

## **Speech and Language Therapy**

Speech and language therapy is often beneficial for children with autism since about 30-50% of them do not use speech. Conventional methods of speech therapy are not always effective. The therapist should have a good understanding of autism and be able to emphasize non-verbal communication, if necessary.

Speech and language therapy has several goals: understanding what is said by others, expressing one's own ideas and desires in a way that is understandable to others, and the social use of language. The speech therapist should have a good understanding of what autism is and how to use alternative methods of communication besides speech (e.g., PECS, sign language).

There are four aspects of speech therapy that make it beneficial for a child: it should begin early in the child's life, and sessions need to occur frequently; the therapy should be based on practical experiences in the child's life; it should encourage spontaneous communication (initiated by the child, without prompting); and the skills learned in the session should generalize to other environments, like the home or school. It is believed some of the behavioural problems seen in children with autism may be caused by an inability to communicate their needs to others. Communication skills may replace some problem behaviours because the child is given a medium to voice their desires.