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Play is FUNdamental: Integrating Social, Motor, and Language Aspects of Play

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- [Amy] And at this time, it is a pleasure to introduce Dr. Lisa Audet this afternoon, who is presenting part two of her four-part series, play is fundamental. Today she is covering integrating social, motor and language aspects of play. Dr. Audet is on faculty and speech pathology and audiology at Kent State University, and she's been there since 2000. She specializes in early childhood language development and disorders, low incidence disorders, autism, augmentative communication and assistive technology. So welcome, Lisa, thank you so much for joining us again today.

- [Lisa] Good afternoon, everyone. I'm really glad to be here again today and do this second part of the four-part series. And I am just delighted that so many of you are attending. I am going to start with just some basics and then a little recap of yesterday. So we can begin. I am getting paid for this presentation. I am involved in the Autism Initiative for Research Education and Outreach, AIREO, which I started at Kent State University. And I'm the owner of a private practice outside of Kent State. But I have no nonfinancial things to report, disclosures to report. My content doesn't focus on any particular product, is integration of information from various aspects of the research and clinical research, and all individuals, I use pseudonyms to represent them to protect their identities.

And this is being presented through speechpath.com. So those are my disclosures. And before I get into the learning outcomes for today, just a recap of yesterday, where we talked about some important principles to keep in mind regarding normal human development. One was cefalocaudal, which is that human beings develop from the top to the bottom. So this is why we have head stability before we begin to walk. proximal distal, which is that we develop from the inside out, which is why little kids engage in a lot of throwing and dumping behaviors that originates from their shoulders before they begin to use more fine motor movements with just their fingers. And then the third was

stability before mobility, and the importance of that, so that any mechanism needs to be stable before it can move and manipulate objects. And we talked about the importance of attending to those three aspects of human development, as we work with individuals who may be older and have developmental delays, that many of their behaviors may reflect some problems in these three principles. So really tried to send the message that we need to adopt a developmental perspective as we engage in our assessment and intervention with individuals who may not have a huge developmental gap but who may have a huge developmental gap.

Today, our learning outcomes are to describe the stages of motor, social and language play. The next is to describe how the stages of the different aspects of play are interconnected, and then how to develop interventions that balance these three aspects of play, of motor, social and language play. As we all know, and we've probably been even more taxed with COVID pandemic, we only have so much energy to give to any particular task at any particular time.

And the same is true for children and young adults or anyone who has a developmental delay, with regard to how they engage with the world. They need to invest energy on the motor demands, the social demands and the language demands. And I think it's imperative that as SLPs, we're paying attention to that and we're beginning to think about, well, how can I lower the motor demands so that my client has more energy for the language goals that I'm working on? Or how can I reduce the motor and the language demands so that the client is able to invest their energy in the social goals that I'm trying to focus on? So that's what we're gonna be talking about today. Our agenda, will start with a motor play, we'll move to social play. Then the intersection of those and creating developmentally matched play experiences for our clients. I wanna begin with a story, where integrating social language and motor components of play really assisted me in the assessment of a young man. Who was referred to me, he was in a sheltered workshop, receiving services through a sheltered workshop, and they

were having problems with him, because they were trying to teach him how to use a shredder. And he had a paraprofessional. So I'll go through this story. We're gonna call him Paulo, a 17-year-old with developmental disabilities who was nonverbal. And did not comprehend de-contextualize language. He did not have eye contact and he did not use gestures to communicate. So when I think about that, just that one line, it makes me think that this individual, if we're looking at stages of intentionality, was either functioning at a perlocutionary stage, or an illocutionary stage. Or maybe emerging into an illocutionary stage. And as we talked about that yesterday, that illocutionary stage, typically human beings develop into that stage around nine months of age. But here we had a 17-year-old who needed a lot of context in order to comprehend routine language, did not talk and was not using that distal point that we talked about yesterday, or using eye contact to communicate.

So the paraprofessional was sitting next to him, trying to teach him how to use a shredder. And the problem was that whenever the paper would go through the shredder, it was one of those shredders that sat on top of a trashcan, he could see the paper falling and he would go to grab the paper. So the paraprofessionals job was to tell him hands back, and to gesture for him to move his hands back. And this was going on and on, and they were having a problem with him because he kept going to grab the paper.

They also filmed him during the day, and during his breaks, they would give him a dish pan filled with various objects, and Paulo, like objects like a pretend car, a pretend phone, some blocks, those kinds of things. And what Paulo would do would be to grab one of the objects and go and put it in his mouth and try to lick it. And then they would yell or say no mouthing, no mouthing. And he would put it down and grab something else and put it in his mouth. So again, we look at him and we have a nonverbal individual, doesn't comprehend language, doesn't have gestural complex, so intentionality is low, is grabbing at objects that are falling down, and is mouthing

objects. So my hypothesis was that this young man was functioning probably mouthing objects, pretty low under six months of age, no intent, okay, under nine months of age, grabbing at things, like as a mobile. When you have younger kids that you put a mobile in there crib so they can grab at things. So it was not surprising, even though he was 17, it was not surprising that he would go and grab things. And so, as we put together the pieces, the developmental pieces, cognitive language, intentionality, social, my hypothesis was that even though Paulo was 17 years old, he was functioning probably at a nine-month or lower level cognitively and linguistically. The solution then, was to get a new type of shredder, where he could not see the papers falling. Because one of the things we know about individuals who are nine months or lower, is that they don't have object permanence. So if they don't have object permanence, if the paper is gone, he's not gonna think to go looking for it based on where he is. So this knowledge of development and developmental age, separate from chronological age, allowed us to do some problem solving that would help him locationally.

And that's a big part of what I'm trying to communicate with all of you and why I wanted to do these presentations, is that we have so much important information that we have learned about normal human development, that can really assist us as we work with older individuals who are developmentally delayed. And the other reason why this is so important to me to share with you, is as I go around consulting and I talked to speech language pathologists, very few say that they had intensive coursework on play development. And so, it just is amazing to me and it's so important to me to understand play and developmental stages of play, developmental stages of human development in order to problem solve. Otherwise, we would look at somebody like Paulo, and we would deal with him behaviorally, put them on a little behavioral program for not touching or whatever it might be but we're missing so much information. So now we can put, if we wanna put him on a behavioral program, that's fine. How many pieces can you shred? We can give his paraprofessional another job to

do. Maybe teaching him how to play during his break times, how to play with those cars and the pretend, well the pretend phone is probably too advanced, but putting in some cause effect and some sensory play and his dish pan versus more representational play. So it just informs our practice in so many ways. So with that introduction, here is the how I solve the problem for your reading pleasure. And then based on what I've presented, we can no longer say that when we think about play, that our goal is that the child will demonstrate appropriate play. We don't know what appropriate play means. What is appropriate play? It's different, if you're playing with a ball, it's gross motor play. If you're playing with a board game, well, there's more collaborative play. But what about your developmental level?

How does your developmental level influence how you will with the materials that you're presented with? So there are many, many aspects of play that we need to consider. We need to look at whether it's matched developmentally at a motor level, a social level and a pretend play level. So if we're looking at functional object use, and the list goes on and on, like what is play? Even pretend play? Is it single-step pretend or multi-step pretend? Is it collaborative pretend? Is it parallel pretend?

There's so many different aspects we need to consider and that will allow us to refine our play goals, but also to refine how we integrate play into the rest of our speech and language therapy sessions, regardless of if we're working on speech receptive language, expressive language pragmatics. So here are some examples of goals. What we can say is my goal is to assist the child in demonstrating some single-step play. Or I want my child to develop collaborative play with typical peers and we could say that the child will engage in collaborative play with typical peers for x number of minutes. We can say that the child is going to demonstrate sharing behavior, or trading behavior three times within a 15-minute period. We can also say that our goal is that the child is going to solve a motor problem independently in play. So you can see from this list, how specific the play is. Parallel play, we might want to say that the child's going to

develop new schemas for five new construction-type plays activities. What do I mean by schemas? Well so many of our children and young adults, or teens or older school-aged kids, their play is very restrictive. They only have three things that they do in play. And if we understand cognition and how we develop memories and sequential acts, it's a schema, and many of our children do not develop play schemas for different activities. And we're gonna talk in a little bit about how observational play can assist children to develop new schema for new play activities. Many of you, I know no have kids or young adults or whatever age who reject novelty. This is a common thing that happens with individuals who have autism. It happens with individuals with developmental disabilities, they reject novelty. Well, that means that they don't have the schema for the activity. So what do we do about that? Well, if we understand stages of social play, we can begin to address development of new schemas.

Okay, as we begin to think about this, there's a lot of content. So what we do is we break things up, and we observe our clients from different aspects. So we observe, what are they doing rhetorically? What are they doing socially? What are they doing from a cognitive linguistic perspective? So we have to break it up and do that observation and then put it back together. And what we might find is when we put it back together, there are certain patterns that emerge, that our client, even though they're 21 years of age, that they're really functioning at a three-year level meteorically, socially and cognitive linguistically. Well, once we know that, the world opens up for us with regard to what our plan is, for which skills we wanna teach. And as mentioned yesterday, the struggle then becomes how do we create a chronologically appropriate activities for somebody who is 21 but functioning at a three-year level? Well, I think the example with Paulo using a shredder, that's a developmentally appropriate task, but we needed to adapt it to his developmental level. But that's a challenge it creates, it causes us to really think about things, but also to collaborate with other interventionists, vocational rehab counselors, OTs, PTs, whomever it might be. So we analyze each component. We ask ourselves, what's gonna be my focus in creating our

goals? Is my focus social? Well, then I need to manipulate the motor demands and the cognitive demands, so my client has energy for the social component. And we know that we can trust human development. Human development is human development regardless of age. It might be occurring slower, individuals might be at a standstill for certain points in time with regard to the development, there may be some gaps and holes, but a developmental perspective always, I believe, provides us with the best safest starting point as we do our assessments. It helps us to recognize the humanity of the person. Helps us to operate from a humanistic perspective and it opens up many, many opportunities for us. So let's talk about these motor stages.

There are basically three main motor stages, and one of the things we need to remember is that as beings develop across these stages, they still might have preferences for earlier stages. And as we grow up, we never as adults, we're still engaged in motor play throughout our day. And it's a big part of what we need in order to stay healthy, a big part of self care.

So people develop certain preferences, but developmentally, we start with sensory motor play like Paulo, and mouthing things. Zero to nine months, we like to experience sensations on our body, in our body mouthing, we enjoy swinging, bouncing. Young babies, this is what they enjoy. But okay, some of us might still really enjoy ice cream because it's a wonderful sensory experience. Others of us might have a swing on our porch, or we might have a swing in our backyard because, because swinging is fun. We might enjoy going to, and Northeast Ohio would be Cedar point. We might enjoy going to Cedar point and being bounced about because of the sensory experience. So it never really goes away, it's just what the focus is from zero to nine months. As the person develops, because of cephalocaudal and proximal distill development and stability to mobility, the next stage is gross motor play, nine to 18 months, where we're beginning to use the large muscle groups of our body. And again, we use this throughout our lives. Some people might be rock climbers, some people might love

going to climbing walls. Some people look at those trampoline parks that have come up. So many people run. My niece was very disappointed, she couldn't run the Boston Marathon this year. It was going to be her first marathon. She runs every day. Others of us walk or we use, we go to the gym. So we never really outgrow gross motor play. As we become proficient in it, we use it as an integral part of our lives. And still the next stage would be fine motor play. And of course that develops round three years of age, so 24 to 48 months, but that's our ability to manipulate objects with our hands. And highly related to cephalocaudal and proximal distal development. And so when we ask ourselves, when we look at a child, maybe a child with autism who's eight years old, is nonverbal and is loving the sensory motor room. Is loving that room, that's where you get the most out of him. Well, that might not be surprising if he's developmentally at a zero to nine month level. Sometimes I think about all the talk about sensory integration and a part that's missing from the discussion is how many of these SI activities may align with the person developmentally, which is why they look so much better when they're engaged in the sensory integration activities.

So I'd like to have that conversation, begin to talk about that. I noticed he loves the swing. I also notice he's nonverbal. I also notice he doesn't have a distal point. I wonder if he's still functioning at like under a nine-month level. Oh, I know what to do to help a nine-month-old develop language. I'm gonna use those principles that I learned when I was getting my graduate degree about normal child development and see if I can't help move this person along. So that's an important consideration. The other is that we use gross motor skills throughout our lifetime, and so do our clients, for social interaction. There're adults who are on field hockey team as adults or in basketball teams, or we're in a swim club, where using our gross motor skills, it becomes essential for social interaction. We're part of a running club or bicycling club, or bowling club. Well, we're just using motor play throughout our lives. So I guess my point is it doesn't just go away once the child is four years of age and is now able to write. We might belong to a knitting group or quilting group if fine motor is our

preference. It's also important to academic success. The kids who are stuck in a sensory motor or gross motor stage. Well, the gross motor kids, they're not sitting down. They're moving around the classroom. It is hard to get them to sit down and focus because of where they are developmentally. But understanding that we might be able to balance giving them gross motor time and have reasonable fine motor or working on fine motor activity time within our daily activities. So it's important to academic success. And then job opportunities.

We wanna think about what kind of job is going to be appropriate for this person who has developmental needs, based on where they are metabolically. Because if we give them a lot of fine motor tasks and they don't get a lot of time to walk around, it might be really difficult for them to keep a position. So these are important things to think about even with older individuals. And you might wanna spend some time reflecting on this for yourself. Where are you in terms of your motor development? What are your motor preferences as an adult? And would it make sense then, that our clients would have motor preferences just like we do? And to consider that as we're developing activities for them or looking at jobs or attempting to have them be more integrated.

Our next part is pertains to social aspects of play. And this is a great shot. So you see two kids on a swing, on the swing in very different ways. The older one kind of challenging herself on the swing, and they're together. And so we have the motor aspects of play, which are quite reduced, is at a sensory motor stage right on the swing, and they're doing it together and we see that the older one is challenging herself. Not surprising that she's challenging herself on a lower level motor task, because she's older and she's having those ideas. And we know that social play is important to relationship development, our own mental health as we engage with people socially. We have a walking group, you might have, well not anymore, but in like your shared workspace, you might have a puzzle that people all contribute to. Some of you may have belong, have scrabble on as an app. Well, those are aspects of social

play that you're engaging in. So it's important for our relationships, our own mental health, being able to understand how another person feels, and for group problem solving and executive functioning. And same is true for individuals who have developmental delays. That it's important for us to address social aspects of play for their mental health, so they're not isolated. I do a lot of work with our college students who are also on the autism spectrum. And the absence of social interaction leads to so much isolation, depression, anxiety, sitting in their rooms just developing, ending up being in their own little bubble. Because they haven't yet mastered certain aspects of social play. So we develop each of the types of social play, and then we apply them throughout our lives. So let's take a look at what those aspects of social play are. The first is solitary play, being able to play by yourself. And 4 to 12 month olds begin to enjoy this. They explore objects, they look at objects, they bang objects. Then we see, I have a whole host of examples of how young children occupied themselves with an object. But as adults, where do we have solitary play? Well, our office work right, sitting at a computer, solitary play.

We might enjoy running alone or exercising alone, or playing an instrument by ourselves. Reading, my husband enjoys cooking and he likes to do it by himself. Knitting or building things might be examples of solitary play that we enjoy later in our life. So solitary play with young children who might be on the spectrum, have language delays, developmental delays, assisting them in developing a solitary play skills is really important. We know that children, one of the things we ask when children are getting ready for kindergarten is can they play by themselves, occupy themselves for five minutes. 'Cause a teacher cannot run around with 20 kindergartners in a typical classroom, if kids can't figure out how to occupy themselves. So the solitary play is important. And typically, one of the benchmarks that I use is that the number of minutes a person can engage in solitary play is related to their developmental age. So like their cognitive age, so developmental age. So if we have somebody who's functioning like a three-year-old, I would expect them to be able to occupy themselves

for three minutes. This becomes challenging when you have a 21-year-old who needs a different activity every three to five minutes. But it's important then that we begin to work on expanding how long they can engage or the number of different activities. This is what I think the teach methodology is so useful with their workstations and having tasks, the task boxes, that a person can occupy themselves independently. And we know for individuals who have developmental delays, being able to occupy that yourself independently is really important for them to be able to get a job, to be able to be at their workstation, making their boxes, or being at a workstation, putting objects together if that's what they're doing.

The other piece that with solitary play is it's an outlet for relaxation, stimulation and gratification. So if our individuals love jumping on a trampoline because that's where they are, they are at a gross motor play stage, well, that might be something that is useful for them even if they are older, and provides them with a good outlet to relax. And I think that's useful for us to think about, our clients need to figure out, we need to help them figure out how to relax, how to occupy themselves in healthy ways. Otherwise they're getting into all kinds of mischief, in their homes, or at work or at school. The next stage is onlooker play.

And I think the importance of onlooker play has been highly overlooked to say the least. But basically it's learning by watching. And the general consensus is that children, people with autism tend to not learn by watching. All right, so that means that you and I need to teach them to learn by watching. And we often neglect how the importance of onlooker play in the work that we do. But I have an example here of the importance of it, of a kid who goes to the community pool every day in the summer. And he watches the big kids go up that diving board and jump off the diving board. And he walks back and forth and he watches them every day. And someone says, come on, I'll help you. And he runs off, he's not gonna do that right now. And then little few weeks later, he starts, he climbs up the stairs and then he climbs back down the

stairs. And then he climbs up again the next day a little bit higher and he climbed back down. And then finally on the last day of the summer, he gets onto the diving board and he finally jumps. Well, what has happened for that young man, that little boy all summer? He has been developing a schema, a mental representation for four jumping off diving boards. And that is what onlooker play does for us. It helps us to develop that schema. He has learned, he's like, okay, I have this problem I'm, gonna... And he's also done a little task analysis. Walking up, going up the steps coming down okay. I've gotten that part down. He might even go up to the top and come back down. He might go up to the top, walk a little bit, come back down.

Schema development, task analysis, and that's really powerful. So let's look at the importance of this. So typically kids 12 to 18 months start to pay attention to other kids in their environment. They watch their older siblings eat with a fork. I still remember being little and watching my brother do his homework and wanting my own homework to do just like him. Kids watch each other on the playground. And look at us as adults, where do we engage in onlooker play? We go to museums, we like to go to sporting events, reality TV shows. We do all kinds of things that are onlooker play-based. Why is it important? I mentioned, schema development.

And what that emphasizes then, if children learn through onlooker play, is that when we model in our interventions, it becomes really, really important. The other is that we need to give our clients time to take in information before they're able to produce it. There's so much emphasis on our data collection to make that little mark that the child or the client demonstrated the behavior. But we need to first put that information in. I have a methodology called tried and true, noble and challenging. Where I will have a board with like six different options of activities that we can do, picture-represented. And three of the objects items are things I know the kid is gonna pick, so there might be bubbles or Plato or a ball or whatever it might be. And then three other objects or things that I know he would never pick because he does not have a schema for them.

And then we take turns, his pick, he picks bubbles. I knew he was gonna pick bubbles, so we play with bubbles for a while, we work on some receptive, expressive language skills. And then it's Lisa's turn, and I pick the one I know he's not gonna want. And I pick it because I am going to demonstrate it. And the child might try to throw it away or grab it from me and I just assure him that he'll be okay. I'm gonna do it three times and if it's a top, I hit the top once. And I'm like, "Hit, oh, look, go, go top, go." And I'm just modeling and he might be a little bit distressed. As long as he's safe, I'm gonna tolerate it. And then we go back to his pick, and he picks Plato and we do that for a while, and then it's my pick again, and I pick that top again.

And I demonstrated that three times, then all done, but the focus is onlooker play. And over a number of years sessions, that child then I set it up. I take the top out here, no longer distraught, he now is beginning to develop a schema, and I put my hand on it and I wait. And the child will hit my hand to make it go. And then over a couple of weeks, he's picking the top to do as an activity. So tried and true are those activities he's gonna naturally prefer, the noble and challenging are those that I want to teach a schema. And when I bring them out, I am gonna work on observation play, or onlooker play, so really important. And then once the child is picking the top, now I remove bubbles, let's say, and I put in a new novel and challenging activity, because I'm gonna teach a schema.

And my goal is that the child is going to develop schemas, they're no longer novel activities. So that the child will develop schema for five new activities within three months. That's my goal. And I'm using this kind of format to really emphasize the onlooker play. If you were here yesterday, I gave the example of the little girl who was running around the playground because she had picked slide and she didn't really wanna go the slide. But we could have worked on her looking at other children do the slide. So I'm onlooker play is really important. The next level of play is parallel play, the ability to play side by side, we tend to focus quite a bit on that. It's important because

we through parallel play, we learn to trade and share. And something to remember is that trading comes first before sharing. I'm not sure this reads the way I want it to. This sets the stage for sharing and trading which comes next. But trading comes first, and why, because no one wants to be left to empty-handed. So if you're having a problem, working with your clients on sharing, start with trading and see how that goes. We begin to be able to let people be in our space, work side by side, and how important is that as a lifelong skill? Being able to work at independently with somebody next to you. In the classroom, in the office, in the warehouse, at home, et cetera. So the stages, it begins to develop around two years of age and continues through four years of age with regard to that whole sharing piece.

And you have some examples here, water play construction play, each person has their own blocks, being able to color side-by-side et cetera. But why is it important? Because parallel play teaches us to sustain attention despite distractions. It helps us to focus attention. And what's that? An executive function. Through that we also learn boundaries, where is my space, where's your space? We learn to control our impulses. If somebody has something we want, we can't just go and take it. And then it sets the stage for us to be able to collaborate and work.

So we complete our work and when our partner is done finishing their work, we now join to discuss what we've done and work on some problem-solving skills, so important for us to address. And real important, work on trading before sharing. The next stage is associative play. And this stage develops, again, around two years and I emphasize the trading versus sharing, and in associative play, the whole focus is trading and sharing. You don't really have to trade and share. You don't have to give up any of your toys in parallel play. But in associate play, that's the whole focus, is trading and sharing, and nobody wants to be left empty-handed at first. The little kids, people with developmental disabilities, they don't know if that favorite toy is gonna come back. So teach the trading first. And being able to trade and share, it's important for

our us to be healthy. It's important for older individuals with developmental delays so they're not just sitting around waiting for more food. So they're not just sitting around and watching, finding Nemo for the 3000th time. We wanna work on these play skills so that they can utilize their time in ways. So our next stage of social play is collaborative play, and this is teamwork. Around three months, not three, 36, three years of age. And then by the time kids are in kindergarten, typically, they have good collaborative skills. We have that bossy little girl in kindergarten who's telling everybody who they're going to be when they play house.

One of the things about collaborative play and pretend play, I don't know if it's gonna be in one of my slides, but Catherine Snow did some research and found that the more time a child spent engaged in collaborative pretend play in kindergarten, the higher their reading comprehension skills while in third grade. We'll be talking more about that, but I just wanted to plant that seed with regards to the importance of engaging in collaborative and pretend play. And it requires a number of skills here, all language-based and cognitive based skills. The ability to negotiate, bargain protest, convince another that your idea's better than theirs. A lot of important skills that become lifelong skills. It's important to learn in the workplace how to convince a coworker. It's important to know in the workplace how to negotiate. It's important to problem solve in the workplace.

So these are lifelong skills. And it's important for us to be able to take another person's perspective so that we can add to what they're talking about. We can contribute in a meaningful way. And then of course, all the executive functions in part three of this series is really going to talk a lot about executive functions that develop through play. All right, now we're gonna move to the cognitive stages of play. These are based on Carol Westby's work. Her main areas, sensory motor play which we talked about, exploratory play, and then she talks at around nine months, between 9 and 18 months, kids begin to use tools. And language is a tool, isn't it? So words are tools. So it's not

surprising that tool use, being able to use a stick, to go and access something, being able to move a chair to climb, that the awareness that we have tools at our disposal aligns with the emergence of first words. That first word of mama, and mama shows up. That's a tool, it's a tool to make things happen. By 24 months, cause effect happens. So now language is like, oh, when I do this, this happens. And then construction play. Construction play of having in your an image. I imagine a tower, I imagine a road, I imagine a crib, and I'm gonna need make it. So what is that image, it's a symbol, so symbolic thought allows us to develop construction play, around three years of of age, and by then we're developing the fine motor skills that allow us to manipulate those objects, to take that image that's in our head and put it out there on paper or with blocks or whatever the medium might be.

And then we have pretend play, which begins to develop at 24 months of age, and continues to develop till five years of age. But we pretend throughout our lives. We love a good novel. We love reality TV. We might really love to go to plays or to watch movies. We might be in a playgroup, not a play group, a theater group which putting on plays. So pretend play never leaves us once we master it. Links, how is cognitive play linked to language? Well, object permanence is something that comes out through our cognitive aspects of play.

And words represent things that are not present. So the emergence of object permanence, realizing that things are there when things still exist really aligns with our ability to use words. We can call or as infants, or you may know infants, they call for a parent when the parent isn't there. That's object permanence. Calling behavior, that pragmatic function of calling requires object permanence. Because if you didn't have object permanence, your mom would be out of the room and you would know that she no longer exists. It might cause you a lot of stress because you don't have object permanence. So that's an important connection and important skill for us to work on with our clients. Cause effect play, that our words have an effect on the world. They

hold idea of tool use that I talked about and that whole, the importance of construction play. In our minds we have that image, we make a plan, our eyes work with hands, our hands as we represent what that image was in our mind. So important correlates to work with and to continue to work with, even if you have older individuals who are developmentally needing to work continue to work on object permanence. So let's spend the bulk of our time, the rest of our time on pretend play. A very important, I mentioned yesterday, the number of objects used in play correlates with a child's MLQ. So if you have a child playing with a single object, let's say it's a ball, they will most likely be at a single word stage. I encourage all of you to go and test this with your clients and see what you come up with. And you have my email, tell me what you come up with. But if you have a child who's engaging with two objects, taking a baby and a baby bottle and putting the bottle in the baby's mouth, that child might be at a two-step play, that two-step play stage, but a two-word utterance stage, feed baby, baby drink.

And notice, so noun verb, verb noun. And then if they do three objects in play, so they feed the baby and then they put the baby down and put the blanket on, they might be at a three-word stage. So important for us to look at some of these examples and to start reflecting on our prior clients or our current clients. And I'm telling you, once you recognize this and you know this, I know my kid's at a single-word stage because I've been watching him play. I know how to talk to that kid. I know how to use elaboration and expansion to help develop his receptive and expressive language. He might be 10 years old, the echolalic, and using functioning with a single objects. Then his true receptive expressive language age is probably at a single-word level. He's gonna echo anything I say, because he's echolalic. But his developmental language stage may be correlated with his play level. So important to think about. Now that we covered all of this, we have to come up with a balance for our sessions. So we do a task analysis, just like that little who was learning how to dive off the diving board. We want to look at where is our child on these three areas of play or development? What skills does the

child bring to the table in each area? And then ask ourselves, what is the goal of the activity? If your goal is to work on cooperative play, I wouldn't recommend doing it with little tiny Legos. If the child is in a gross motor stage of motor development, because it's gonna be a hot mess and you've set it up. So you want, if your kid is gonna have to focus on social aspects of play, you want to reduce the motor demands and reduce the language demands. You wanna think about it, and you have so many, we have so many options available to us with regards to materials. And I mentioned early on, we only have so much energy.

And if you're gonna be overloaded in one area, you're going to not have skills in the other area. And a good example is a young lady. She was probably 17 and I ran a summer program, and the assistant in the program was trying to get this young lady to string tiny beads with kind of like a shoelace. And this young lady, 17-year-old, her motor skills were horrible. I heard this on video and we talked about it. The young lady really wanted to be social and really liked the paraprofessional. And so she kept trying and trying, and the beads kept falling.

And eventually, she just started swearing, that 17-year-old just started swearing. It made sense, she was overloaded rhetorically. So if we wanted her to be social and us take turns to put beads on a string, we should have had much bigger beads and a much bigger piece of thread or maybe a rope to do it. Because the motor demand was just too high and her focus was on the social level. So also, this is good to know. When it doesn't go according to plan, it's always helpful to go back and say, "Hmm, what should I have done differently in terms of motor, social or cognitive demands of the task?" Here's some examples, child who has fine motor problems. You wanna address language goals, you want objects that are easy to manipulate a child with language problems, you want to address the social aspects, use some cause effects sensory activities. So the child has energy to socialize. Do some turn-taking. A child who might have limited place schema, you wanna be the model, before you expect that output as

I described earlier. Or childhood social, pragmatic problems, you might wanna allow that child and support him in observing how other people are interacting. And then redo some of the motor demands when you expect him to be social. Like I mentioned yesterday with a young man who had motor problems and he wanted to be social. We had to give him other ways of being social that didn't really emphasize the motor component because kids would see him running and be afraid of him. So you wanna attend to the type of group activity that you have the whole group doing. If your person has fine motor problems, you don't want a group activity where they're making an intricate collage. You wanna have something, maybe they're using large logos to craft something, to build something. Or they're engaged in a gross motor activity. So you wanna balance that so you can really attend to your goals.

So it's not simple. Lots to think about, and right now I'm wondering if you're exhausted or exhilarated. For me, this always, I love this kind of problem solving so it's always exhilarating. It's also very comforting for me because I know that I can trust human development and I tell my students that all the time. Trust human development, when you're stumped, go back and look at human development and see what you can learn from that. So you become a really good observer when you begin to think about human development.

And if things don't go well, we go back to the drawing board. When we adopt this way of thinking about things, we're no longer blaming our clients and saying, "Oh, he has ADHD, that's why he didn't want to do this. He just wasn't interested today, or he was playing with me. He was manipulating me." And all that other stuff. No, we just stop talking like that and we go back to the basics. And we say, what could I have done differently? Because I know that as humans, we want to play, we want to engage with materials in meaningful ways, and that human development is aligned with play. And that's my starting point. So I'm gonna leave some time now. I have some time for questions. And if you want to put them in the Q&A, that would be great. And I'm hoping

that you'll join me in the next couple of weeks I'm back on. I don't remember the date exactly, but I'm gonna be talking about habits of the mind and executive functions that we work on through play. And then we'll talk about literacy and play, and more about that amount of time that kids play and pretend plays equal to better reading comprehension later on. Okay, so I see one question. So, do I think that increasing the number of objects a child uses in play could lead to increases in expressive MLU? That's a really interesting question and I think it's possible. So if I know that my child is using single objects in play, I am going to set up play activities where I'm gonna be modeling two objects in play. And as I model two objects in play, what am I doing? I am saturating the environment with two word combinations. So feed baby, baby drink, more drink. All of my language that I'm giving the child as I'm using two-step play is, or two-object play, is supporting the child in moving forward. So you can't help it. But if you're gonna be using elaboration and expansion and modeling and saturation and all those wonderful language techniques that you've learned, you can really use them in play. And know that if you give that baby to the kid, that kid is gonna play with that baby's eyes.

But when you have the baby, you are setting that schema and you are modeling two-word combination. So great question. Next question. How do I suggest using Westby's play scale to help shape assessment, observations and therapy planning? Okay, so when I was just doing clinicals work, I had like a suitcase, that was my Westby play scale suitcase pace. And in it were different activities. Now, I should probably market this and I could sell it to you for \$3,000 and then you would get like a tote with all the objects in it. But if you could put together a Westby play scale suitcase, what would be in it? You would have items from the different stages. And then what I would do is take, look at the child developmentally or look at, "Okay, I have a three-year-olds coming in." I would put out representation of different items and see what he would go to. So it would be an informal tool. I actually have my students when I was teaching the early intervention class, they had to use Westby's play scale to plan

an assessment and to plan to collect the language sample. So I would have activities for each of the stages, and then I would be collecting data about how they were engaging with each of the stages. So I hope that's helpful. I got a bunch of others. How would I go about teaching the next level of play? How long should we stay within their current level of play versus pushing them to the next level of complexity and independence? So I think it all depends on who the person is. Like I told you the story about the 17-year-old, who was just had a severe cognitive deficit. Certainly, we should be trying to continue to scaffold him to the next level, but I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all answer, unfortunately for that question.

But we have to see start somewhere. So we start by doing it and you might be surprised with the clients you would have never thought to do it, they're all of a sudden enjoying this and they're moving on and you're getting more language. You may be surprised. Okay, with regards to solitary playing kids on the spectrum, how do I feel about a child who plays repetitively or stems on the same activity for long periods? So what if it's self soothing? Well, it's probably self-soothing and the child is probably learning to how to occupy himself.

A word I don't use is self stem because removes the humanity of it and then we forget that we all also self stem. Some of us shake our legs a lot or we might chew gum all the time. It's just that those activities made the cut for what would be okay, but looking your fingers doesn't or pushing a button doesn't. What I would do is look at where, if the child is engaging in those activities, I would begin to say to myself, maybe he doesn't have schema for other activities. And so I would start by presenting some schemers for some gross motor activities, or some cause effect or sensory motor activities, and see if you could begin to teach schema with that. And I would balance doing some onlooker play with some low level kinds of activities with allowing him to go to his preferred activity. You might use a timer for this that he gets to do his for three minutes and then you do your for three minutes but you're doing observing, he's not

gonna be happy about it. But as long as he's safe, we just can console him and say, this is new, I know this is hard. But three times then I'll be all done. Because we know that we're putting in some new schema and learning new scheme is hard. I mentioned teach way. Can you learn more about this? Rather, what would be the best place to learn more about teach? You can actually Google teach. And it's out of North Carolina. You can also email my colleague, Dr. Sloan Burgess, at sburgess, S-B-U-R-G-E-S, eight, the number eight, @kent.edu. And she does teach training. So it's really nice here at Kent State. We have developmental folks like me teach people like her. And then we obviously have many, many ABA people too. What's my opinion about a 15-year-old on a sensory level who wants to play with an Elmo toy? It goes with what is appropriate. Yeah, so I don't worry about those things a whole lot. I try to get my perspective on this. We have kids going into schools with guns. Elmos is the least of my worries. We have kids doing drugs, Elmo is the least of my worries. I know it sets him apart, it might set him apart.

And I think we could, I don't know how aware he is that he's set apart. But maybe the work needs to be with those around him to let it go. It's Elmo. It could be a gun. So I guess I don't get too worried about those things. I don't know if that's the answer you wanted to hear but that's how I look at it now that I'm old. What if I had a 12... Oh thank you for agreeing with me. What if you had a 20-year-old who has been at a three-month-level for many years? Can he improve with continued therapy? Well, I think we can look at, like with this guy Paulo, his break time, his downtime, that would be a time for us to scaffold and work on maybe some gross motor play if he was in the sensory motor play, motor stage and give him those activities to do. But also with regard to vocation, if we're designing vocational activities for him, we need to keep in mind that that's where he is, and like we did, we got him a different shredder so that he could be productive. So I hope that helps. I think looking at his downtime, his playtime, his break time as an opportunity for us to give him some meaningful activities that are at that next stage of development would be really worthwhile, versus just continuing to

give him that dish pan and barking at him, no mouth, no mouth. Well, why don't we sit down and push that car back and forth with him, and do some social play? Do I have any handy present references or suggestions to increase parental buy-in to target behavior when the child's involved? Oh, right. Yeah, so how to get parent buy-in there are... Oh, there's a website. I included it in my third week, a handout, and I don't recall it off-hand, the website offhand, but the whole focus is on the importance of play. So hopefully you'll be here with me on part three and you'll get that website that really emphasizes why play is so important. And I think for, if you come to week three or part three, you'll see habits of the mind and there's a website for that and just how important it is. Okay. Oh, Caitlin just said you can leave if you have to. I have one more question. What verbs do you start modeling? Yes, okay, so Brittany, you and others, you need to go and look up Rescorlia, the Rescorlia word list, it's by Leslie. Rescorlia, R-E-S-C-O-R-L-I-A Leslie Rescorlia, and look at her list. That is a wonderful place. It represents the 200 words children first begin to use by 24 months. So it is my go-to when I'm looking for targets. And if kids have apraxia or speech delays, then I can target words that are within their repertoire. So Leslie Rescorlia, look her up and the Rescorlia word list. That would be my recommendation. So with that, I'm going to turn it back over to Amy, thank you for being here and hope to see you all in a few weeks.

- [Amy] Wonderful, thank you so much, Lisa. This is been really fascinating. I love this group and talking about play is always really enjoyable for me. So thank you so much for joining us. I know our participants really appreciated all of your information today too. So again, thank you. We look forward to part three and part four coming up in a couple of weeks. To all of our participants, thank you for joining us today. If you are unable to join us for any of the parts of this four-part series, please know that the recordings will be available in a few weeks, and we will continue to have you join us in about two weeks I believe. Thank you so much, Lisa. I hope you and everyone joining us has a great rest of the day. Thank you all.