al., 1996b).



Study #4

Study on efficacy of It Takes Two to Talk, incorporating focused stimulation, for children with Down Syndrome

A subsequent study of the efficacy of the focused stimulation version of *It Takes Two to Talk* was conducted on twelve children with Down Syndrome (29-46 months) and their mothers. The children communicated using single words or signs, with no combinations. Consistent with the other studies, positive effects were documented

for mothers' interactive behaviour. In addition, in comparison with the control group, children in the experimental group used more target words (signed or spoken) both during free play with their mothers and according to a parent questionnaire (Girolametto, Weitzman & Clements-Baartman, 1998).

Conclusion

It Takes Two to Talk is one of the most well-known and most researched early language intervention programs (McCauley & Fey, 2006). Grounded in evidence and consistent with best practice in terms of utilization of naturalistic contexts and a family-centered approach, *It Takes Two to Talk* empowers parents to build on their existing strengths and acquire new skills. Helpgiving of this kind allows parents to experience greater positive control over their own and their child's lives (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004). *It Takes Two to Talk* provides SLPs with an evidence-based approach, supported by user-friendly resources that can be implemented with families of young children, who are language-delayed.



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About the authors of *It Takes Two to Talk* Program Resources

Elaine Weitzman, M.Ed., is a speech-language pathologist and executive director of The Hanen Centre. Over the past 25 years, Ms. Weitzman has been involved in the development and dissemination of Hanen Programs. She was responsible for the creation of Learning Language and Loving It™ — The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators/Teachers and authored both the first and second editions of the *Learning Language and Loving It* guidebook. She has conducted research on the efficacy of Hanen Programs and on caregiver-child interactions in collaboration with Dr. Luigi Girolametto, University of Toronto. This extensive body of research has informed speech-language pathologists' practice in relation to working with parents and educators and has been widely published.

Jan Pepper, M.Cl.Sc., is a speech-language pathologist and the former program manager for *It Takes Two to Talk* — The Hanen Program® for Parents. With over 20 years of clinical experience, Ms. Pepper has combined her expertise in child language disorders and adult learning to develop the program and resources associated with *It Takes Two to Talk*, the foundation Hanen Program, which recognizes parents as being their child's best language teachers.

Available *It Takes Two to Talk* Resources

For more information, contact The Hanen Centre or visit us online at www.hanen.org



Translations

The *It Takes Two to Talk* guidebook (Pepper & Weitzman, 2004) is available in English, French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish.

Helping Children Communicate

The Hanen Centre is a non-profit charitable organization founded in Canada in 1975. Our mission is to give the important people in a young child's life the knowledge and training they need to help the child develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills.

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