

P A M M A R S H A L L A



# STUBBORN & UNCOOPERATIVE

How to Achieve Sound & Word Production  
In Young Children Who Refuse Participation

ONE-HOUR SEMINAR



# STUBBORN & UNCOOPERATIVE

How to Achieve Sound & Word Production  
In Young Children Who Refuse Participation

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Speech-Language Pathologist



## **Stubborn & Uncooperative: How to Achieve Sound and Word Production in Young Children Who Refuse Participation**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	8
SLIDE 1      Uncooperative Clients .....	9
SLIDE 2      On His Own Agenda .....	10
SLIDE 3      Evidence-Based Practice .....	11
SLIDE 4      Life Experiences .....	12
SLIDE 5      Methods .....	13
SLIDE 6      1. Performance Ratios .....	14
SLIDE 7      2. Cognitive Level .....	15
SLIDE 8      3. Phonological Level .....	16
SLIDE 9      4. Questions .....	17
SLIDE 10     5. Word Choices .....	18

SLIDE 11	6. Physical Environment .....	19
SLIDE 12	7. Play .....	20
SLIDE 13	8. Routines .....	21
SLIDE 14	9. Any Activity .....	22
SLIDE 15	10. Verbal Leads .....	23
SLIDE 16	11. Pragmatic Functions .....	24
SLIDE 17	12. Curiosity .....	25
SLIDE 18	13. Self Esteem ..	26
SLIDE 19	14. Classic Reinforcement .....	27
SLIDE 20	15. Responding .....	28
SLIDE 21	16. Saying “We” .....	29
SLIDE 22	17. Priorities .....	30
SLIDE 23	18. Long Haul .....	31

**Pam Marshalla**, MA, CCC-SLP, completed a Master's Thesis in phonology in 1976 and worked with clients of all ages and ability levels for over 35 years. For decades, Pam taught continuing education workshops around the United States and Canada. She is celebrated as a "clinician's clinician" whose practical books and seminars successfully integrate research data and clinical experience.

**Financial Disclosure:** Pam Marshalla was the owner of Marshalla Speech & Language (MSL), through which this lecture was originally published and from which she received a monthly salary. Pam Marshalla passed away in 2015. This lecture continues to be published by MSL.

**Non-Financial Disclosure:** Neither Pam Marshalla nor Marshalla Speech & Language have any non-financial relationships to disclose.

## INTRODUCTION

All speech-language pathologists face young clients who refuse to participate in speech-language activities. Some children don't want to play unless it is play of their own design, and they hardly want to imitate sounds and words at all.

In this lecture, Pam Marshalla draws from four decades of clinical experiences to discuss 18 specific strategies to help clients overcome this type of uncooperative attitude. This material is designed to help therapists think through these issues regarding their own specific stubborn clients.

**The following slides are part of a video production and should be viewed along with the accompanying video of the same title.**

## Uncooperative Clients

## Slide 1

**Some kids just don't want to participate!**

*How do we engage these kinds of clients?*

A certain percentage of every therapy caseload consists of uncooperative clients.

Even if you have good rapport there are times when all kids get grumpy and refuse.

## Slide 2

## On His Own Agenda

### PEOPLE MAY SAY ABOUT THE CLIENT:

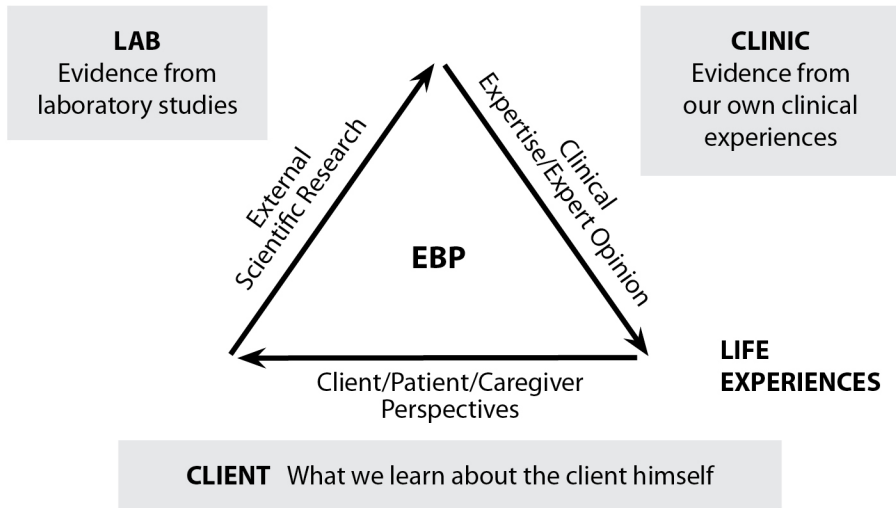
- *"He is on his own agenda..."*
- *"He participates as long as I do what he wants..."*
- *"He could do it if he tried..."*
- *"He doesn't like coming to speech..."*
- *"He will work for only 10 minutes at a time."*

SLPs have to figure out for themselves what to do with these clients.  
That means that we have to make up our own methods.

## Evidence-Based Practice

## Slide 3

*What does ASHA say about “making up” methods?*



## Slide 4

## Life Experiences

- Being involved with children of all ages outside therapy
- Having and raising your own children.
- Studying outside resources.

*The best resources on this topic are found in books for parents on how to manage their unmanageable children.*

### EXAMPLES

- Faber, A. & Mazlish, E. (1980) *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*. New York: Avon Books.
- Garber, S. W., & Garber, M. D., & Spizman, R. F. (1990). *Good Behavior*. New York: Villard Books.

## Methods

## Slide 5

1. Performance Ratios
2. Cognitive Level
3. Phonological Level
4. Questions
5. Choices
6. Environment
7. Word/Sound Play
8. Any Activity
9. Routines
10. Verbal Leads
11. Pragmatics
12. Curiosity
13. Self Esteem
14. Verbal Reinforcements
15. Responding
16. Saying "We"
17. Priorities
18. Long Haul

## Slide 6

### 1. Performance Ratios

Old-time SLPs often suggested that therapy should be a 3-to-1 mix of easy and difficult work.

- 75% of a session should be easy, familiar, and a rehearsal of what the client already can do.
- 25% of a session should be new, challenging, and unfamiliar.

*Think: Basketball Practice*

## 2. Cognitive Level

## Slide 7

Kids cooperate better when we work at their cognitive level.

### **BIRTH–2 YEARS OF AGE**

- Learning through movement and sensation
- Drive for consistency in performance
- Self-centered
- Therapy: Explore it and move on

### **2–7 YEARS OF AGE**

- Magical thinking
- Pretend play
- Therapy: Imagination, role-playing, perform it again and again

## Slide 8

### 3. Phonological Level

Research shows that there is tremendous experimentation while a child develops his first 50 words.

We invite uncooperative behavior when we ask a child to organize his phonological skills too early.

#### **CLIENT – JAY**

- CA 3;2. Receptive language very high, IQ 132.
  - Refused: Initial /b/, /m/, /t/ and final Cs

## 4. Questions

## Slide 9

Whenever we ask a child to perform, we invite him to say, "No!"

Reduce these refusals simply by making fewer requests for action.

DON'T ASK A QUESTION...	→	MAKE A LEADING REMARK
Do you want to play cards?	→	I found some cards...
Do you want to play?	→	We get to play now! Yeah!
Can you put the books on the shelf for me?	→	Oh no! The books need to be put away...
Should we play dolls?	→	That doll is hungry...

## Slide 10

## 5. Word Choices

Kids like to make their own choices.

This can be a way to **get them to say words.**

**Demand** Say, car.

**Options** Do you want the ball or the car?

**Demand** Tell me, go.

**Options** Should we stay here or go?

**Demand** Do you want to go up? Say *up*.

**Options** Up or down?

*Make sure both options are do-able before you ask!*

## 6. Physical Environment

### Slide 11

Uncooperative children often cannot handle the sensory stimuli of the physical environment.

#### **Child Gets Too Busy Or Distracted, Or Shuts Down**

**To Do:** Analyze what is going on in your working environment and figure out how it might be impacting the child.

- Do you work in the classroom?
- Do you have to share a room?
- Do you do “push-in” or “pull-out” therapy with him.
- How much visual and auditory distraction is there?
- Is the room too big or too small?
- Is the furniture suitable to his size and motor skills?

*Alter the environment to maximize his comfort and to foster his learning style.*

## Slide 12

## 7. Play

*Floor time, play-based therapy, child-directed activities,  
let the child lead, TheraPlay...*

It's not the toys or the floor –  
**It's the speech-language play that is important.**

### **PLAY WITH SOUNDS AND WORDS**

Make them:

- Louder, softer, longer, shorter, higher, lower..
- With laughter, tears, excitement, boredom...
- Faster, slower, repetitively, before or after a pause...
- Alone, in sequence, in one word, in 10 words...
- With a game, on demand, spontaneously, in imitation...

## 8. Routines

## Slide 13

Some kids hold back their participation until they perceive a pattern in the activity. They like and respond to routine.

*Your play may be too unstructured to enlist their cooperation.*

### USE ROTE ACTIVITIES

**Cards** – Place picture cards in toy mailboxes, in a purse, in wall pockets, on a display board, on a white board.

**Toys** – Line them up on the couch, put them on train cars, make a trail of them on a city rug, place them one-at-a-time in a storage box, etc.

**Puzzles** – Kids also will say just about anything to get a puzzle piece to place in a form puzzle.

## Slide 14

## 9. Any Activity

**Remember: Any activity can work.**

*Each of us has preference for how we work.*

If the child is practicing /m/ in a CV he can do it:

- To name a toy
- While making faces in a mirror
- To each person driving by
- For each dot he draws on a paper
- While hopping across the room
- To teach a doll how to say it
- While listening to a ticking clock
- To “make a funny sound.”

## 10. Verbal Leads

## Slide 15

*Don't always use a command, but don't always make it about selection, either.*

### VARY YOUR LEADING REMARKS

Fill-in-the-Blank	Car, train, truck...	Boat!
Challenge	I bet you can't say <i>boat</i> .	Boat!
Reverse Psychology	Hey. Don't say <i>boat</i> .	Boat!
Amazement	Are you going to say <i>boat</i> again	Boat!
Awe	I can't believe you can say <i>boat</i> !	Boat!
Acting Stupid	Are you sure this is a boat?	Boat!
Cajole	What? This can't be a boat.	Boat!
Simple Repeat	Say it again.	Boat!
Sing It	Oh, boat! Oh, boat! Boat! Boat!	Boat!
Chant	Boat. Boat. Boat. Boat.	Boat!
Q-A-A	What is this? Boat?	Boat!

## Slide 16

## 11. Pragmatic Functions

**Vary the pragmatic function of the utterance and the activity.**

Communication occurs when children want to express themselves in a variety of ways:

- |                 |              |                |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| • Greeting      | • Bantering  | • Being Silent |
| • Questioning   | • Naming     | • Reading      |
| • Refusing      | • Singing    | • Ignoring     |
| • Acting        | • Answering  | • Pretending   |
| • Story Telling | • Guessing   | • Being Grumpy |
| • Demanding     | • Pleading   | • Fibbing      |
| • Imitating     | • Requesting |                |

## 12. Curiosity

## Slide 17

Kids can get bored if things are too expected.

**They don't want to be told — they want to discover!**

*Add the element of surprise to your therapy.*

- Peek-a-boo, Boo!
- Do something unusual, strange
- Surprise them
- Hide therapy cards in a box, bag, cabinet
- Hide toys under blankets, in your fist, behind your back, under the table...

## Slide 18

## 13. Self-Esteem

**Some kids have been told they “can’t say it” or  
“can’t talk” for years.**

Help them see the opposite and they will love you  
and love coming to speech.

Make simple statements about their person:

- You are getting so big!
- You are so smart.
- This is so easy for you.
- You did all of them! You work hard.
- I like when you come to see me!

## 14. Classic Reinforcement

## Slide 19

Modern: *"That was a good try" or "Good talking."*

**These phrases are meaningless and they don't teach the child anything about what he is doing right or wrong.**

### CLASSIC REINFORCEMENT

Clear positive or negative reinforcement that teaches the client something about what he did right or wrong:

- "You said *boat*. Yeah!"
- "Oh no! You forgot the sound. Listen...Sssssss."
- "Nice. I heard you make that word sooooo loooong!"
- "That was a good word. You said it perfectly!"

## Slide 20

## 15. Responding

**Kids tend to get very uncooperative when they feel that nobody is listening to them.**

- Let the child talk.
- Take a back seat in the dialogue.
- Play off what he says.

### **GREAT METHOD**

Mirror their mood back to them. Play with it.

## 16. Saying “We”

## Slide 21

*Some clients don't respond well because they perceive an adversarial relationship between you and them.*

Establishing rapport is just the beginning.  
We need to help these children see that **we are on the same side.**

DON'T		DO
What do you want to do?	→	Hmm... what do we want to do?
Can you say <i>shoe</i> ?	→	We can say <i>shoe</i> ! Me first...
You should take a drink.	→	We need a drink.

## Slide 22

## 17. Priorities

### **WHAT IS THE POINT OF WHAT WE ARE DOING?**

Is it important that he learn to say *more*?

Or is it important that he learns *how to talk*?

- If it is important for him to learn to say *more*, then make him say *more*.
  - But if he is just learning to talk, then it really doesn't matter what word he says, as long as he says *something*.

## 18. Long Haul

## Slide 23

Therapy can look like it's failing when the child won't do what we want him to do - TODAY.

**But the client has a lifetime of speech learning in front of him.**

Don't worry so much about what happens in individual sessions. Sit back and look at the big picture.

Compare your data for every 3-6 months of therapy to see the patterns of growth.

Look at the things you are NOT working on – they often tell the tale.



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Printed in USA

This booklet is part of a video lecture.