



TalkTools Oral Placement Therapy

Important Information for Therapists and Parents.

What is TalkTools?

American Speech and Language Pathologist Sara Rosenfeld-Johnson founded TalkTools to help those with speech, oral placement, and feeding difficulties. Using an approach based on sensory and tactile input, she provided clients with effective therapy and the best possible outcomes. As she taught more people about oral placement therapy techniques, the therapists and caregivers attending her courses expressed a desire for tools specifically designed to help them implement what they had learned. In response, she developed the TalkTools brand and range of tools and equipment.

TalkTools combines caregiver and therapist lead approaches. Parents and caregivers can learn the basics of TalkTools, and use these with their child. Therapists can undertake TalkTools training to a variety of levels. TalkTools techniques are not usually used in isolation, but form part of an overall approach to communication and feeding therapy.

Client groups

TalkTools is used with a wide range of client groups. These may include people with: Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autistic Spectrum Conditions and Dyspraxia. TalkTools works well for people whose speech and feeding difficulties have a sensory, motor or oral placement basis to them.

TalkTools uses a hierarchical approach and includes visual, auditory, sensory and tactile inputs to help with learning and production of the movements for improved feeding and speech skills.

Further Info

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Considerations

As with all therapy programmes, it is important to understand what you are doing and why you are doing it to get the best out of the programme. Please also consider accessing expert help from a level 3 or above TalkTools therapist to provide an evaluation and full programme for you to follow.

TalkTools uses specific equipment for its activities, these activities need to be undertaken regularly. Please consider that you will need to purchase specialist equipment and undertake activities on a daily basis as part of a TalkTools programme.

Some of the TalkTools therapy tools look like toys. Please remember that the tools are not toys. Each tool has been specifically designed or chosen for a reason, substituting a tool for another similar item may not achieve the same results. As with all therapy equipment, children should not be allowed to play with the tools.

Please refer to the Eg (Training) Ltd leaflet “TalkTools OPT – Infection Control and Sterilization of TalkTools Therapy Equipment.” To learn more about care of your TalkTools Therapy Tools.

Working with Swallowing Difficulties

Swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) often affect the type of clients who are using a TalkTools approach. If you are concerned that your child or client has difficulties with swallowing either food or drink a specialist assessment is strongly recommended. A dysphagia trained speech and language therapist (SLT) assesses swallowing risks and advises on appropriate strategies to manage these risks.

Not all TalkTools therapists are dysphagia trained SLT's. To find a dysphagia trained SLT you can contact your local NHS (or equivalent) SLT. For an independent SLT contact The Association of Speech and Language Therapists in Independent Practice (ASLTIP) www.helpwithtalking.com

If you have been advised that your child or client cannot safely swallow certain liquids or food textures, these items must not be included in a TalkTools programme.

Examples:

A child who cannot safely swallow thin liquids must not undertake honey bear drinking, straw drinking or cup drinking activities with thin liquids.

A client who cannot safely swallow small hard bits of food must not undertake chewing activities with foods that will create small hard pieces in their mouth – such as biscuits.

Provision of TalkTools OPT

TalkTools OPT is provided in various ways. In the UK, TalkTools is available via the NHS in some areas, or you may want to purchase services from an independent therapist.

Always talk with your therapist prior to commencement of a service, so that you have a clear understanding of:

- Their level of competence and training.
- What is being provided as part of the service.
- What else you may need to pay for.

All reputable independent therapists will be happy to discuss your needs and any concerns you may have, and to provide you with information about their training levels and fees.

You can also refer to the Eg (Training) Ltd leaflet “TalkTools OPT – Information about TalkTools Training” to learn more about the specific TalkTools training levels.