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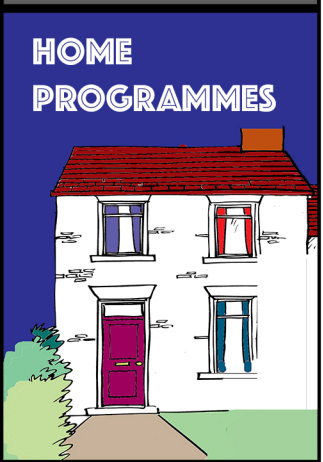
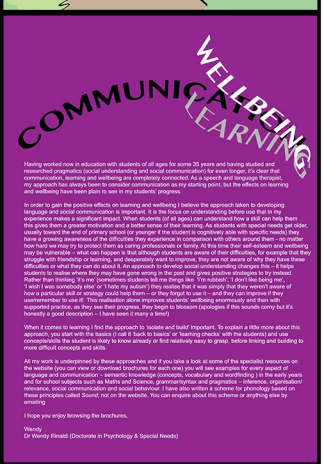




Having worked now in education with students of all ages for some 35 years and having studied and researched pragmatics (social understanding and social communication) for even longer, it's clear that communication, learning and wellbeing are completely connected. As a speech and language therapist, my approach has always been to consider communication as my starting point, but the effects on learning and wellbeing have been plain to see in my students' progress.

In order to gain the positive effects on learning and wellbeing I believe the approach taken to developing language and social communication is important. It is the focus on understanding before use that in my experience makes a significant impact. When students (of all ages) can understand how a skill can help them this gives them a greater motivation and a better sense of their learning. As students with special needs get older, usually toward the end of primary school (or younger if the student is cognitively able with specific needs) they have a growing awareness of the difficulties they experience in comparison with others around them – no matter how hard we may try to protect them as caring professionals or family. At this time their self-esteem and wellbeing may be vulnerable – what can happen is that although students are aware of their difficulties, for example that they struggle with friendship or learning, and desperately want to improve, they are not aware of why they have these difficulties or what they can do about it. An approach to develop social understanding changes this – it helps students to understand why they have difficulties and what they can do to improve their situation. Rather than thinking 'I'm rubbish' (sometimes students tell me things like: '(I'm rubbish), I don't like being mean', 'I wish I was somebody else' or 'I hate my autism') they realise that it was simply that they weren't aware of how a particular skill or strategy could help them – or they forgot to use it – and they can improve if they use/remember to use it! This realisation alone improves students' wellbeing enormously and then with supported practice, as they see their progress, they begin to blossom (apologies if this sounds corny but it's honestly a good description – I have seen it many a time!)

When it comes to learning I find the approach to 'isolate and build' important. To explain a little more about this approach, you start with the basics (I call it 'back to basics' or 'learning checks' with the students) and use concepts/skills the student is likely to know already or find relatively easy to grasp, before linking and building to more difficult concepts and skills.

All my work is underpinned by these approaches and if you take a look at some of the specialist resources on the website (you can view or download brochures for each one) you will see examples for every aspect of language and communication – semantic knowledge (concepts, vocabulary and wordfinding) in the early years and for school subjects such as Maths and Science, grammar/syntax and pragmatics – inference, organisation/ relevance, social communication and social behaviour. I have also written a scheme for phonology based on these principles called *Sound*, not on the website. You can enquire about this scheme or anything else by emailing

I hope you enjoy browsing the brochures,

Wendy
Dr Wendy Rinaldi (Doctorate in Psychology & Special Needs)

About Wendy Rinaldi

I have been working now since 1983 as a speech and language therapist and since 1998, having gained my doctorate with the London University Institute of Education, as an advisor in psychology and special needs to professionals in health and education throughout the UK and overseas.

My experience is with children, teenagers and adults who have language and social communication needs, including those on the autistic spectrum. Most of my experience has been with students who are of average ability or with mild to moderate learning needs. My first posts were for the NHS, working in schools and health clinics, and I then worked for the charity ICAN where I developed a service for secondary school students in mainstream comprehensive schools.

I wrote my first publication in the late 1980s and now have around 15 programme titles including around 90 books/ebooks. I have been working independently since 1998, advising and training staff alongside my research into pragmatics (social communication and understanding).
As well as my small group courses for professionals in the UK, I have been invited to speak at conferences in the UK and overseas (furthest trip to date - New Zealand!) I have also been involved with a number of very interesting projects, for example, I was a member of the working party developing web based guidelines for the DfE Primary National Strategy and I worked with the Surrey Youth Justice Service to look at the communication difficulties of young people at risk of offending (published in the RCSLT Bulletin, June 2011).

In addition to advising and training professionals in health and education, I work with students and families myself – I have run many very successful courses for students and families that have made a difference to how they communicate and get along both as a family and in a wider social sense. I have also supported a number of families in the EHCP process.

THERAPIES FOR CHILDREN, TEENAGERS, ADULTS & FAMILIES

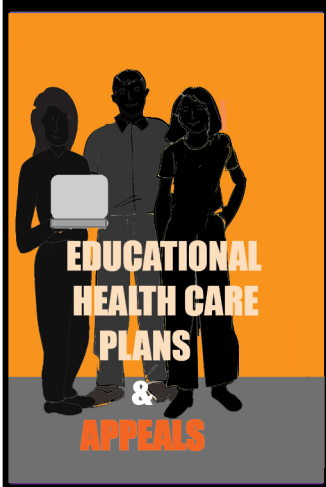
Wendy offers a wide range of therapies and home programmes suitable for children, teenagers, adults and their families. Much of her work has been published and she also develops bespoke programmes to meet individual/ family needs. Click here to view a short introductory film. Click on an image in the border for a pdf download or email enquiries@wendyrinaldi.com

SUPPORT IN THE EDUCATIONAL, HEALTH & CARE PLAN (EHCP) PROCESS

Wendy draws upon the knowledge and experience she has gained from her Doctorate (with the London Institute of Education, Dept of Educational Psychology & Special Needs), in addition to many years of practice as a speech and language therapist, to offer support to parents in their contribution to their son or daughter's EHCP. Click here to view a short, introductory film. Click on the EHCP image in the border for a pdf download

THERAPIES FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Wendy can be commissioned to provide therapy for schools and colleges. Staff training can be incorporated by Wendy tutoring staff who work alongside and by providing specialist materials (published and bespoke) that can be used afterwards. Please email enquiries@wendyrinaldi.com for further information.

To view a film about the effectiveness of *Social Use of Language Programme,* suitable for professionals and parents, please click here (click the Skip Ads button to skip the adverts added by You Tube).

- *Social Communication, social understanding & wellbeing. Friendships & relationships at home, school or work.*
- *We can work it out! (inference)*
- *Getting It Across! Communicating your ideas more effectively*
- *Sound Sounds! Awareness & use of sounds for speaking*