



# Talking about hard stuff

How to approach discussing concerns about a child's development with the parents

# Overview

- Introduction
- Background
- Strategies and Resources
- Questions
- Follow up support

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# Introductions

- Katharina Senger B.Sc.OT from Germany
- Owner of Little Hands OT in Holt
- 15+ years of experience in OT and most of that in Paediatrics
- Mum of two little boys

How about you ?

Experience ?

Age group ?



The infographic features a central teal circle with the text 'AREAS OT PROVIDES SUPPORT'. Surrounding this central circle are eight smaller circles in various shades of purple and magenta, each containing a specific area of support. The background is a light blue-grey color with several small, solid purple circles scattered throughout. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for 'Little Hands Occupational Therapy' which includes a stylized graphic of hands.

# AREAS OT PROVIDES SUPPORT

Executive  
Functioning  
Skills

Self-Care  
Skills

Fine  
Motor &  
Hand  
Skills

Skills of  
Independence

Visual  
Perception

Social  
Cognition  
and Play  
Skills

Equipment  
Prescription

Emotional  
Regulation &  
Sensory  
Processing

# Why is your input crucial to identify developmental concerns ?

- Parents hold specialists knowledge on their child
  - Detailed insight into the needs and abilities of their child
  - Intuitive scaffolding to enable child's development (pro and con)
  - Bias towards their child
  - Mostly observe their children in a structured/ set-up social setting
  - Understand cultural background, family values and family dynamics
- Educators hold specialists knowledge on child development in general
  - Experiences with a wide range of different children over many years
  - Broader understanding of age expectations
  - See the child regularly interact in a large social setting and ever changing learning environment

# Things to consider

- Early intervention leverages a child's brain plasticity during their formative years to maximise their developmental potential and address potential challenges before they become more ingrained
- Current circumstances of the family (e.g. new baby, moved houses etc)
- Families cultural background
- Your relationship with the parents and your level of knowledge of the child
- Possible 'negative' emotional responses : fear, guilt, denial

# Concern → Discussion

- Notice behaviour/ lack of skill progression
- Discuss concerns within the team to identify if others share your concerns and can add observations
- Use screening tools and targeted observations to inform your concern
- Invite brief conversation at pick up to gauge parent response

# Concern → Discussion

- Have a more in depth conversation
  - Open conversation demonstrating that you care
  - Identify area of concern
  - Provide specific examples/ observations
  - Demonstrate what you did to assess and support so far
  - Wonder if this is an experience specific to the child, the environment or the circumstances
  - Invite them share their thought, ideas and strategies
  - Provide options/ideas/resources regarding 'what's next'
  - Hold space for emotions



# Case Study

- Notice Olly is mostly playing by himself, doesn't participate in group activities and seems to have a limited range of play activities he enjoys.
- Discuss with your colleagues their observations.
- Use checklist to check age appropriate play skills and social skills and make an extra effort to invite him into group time, support his participation and try to offer support to extend his play.
- Consider Olly's current circumstances (new siblings, parents separation, new to the centre etc)
- At pick up, mention an observation: I noticed that Olly really enjoys playing with cars here, is he enjoying other play activities at home so we can make sure we offer him alternatives.
- Observe parent response and eagerness to talk: Olly's mum response by saying that she has been concerned as its all about cars and he is 'obsessed'

# Case study

- I was wondering if you observed similar things at home or the playground ? I know he had a little sibling/ just changed rooms, is this something that happened before too or is that just recently happening?
  - mum reports that Olly was always a shy kid who never really joined in and appears to be very happy to just play with his cars as long as none interfered.
  - mum also admits that she has been wondering if she should chat with someone but wasn't sure if she is just an anxious mum.
- Do you have ideas or strategies on how we can support him here ?
  - mum recommends a book Olly really likes to read and which might help him engage in circle time, she also shares that loud noise seems to be something he dislikes and that she found he best engages when it is quiet or he wears his 'construction' headphones
- Provide options/ideas/resources regarding 'what's next'
- Throughout hold space for mums emotions, validate feelings, be empathetic

# Resources for parents

- Child Development Service
  - Drop-In Clinics
  - Referral for free assessment
- Little Hands OT
  - Baby Drop In
  - Parent Info Nights+ Follow -Up
  - Single Session Services
  - Assessments and Therapy

# Resources for educators

- Online
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/watch-me-training/about/index.html>
  - <https://pathways.org>
  - <https://raisingchildren.net.au>
- Little Hands OT
  - Parent Info Nights
  - Topic specific presentation



Thank

you