

Using the Parent Workbook in 1:1 Sessions with Families



Nancy Johnson is a speech-language pathologist in British Columbia, Canada, with extensive experience in working with young children and their families. She is a Hanen instructor and long-time Hanen member, who uses *It Takes Two to Talk* resources in her clinical work with families, as well as offering *It Takes Two to Talk* Programs as part of the clinical services offered to clients at her workplace, Ridge Meadows Child Development Centre.

This is what Nancy had to say about using the ITTT Parent Workbook in her individual coaching sessions with families as part of her service delivery model:

The initial family consultation

During our initial consultation with families, the speech-language pathologists observe the young child interacting and playing with their parent. The clinician also interacts directly with the child to identify the child's strengths and needs. The clinician models strategies for the parent and coaches them to use these strategies with their child. Recommendations for service are also provided. Additionally, there are forms to complete and other information to impart, all of which can be overwhelming for parents to process in 75 to 90 minutes. What most parents take away from this initial consultation is the fact that their child will be placed on a wait list for ongoing speech and language services.

At the initial consultation, if a child's communication skills are found to be within the Discoverer to Combiner stages based on the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program (i.e., the child's skills ranged from pre-intentional to combining words together), the full *It Takes Two to Talk* program is recommended and offered to families. Many parents express interest in participating in the program and then wait until the next available program is offered. Other families are interested but, for several different reasons, are not able to participate in the full program. Several parents do not have regular child care that would allow them to participate in an evening program, others work shift work or have transportation challenges.

Using the ITTT Parent Workbook in 5 individual coaching sessions

If a family is unable to attend the full ITTT program, we now use the ITTT Parent Workbook in individual coaching sessions with families. We are providing 5 individual coaching sessions per family. Both the parent and the child attend each of the sessions. These five sessions can be spaced over 4-5 months, allowing families time to read the material in the *It Takes Two to Talk* Parent Guidebook, to complete the checklists and home plans in the Parent Workbook and practice specific strategies with their child. Parents purchase the Parent Workbook from our organization and we loan them the *It Takes Two to Talk* Parent Guidebook.

Session 1

The first coaching session focuses on Part 1 of the Parent Workbook. Together, the speech-language pathologist and the parent identify the child's stage of communication. The parent also completes the FOCUS © (Focus on the Outcomes of Communication Under Six), authored by Thomas- Stonell, N., Oddson, B., Robertson, B., Walker, J., & Rosenbaum, (2012) and the speech-language pathologist completes the [It Takes Two to Talk Parent-Child Observation Form](#) to get a clear picture of both the child and the parent's communicative behaviours – and how these two styles affect each other. The observations guided by this form help our clinicians choose goals for the child and select strategies to teach the parent so that he or she can support the child's goals.

Session 2

The strategies of OWL and Follow Your Child's Lead are covered in the second coaching session.

Sessions 3-5

In the last three sessions, the speech-language pathologist selects the strategies from Parts 2 -5 in the Parent Workbook that are determined to be most helpful for the child in terms of her/his communication stage and style, as well as for that particular parent. This could include more time spent on helping the parent build interaction with their child or it could include spending time on specific language goals. It may also include time spent on other skills such as the child's play and book skills.

At the end of the 5 coaching sessions, the parent completes the FOCUS© again and changes in the child's communication skills are documented and discussed. In addition, the speech-language pathologist completes the ITTT Parent-Child Observation Form again to note changes in the child's interaction and language skills, as well as changes in the parent's use of strategies since the intervention began.

How the Parent Workbook supports our individual coaching sessions

Involving parents in their child's goal setting

To date, we have found the Parent Workbook to be a valuable resource to support individualized parent-implemented intervention. Using the Parent Workbook, parents have been able to be actively involved in identifying their child's language stage and subsequently choose specific goals for their child. Going through the Child's Stage of Communication Checklist in the workbook together with parents has allowed us to clarify more specifically what the child is currently doing and has helped parents to have a better understanding of what the 'next step' is for their child. For example, if the child is at the Communicator stage for Expression and has limited gestures, we can help the parent identify specifically which gestures their child is and is not yet using, giving them suggestions as to what other gestures they may need to model for their child.

Introducing content and strategies flexibly to parents

Being able to individualize the content and strategies for each child and family was found to be the most satisfying for the parents and the speech-language pathologists. It allows us to respond

to the individual needs of the parents and focus on the areas that are most relevant for their child. In one situation, the parent identified in the second session that her daughter enjoyed books and she chose book time as one activity for her home plan. This parent was able to move to Part 5 in the Parent Workbook and, with some coaching, incorporate the information right away with her daughter.

Parent checklists, home plans and reflection on progress

Parents reported that the Parent Workbook complements the information from the guidebook and allows them to individualize the information to their own family. Parents found the workbook easy to read and liked having the checklists and home plans all together. Having examples was noted to be very useful, as well as the wrap up component at the end of the different sections, which allowed them to reflect not only on changes in their child, but also changes in themselves.

Incorporating the Hanen 4P coaching cycle

The nature of the sessions have been reported to be relaxed, conversational, and personalized. Using the 4P cycle provides a structure to the session and allows the individual child's goals to be achieved. Coaching the parents 'on-line' in a real life situations was also very helpful. Having the children present during the coaching sessions provided "real time" opportunities for demonstration, parent guided practice and problem solving.

Time between coaching sessions

Spacing the sessions out allowed the parents time to practice the individualized strategies as they learned them and gradually integrate subsequent strategies as they progressed. Knowing that we had these five opportunities to meet up with each family also gave the speech-language pathologist the time to adequately teach the strategies and not overwhelm parents with too much information at once. Typically the individual visits lasted one hour using the 4P cycle. Our wish for future sessions is to incorporate video feedback into these individual sessions, extending the length of each session. One parent mentioned, for example, difficulty reflecting on her interaction in the moment, highlighting the value of implementing video feedback during the session.

Our final word on the Parent Workbook

Utilizing the *It Takes Two to Talk* Parent Workbook individually with families is still relatively new to our service delivery model. However, the children and parents who have completed the five coaching sessions have made changes based on the FOCUS© and on the Parent-Child Observation Form. The Workbook provided a framework for sharing information and teaching strategies in a more individualized, concrete and organized approach. The feedback from both the speech-language pathologists and the parents is that the Parent Workbook is a very effective and positive addition to the services our centre offers. It has allowed us to engage with families and address the child's communication needs in a more efficient and timely manner.

References

Thomas-Stonell, N., Robsertson, B., Oddson, B., Washington, K. & Rosenbaum, P. (2012) FOCUS©: Focus On the Outcomes Under Six. Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.