The Importance of Classroom Relationships for Children with Hearing Loss

Learning Objectives

- After this course learners will be able to describe the key components of Self-Determination Theory.
- After this course learners will be able to identify facilitators of relatedness, competency, and autonomy.
- After this course learners will be able to describe barriers and facilitators to successful classroom relationships for children with hearing loss.
The Lives of Children with Hearing Loss:
Professional Experiences and Interests

Today’s children with hearing loss

- **Newborn Hearing Screening** – children who are identified early, and receive intervention with appropriate hearing technology can achieve communication outcomes similar to hearing peers (Yoshinaga-Itano, 2003).

- **Better Hearing Technology** – for children and adults, innovations in digital hearing aids and cochlear implants mean more access to auditory information and for young children, more opportunities to develop age appropriate spoken language (Cole & Flexer, 2007).

- **Evidence-Based Practice** – well-established, validated methods for the fitting and evaluation of hearing aids to infants and young children.

- **Education** - Today, most deaf and hard of hearing students find themselves at their neighborhood schools, interacting with hearing classmates and being educated by hearing education professionals (Angelides & Aravi, 2006; CRIDE, 2014).
Research questions

- What is the personal impact of hearing loss on today’s deaf and hard of hearing children?
- As hearing care professionals, how might we help the children understand their hearing loss, develop strategies to live with hearing loss, and work with them to internalize these skills?

Agenda

- Self-Determination Theory
- **Study:** Conversations with my audiologist: I am more than a hearing loss
- Promoting self-determination in children with hearing loss: Suggestions for audiologists
- **Study:** The importance of teacher-student relationships for children with hearing loss
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
Ryan & Deci, 1991

- Children have a natural motivational propensity to take in behaviors and to make them their own.
- There are three identified needs that are essential for optimal functioning, integration, constructive social development and personal well-being.
Relatedness

- Relatedness can be thought of as the desire or need to have positive, understanding relationships that will facilitate motivation and growth.
- It is the starting point for self-determined functioning.

Competency

- Competency can be described as "a general desire to succeed in achievement-tasks and to perceive one's own success"
- The process of active engagement to learn about oneself and the environment and therefore to feel in control and successful.
**Autonomy**

- Experiencing a sense of autonomy and choicefulness is critical for a person’s optimal functioning.
- Autonomy is helped by a supportive, non-coercive family climate.
- Parents promotion of choicefulness has been shown to be a strong predictor of children's well-being, adherence to care and academic functioning (Grolnick, 2003; Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991)

**Why is Self-Determination Important?**

- Autonomously motivated children thrive in school, and they benefit from those that support their autonomy (Reeve, 2002).
- The development of self-determination skills have also been shown to be a strong predictor of student's wellbeing, adherence to care and academic success (Grolnick & Gurland, 2002).
- Students with hearing loss who do not possess these skills of relatedness, competency, and autonomy, researchers have noted difficulties in their social development and identity construction (Grolnick & Gurland, 2002).
Self-Determination Study

Conversations with my Audiologist:
I am more than just a hearing loss

A Triadic Partnership

Child

Parent  Audiologist  TDHH
A Triadic Partnership: Audiologist

- “It’s always interesting when they show up to an appointment on their own… and you look around and ask where is your mother?” -Shane Moodie
- Audiologists working with children are taught to work in the frame of family centered care — and that often means the parents.

A Triadic Partnership: Parent

- Successful use of amplification is likely to reflect our ability as professionals to communicate this importance to the parents. This will depend on their understanding and their acceptance of their child and the hearing loss.
- First and foremost we must remember that the child is part of a family unit… and we must work with the parent(s) and all of the challenges that they have in their busy lives.
A Triadic Partnership: Child

- The third person in the triad, is really the most important one.
- “The audiologist may have told my parents, but did not explain it to me”
- “I am more than just a hearing loss.”

Implications for Clinicians

Working with parents

- The extent to which children are encouraged by their parents to be independent, will in turn have an impact on the Audiologist’s relationship with the child.
- This will affect the child’s willingness to take an active part in the appointment and their compliance with audiological care.
- Examples from other medical conditions.
Conversations with My Audiologist:
“I am more than a hearing loss” (Moodie & Gordey, 2009)

- We undertook a study to explore the reflections of young adults with hearing loss.
- We examined the personal impact that hearing care had on them.
- We believed that we could learn from their stories. It might help us to consider additional methods when working with children.
- The study provided us with very good examples of self-determination.

Conversations with my Audiologist
(Moodie & Gordey, 2009)

- 6 individuals (3 males, 3 females) participated in the study
- Average age was 30 years
- Diverse range of hearing losses
- All communicated with spoken language.
- All were born with hearing loss, or acquired their hearing loss at a very young age
- All had the experience of wearing amplification.
Conversations with my Audiologist
Sample questions included:

- As a child, what did you see as your role (your position) within the child - parent(s) - Audiologist partnership?
- What strategies do you think Audiologists might use to help parents encourage their children to become more active participants in audiological appointments?

Reflections of Parents Involvement

“”

In my experience, my parents were somewhat assertive to the point where they acted as if they knew more about my hearing loss/how to cope with it than I did.”

Kendra, patient
Relatedness with Audiologist
(Moodie & Gordey, 2009)

“Start by forming a good relationship with the child. Be interested in them, their hearing, and more important other things they like. There is a fine line between encouragement and pressure. I wanted to feel some sense of normalcy — if not with my hearing, maybe with some other part of me.”

Craig, patient

Reflections on Competency

“I wish my Audiologist would have equipped me with words/sayings to tell other children why I wear hearing aids.”

Amy, patient
Emerging Themes from the Study
(Moodie & Gordey, 2009)

- Relationships
- Self-confidence
- Self-advocacy
- Control
- Access to information
- Responsibility
- Strategies
- Listening
- Respect
- Normalcy

Relationships and Children with Hearing Loss

- Educators
- Peers
- Child
- Audiologists
- Parent/Caregiver
Working with Children with Hearing Loss
A productive and constructive contributor to the audiology visit!

- Express my needs, preferences and I ask questions to help me learn.
- I am encouraged to let my audiologist know what I am interested in.
- Children who are less engaged, receive less autonomy support from professionals and parents.
- Gilmore Girls

Working with Children with Hearing Loss

- Role of autonomy in integrating identities — Helps children take ownership of who they are.
- When children are able to feel control, they are better at integrating negative perceptions.
- Autonomy support is important when aspects of identity are difficult. When we feel different from those around us, it is important to feel supported.
- Autonomy creates an openness and emotional acceptance to mistakes.
Working with Children with Hearing Loss
Impact of Gender (Jamieson, 2008)

For all boys

- Informal peer interaction among boys largely through physical play
- Play begins as solitary in early years; develops into group play
- Group membership often achieved through team sports

For boys who are hard of hearing

- Team play with parent involvement in early years
- Rules for team play are constant (e.g., soccer)
- Importance of early entry
- Danger of solitary activities (e.g., computer)
Working with Children with Hearing Loss:
Impact of Gender (Jamieson, 2008)

"They don’t seem to talk down to him at all or treat him differently like he’s a dumb kid or anything. They don’t do any of that… he looks like an equal when he’s out there playing soccer."

Father of a 10 year old boy with hearing loss

• Informal peer interaction tends to occur verbally
• Group membership achieved largely through verbal means
• Strong social consequences for not affiliating

For all girls
Working with Children with Hearing Loss
Impact of Gender (Jamieson, 2008)

For girls who are hard of hearing

- Often do not hear social information or cues
- Often systematically left out of groups
- Often described by parents as isolated, rejected, lonely
- Importance of one-on-one interaction

For girls who are hard of hearing

It has been a really big deal to her in the last couple of years to want to be more like everyone else and not have these things that make her different... She'd rather not hear what the teacher's saying and miss an assignment than suffer the humiliation of having to wear that FM system.

__________________________________________
Mother of girl with hearing loss
Parents
(Jamieson, 2008)

- Parents define themselves in relation to their child’s achievements.
- Controlling parent approach – view it as a shortcut to getting child to a desired outcome. Or more achievements.
- Parents who feel they are under more social pressure to have achieving children are more likely to be controlling. Parents who feel they are being evaluated.

What can you do when working with Parents to promote Self-Determination?
(Rall, 2012)

- Teach parents about the importance of:
  - Healthy attachment/bonding
  - Effective communication at home
- Support them through the feelings associated with grief – don’t rescue them.
- Help them understand the impact hearing impairment has on communication – avoid misunderstanding communication difficulties.
What can you do when working with Parents to promote Self-Determination? (Rall, 2012)

- Provide opportunities for mentoring – encourage relationships with deaf/hard of hearing adults and peers.
- Discuss “over-protection”
- Encourage parents to involve children in:
  - Setting goals
  - Evaluating options
  - Making choices
  - Work on achieving goals

Potential Barriers to Self-Determination

Recognizing Emotional Reactions - Feelings Involved with Grief (Rall, 2012)

- Shock/Denial/Numbness
- Anger/Fear/Panic
- Sadness/Hopeless
- Guilt/Bargaining
Facilitators to Self-Determination: Audiologists
(Rall, 2012)

- Include the child in positive conversations about their hearing loss.
- Monitor for “complicated” grief in caregivers.
- Support families in developing relationships with other families with children with hearing loss and with Deaf /Hard of Hearing (D/HoH) adults and older children(i.e. Hands and Voices; AG Bell).

The Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships
How Important is it to Prepare Preschool Children with Hearing Loss for Elementary School?

- The preschool and elementary school environments are very different!
- Preschool programs are family focused, school programs are child focused.
- Higher expectations for social skills and behavior.
- Kindergarten is primarily about the teacher-student relationship. Moving from play activities to those that are more academic.
- Different service levels exist within school compared to preschool. Moving to environment with more students, more policy, and more complex infrastructure.

Why Prepare Preschool Children with Hearing Loss?

- Many children feel socially isolated and uncertain in their social and classroom environments.
- They describe themselves as trying to “crack the code” of rules of how to behave and belong in a hearing world (Israelite et al., 2002).
The Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships
Relationship Building: Research on Children with Typical Hearing

- There is growing evidence to suggest that positive teacher-student relationships result in increased engagement and improvement in academic and social outcomes (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007).
- Understanding the impact and dynamics of teacher-student relationships are most important in early elementary grades, as this period is when students have the closest relationship with their teacher (Pianta, 1994).
- As Birch and Ladd (1997) noted, elementary students with whom the teacher described as having a close relationship were more likely to display academic readiness, be more independent learners and have a positive perspective on school.

Teacher-Student Relationships
What about students with hearing loss?

- Little is known about the social relationships and social contexts of today’s children with hearing loss and their classroom teacher, and how these dynamics impact school success.
- Problems with social interactions at school both between the student and his or her teacher, and between the student and his or her peers have long been recognized to be an issue for students with hearing loss (Dalton, 2011; Stinson, Whitmire & Kluwin, 1996).
The Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships Research Study

- Mixed Methods Study: Survey and Interviews.
- Participants: Canadian children with hearing loss, parents and elementary school teachers.
- Teachers, children and parents were asked to reflect upon classroom relationships in grade one and grade two, in their neighborhood elementary school.

Research Question

What are the **facilitators** and **barriers** for the development of teacher-student relationships in children with hearing loss in their early elementary school classroom?
Emerging Themes

- Transitions
- Teacher Understanding of Hearing Loss
- Teacher-Student Relationship
- Social Skills
- Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Results

The Need for Transitions

- School orientation and formal transition was not standard practice for students with hearing loss entering their neighborhood elementary school.
- Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDHH) or parents often facilitated the transition from preschool into kindergarten, by arranging a meeting with the school principal and classroom teacher prior to the start of school.
Results
The Need for Transitions

- This activity was viewed as critical to the students' adjustment and confidence in a new environment.
- One parent stated, “Typically the school does not tell you who your child’s teacher will be, they save that as a surprise for the first day. But I advocated and explained the importance of being able to meet with the teacher before school started. This was for my son’s comfort level and to explain to them how the FM classroom hearing equipment worked.”

Results
Developed Social Skills

- Parents and teachers both agreed that developed social skills made it easier to build relationships in the classroom.
- While parents, students and teachers believed that social skills of children with hearing loss were important, they reported that they took longer for these students to acquire these skills compared to their typical hearing peers.
- Many parents in this study recognized the importance of social needs with their deaf and hard of hearing child, and did “invisible work,” pre-teaching social skills, to better prepare their child for school entry. This included enrollment in sporting and recreational activities, providing other opportunities to practice social skills.
Results
Developed Social Skills

- Most teachers were unaware of this practice, and the coaching by parents prior to the start of kindergarten, with some teachers identifying some of their students with hearing loss as have an inherent quality of resilience.
- These findings highlight the need for parents, educators, and hearing care professionals to address social skill development early, as an integral part of the management of hearing loss.

Results
Teacher Understanding of Hearing Loss

- In this study, teacher interview data found that teacher confidence in working with deaf and hard of hearing students was strongly correlated with their knowledge of hearing loss, support and being equipped with strategies to support these students.
- This meant that for those teachers who had limited or no experience in teaching students with hearing loss, they were unable to understand their required needs, and how their needs differed from those students with typical hearing.
Results
Teacher Understanding of Hearing Loss

- Parents and students agreed poor teacher knowledge of hearing loss was challenging, and added that poor teacher understanding was also a major barrier to the development of the teacher-student relationship.

- A parent reflected on her child's experiences in elementary school and said, “So pretty much our experience has been if someone has never taught a child with hearing loss, they are terrified, and they really don’t know what to expect.”

- A teacher commented on her first student with hearing loss saying, “He is pretty much like the other students that have normal hearing, although he is a bit of a dawdler (slow mover). When the bell rings, I have to tell him two or three times to pick up his homework from the front of the classroom.”

Results
The Importance of the Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Nearly all teacher participants in our study reported that they felt “uncertain” and “unprepared” when they were told they would be teaching a child with hearing loss.

- They reported that they relied heavily on the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing for knowledge and support.

- However, this study found that large caseloads and a reduction in direct student services time meant that many teachers of the deaf and hard hearing were only able to assist in educating the classroom teacher about the basic use and care of classroom hearing technology.

- The implications of reducing teacher training on hearing loss was that many children with hearing loss are entering their neighborhood school classrooms with teachers who have little or no understanding on how to best accommodate their needs or the parents were taking on that responsibility.
Study Conclusions

- The findings of this research were that the teacher-student relationship was identified as essential for deaf and hard of hearing students and their success in their elementary school classroom.

- While parents, teachers and students in this study strongly believed in the promotion and development of the elements required to achieve teacher-student relatedness, the responsibilities to achieve this goal were not equally shared among these stakeholders.

Study Conclusions

- This research study indicated that parents carried the majority of the responsibility for teacher-student relationship development.

- Pre-teaching social skills, planning the transition from preschool to elementary school, and advocating for accommodations and support for their child with hearing loss was managed by the parents.
Study Conclusions

- The TDHH was the second key facilitator of the teacher-student relationship.
- They taught parents about self-advocacy, support services, and acted as a liaison with the elementary school.
- They were vital as a resource for school staff, educating the classroom teacher on hearing loss and hearing technology.

Future Research

- Development of a guidance document outlining provision of essential school supports for the inclusion of today’s students with hearing loss.
- The development of a useable and feasible, interactive educational resource tool for classroom teachers and other educational professionals on working with students with hearing loss.
- Exploring how social skill development, transitions and classroom relationships can be included as an essential element for all hearing care professionals in the management of young children with hearing loss.
Thank you

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