



It Takes Two to Talk® Helps More Than Communication, New Studies Show

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The It Takes Two to Talk® program has been [studied several times](#), and we know that it has many benefits for both children and their parents. Recently, two new studies showed that *It Takes Two to Talk* can have an impact on more than children’s communication skills.

Study #1: It Takes Two to Talk® helps children’s behaviour and social-emotional skills

Children with early language delay sometimes also have difficulties with:

- **behaviour** – They may have tantrums, hit others, or cry easily [1]. These behaviours are often thought to be related to their difficulty with expressing themselves and making themselves understood.
- **social-emotional skills** – These are skills that help us understand and manage our emotions and have effective relationships.

Since children’s language development is often connected to their behaviour and social-emotional skills, researchers in Australia wanted to see if helping parents promote their child’s language development would have the added benefit of improving their child’s behaviour and social-emotional skills [1].

The researchers studied 121 children with delayed language, who were enrolled in 20 different *It Takes Two to Talk* programs across Queensland, Australia. The children were between ages 18 months – 4 years. The researchers looked at how the parents interacted with their child after taking the *It Takes Two to Talk* program, as well as how the children’s behaviour and social-emotional skills changed.

The researchers noticed the following changes after parents attended *It Takes Two to Talk*:

- **Parent-child interaction improved** – Parents used the *It Takes Two to Talk* strategies more frequently by the end of the program.
- **Children’s behaviour improved** – Even though most of the children didn’t have frequent behavioural difficulties at the beginning of the program, they still made improvements, according to their parents. Parents reported that their children didn’t whine as often and were able to concentrate better on activities. They also said that their children didn’t constantly seek out attention as they did before, and didn’t get angry as often when they didn’t get their own way.
- **Fewer children were considered at-risk for social-emotional difficulties** – Before the *It Takes Two to Talk* program, more than half of the children were identified as being at-risk for social-emotional difficulties. By the end of the program, however, only one third of the children met the criteria for being at-risk for these difficulties.

The researchers concluded that programs like *It Takes Two to Talk* that help parents learn how to promote their child’s communication development may have benefits that go beyond improved interaction and communication.

Study #2: *It Takes Two to Talk*® supports children’s social communication development

Learning to communicate involves more than learning to say words and sentences; it involves knowing how to use language to interact with others. To be effective communicators, children must learn the rules of back-and-forth conversation, as well as learn to adjust their language to a variety of social situations, and to understand and use nonverbal communication (such as eye contact and body language). These skills that help us interact with others are known as social communication skills.

Because the *It Takes Two to Talk* program is based on the idea that children learn to communicate during everyday social interactions, a group of researchers in Spain wanted to know if the program would improve not only children’s language (their vocabulary and grammar), but also their social communication skills [2].

The researchers also wanted to look at whether the *It Takes Two to Talk* program had an impact on parents’ wellbeing, such as their stress level and how they perceived their child’s communication difficulties. Since parents play a central role in the *It Takes Two to Talk* program, their wellbeing could affect how effectively they would learn and use the program strategies.

The study compared two groups of families:

1. **ITTT group** – In *It Takes Two to Talk*, the parent is the main person delivering the intervention, as they learn strategies to use as they play and interact with their child. In this study, 10 families participated in an *It Takes Two to Talk* program, which involves 8 parent-only group sessions to learn the program strategies, and three individual sessions with their child to practice the program strategies, which are recorded by the speech-language pathologist. Parents receive coaching during the interaction and then review the recording with the speech-language pathologist during these sessions.

2. **traditional one-to-one speech therapy group** – in this group, the speech-language pathologist interacted directly with the child and was the main person delivering the intervention. For four months, the 7 children in this group received one or two weekly sessions with a speech-language pathologist who had not been trained in *It Takes Two to Talk*.

The children in the study were all considered “late talkers,” meaning they had a language delay but no delays in other areas (such as physical or cognitive delays).

The researchers noticed the following changes in the children and their parents after the interventions:

- **Children’s language skills (vocabulary and grammar) improved in both groups**
- **Children’s social communication skills improved more in the *It Takes Two to Talk* group**
- **Differences in parents’ stress weren’t noticed between the two groups** – however, parents in both groups started off with low levels of stress, so this wasn’t surprising
- **Parents’ perceptions of their child’s communication development were better in the *It Takes Two to Talk* group**

Besides the positive changes in children’s social communication skills and parents’ perceptions, the researchers pointed out an additional benefit of *It Takes Two to Talk*: the program provided intervention in a more efficient and cost-effective way than the traditional speech therapy group, which involved more than twice as many sessions as *It Takes Two to Talk*.

Putting this all together

These studies provide us with more evidence that *It Takes Two to Talk* has benefits for children and their families beyond improved interaction and language skills.

In summary, *It Takes Two to Talk*:

- can impact children’s behaviour, social-emotional development, and social communication skills
- improves parents’ perception of their child’s communication development
- delivers the same – or better – results than traditional speech therapy for children who are “late talkers,” and takes much less time

Taken together with [past research on the program](#), we now have several studies which show the far-reaching influence of the *It Takes Two to Talk*[®] program.

[Read more about *It Takes Two to Talk*](#)

References

1. Rose, T., Scarinci, N., Meyer, C., Harris, S., Forsingdal, S., Anger, N., & Webb, K. (2020). The It Takes Two to Talk® – The Hanen Program® for Parents: impacts on child behaviour and social-emotional functioning. *Speech, Language and Hearing*, 23 (3), 180-188. DOI: 10.1080/2050571X.2019.1622832
2. Senent-Capuz, N., Baixauli Fortea, I., & Moret-Tatay, C. (2021). Parent-Implemented Hanen Program It Takes Two to Talk®: An Exploratory Study in Spain. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(15): 8214. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18158214