



PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DISORDER

WHAT IS A PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DISORDER?

- Pragmatic language disorder is also known as social language disorder or social communication disorder.
- A disorder indicates that an individual's social language skills are not appropriate for his/her age.
- Expectations or norms for various social situations are not known or there is difficulty using verbal and/or nonverbal language for social use.
- Verbal language difficulties can include staying on topic, inferencing, turn-taking, etc.
- Nonverbal language difficulties can include inappropriate eye contact, body orientation, facial expressions, etc.
- Pragmatic language disorders can occur alone or with other diagnoses such as learning disability and ADHD.
- In autism spectrum disorders, social communication difficulties are part of the diagnosing criteria.

WHERE CAN AN INDIVIDUAL BE EVALUATED FOR A PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DISORDER?

- Children who are not yet attending school can be evaluated at their local county Intermediate Unit.
- Children who are attending school can be evaluated by their school building's speech therapist.
- Families can also seek evaluations from children's hospitals.
- Families can also seek evaluations from student therapists at local universities with speech programs.
- Families can also contact private speech therapists/clinics for evaluations.

WHY SHOULD AN INDIVIDUAL RECEIVE THERAPY FOR A PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DISORDER?

- Inability to interact appropriately with peers can affect educational performance and/or employment, particularly as an individual gets older and is required to work as part of a team.
- Academic progress (e.g., reading comprehension and writing) can be impacted by an inability to infer unstated meaning, use figurative language, sequence, etc.
- Inability to communicate appropriately can affect ability to maintain social relationships.
- Inability to develop or maintain relationships can lead to isolation and depression.
- Unintended trouble can occur for individuals when miscommunication occurs with people in positions of authority such as law enforcement.

HOW DO I HELP AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DISORDER?

- Model appropriate behaviors and verbal/nonverbal language use.
- Explain and discuss appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors for different social situations (e.g., school, playdates, restaurants).
- Explain and discuss appropriate versus inappropriate ways to communicate wants and needs.
- Role play and practice various social situations and expected dialogue.
- Use social stories to discuss behaviors and target lessons.
- Encourage use of polite language such as "thank you"
- Ask about relationships and interactions and help analyze any communication breakdowns.
- Practice social skills in structured contexts such as board games.
- Praise use of appropriate behaviors and language.