

KIDS SPEECH MATTERS

A Mother's Journey

**Living With Her Son Who Has A Severe Language Delay
and an Auditory Processing Disorder
From Birth to 10 years**



Written by Sandra Ahlquist

Language
Delay Network

Legal Stuff



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Please subscribe to my website at www.languagedelaynetwork.com to keep up to date and connected to parents, teachers, special ed teachers and key specialists. To gain information, others points of view on everything to do with language delay, speech delay, auditory processing disorder and learning disabilities in children.

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About:

Kids Speech Matters is written by Sandra Ahlquist and tells her story of the journey with her son Luca who has a severe language and auditory processing disorders.

It takes you right back to the beginning and the milestones along the way.

The book works through the emotional journey of the medical results, early preschool years, specialist testing and the early primary school years. Where her son was found to have a learning disability and how they have navigated through the education system.

Sandra shares the insights gained, what strategies they have used, and the ups and downs during the primary school years.

The book has been written to empower parents/carers but also with the hope that parents will take what they have read and be the very best advocate for their children and talk about their children's learning disabilities.

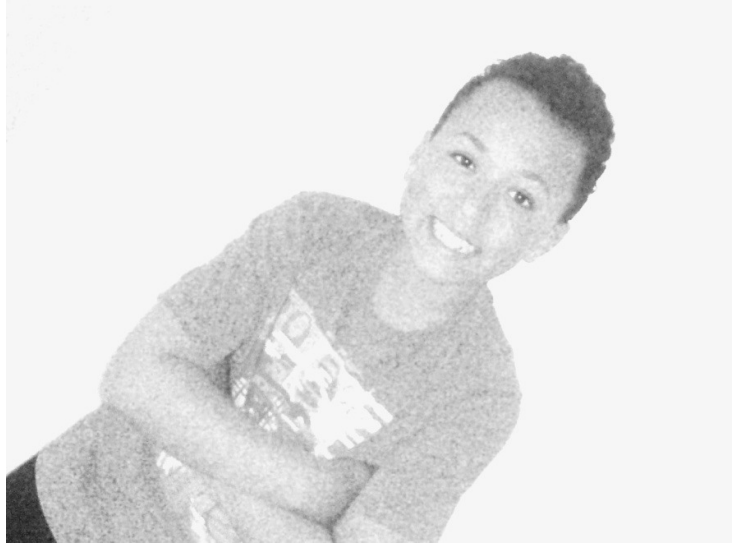


Kids Speech Matters!

Foreword:

The questions spin around my head. When will the light go on? When will he catch up? When will I see him at the 'same stage' as the other kids? How much more 'extra' homework do we need to do? How much more speech therapy? New teachers to meet? What does go on in his mind? His hand and his brain don't seem to be connected to be able to learn?

These questions are only the tip of the iceberg for me. A mum living with a child who has a severe language delay, and more recently diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder.



It may sound like I'm an overly worrying type of mother, but no, in fact I'd say I'm too busy, or feel I have been at times, with my own career and other family commitments to be too overly protective of my son. We muddle along – that's what we do. We learn constantly about new technologies, therapies, support groups, other children, meet families and hear their stories and have visited lots of therapists. All in hope of learning just a little bit more that will help us through these school years. Yep I said it out loud. 'The school years.'

I thought, as quoted by the first ears nose throat specialist that he would "catch up". That once he received his grommets, after the operation a year or so down the track all would be fine. We'd just fast track those early learning years. He was four by the time we got to that stage and he had grommets inserted to relieve years of severe glue ear, he never had the clarity in his hearing that was needed to hear properly and hence language became muffled. Well at ten I am still waiting for him catch up and in fact I've given up on worrying about catching up. Our story will explain to you why.

You may know be thinking.... she's given up.... no I just mean I'm accepting that things are the way they are for my son. This last year, through the seeking and sourcing, I found out really my son has a disorder that will probably be with him for all his life. It is defined as a learning disability and the acknowledgment of understanding what this is what helps me cope.

I accept and we work with his learning disability and I ensure that we, we being ourselves, school and his specialists, are building strategies for his future and giving him support. This helps him cope but more importantly learn at his pace, learn his way. These strategies and the emotions I will share in the chapters of this book. It has been for us about getting the team right. Our Speechie, our school and we work together.

The purpose of why I thought I'd write this book is to share my/our experiences with other parents/carers as I've lived through the angst. I do get it. I want to share how I've coped and worked with an education and medical system that really doesn't pave the way too easily for these children. Because of the lack of funding and recognition given to their learning disabilities. Not just

coped but became increasingly informed on the subject as I navigated the system and share that with you. We aren't all alone. The outcome is that my son is a happy boy and I am a happier Mum for working through all of the information and support networks.

I also am sure it will help you work through the unsettled sleep of you and your child, nurture their self esteem, iron out issues, and help them to not feel dumb. As a parent I had many sleepless nights, juggling work and specialist appointments, speech therapy, school jargon, too many meetings with school and special needs co-ordinators and working my way through the system only wishing someone gave me the guide book at the start and told me how to navigate it.

I know that is how I felt, especially when we started those first years of school. There was so much I just didn't know and no one really told me what I needed to exactly know.

This book isn't written as a guide book – it's a snapshot of our journey – to perhaps make sense of some of the emotions and fears you may be feeling. Help you feel you are not the only one and encourage families, carers, support teams to keep going.

To help prepare for the yards you will need to put in at home with family centred speech therapy and supporting homework from school. Most importantly to seek alternatives if things just aren't working. Find out why and understand the diagnosis and what will work for your child. How do they best learn? Ask people to simplify jargon or medical speak – the numbers, test scores what does it mean? Ensure you understand it.

I do hope that this book will give you some understanding and support ... you know your child and you know them best. You are the very best advocate. Be informed as the parent/carers/teacher.

The light bulb went on for me, and it was only last year when I thought... he's learning and achieving and moving forward and he can learn, when it's adjusted, modified and he is feeling good about himself – a self esteem is critical – they learn differently.

He learns differently – so simple but yet if you fit a square peg into a round hold it doesn't fit/work. Same can be said for teaching practices. Unfortunately the resourcing given to schools for severe language, auditory processing disorder, speech and language disorders is minimal. School speech therapy is often too infrequent. So you will have to work with this and work through the best way to move forward. I'll explain how we have pursued and managed that in these chapters. Don't give up!

My son needs support and visual aids, he needs movement, he can't sit for long periods and what he needs more than anything is acknowledgement and reward. If he feels supported and encouraged and not left to feel stupid, not getting it or out of his depth ... he will learn, he will try and he will one day catch up.

Walk through with us the early years to - today. He is ten years old and flourishing – I am very proud of his successes and his enthusiasm to give it a go. He's a happy and well adjusted, intelligent young boy.

There were parts of this book that were quite emotional to write and with it brought back the emotion of those difficult days with school. Badly run PSG's, heated discussions and my absolute amazement that children, well my child could be left to feel the way he did. As a parent it was a

most stressful year, and quite the emotional roller coaster. But the last year has most certainly made up for that.

Communication is the most complicated human behaviour, yet it is often taken for granted. Communication involves listening, speaking, reading and writing. Communication difficulties are the result of problems with producing speech sounds (articulation), using and understanding language, voice (i.e. the production of sound in the voice box), fluency (stuttering), hearing, reading and writing. Communication difficulties range from very mild (eg. a seven year old who cannot yet produce the sound "r") to very severe (eg. a seventy year old who has suffered a stroke and is no longer able to produce speech or language).

One in seven Australians has some form of communication disability. In Australia approximately:

- 386,000 children have speech delay problems
- 577,000 school-aged children have difficulties with language
- 326,000 people stutter
- 2.5 million people have hearing impairment
- 25,000 people have a severe brain injury

Referenced: [Speech Pathology Australia](#)

The facts are there are an estimated 10% of school aged children with a communication disability in Australia.

The Australian figure equates to over half a million children – escalate that to the parents, carers, specialists, teachers and there are so many of us that together we can help and hopefully gain more awareness for this invisible disability. Awareness over time can and hopefully will create further funding and changes within the education system. With that change acknowledgement it needs in the health system for children and carers who are affected by this and need support and more medical resources for their children.

There are a 'half a million' very good reasons why, we need to be advocates for these children.

It has been an effort to write, about two years in the making, but an absolute pleasure to share with you.

Enjoy our book,
Sandra

Kids Speech Matters