

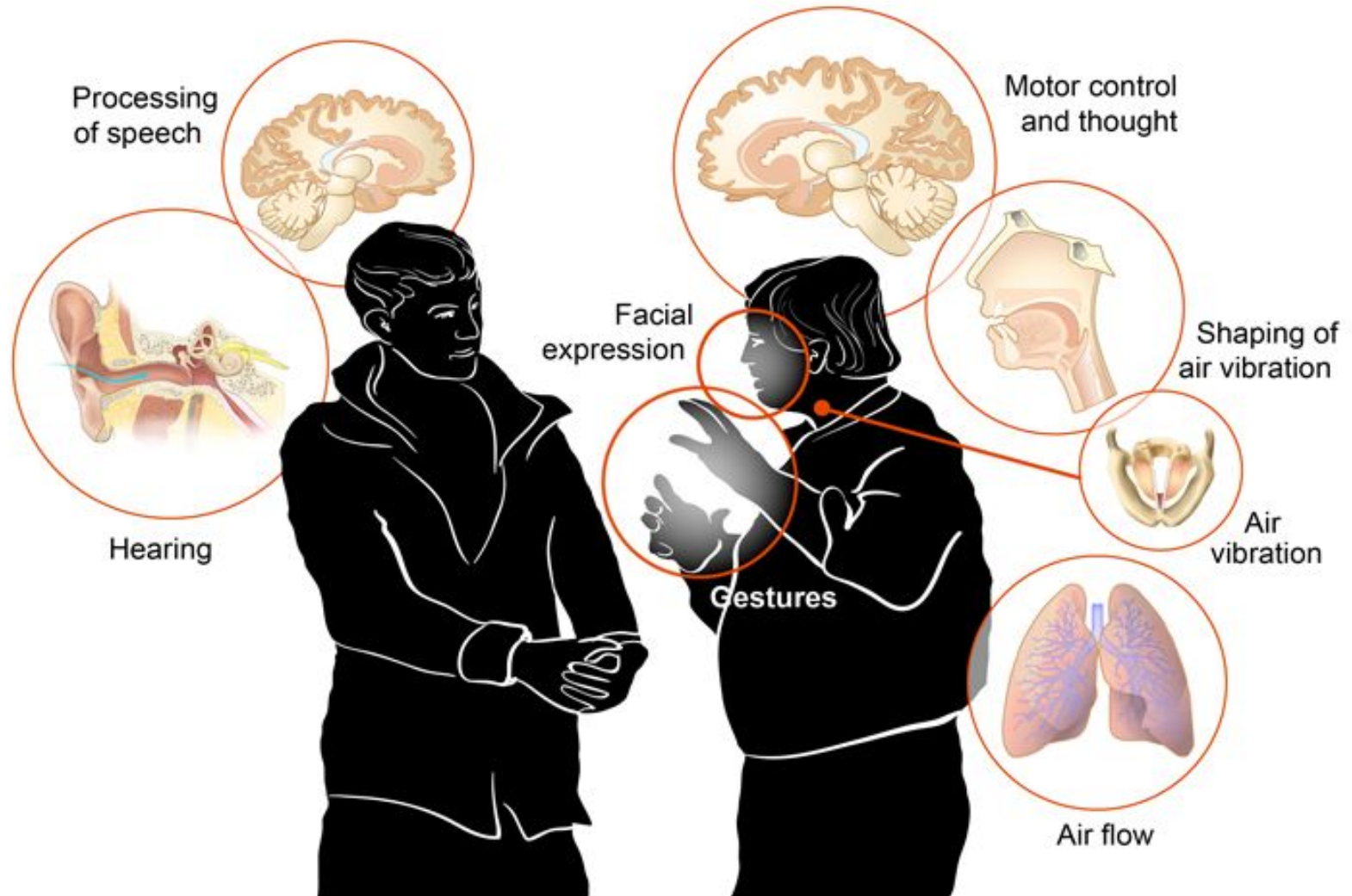
# Relationship Between FASD and Communication Impairments



# Learning Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of communication
2. To develop an understanding of the relationship between FASD and communication
3. To explore the impact of communication deficits on academic learning and social interactions
4. To explore strategies to support communication

# THE ANATOMY OF LANGUAGE



# What Does Communication Look Like?

## SPEECH:

- Fluency: stuttering
- Articulation: pronunciations of sounds
- Voice: vocal disorders that reduce or interfere with clear vocal quality

# Language: Expressive

- Speaking and communicating in social situations (pragmatics/social communication)
- Using words (semantics/vocabulary)
- Putting words together to make sentences (syntax)
- Retelling stories (narrative sequence)
- Formulating and organizing ideas (discourse)

\*\*Oral language deficits are often associated with deficits in written expression and formulation

# Language: Receptive

- Understanding spoken vocabulary
- Understanding concepts
- Understanding questions
- Following instructions/directions
- Understanding sentence structure
- Understanding stories/ longer pieces of spoken language
- Understanding and interpreting non-verbal information (pragmatics)

# Components of Social Communication

- Social Interaction (i.e., cultural influences, gender, ESL, power relationships)
- Social cognition (i.e., theory of mind, emotional competences, executive functioning, joint attention)
- Pragmatics:
  - verbal: purpose, intention, discourse style etc.
  - non-verbal -body language, facial expression etc.
- Language processing (expressive and receptive)

# Why is Language Important?

- Language used in the classroom is complex
- Most language used in the classroom is delivered through spoken or written language
- Students acquire information through listening or reading
- Students demonstrate what they know or have learned by speaking and writing
- Students are estimated to learn through listening at least 60% of the time during elementary years and 90% of the time during secondary years
- Oral communication has an impact on learning, socialization, attention and behaviour



# Communication and the Student with an FASD

- Children with an FASD often develop language skills at a slower rate than is age appropriate
- Regardless of the rate of language development, children with an FASD often have difficulty with communication
- Children with an FASD may display developmentally appropriate vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure but struggle with higher level language abilities
- “Cocktail party phenomenon” i.e. fluent but no content

# Relationship Between FASD and Communication

- Individuals with an FASD may present with deficits in different cognitive domains which may or may not include the language domain

However...

- in the absence of low scores on testing or in the presence of average language performance, someone may still exhibit difficulties with all forms of communication because of the relationship between cognition and language

# Attention, Concentration and Memory at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- impaired auditory comprehension (following directions)
- pragmatic impairments (maintaining eye contact, turn taking, topic shifting)
- encoding and retention of verbal/written information
- difficulty following conversations

# Organization at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- difficulty analyzing, classifying, integrating, sequencing and identifying relevant information in verbal/written
- pragmatics and social communication (i.e., topic maintenance, language cohesion, perspective taking etc.)
- difficulty completing and giving instructions
- difficulty identifying key ideas
- difficulty summarizing language

# Convergent and Divergent Thinking at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

## **Convergent Thinking (over production of language):**

- difficulty focusing and maintaining train of thought
- difficulty getting to the point (people that talk a lot, verbose, “Goldilocks Effect”)

## **Divergent Thinking (under production of language):**

- difficulty elaborating and expanding on their ideas
- difficulty generating responses, topics, ideas (limited verbal output)

# Reasoning at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- failure to draw conclusions from social interactions (i.e., main ideas and details)
- inappropriate conversation and social responses (i.e., difficulty planning language and modulating choice of words)
- difficulty using logic to complete the step of various daily activities (e.g. reading, math, written work)
- difficulty with comparison and cause and effect
- Social tasks such as cooperative play i.e., assessing peer groups

# Problem Solving at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- difficulty planning and evaluating appropriate responses
- impaired judgement in a variety of settings
- impulsiveness and difficulty inhibiting responses (e.g. verbal or physical)
- monitoring what to say

# Executive Functioning at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- difficulty formulating ideas
- difficulty planning steps
- difficulty implementing solutions
- difficulty with goal directed behaviour and thinking
- difficulty with time management



# Social/Behavioural Self-Regulation at Home and at School

Possible difficulties with communication include:

- difficulty initiating and generating verbal/written responses
- difficulty inhibiting social inappropriate comments
- difficulty considering a listener's perspective or state of mind
- **language is the primary tool for self-regulation**

# Activity

**Scenario #1-** Getting ready for school and taking the bus

**Scenario #2-** Going to family member's birthday party

**Scenario #3-** Asking to participate in a game at nutrition break

**Scenario #4-** Providing a written answer to a question on a test

# Language Strategies- Attention, Concentration and Memory

- limit auditory and visual stimuli
- use visuals to support routines and schedules
- schedule breaks
- modify the environment (physical, communication style and expectations)
- allow the child time to process information after asking a question

# Language Strategies- Organization

- Use a colour coding for school (i.e. yellow for math etc.)
- Clear and predictable schedules and routines
- Break down learning tasks into steps
- Plan ahead anticipating the next hurdle
- Make space visual concrete and provide labels

# Language Strategies- Convergent and Divergent Thinking

## **Convergent Thinking:**

- Graphic organizers to be more specific
- Visual reminders of steps/ main objective
- Redirection
- Scripts

## **Divergent Thinking:**

- Graphic organizers to expand language
- Need support to begin planning responses
- Allow extra time

# Language Strategies- Reasoning

- Generating alternate solution to problems or narrowing down potential solutions (provide choices)
- Identifying realistic goals
- Organizing and prioritizing
- Use graphic organizers, charts and rubrics
- Self-talk e.g. “Stop, think and do”

# Language Strategies- Problem Solving

- Help student predict outcomes
- Help students compare options
- Provide choices
- Make a plan

# Language Strategies- Executive Functions

- Provide external structure “the plan”
- Break down learning tasks into steps
- Develop timelines
- Monitor progress e.g. check-ins
- Build-in automatic reminders (e.g. on a watch, smartphone, computer)
- Use timers



# Language Strategies- Social/Behavioural/Self-Regulation

- Identify stressors and triggers
- Teach communication alternatives to behaviour (e.g. scripts, can be verbal, visual or gestural)
  - to access i.e. “I need someone to talk to”, “Can you help me here”
  - to escape i.e. “I need a break”, “I can’t deal with this now, can we talk about this later”
- Expand social communication including emotions, feelings, engage in dialogue

QUESTIONS??????

# RESOURCES

- FASD: Strategies not Solutions
- <http://www.fasdwaterlooregion.ca>
- Sheila McDonald, Speech-Language Pathologist, Assessment and Treatment of Cognitive-Communication Disorders (level 1 and 2)
- Kerry Howland, PhD., CCC-SLP, Developing Executive Control Skills in Children with Language and Learning Disorders (2013)
- American Speech Language and Hearing Association  
[www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

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