

# Imposter Syndrome – What SLP Students Feel When Working With Parents

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Many SLP students experience **the phenomenon of Imposter Syndrome**: anxious feelings and self-doubt about their abilities as a clinician.

At one university, students from eight different health professions rated themselves on the *Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale*.<sup>i</sup> **All SLP students who participated reported moderate to intense imposter feelings.**<sup>i</sup>

You can quickly [take the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale yourself here](#). Even with four years' experience as an SLP, my own score was quite high.

Imposter Syndrome followed me throughout my degree. As SLP students, we need to become confident in our own clinical skills in order to support parents in becoming effective language facilitators for their children.

We know that [collaborating with parents is best practice](#) and leads to better outcomes for children with language difficulties.<sup>ii</sup> But, **providing parent-implemented intervention may be a particular source of Imposter Syndrome** for SLP students and new grads, given that we are working with the parents and not the children.

So, is there a way to alleviate imposter feelings related to parent-implemented intervention? Research shows that **gaining experience with *It Takes Two to Talk*<sup>®</sup> improves students' confidence in working with parents to help children.**<sup>1</sup> In a study by Scarinci et al. (2018), 14 students discussed their experiences both before and after they observed and assisted in the *It Takes Two to Talk*<sup>®</sup> Program for Parents.

## Delivering *It Takes Two to Talk*<sup>®</sup> under a Hanen-certified SLP's supervision

It's important to note that **SLP students may only assist with an [It Takes Two to Talk Program under certain circumstances that are pre-approved by The Hanen Centre](#).**

**The Hanen-certified SLPs described in Scarinci et al. (2018) met the following conditions, as required by The Hanen Centre:**

They submitted a request to involve up to three students in the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program to The Hanen Centre

- The Hanen Centre reviewed the request and determined that the SLPs were qualified to involve students.
- The Hanen SLPs signed an agreement which outlined specific terms and conditions, such as exactly what the students could and could not do during the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program.
- The signed agreement with The Hanen Centre included the names and email addresses of up to three students. No more than three students may participate in an *It Takes Two to Talk* Program at a time.
- There are other requirements of the Hanen-certified *It Takes Two to Talk* SLP.

The **students who participated in the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program were required to:**

- Be in their second year of study and have completed certain areas of study, as well as a practicum with preschool children with language difficulties
- Complete readings assigned by their Hanen-certified SLP supervisors and watch Hanen videos for their introduction to the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program
- Observe the individual pre-program consultation of each child and their parent(s)
- Observe at least three parent group sessions before presenting small sections of the remaining sessions under the Hanen-certified SLP's supervision
- Observe video feedback sessions. Because it requires Hanen certification, students cannot provide this component of the program to parents.

## **SLP students' concerns about involving parents**

Before involvement in the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program, Scarinci et al (2018) report that students described their uncertainty about how and when to include parents in a child's intervention. The students discussed **imposter feelings** that can be categorized into three key themes:

1. Concern that **parents would question or judge** their knowledge and skills.
2. Concern about their **ability to establish and maintain a strong relationship** with parents.
3. Concern about their **ability to manage parents' involvement** in and expectations for intervention.<sup>1</sup>

## More confidence and new perspectives about involving parents

After observing and participating in their supervisors' *It Takes Two to Talk* Programs, **students reported positive changes in their imposter feelings about parent-implemented intervention** that addressed all three of their earlier concerns.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

The students described how:

1. **Confidence in their clinical skills increased** throughout *It Takes Two to Talk*. Parents did not question or judge their clinical abilities.
2. **Mutual learning about the child (alongside the parent) helped develop rapport with families.** The students now considered both the child and the parent to be their clients.
3. **Parents were empowered by the format of *It Takes Two to Talk***, which further bolstered the students' confidence. From observing and participating in the program, the students gained skills in how best to support parents and maintain "buy-in" for their child's intervention.

## Hanen training sets you up for success early in your career

*"The Hanen ITTT program provided a valuable student learning experience for influencing how SLP students perceive how best to work with parents..."*

(Scarinci et al., 2018, p.139)

While these students observed and assisted in delivering the Hanen Program, there are benefits to taking the next step and becoming certified in *It Takes Two to Talk* yourself. **Hanen training sets you up for success to work with young children and their parents from the beginning of your career.**

In my first year as an SLP, I knew I *ought* to be supporting a child's whole family. I was even fortunate to have had practical, parent-implemented experiences during my degree.

Nevertheless, faced with the reality of working with parents myself, **the Imposter Syndrome reemerged.**

*What should I say? What do I do?*

**Becoming Hanen certified provided me with a clear framework and guidance for supporting both the child and the parent simultaneously.** This allowed me to apply my knowledge and skills more confidently to each family's individual needs.

**Hanen training is a lasting investment that leaves you with tangible, evidence-based resources.** If you attend an *It Takes Two to Talk* workshop as a student, upon showing proof of graduation, you become licensed to run the *It Takes Two to Talk* Program for parents in groups or use the resources in one-to-one sessions with clients on your caseload.

Students are eligible to take [It Takes Two to Talk](#) workshops and can [apply for a subsidy from The Hanen Centre](#).

## References

<sup>1</sup> Haney, T. S., Birkholz, L., & Rutledge, C. (2018). A workshop for addressing the impact of the imposter syndrome on Clinical Nurse Specialists. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 32(4), 189–194.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/nur.0000000000000386>

<sup>1</sup> Weitzman, E. (2017). *It Takes Two to Talk: A Practical Guide for Parents of Children with Language Delays*, 5th ed. Toronto, Ontario: The Hanen Centre.

<sup>1</sup> Scarinci, N., Rose, T., Cronan, A., & Lambertz, K. (2018). Speech pathology student experiences and perceptions of working with parents in a Hanen it takes two to talk family-centred clinical placement. *Speech, Language and Hearing*, 21(3), 132–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2050571x.2017.1329890>

### About The Hanen Centre

*Founded in 1975, The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization with a global reach. Its mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those on the autism spectrum, and those who are developing typically.*

*For more information, please visit [www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org).*

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