

USING YOUR SNAIL PUPPET!



The snail puppet is a unique and extremely cute puppet. Yes, it is slightly odd that she has arms, but I suppose we are pushing the boundaries of possibility simply by making her speak!

TIPS SPECIFIC TO THE SNAIL

*We know that one thing that is very beneficial to the development of clear speech and language is the modelling of slow speech. The snail puppet allows for this. At no time should her speech be stilted, robotic or drawn-out and distorted. Instead simply slow the rate of her speech so that it is slow, but natural.

*If there are certain children who are very cluttered or speedy in their speaking rate, you can remind them to try and slow down and speak a bit like the snail. Engage them in a conversation with the snail. You will find they slow down also. If the outcome of this is that the child increases in their speech clarity and language output, make sure you mention this to the parents and stress the importance of slowing down EVERYBODY'S speech rate in the home.

*Remember that it's not all about slowing the rate of speech, but also about the perceived waiting time between questions and answers. Increasing "WAIT TIME" is extremely effective in increasing the quality and quantity of a child's responses to questions. When a question is asked, we know that a pause of 3 seconds (before expecting an answer) has huge benefits when it comes to how well a child can respond. Have the snail ask a question to the group and then look up and around as if she is thinking. Then after 3 seconds, have her look at a child, name them and repeat the question. If this routine is set up, children become aware of it and know that they have "thinking time" before a response is required. If other children jump in with an answer, you can make the snail retreat into her shell. "Uh-oh, we forgot the rule. You have to wait until Snail asks you for your answer. You were too quick with your answer!"

*The snail puppet can be great for behaviour management. For example, the snail might come out when all the children are sitting quietly. If children are being disruptive, you may turn one of her antennae down and explain that she is starting to feel a bit sad because of children being silly, noisy or whatever the issue may be. When the second antenna is down, it indicates that she is feeling even more sad. If the behaviour continues, the snail retreats back into her shell and only come out again, when the children are attending appropriately. The antennae trick is a good one, because it gives children a chance to try and manage their behaviour.

*The snail puppet is also brilliant for use in fluency (stuttering) therapy with young children and she can model smooth and slow speech. Fluency therapy, however, should only be conducted by a qualified speech pathologist. Please make sure you refer a child who is stuttering to a speech pathologist as early as possible. Early intervention is important when it comes to stuttering therapy.

*Another way to use the antennae is for chatting during book-sharing time. While sitting with a child (or in a small group), have both the snail and the child look at a book. Ask the snail, “Can you tell me two things about this story?” then “Tell me one thing...” (and touch one antenna.) Make the snail make a comment (Eg. “The caterpillar looks hungry”.) Comment on what the snail has said and then touch the second antenna and ask “Can you tell me something else?” Make the snail say something else about the story. You can then give the snail puppet to a child and see if they can make the snail look at the next page of the book and tell you two things that they know about the story or that they can see in the picture. This is a great non-threatening way to have children initiate speech.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUPPET USE:

* Consider the positioning of the head, whether the mouth is open or closed, and the direction of the eyes. (Remember, a puppet can use eye-contact too!) *You don’t have to be a ventriloquist, but a using a slightly different voice to your own is a good idea. You will find the children’s eyes are on the puppet anyway. Open and shut his mouth when talking and model clear, slow speech at all times.

* Have the puppet look around to different children when they speak to a group.

*Don’t forget to name your puppet. I call my snail, Gail the Slow-Talking Snail.

* Create a character for your snail. What does he like to eat? What is she scared of? Who are her friends?

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