

Introduction

HELP for Language provides speech-language pathologists, teachers, parents, and other facilitators with a framework and materials to help children and adults improve their understanding and expression of abstract language. It is intended for children (age 8 and above) and adults who demonstrate weakness or impairment in processing abstract or ambiguous language.

Abstractness and ambiguity are pervasive features of daily communication. Each day, we are required to “read between the lines” of oral language. We must make inferences from minimal communication segments, draw conclusions from inadequate information, discriminate among multiple meanings of words, choose between literal and non-literal meanings, and extrapolate useful from irrelevant information. Each of these skills must be applied within the context of a communication environment that is rapidly delivered and constantly shifting. Individuals who have not mastered these skills are at a disadvantage in understanding academic materials, performing adequately in the workplace, and interacting smoothly in social situations.

Previous books in the HELP series provide the basis for building concrete language skills. *HELP for Language* fills the gap in available materials to support clients with weaknesses in abstract language processing. This book scaffolds on a strong foundation of basic language skills, enabling clients to develop and apply higher-order thinking and reasoning skills.

As with each book in the HELP series, *HELP for Language* takes a no-frills approach to language development and remediation. Skilled clinical judgment is needed to match tasks with each client’s needs and to expand each lesson to reflect each client’s individual background and interests. The following guidelines will help you effectively use the tasks in *HELP for Language*:

- Begin by identifying the individual’s present level of performance, using the person’s strengths as a basis for remediating her weaknesses.
- Choose tasks that are relevant to the client’s communication needs and functional communication profile.
- Select tasks and items within tasks to enable an individual to gain new skills without being overwhelmed by the difficulty of the tasks. The tasks within each of the four sections and the items within each task are presented with a gradual increase in complexity.

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- Use your own judgment in presenting the tasks orally or as worksheets. If you give tasks for homework, keep in mind that the purpose of homework is review and reinforcement. It's better to introduce and provide practice with new tasks and items in a therapy setting.
- Present materials at a pace that matches the client's rate of acquisition, factoring in repetition for mastery.
- Relate the material to each client's real-world experiences, striving to help the client achieve carryover of target skills to daily communication.
- An answer key has been provided for most of the tasks. Suggested answers have been given for most of the items; however, many answers may be acceptable. Accept any reasonable responses your clients may give, as long as they back them up with appropriate reasoning.

"After all is said and done," I am "pleased as punch" to present *HELP for Language*. I hope that it helps you "hit the ground running" and enables your clients to "make tracks" toward becoming "top-notch" communicators.

Andrea