

Play Book Instructions:

The pages of this play procedure are best presented one page at a time and put in a loose-leaf notebook. Instructions to the adult facilitating the procedure are written on the pages in gray font. Personal pictures of the child, his family, home, pets, friends, relatives, and important events help the child to see his cochlear implant as an integral part of his life. The purpose is to alleviate fears and create readiness not only for the cochlear implant procedure but also for wearing the speech processor during all waking hours. The book may include anything of value to the child. Thus the loose-leaf construction allows the book to take on an individual shape for each child. Taking one page at a time ensures that the child is presented with information when he/she is ready. For example, one child may need a lot of time simply talking about what an implant is, or may need to meet other children who have implants. If the details of going to the hospital, and breathing into a mask are presented before the child has accepted that he's getting an implant, then seeing the details of the hospital visit will be unproductive and threatening. Another child may need extra time to deal with breathing into the mask, or perhaps with cutting the hair. Presenting one page at a time also leaves room for personalizing the experience so that the child internalizes and accepts the inclusion of sound into his life. **EACH CHILD IS DIFFERENT!** Coloring books and stuffed animals can be part of the experience, but don't in themselves address a child's **INDIVIDUAL NEEDS**.

Supplement the book with Play!

Each page of the Play Book can be reinforced by playing dress-up with OR masks, hats and "pajamas". In addition, using small toys to play through the procedure in detail can be very helpful, especially when language is limited. The Playmobile hospital and OR sets, along with a car and play house, lend themselves very nicely to showing not only the details of the upcoming surgery, but also instilling the assurance that, after the visit to the hospital, there is indeed a return to home and life as the child knows it. This helps to alleviate the fear that, when falling asleep with the mask, that one is disappearing. Using the toys, Mom and Dad are placed waiting in chairs, and when all is over, everybody drives home and everything is OK. The toys also help with depersonalizing the experience initially, as it is much easier for a child to put a mask over a doll's face than to put a mask on his own face. For children who find the mask particularly threatening, using toys and other people to breathe into the mask, fall asleep, wake up, have a drink, and then drive home, allows the child to realize that this experience does not have to be as scary as he/she originally thought.

Each child will profit from a different emphasis; some may like making the book; some may benefit from a detailed development of the story with the Playmobile or other toys, and others may enjoy dressing up the most. A combination of all three forms of play, with individualization focused on the child's needs, ensures a

thorough and healthy preparation not only for a child's cochlear implant surgery, but also for a life enriched by hearing.

How can this help very young children?

One might ask how this can be helpful with very young children who are now being implanted as young as 12 months of age. Although the details may not be absorbed at the same level as an older child, a very young hearing impaired child will have something concrete to show, re-experience, and ingest at whatever level he is capable. For example, a simple play book was made for an 18 month old. Each page was enhanced by brief dress-up sessions a few minutes daily for 2 weeks prior to the surgery date. As a result, the child was desensitized to the hospital and the OR. He went through the surgery without a tear, wore his device 100% of the time beginning on the day of the initial stimulation, carried the book to school for **over two years**, showed it to family or visitors, and still looks at it occasionally at age 7! Most of the children who have had the opportunity to go through this play procedure have worn their device all day from the day of the initial hook-up, and audition has become an integral part of their lives very rapidly. Of course, the play preparation must be supported by family, CI team, and educators, all of whom are dedicated to making audition an integral part of the child's life.