How to Model Language

HOW you talk to your child and the way you model language can help them as they learn how to talk. This is especially true if your child is a late talker, has special needs, or is in speech therapy. Two language techniques you can use at home are Parallel Talk and Self-Talk.

Parallel Talk
Parallel Talk is when you talk about what **YOUR CHILD** is doing, seeing, feeling, touching, etc. You use child-friendly language to describe what is happening in that moment. You shouldn't ask your child questions during parallel talk. Parallel Talk is great to do when you are down on the floor playing with your child.

Examples of Parallel Talk:
"You have a car! You pushed the car. Beep-beep! Here comes the car!"
"You got your drink. That's your blue cup. Mmm! You're drinking milk!"

Self-Talk
Self-Talk is when you use child-friendly language to talk about what **YOU** are doing, without expecting your child to respond. You can use this strategy during everyday activities around the house.

Examples of Self-Talk:
"I am picking up the toys. I put them in your basket. Blocks go in!"
"Mommy's making cookies. I'm stirring. I put them in the oven."

Things to keep in mind:
- There is no expectation for your child to respond to you right now. These techniques give your child exposure to language during play and daily routines.
- Self-talk for short periods throughout the day, about things that interest your child.
- Don't comment on every single action. Commenting after 2-3 actions creates a more natural conversational pace and gives your child a chance to respond, if he chooses.
- Use child-friendly, short sentences.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LEVEL OF LANGUAGE TO MODEL:

Try speaking at one level **above** where your child is speaking:
For example, if she is not talking yet, model 1-2 words at a time:
When you get out the box of Cheerios, say: "Cheerios" or "Os", or "Yummy Os!"
If he is saying single words, use 2-3 words as a model: "Os for snack" or "Eating Os!"
If he is saying short phrases, then narrate in simple sentences. "You're eating yummy Cheerios!"

If you have questions, contact the team of Speech-Language Pathologists at Wee Speech, P.C.,