# An Introduction to Gestalt Language Processing (GLP)- Explaining Echolalia

By a fellow gestalter aka Jordyn Stromback, M.A., CCC-SLP

*Most information and visuals are coming from trainings via Marge Blanc on ASHA CEU learning pass, and the Meaningful Speech course

# What we will be doing today

**1**

## GLP vs ALP

**Describe** the two types of language development

**2**

## Recognizing GLP

**Determine** who is using GLP/ gestalt phrases

**3**

## NLA/GLP Stages

**Identify** the stages of NLA

**4**

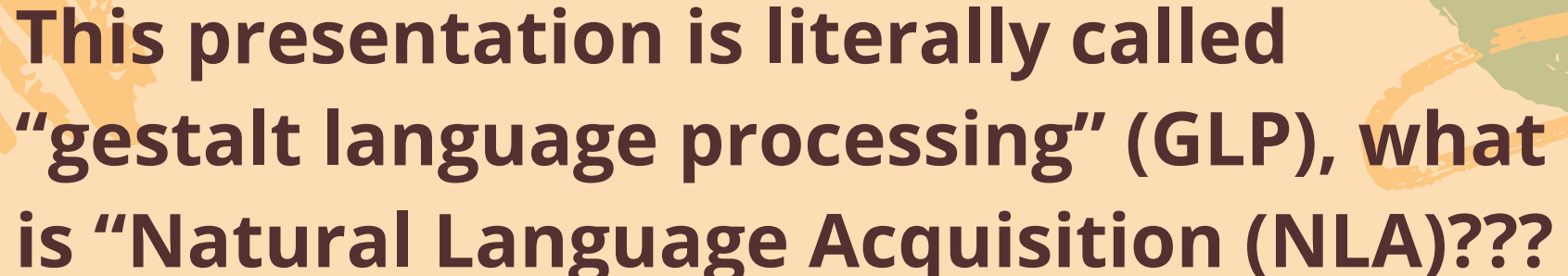## Supporting GLPs

**Learn** What to do

**5**

## Examples

**Practice** what to do

# People I will be referring to by their first name:
# Marge **Blanc** and **Alex Zachos**

Why?
- Marge literally wrote the book on **Natural Language Acquisition**
- Alex teaches the Meaningful Speech course (for SLPs and parents) and will be referring to a lot of her examples

**This presentation is literally called "gestalt language processing" (GLP), what is "Natural Language Acquisition (NLA)???**

**GLP:** overarching process of development

**NLA:** stages in how we describe and measure the development (that Marge developed)

# WHAT IS THIS and HOW IS IT DIFFERENT

**Analytical Language Acquisition**
- The "typical" way we think about language development
- The ONLY way they taught us in grad school (not anymore)
- Think- "bottom up"
- One word = one unit of meaning
- ball → mama ball → mama ball go up

**Gestalt Language Processing (GLP)**
- Intonation is the focus vs single words
- Big chunks of language are used for specific meanings/instances
- Think- "top down"
- One chunk = one unit of meaning

| Analytic Language Processors | Gestalt Language Processors |
|---|---|
| "Word Babies" – tune into single words | "Intonation Babies" - hear the melody of language |
| Basic Units of Language are WORDS<br>1. use of single words<br>2. use of two word combinations<br>3. use of emerging grammar in first phrases<br>4. use of first sentences<br>5. use of more complex sentences/grammar | Basic Units of Language are CHUNKS:<br>1. use of gestalt language (echolalia) to communicate<br>2. breaking apart language chunks (mitigation) and communicating more flexibly with smaller chunks<br>3. isolating single words and using single words and novel 2-word combinations<br>4. use of pre-sentence grammar in novel phrases -Developmental Sentence Scoring (DSS) Levels 1-3<br>5. use of advanced grammar in self-generated sentences<br>6. use of more complex sentences/grammar |

# Is Your Child a Gestalt Language Processor?

**Does your Child Use....**

**Single Words**

**Long Scripts**

**Rich Intonation**

**Unintelligible Strings of Language**

**Additional Ways to Identify:**

The child is not responding well to "traditional" therapy approaches (e.g. increasing vocabulary, modeling expansions of the child's language)

"Taught" phrases have not progressed

Single words stay single words as the child is not combining them to create 2-3 word phrases

Language is used "in-context" but appears inflexible and limited to specific content

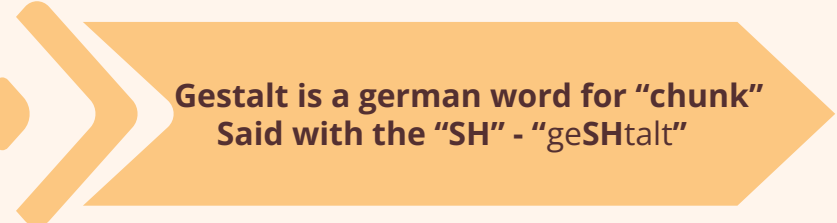Example handout from the Meaningful Speech Handbook

# Terminology is important

Echolalia has traditionally been seen as something to ignore or "extinguish". Echolalia has been highly pathologized, seen as just stimming, not communicative.

**Other ways to describe echolalia include:** scripting, gestalt, chunks of language, delayed and immediate echolalia.

**Marge likes gestalt because it refers more to the natural process of echolalia.**

(I like gestalters because it's fun to say)

**Gestalt is a german word for "chunk"**
**Said with the "SH" - "**ge**SH**talt**"**

**Neurodiversity affirming language is important**

Part of neurodiversity affirming care **is listening to those who are neurodivergent. Autistic adults and the autistic community prefers identify first language.**
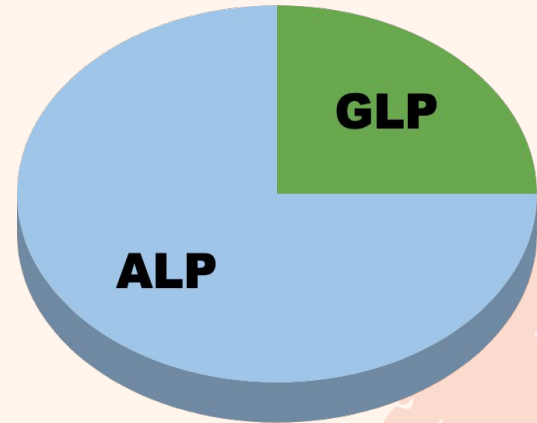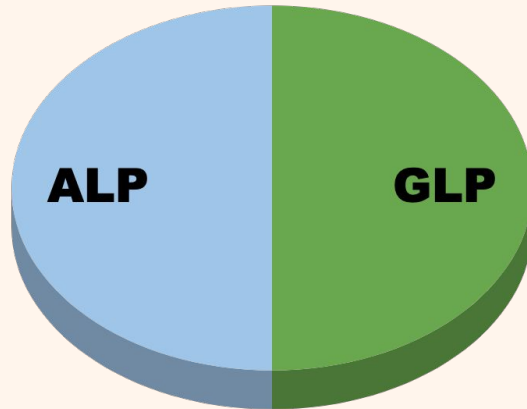
**Language I will be using**
- **Autistic kiddos, autistic adults**
- **Nonspeaking vs nonverbal**

# Gestalting ≠ autism

You can be an analytic language processor and also gestalt language processor in different amounts

Not all GLPs are autistic
Not all autistic kiddos are GLPs

# Let's think of some everyday gestalts we use!!!

Let's go!

Okay!

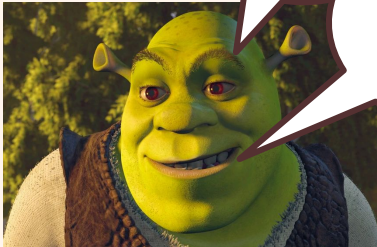See ya later

Whatcha doin?

Ready set go!

# Some of my stage 1 gestalts :D

# Not all gestalts come from the media!

# Not all gestalts come from the media!

# Echolalia communicates

Lots of emotion- positive or negative

It's important to them- connected to an experience

They remembered it for a reason

How we may feel sometimes when we hear an unfamiliar gestalt
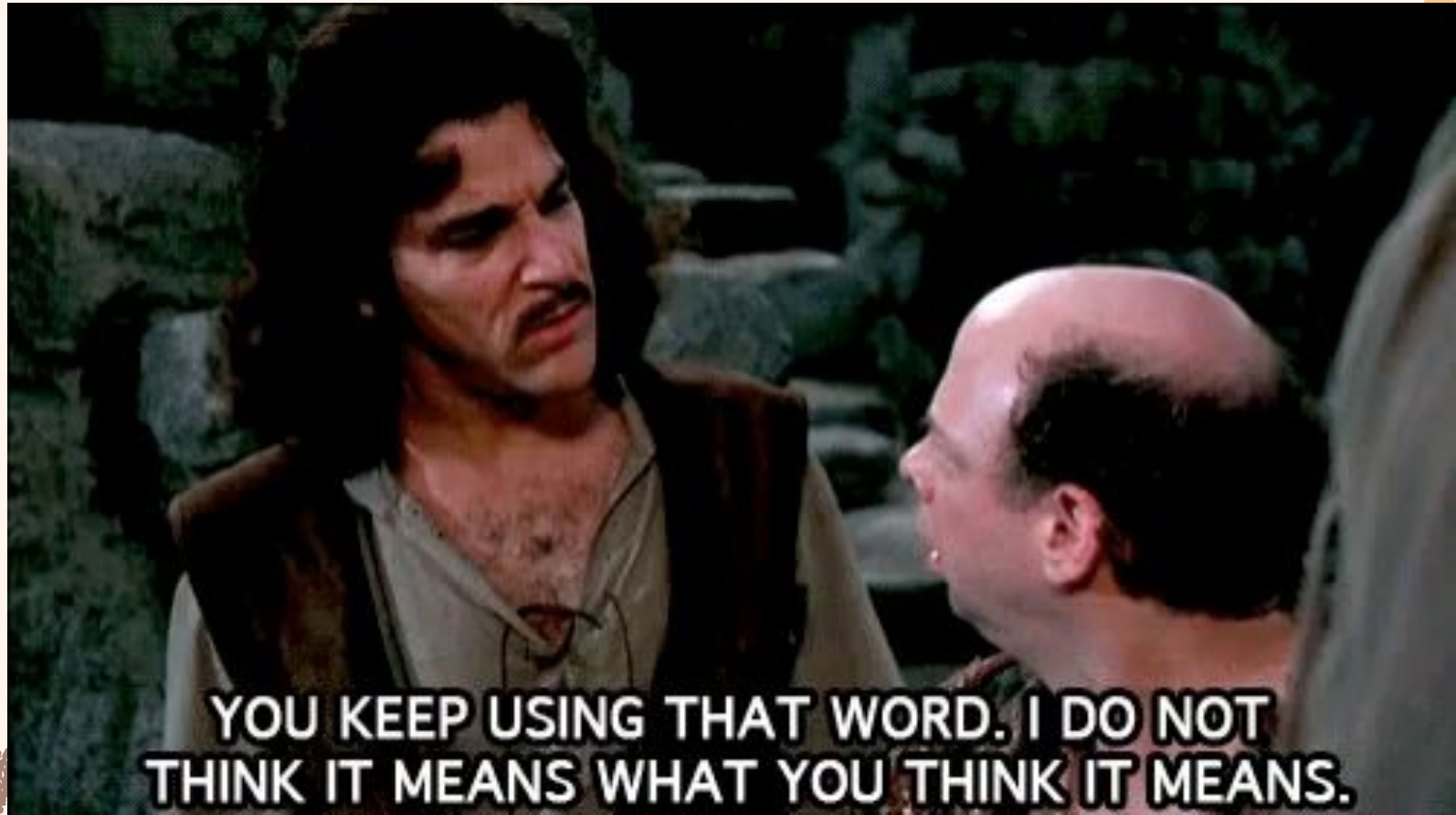
# Stage 1-Full gestalt phrases

- Delayed echolalia- the delay mean it's stored
- **Aren't literal**- phrases carry a different meaning
  - They found a connection between the phrase and the experience
- **Know the vibe**- are they saying this when happy? Frustrated? Sad?
  - **To find other phrases to model**
- In longer babbling strings, are there louder parts?
- Be a detective- what's their intention?

Storm

Tap to subscribe!

Pull!

Let's go!
Go where?
xxxxxx

I like to eat eat eat apples and bananas

Wally is stuck!

Parents and siblings know best!
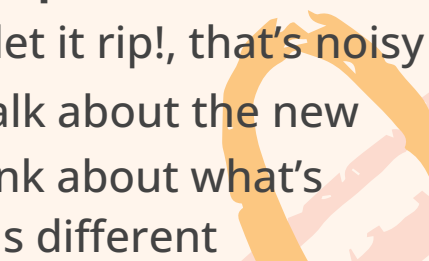
Sometimes we need to acknowledge the phrase before they will accept the knew phrase

Example from Alex
- "The tractor have a flat tire" → stickers are stuck

# We need variety of phrases!

- **Commenting**→ it's stuck, under the table, I love the letters, this is a mirror
- **Help** →Help me, I need help
- **Transitions** → What's next, let's do something else, let's learn something new
- **Protests**- I don't like it, stop doing that, don't touch it

- **Shared joy** →That was awesome!, I love it, it's my favorite
- **Joint action routines** →Here we go, we did it!
- **Fun sensory motor experiences** → Spinning is the best, let it rip!, that's noisy
- **New situations** → Talk about the new doctor, I'm gonna think about what's gonna happen, it feels different

# Stage 2- mix and match, partial gestalts

**Hard to mitigate**
- Media gestalts - "Happy Halloween!"
- Stuck single words

**Easier to mitigate**
- We did it! → I did it, you did it, we made it!
- It's so spicy → It's so cold outside
- Let's get out of here → Let's go, let's go over there, let's eat, let's swim, out of milk, I'm here, get out

**Mitigations are easier from natural phrases heard in the environment from parents, siblings, friends, teachers, therapists v.s. Media**

The fun, think on your feet, making paradies stage! Start with small tweaks

# Example from P

"Uh oh dropped my toy" (1)
- When anyone drops anything, phone, toy, food, etc.

"1,2 let's learn something new" (1)
- When wanting to do something different
- →Let's learn something else

"Can you make a silly face, "
- Can you make a happy face" (2)

"Super duper fast!"
- Things going fast
- → "Super fast" "Super slow" "Super big" Super small" "Super faster"

can you make a super big?

**The golden mitigations**

Let's ___

It's __

I'm _

We ___

That's __

# Are we ready for stage 2? - ask EVE !

**E**nough phrases to mitigate?

We need multiple phrases that are easily mitigatable
One "let's ____" phrases is not enough

**V**ariety of phrases?

Are our phrases just to request? Or just to talk about dinosaurs? Or trains? Or food?

**E**asy to mitigate?

"To infinity and beyond" is not easily mitigable
"I'm flying!" has more mitigation options

# Stage 3- the magic stage!


FREEDOM!

**Goal- to free single words from previous gestalts/longer phrases**

*Nouns, attributes, locations, and attributes oh my!*

- "Some more" + "no more" = more
- "Let's get" + "wanna get"= get
  - "Get more", "more get"

First time for a **pointing phase**-referencing and pointing out all of the different things

**Ready for stage 3?** Are these stuck single words? Have you heard this word in another phrase? Are they referring to the word/recognizing the word easily?

"I'm so **high**!" → "**high**!" - sign of a single word

"Yummy!"--> but no "it's so yummy", "that's yummy" – probably a stuck single word

We don't care about grammar or word order- **just learning one word has one unit of meaning**

We are pointing, referencing, naming, playing memory match games, etc.

Stage 3- true single word - "fish"

Stage 1- stuck single word - "fish"
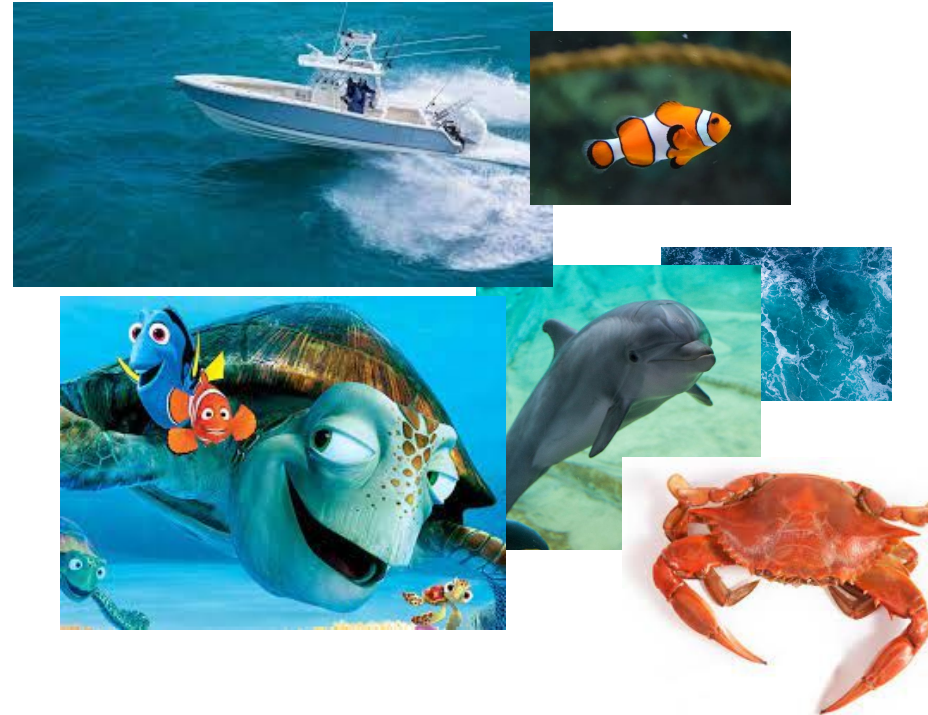
Stage 3- true single word - "pen"

Stage 1- stuck single word - "pen"

Doesn't demonstrate receptive language skills- why WH questions are so hard at this stage

**Nouns, adjectives, attributes, locations, (no verbs right now)**

Chair...blue
Pool…girl
water
boy..pool
Cake…oven
Table..chair
Couch
Pink
three..chair

**Get referential!**

**Nouns, attributes, locations**

<a href="https://storyset.com/animal">Animal illustrations by Storyset</a>

# Stage 4+ Goodness gracious great balls of grammar!

- Sentences but with **bad grammar**
  - That's a great sign! They are creating their own phrases, completely novel to them
- Taking those freed words from stage 3 and putting them together!
- Starts to look like analytic processors
- How to look at language targets?
  - **Developmental Sentence Types (DTS) and Developmental Sentence Scoring (DSS)**
  - Finding the grammatical types they have and don't have

"Can you need to get the balloon please"
"Mom I can need a help"
"Where did balloon go?"
"Mr. Bear is back"
"I got it my baby"
"I gonna help you"
"I brushing my teeth"
"And then cut eggplant"

# Development Sentence Types-Cont. (Lee, Laura L, 1974)

## Descriptive Words and Predictive Elaborations

**Single words, such as:**

big, pretty, broken, fixed, one, two, more, on, off, up

**Single-words modifications, such as:**

my, his, red?, big?

**Two-word elaborations and modifications such as noun + descriptive word, plurals, pronouns, questions, and wh-questions:**

car broken, truck dirty, light off, tv on, car there, truck here, cars here, lights on, that pretty, it big, something here, another one, car broken?, it gone?, where car?, what here?, who there?

## Other Vocabulary Items and Phrase Fragments

**Single words, such as:**

yes, no, OK, hi, bye-bye, night-night, oh-oh

**Single-words elaborations and modifications, including adverbs, questions, wh-questions, and the conjunction 'because':**

again, now, too, huh?, right?, OK?, what?, who?, where?, when?, how?, why?, because

**Two-word elaborations, including prepositional phrases, plurals, and adverbs:**

for Daddy, in car, on chairs, in cars, too big, all gone, up now, here again, right here, over there

**Two-word modifications, including pronouns, negatives, questions, conjunctions:**

to you, in it, not big, not here, in here?, all gone?, and big, but dirty, and here

## Verbs and Verbal Elaborations

**Single words including imperatives, such as:**

sleep, eat, walk, fall, look!, wait!, stop!

**Single-words elaborations and modifications, including verb elaborations, negatives, and questions:**

going, fell, can't, won't, don't, see?, eat?

**Two-word elaborations, including verb + object, verb + locative, verb + particle, noun + verb, verb elaborations, plurals, and adverbs:**

hit ball, sit chair, fall down, saw car, eat cookies, eat now, fall too

**Two-word sentence modifications, including pronouns, negatives, questions, wh-questions, and infinitives:**

see it, find one, not fall, see it?, go home?, where go?, what take?, what find? and sleeping

## Three-Word Combinations

**Noun example (pronoun sentence modification):**

his other truck

**Designator example (negative sentence modification):**

that not car

**Descriptor example (adverb sentence elaboration):**

light off now

**Verb example (wh-question):**

what take out?

**Vocabulary example (conjunction):**

and for me

# Developmental Sentence Analysis (scoring)

| Score | Indefinite Pronouns or Nouns | Personal Pronouns | Main Verbs | Secondary Verbs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | It, this, that | 1st & 2nd person, I, me, my, mine, you, your(s) | A. Uninflected verb: I see you.<br>B. copula, is or 's: It's red.<br>C. is + verb +ing: He is coming | |
| 2 | | 3rd person: he, him, his, she, her, hers | A. –s and –ed plays, played<br>B. irregular past: are, saw<br>C. Copula: am, are, was, were<br>D. Auxiliary am, are, was, were | Five early developing infinitives:<br>I wanna see. (want to see)<br>I'm gonna see (going to see)<br>I gotta see (got to see)<br>Lemme [to] see (let me [to] see)<br>Let's [to] play, (let [us to] play) |
| 3 | A. no, some, more, all, lot(s), one(s) two (etc.), other(s), another<br>B. Something, somebody, someone | A. Plurals, we, us, our(s), they, them, their<br>B. these, those | | Non-complementing infinitives:<br>I stopped to play.<br>I'm afraid to look.<br>It's hard to do that. |
| 4 | Nothing, nobody, none, no one | | A. can, will, may + verb: may go<br>B. Obligatory do _ verb: don't go<br>C. Emphatic do _ verb: I do see | Participle, present or past:<br>I see a boy running.<br>I found the toy broken. |
| 5 | | Reflexives: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, themselves | | A. Early infinitival complements with differing subjects in kernels: I want you to come, Let him [to]see.<br>B. Later infinitival complements: I had to go, I told him to go, I tried to go, He ought to go.<br>C. Obligatory deletions: Make it [to] go.<br>D. Infinitive with wh-word: I know what to get, I know how to do it. |
| 6 | | A. WH-pronouns, who, which, whose, whom, what, that, how many, how much<br>B. Wh-word + infinitives: I know what to do, I know who(m) to take. | A. could, would, should, might + verb: might come, could be<br>B. Obligatory does, did + verb<br>C. Emphatic does, did + verb | |
| 7 | A. any, anything, anybody, anyone<br>B. both, few, many, each, several, most, least, much, next, first, last, second (etc.) | (his) own, one, oneself, whichever, whoever, whatever: Take whatever you like. | A. Passive with get, any tense Passive with be, any tense<br>B. Must, shall + verb, must come<br>C. Have + verb + en: I've eaten.<br>D. Have got: I've got it. | Passive infinitival complement: With get; I have to get dressed. I don't want to get hurt.<br>With be: I want to be pulled, It's going to be locked. |
| 8 | | | A. have/had been + verb +ing<br>B. Modal _ have + verb + en: may have eaten<br>C. Modal + be +verb + ing: could be playing<br>D. Other auxiliary combinations: should have been sleeping | Gerund:<br>Swinging is fun.<br>I like fishing.<br>He staring laughing. |

# So, how do we support our GLPs?

## Listen
## Acknowledge
## Model
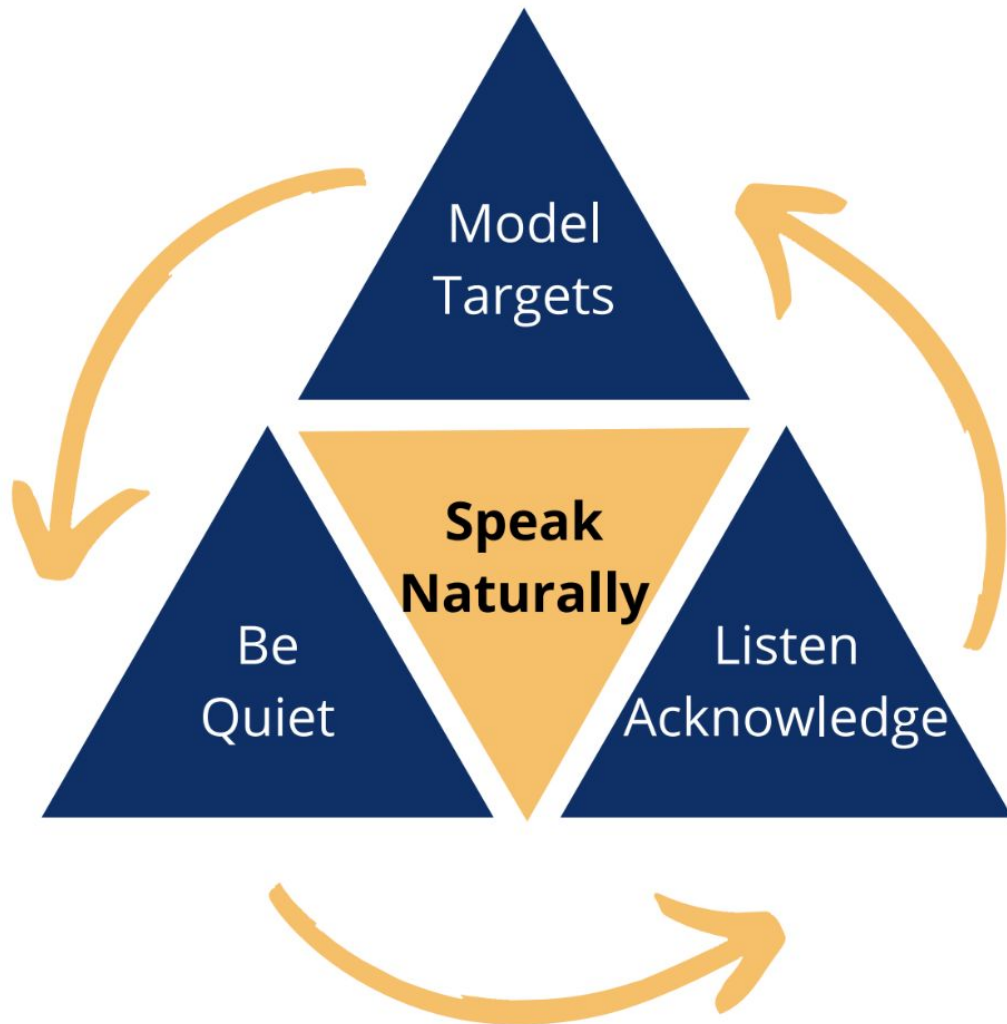
# The unofficial GLP pledge (that I made up)

I will imitate and will acknowledge gestalt phrases, giving time for their responses and reactions, in order **to cultivate peace and joy** and **to tell them that someone is listening.**

# Must be child-led, play-based

# Redundancy = yes
# Repetition= no

Let's play cars! Let's go faster! Let's go now! Let's do something new!

Let's play cars! Let's play cars! Let's play cars! Let's play cars!

**Redundancy = yes**
**Repetition= no**

I'm gonna get the red one, let's trade, ooh I like that one!, blue is my favorite, watch out green car!, i got the green one!

I want red, I want blue, I want green, I want purple

# We don't need prompt them to imitate certain words or phrases

Silence is okay!

# leads to compliance and not self-generated, natural language

They will imitate the phrase **if they like it** or **if it describes what they mean to say**

If imitating due to compliance, there won't be that connection and won't generalize
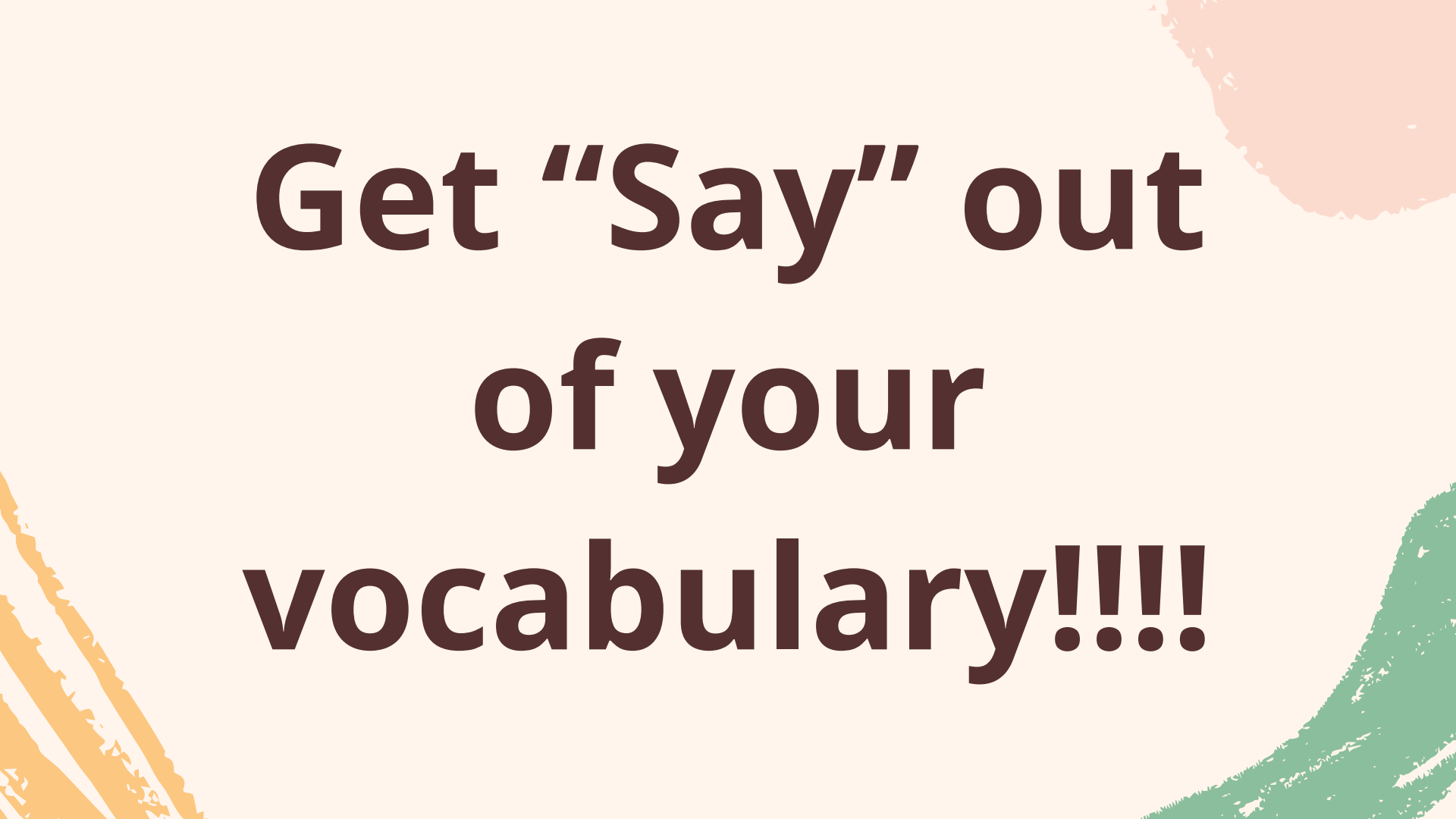
# Goodbye "I want ___"

# Hello "I wanna __"

We want to model how kids actually talk.
"I want ___" is often a highly taught, repetitive phrase that isn't very natural.

# Get "Say" out of your vocabulary!!!!

# New language models must be NATURAL

We use **NATURAL** (but engaging) intonation when offering **NEW** language models

We **do** use the intonation of these gestalts that **they already have**

# We will *try* not to ask WH questions and expect a novel response until they are at stage 4

It is so hard to accurately answer a WH question if our language isn't flexible enough yet

Where'd it go? Oh there it is!

"What is it? It's a baby shark"

What's next?

Whatcha doin?

# Model from the child's perspective or a joint perspective

"When a kid picks up the entire gestalt he's got the pronoun of the original speaker. So "pronoun reversal" is nothing more than that."- Marge Blanc

"Maya's turn", "Zach's turn"
"Can you help you?", "Do you want purple birdie?"

**Your turn!**
**Let's think of some models for this kiddo.**

Let's ____
It's ___
I'm __
We ____
That's ___

# How do we know when to model phrases at a different stage?

**LANGUAGE SAMPLES!**
If they are at one stage more than 50% of the time, probably ready for modeling phrases at the next stage

**It's a** triceratops (2)
Rawr (1)
**It's a** stegosaurus (2)
**It's a** velociraptor (2)
**I want** trex (2)
**I want** brontosaurus (2)
Dinosaur song (3)

I'm not ready for stage 3. I probably need more stage 1 phrases to mitigate off of

# Example from A

Lots of Stage 1 and 2- starting to pick up more variety of phrases for different contexts

Escaping/avoiding going to brush teeth and go to bed. He consistently would say "I'm hungry" when parents say it's time to brush teeth or go to bed. They would honor the request, but often he wouldn't actually be hungry, he just didn't want to get ready for bed.

## Let's think- What should we do?
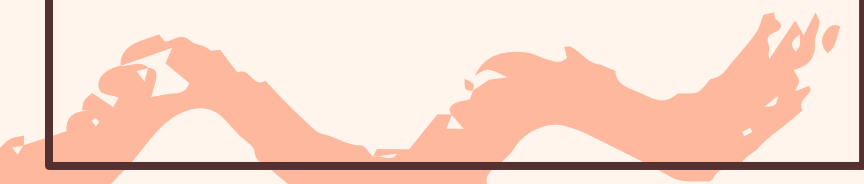
Listen
Acknowledge
Model

## What we did

Parents started modeling "I don't want to" and A has started to say "I don't want to" on his own intermittently, not always, but we thought about his intention and gave him the language to express what he truly meant.

# Example from Z

Lots of Stage 2, starting to isolate single words and create self generated "bad grammar phrases"

Not a lot of variety with requesting Before using GLP focused interventions, our early targets were "I want ___"

- I want this
- I want on the table
- I want blue please
- I want big balloon

**Let's think- What should we do?**

**Listen**
**Acknowledge**
**Model**

**What we are doing**

When "I want ___" is said, **we acknowledge and also model**
- "How about ___"
- "Let's do ____"
- "Another", "again" phrases

# Example from N

One of the "fast forward" kiddos
At stage 4+, still has stage 1-3 phrases
We always continue to have some phrases from all of the stages and that's ok!

- I gonna help you
- i brushing my teeth
- my teeth is hurt
- I can need a help
- Can me the help?
- Can you need the help please

## Let's think- What should we do?

**Listen
Acknowledge
Model**

## What we are doing

Similar to traditional grammar intervention
- Classic "carrier phrases" , "I am", "she is ____", "he is ___"
- Reading and writing is a strength, so we are writing out simple sentences with "is" and infinities "to play", "to go", etc.
- She is creating own simple sentences
- Modeling with more emphasis on grammar targets

# Example from K

Stage 4 kiddo- creating a lot of novel, self-generated phrases with "bad grammar" **Lots of questions with pronoun reversals**

- **Can I help you on top?**
- I am jump over it
- I comfy
- This to restaurant
- Come to get you
- You sitting on the bigger chair

## Let's think- What should we do?

| Listen Acknowledge Model |

## What we did

When questions with pronoun reversal happened, parents started modeling the phrase with the accurate pronouns with more emphasis
Using more gestural cues to support the idea of "I" and "you"

# WE CAN'T ACCESS ALL OF OUR LANGUAGE IF WE AREN'T REGULATED

we will rely on the automatic language we have



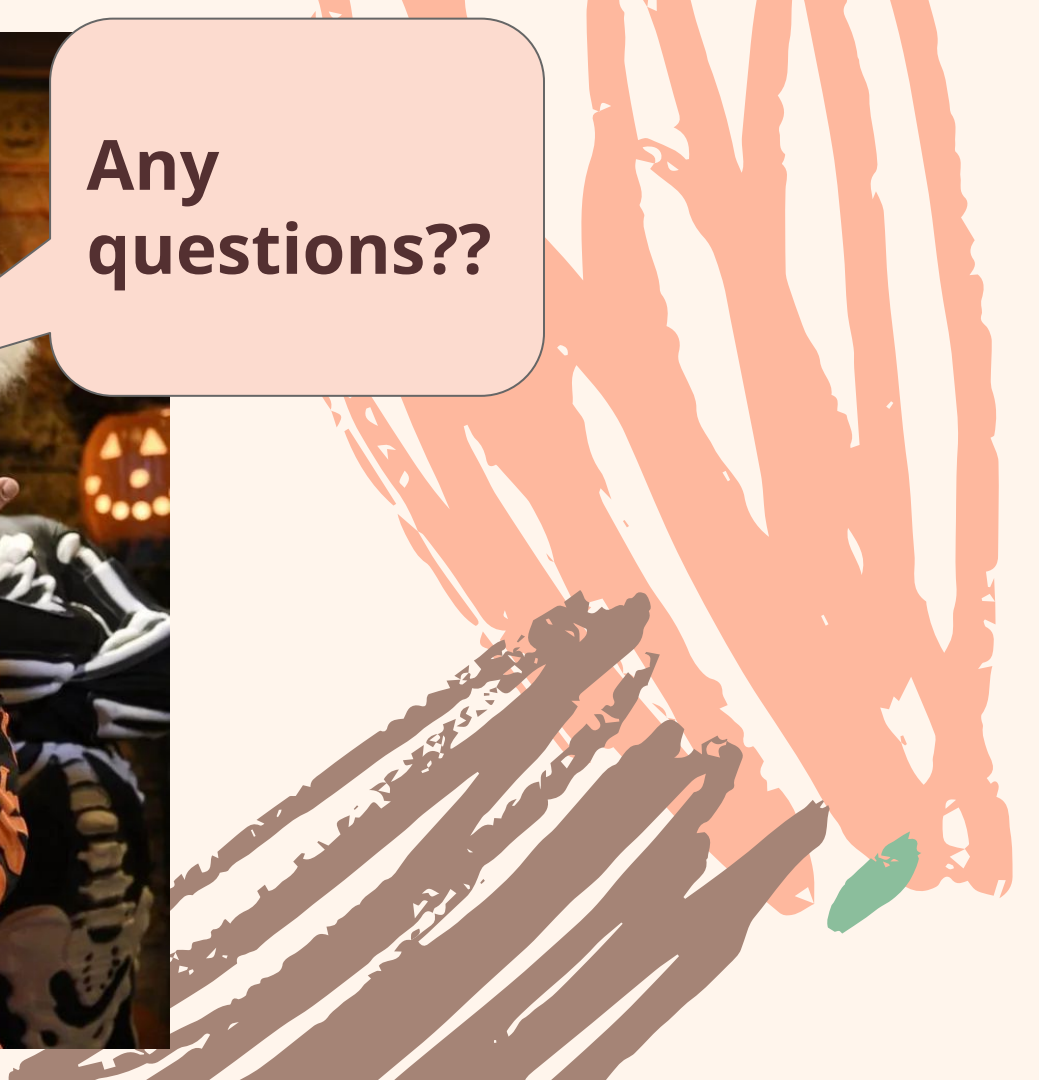The range of arousal for asd kiddos is paper thin

# When dysregulated, we won't expect use of new phrase, or imitation of models

This is a good time to listen, acknowledge, and repeat

**Any further questions can be emailed :D**

jordyn@cptherapyservices.com

# Ways to Learn More

- Facebook Groups!
  - Natural Language Acquisition Study Group
  - AAC and Gestalt Language Processing
- Websites
  - Meaningfulspeech.com
  - communicationdevelopmentcenter.com
- Podcasts
  - **Two Sides of the Spectrum**- Delayed Echolalia and Gestalt Language Processors, GLP Q & A
- Marge's book
  - *Natural Language Acquisition on the Autism Spectrum: The Journey from Echolalia to Self-Generated Language*

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# WHAT IS THIS and HOW IS IT DIFFERENT

**Analytical Language Acquisition**

- The "typical" way we think about language development
- The ONLY way they taught us in grad school (not anymore)
- Think- "bottom up"
- One word = one unit of meaning
- ball → mama ball → mama ball go up

**Natural Language Acquisition (NLA) or Gestalt language Processing (GLP)**

- Intonation is the focus
- Think- "top down"
- Big chunks of language are used for specific meanings/instances
- One chunk = one unit of meaning

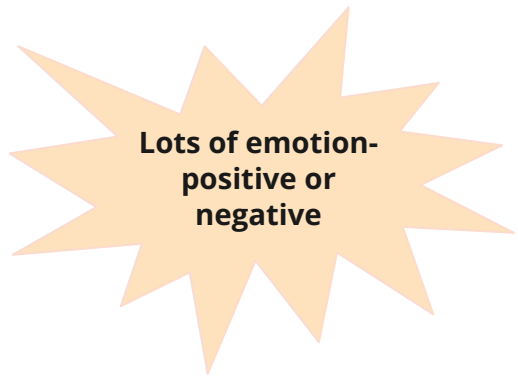| Analytic Language Processors | Gestalt Language Processors |
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| Basic Units of Language are WORDS<br>1. use of single words<br>2. use of two word combinations<br>3. use of emerging grammar in first phrases<br>4. use of first sentences<br>5. use of more complex sentences/grammar | Basic Units of Language are CHUNKS:<br>1. use of gestalt language (echolalia) to communicate<br>2. breaking apart language chunks (mitigation) and communicating more flexibly with smaller chunks<br>3. isolating single words and using single words and novel 2-word combinations<br>4. use of pre-sentence grammar in novel phrases -Developmental Sentence Scoring (DSS) Levels 1-3<br>5. use of advanced grammar in self-generated sentences<br>6. use of more complex sentences/grammar |

# Echolalia communicates

They remembered it for a reason

It's important to them- connected to an experience

Lots of emotion- positive or negative

# Stage 1 - Full scripts

- Delayed echolalia- the delay means it's stored
- **Aren't literal**- phrases carry a different meaning
    - They found a connection between the phrase and the experience
- **Know the vibe**- are they saying this when happy? Frustrated? Sad?
    - **To find other phrases to model**
- In longer babbling strings, are there louder parts?
- Be a detective- what's their intention?

_____

_____

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# Stage 2 - mix and match, partial gestalts

Mitigations are easier from natural phrases heard in the environment from parents, siblings, friends, teachers, therapists v.s. Media

**Hard to mitigate**
- Media gestalts - "Happy Halloween!"
- Stuck single words

**Easier to mitigate**
- We did it! → i did it, you did it, we made it!
- It's so spicy → it's so cold outside
- Let's get out of here → let's go, let's go over there, let's eat, let's swim, out of milk, I'm here, get out

**Start with small tweaks**
- The fun, think on your feet, making parodies stage!

# The golden mitigations

Let's ____

It's ___

I'm __

We ____

That's ___

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# Stage 3 - single words

**Goal- to free single words from previous gestalts/longer phrases**
*Nouns, attributes, and locations, oh my!*
- "Some more" + "no more" = more
- "Let's get" + "wanna get"= get
  - "Get more",  "more get"

First time for a **pointing phase**-referencing and pointing out all of the different things

**Ready for stage 3?** Are these stuck single words? Have you heard this word in another phrase? Are they referring to the word/recognizing the word easily?
- "I'm so high!" → "high!" – sign of a single word
- "yummy!"--> but no "it's so yummy", "that's yummy" – probably a stuck single word

Stage 3- true single word - "pen"

Stage 1- stuck single word - "pen"



Doesn't demonstrate receptive language skills- This is why WH questions are so hard at this stage

# Stage 4 - bad grammar

- **Self-generated, novel phrases with bad grammar**
  - A great sign! creating their own phrases, completely new to them, not borrowed
- Taking those freed words from stage 3 and putting them together
- Starts to look like analytic processors
- Language supports
  - Find the grammatical types they have and don't have
  - **Developmental Sentence Types (DST) and Developmental Sentence Scoring (DSS)**

# We need variety of phrases!

- **Commenting**→ it's stuck, under the table, I love the letters, this is a mirror
- **Help** →Help me, I need help
- **Transitions** → What's next, let's do something else, let's learn something new
- **Protests**- I don't like it, stop doing that, don't touch it
- **Shared joy** →That was awesome!, I love it, it's my favorite
- **Joint action routines** →Here we go, we did it!
- **Fun sensory motor experiences** → Spinning is the best, let it rip!, that's noisy
- **New situations** → Talk about the new doctor, I'm gonna think about what's gonna happen, it feels different

# Supporting GLPs



Model Targets

Speak Naturally

Be Quiet

Listen Acknowledge
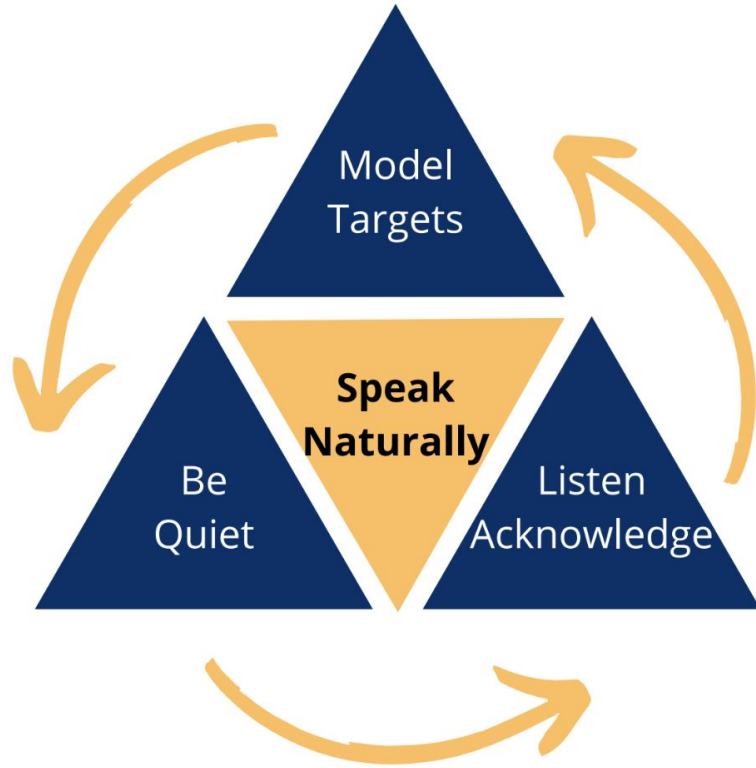
# Supporting GLPs

- Don't need to force them to talk or imitate our phrases
- Silence is okay!
- Redundancy = yes, repetition= no
- We want to model **how kids actually talk**
- "I want ___" is often a highly taught, repetitive phrase that isn't very natural
- New language models must be **NATURAL**
- We use **NATURAL** (but engaging) intonation when offering **NEW language models**
- We **do** use the intonation of these gestalts that they already have

# Supporting GLPs

- We will not prompt them to say certain words or phrases
    - leads to compliance and not self-generated, natural language
- **They will** imitate the phrase **if they like it** or if it describes **what they mean to say**
    - **Look for that "Bingo eye contact"**
- If imitating due to compliance, there won't be a connection and it won't generalize

# Supporting GLPs

- We will try not to ask WH questions and expect a novel response until they are at stage 4
- It is so hard to accurately answer a WH question if our language isn't flexible enough yet
- **We can** model WH questions and the response as a full gestalt OR transitional WH phrases
- Model from the child's perspective or a joint perspective
  - "I wanna do something else", "we can do it!"

# Supporting GLPs

- When dysregulated, we won't expect use of new phrase, or imitation of models
- This is a good time to listen, acknowledge, and repeat

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