

Speakable

A magazine with news and articles about communication and confidence

Imagination and children development

When approaching developmental studies, the role of imagination is sometimes underrated, but it is extremely important for children

Speakable  Because you can.
Speaking • Reading • Confidence

Learning Styles and Habits
ebook available for free
download

Use these ebooks to boost your
study practices and reach more
efficient results at school

Speakable Team
#5 Issue | July 2021

Introduction

Hello achievers,

Last year was a huge challenge for many businesses and people, but we all kept a strong-minded focus on providing services with excellence to our clients and continuously adapt to new procedures. Our nonstop growth just reflects this dedication and focus on innovative solutions to clients, and now **we celebrate our 7th year of operations** with so many satisfied clients who benefitted from our therapies and can live a happier life.

Speakable is perfectly able to provide both in-person and remote sessions for the best outcomes of our clients. Other innovations include our weekly blogposts about speech pathology, learning difficulties, communication confidence and much more. Complementing the release of the Speakaboo Cards, we are proud to announce our special Vietnamese Accent Reduction and COGMED programs and our contribution to the World Food Program,

Our new issue is full of cutting-edge articles to inspire parents, students, teachers, speech pathologists and other health specialists.

We hope that you enjoy our fifth issue! Please feel free to share your reading experience and to give your feedback for us to be better and better!

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Symmetra and representativeness in videogames



Neurodiversity is a condition gradually recognised among educational, medical and business environments, while studies continue explaining how the brains of people with autism, dyslexia, ADHD and many other learning differences actually work. On the parallel, characters with a neurodiverse condition are presented in pop productions such as comic books, TV series, movies and videogames, helping the increase of awareness regarding such conditions. One of the most famous neurodiverse characters is [Symmetra](#), from Overwatch. While the games only imply that she is within the autistic spectrum, Overwatch comic books have clearly mentioned keywords such as spectrum.

Therefore, Symmetra is an admirable representative character, but you can point out many other characters who are said to have a neurodiverse condition, or demonstrate signs of neurodiversity, such as:

- Cassandra Murata, from Rage of the Dragons
- Dr. Brigid Tenenbaum, from BioShock franchise
- Patricia Tannis, from Borderlands 2
- Rell, from Warframe
- Cole, from Dragon Age: Inquisition
- Jäger, from Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege
- Josh Sauchak, from Watch Dogs 2

If your children like to play any of these games and has a neurodiverse condition, tell them about these characters and how these characters make the difference in their respective games!

NEWS: Speakable updates its COGMED services



Neurologic conditions and neurodiversity affect people in different ways, sometimes acting as barriers for them to make the best use of their own memory to remember recent events, information from many years ago, or simply organise knowledge to access and use when socialising or working.

One of the most famous and reliable techniques for the improvement of memory capabilities is COGMED, owned by the education-centred multinational named Pearson. It is present in many clinics and educational institutes for many years, and recently it has passed through an upgrade for a better performance in a world increasingly more dependent on remote work and digital platforms.

According to [COGMED's website](#), there are many big changes for the better, highlighting these ones below:

- An incentive system is paramount for motivation and compliance
- The current Robo Racing (RM) and Aquarium (JM) are replaced with a persistent world builder (Create theme) that visualizes training progress
- Motivational gamification mechanism that integrates rewards (earning gold and gems) during training
- Allows users to present their unique Cogmed training creation to parents and peers
- Extendable to future new themes (e.g. gardening, ocean, space etc)
- Research-based activities with scientific proof ([click here](#) to learn more)

Binh Doan, Speakable's owner and leader of therapy staff, participated in the updating processes and considers the new version of COGMED is even more user-friendly than before, with a modern and effective organisation of content and activities, very easy to navigate.

Speakable is a registered provider of COGMED training. Please [click here](#) to learn more about our services. If you want to keep improving your working memory, check out eight tips we listed for you by [clicking here](#).

Learning Styles and Habits ebook available for free download



Every learner has their own learning styles and habits which can be explored towards better results, no matter the age, topic learned and any other circumstances. The more learners know about themselves, the higher the potential for learning more efficiently through individual strategies or strategies applied by school and parents.

Aiming to help learners know better about how to unleash their potential by knowing their styles and habits, Speakable is releasing this week its ebook focused specifically in explaining these topics for learners' better performance.

Four important topics are approached by the ebook, with enough explanation about the use of tables and benefiting from that information:

1. **What kind of student are you?** A simple checklist will guide the learner to know more if they are doing well or needs some more effort towards better school performance.
2. **What's your learning style?** Through a questionnaire with 20 questions, the learner is able to understand if they are more related to a Visual, Auditory or Tactile Learner. When this information is acquired, many strategies are described on the ebook to stimulate the best performance in learning.
3. **Improving your study habits.** This is a checklist to verify what efforts the learner is already doing towards good study performance, and which activities should be tried for better outcomes at school.
4. **Confidence Wheel.** This is a trademark of Speakable and is based in an eight-dimension checklist for students to know about these eight aspects in their lives. If one or more of these aspects are not in the ideal place in the student's life, it means that higher efforts must be made individually, with the help of friends and family, and from school and other education-centred professionals.

You can download this ebook for free in the link below:

Learning Styles and Study Habits Ebook

Since school Term 2 has just started, this is a very good opportunity to check all student's learning styles and habits to keep an engaged and exciting new school term with the best strategies for students' best outcomes.

Preparing your kids for NAPLAN



Every year, the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests the performance of students from Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. This test is extremely relevant for the education sector because it establishes benchmarks and allows deeper analyses regarding school curriculum.

However, it becomes a source of stress for many parents and children who want to reach high grades in it. The very nature of NAPLAN is actually to establish a standard in order to guide educational institutions towards improvement, and it's not a simple "extra test" just to frustrate students. In order to help children in the moments before NAPLAN, we have created this list with some very useful tips for better performance on NAPLAN test day:

- **No pressure, just a calm mind.** Children need to be free from extra pressure. They already have their own stressful moments from the traditional tests, so it's not helpful having this extra stress, at all.
- **NAPLAN practice tests.** These practice tests can be easily found on the internet or prepared by some specialised learning institutes, since the demand for preparation for NAPLAN is increasing. By practicing those simulated tests, children feel confident with content and structure.
- **Time management.** It's good for schools to provide tips and techniques for the best use of time when doing any kind of test, including NAPLAN. Some technique such as elimination processes for multiple alternative questions or brainstorming for answers could make a difference.
- **Emotional support.** Both parents and teachers need to be always there for their children, so it is always effective keeping a close relationship by asking how the children are feeling about tests, their daily study routines etc. They need to feel embraced, supported and stimulated, which will positively influence in their performance.
- **Pre-test routine.** Before the NAPLAN test day, the child should have a good night of sleep to be sufficiently relaxed for the following day. Also, a rich breakfast must be prepared for the child's energy. Any other morning routines should be maintained, especially because they might help distract the child from getting anxious about the moment of test.

With these tips, we hope your children can have a great performance on NAPLAN test day with no stress. Speakable will be always at your service to provide special training to your children, so they can have better learning skills to go well in any test!

Mothers' influence over children's development



Mother's Day is extremely special for emotional reasons, when we simply make a different breakfast, buy a gift or declare our love for our mother in the most varied communication ways. However, we can use this special date to point out some scientific information about the uncanny connection between a mother and her children, and even her amazing effects over a child's development. Have a look at how much a child can be bonded to his or her mum:

- By the first trimester of pregnancy, a fetus is already developing its [sense of smell](#), memorising its mum's amniotic fluid! With this acute sense of smell, the very moment of birth is also marked by the baby smelling his or her mum and memorising this smell with such an effectiveness that even by distance the baby can differentiate if mum is around. Mum's unique breastmilk is the other smell the baby can differentiate among other mum's breastmilk and other kinds of liquids. Sensing mum's smell has an immediate effect of safety and comfort, which also contributes for the baby's overall development.
- By the second trimester of pregnancy, the baby's [hearing](#) is already able to recognise mum's voice among other sounds, which include internal sounds such as heartbeat, organs working and so on, and even external noise. By hearing mum's voice, the baby can become calm or excited depending on the situation. Mum's voice is also the other way the baby can recognise mum at the very moment of birth.
- Even during childhood and adolescence, mum's voice has a very strong effect, in person or even through electronic communication. A [team of researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) discovered that mum's voice through a simple phone call can induce the production of oxytocin over her children, with the same effect as mum's hug and cuddling.

As you can see, you are miraculously important in your children's lives, even with no effort at all! Therefore, the more you dedicate yourself for your child's development, the higher the chances are for them to succeed in their future. You can read [this post here](#) about interesting activities to stimulate your child's communication skills.

Synesthesia: do you know how a word tastes?



The human brain is an extremely complex and fantastic system that processes body and environment stimulus to present proper reactions, allowing us to survive, socialise and innovate. However, sometimes the brain is wired in an unexpected way, giving some people advantages and disadvantages in various situations. This is simply what neurodiversity means. Some neurodiverse conditions are better understood and already have some therapies to help the neurodivergent individual cope some challenges, though not every condition is easily understood to receive any customised support. That's the case of **Synesthesia**.

Synesthesia is a curious condition in which a synesthete experiences a crossed processing of senses, having a surreal experience describing something through an unexpected sense. For example, someone who says that some song is very yellow, a perfume has a pretty melody, or that some carpet tastes like chocolate by stepping on it. While it might seem amazing to be able to cross senses like this, sometimes it can become a barrier for the synesthetic person because expressing and interpreting other people might become impossible. Along with social challenges, sensory overload can affect the synesthete in a very negative way, since many stimuli are using two or more senses – imagine yourself unable to close your eyes because sounds or the very touch of your bed projects colours and shapes directly into your brain.

Some tips that our team of experts from Speakable have to help synesthetes are:

- **Educate yourself about your synesthetic condition.** The more you understand about your brain and your senses, the more effective will be your efforts to help yourself.
- **Accept this condition.** Don't feel like an alien, a cursed person or anything negative. In fact, you can even perceive the world in fantastic ways that most of us only dream of.
- **Develop sensory overload coping techniques.** Sometimes, the excessive sensorial input might overwhelm you, so you need to keep trying more and more strategies to suppress such excessive sensory stimuli.

Synesthesia: do you know how a word tastes?

- **Share your perception to the world.** It's not uncommon to see synesthetes becoming great artists in so many kinds of art, because Synesthesia was explored as an extra layer of perception about the world. You can amaze us with your different ways to express this, use that!
- **Synesthetic networking.** Try to find and meet other people with their unique synesthetic experiences, they will understand you and both of you will have the chance of giving support to each other when needed.
- **Check whether you need a therapist.** Synesthesia itself is not usually something disruptive enough to need therapists. However, if you feel you're not succeeding in your efforts to cope sensory overload, self-esteem, self-expression and other issues, always go to a therapist to better know what you might need as extra support.

If you need to better understand about your neurodiverse condition and how to cope with it, feel free to contact Speakable and have our team of speech-language therapists and special education specialists to give you the needed support!

Imagination and children development



Children develop their physical and mental skills through various internal and external factors, which include one sometimes neglected by many parents and educators: the imagination. According to Einstein, imagination is more valuable than knowledge itself, since imagination opens the door to possibilities and experiments.

As well, a Russian psychologist named Lev Vygotsky had provided remarkable studies supporting the role of imagination on children's learning process. This scholar stands for the highest efforts towards imagination in learning environments since early years, both at a learning environment and at home. He points out six main benefits from the stimulation of imagination in early years:

- Exploring new ideas
- Practicing problem-solving
- Planning and testing ideas and solutions
- Learning through trial and error
- Taking calculated risks
- Learning to accept failure and trying again

Speakable is a clinic enthusiastically dedicated to the stimulation of imagination during sessions, with an open-minded set of techniques to engage and entertain clients while performing therapeutical procedures. Our team has created a list with great activities to be performed at school or at home to stimulate children's imagination and have better development across the years:

- **Spend time outdoors.** The world is vast and offer an infinite number of opportunities for children to use their imagination. Observing the nature, people, transport vehicles, using the five senses towards new sensorial experiences, finding shapes, colours and patterns. Everything can be a rich source of imagination.

Imagination and children development

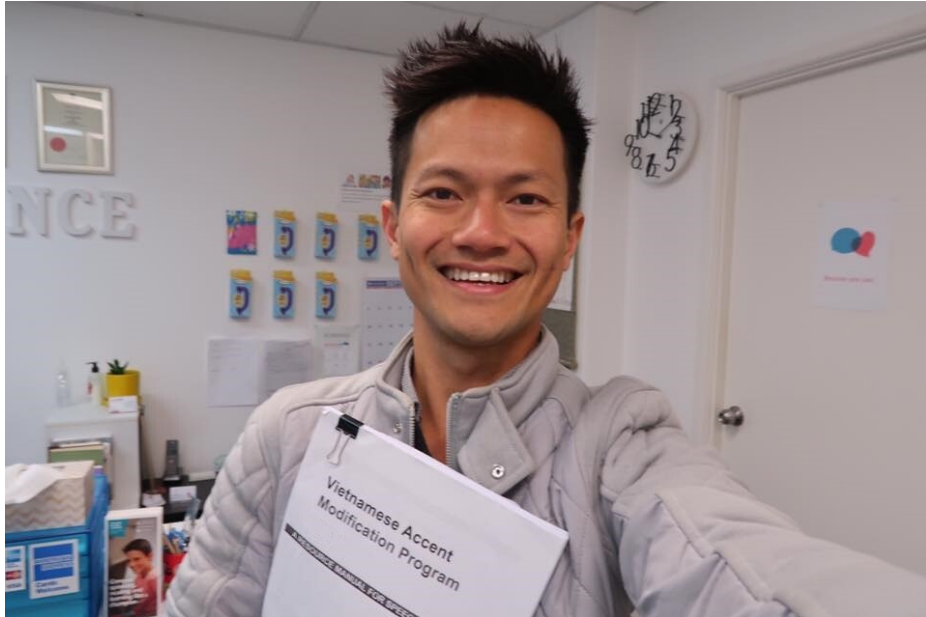
- **Invent scenarios and play roles.** When children pretend that they are an astronaut, archaeologist, athlete, doctor, policeman, firefighter, teacher and many other professions, they are exploring human relationships and getting more clues of their interests, maybe even their future professional interests. Fictional scenarios are as valuable as realistic ones, such as starship battles, Tolkienian adventures, superhero situations... These fictional ones allow them to better separate what is possible in the real world and what is not.
- **Verbal activities.** From rhymes to riddles, silly sounds to phonics, these fun activities encourage children to try new words and meanings, enriching their vocabulary.
- **Encourage arts and crafts.** When children can express themselves through artistic ways, their imagination is strongly stimulated. Plastic arts, poetry, dancing, playing instruments, cooking, working with wood, metal and other materials (always with an adult), they are adding new layers to a simple message or piece of information.
- **Encourage reading.** Reading books, magazines, newspapers, blogs and other text-based sources is a great way to stimulate imagination, no matter if it's about real things or fictional stories.
- **Limit screen time.** It's inevitable that children will be too much time trying to use some screen-based device (television, computer, tablet, smart phone, handhelds, video games, etc.), but these devices actually limit imagination, since they provide visual and sound elements that the viewer doesn't need to imagine anymore. However, limit it entirely is also not effective, because the watched/played material (movie, series, animation, game) could be used for children to imagine how it was produced, how computer effects and practical effects work, what is the role and talent of actors, how to develop games, and many other reasons.
- **Flexible time versus scheduling.** Though children definitely need order and routine for many daily activities, there should be some flexibility at moments, so children can feel free to control part of their days with their own desires and preferences.
- **Be part of it.** Children can feel even better using their imagination when someone enters in the story or situation with them. If children play with cars, you ask permission to control one of them and really engage in it. If the child built a phone, you take yours and pretend you're calling the fake phone to have a role-played conversation.

Imagination and children development

- **'I wonder' questions.** When you think out loud about your own imagination, children can see that it's acceptable to explore their different ideas. You can explore many different reflections such as 'I wonder how a rocket works and how it can go to space', or 'I wonder how rain and snow fall from the sky' or even 'I wonder where those people are going right now'. It activates the child's interest to imagine thousands of possibilities, just to guide to serious conversations explaining about those topics.

By employing one or more of those initiatives, you will easily see how significant the use of imagination is for the learning and development of children since early ages.

NEWS: The Vietnamese Accent Reduction program is ready!



As announced some weeks ago, Speakable was preparing its **VAR (Vietnamese Accent Reduction program)** to star in July for both face-to-face and online sessions. This is the product from a successful partnership between Speakable and Central Queensland University to develop this 10-week program designed to improve English pronunciation for Vietnamese speakers, improving clarity and fluency.

Among the many topics approached and stimulated towards the attendees' oral communication, some of the most important ones that usually affect Vietnamese people when speaking English are:

- **TH /ð/.** This sound doesn't exist in the Vietnamese oral language, so this is one of the initial challenges faced. Speaking this sound instead of /d/ is fundamental, especially because of very common words such as *this*, *those*, *mother*, *though* and so many others.
- **CH /tʃ/.** Another common sound which is not used in the Vietnamese oral language. Words like *chat*, *purchase*, *Architecture*, *pitch* have this sound, and are difficult to be correctly pronounced by Vietnamese people.
- **Consonant clusters.** Consonant clusters, or blends, might represent more complexity to the Vietnamese speaker because of the accumulated letters to reproduce a sound the speaker isn't expecting. Among the examples, there are *smell*, *bread*, *anthropology* and *athlete*.
- **Final consonant sounds.** Sounds such as "z", "s", "t", "v", "ed", "ks" and "st" tend to be ignored by Vietnamese people when speaking English because these sounds don't have equivalents in Vietnamese. It's important to train the pronunciation of them when speaking words which end with one of them.
- **Multi-syllabic words.** The Vietnamese language is composed by many small words, while the English language is used to words such as *multiplication*, *meteorological*, *assimilation* or *counterargument*. It's important for a Vietnamese person to learn solutions such as identifying prefixes and suffixes, as well as chunking the word into understandable syllables and sounds. The understanding about word stress is extremely important when speaking such multi-syllabic words.

NEWS: The Vietnamese Accent Reduction program is ready!

- **Intonation.** This trait is very relevant to help guide the ideas towards the comprehension of the other person you are talking to, since sometimes the different intonation might become a distraction and hinder the true understanding of the tone. Vietnamese is a tonal language, but English is not, so it's important to notice how to change properly the intonation when speaking each language.
- **Verb "to be".** English uses this verb for many purposes, including to link the subject and a predicative adjective, which is not used by the Vietnamese verb *là*. For examples, for the translation of "He is hungry", it is said *Nó đói*, which literally means "He hungry". Therefore, this use for verb to be tends to be challenging.
- **Articles.** While English has definite and indefinite articles, Vietnamese simply has no articles. Therefore, the selection of the article for the best situation, or even whether it's necessary or not to insert an article, is an extra challenge.
- **Verb tenses.** English tenses can modify the verb itself, especially in cases of irregular verbs. However, Vietnamese uses a particle in front of the main verb to denote the tense. Because of this, Vietnamese people might have difficulties when using tenses other than simple ones, making the conversation more confusing time-wise.

For all of these traits and many more, Speakable is open to start new sessions for both face-to-face and online sessions, in such a way it will help not only Vietnamese people living nearby the clinic, but people in the whole Australia and even overseas. [Get in contact](#) to know more and don't forget to inform Vietnamese friends and family members who would benefit from this special program!

Snowman activities for Winter



You may have seen some activities Speakable recommended to conduct with your children during Winter in our blog. If not, click [here](#) and [here](#) to read about them. For this Winter, we have just come with three more ideas, all of them related to the famous snowman, a fun presence anywhere there is snow and children (or youthful adults, why not?). Check them out below:

- **Frosty the Snowman.** You can use the [lyrics of this song](#) to engage children to sing, or you can analyse the words and expressions from the lyrics itself. Another good way to use the song is by asking the child to retell the story in their own words, as well as making specific questions regarding the story.
- **Snowman roleplay.** You can bring a top hat like the one worn by the Snowman for the child to wear it and pretend they are a snowman becoming alive. According to the child's level of vocabulary and expressive language, you should provide prompts such as "As a snowman, I am" to guide them to express themselves with simple words such as "white", "cold", "made of snow", "happy", among others. Or else, when the child has a better vocabulary and expressive language, no prompts should be used and the complexity should be higher about the snowman, such as "carrot nose", "coal buttons", "red scarf", "three large snowballs" etc.
- **Snowman building instructions.** In order to stimulate sequencing and ordinal activities, this activity consists in talking about how to build a snowman, step by step. The child should be able to give a proper sequence of events. In order to make it funny, the child's steps should be noted and literally followed after all the explanation, building a snowman from those instructions. If there is a wrong sequence, there should be something wrong that would make the child laugh, but learn that a proper order should be told for a correct snowman.

With all the other activities from our blogposts [here](#) and [here](#), these three additions will make this cold Winter become much more fun!

Speakable's CEO celebrates City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club's 35th anniversary



On May 28th, **City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club** has celebrated its 35th anniversary, operating in Sydney CBD. **Binh Doan**, Speakable's CEO and therapist team manager, is currently the Area 10 Director within Waratah Division. In addition, next year he will start his new role as Club President of City Tattersalls.

Toastmasters is a not-for-profit organisation with the purpose of promoting communication, public speaking and leadership. By attending the meetings, the participant can:

- Develop better speaking and presentation skills;
- Learn to think quickly and clearly on your feet;
- Learn techniques to stop your hands shaking when presenting;
- Build strong leadership abilities;
- Hone your listening skills; and
- Enhance your resumé and career prospects – many companies value the Toastmasters qualifications.

City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club currently has around 25 members, comprising a good mix of ages, cultures and professional backgrounds, as well as a combination of experienced speakers and beginners.

This Club's members meet on the first and third Tuesday evening of every month, at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, at 169 Castlereagh St, Sydney. All participants arrive at 6:45pm for a 7:00pm start. Obviously, visitors are always welcome!

If you want to have more information regarding City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club or if you want to participate, feel free to visit this club's website by [clicking here](#), or [contact Speakable](#) to talk directly to Binh Doan.

What is a superforecaster?



Forecasting is a probabilistic process dedicated to point out the highest chances of something to happen. It could be simple things such as identifying if the next result when flipping a coin, to complex knowledge such as the likelihood of a third world war to happen. Even bizarre forecasts could be conducted, such as the likelihood of a specific cow to lie down (yes, this study was really conducted and had even [received a scientific award!](#)).

However, a [special research](#) conducted by psychologists Phil Tetlock and Barbara Mellers at the University of Pennsylvania under the sponsorship of US Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA), aiming to refine forecasting procedures.

Instead of only identifying better tools and methodologies, the researchers were able to identify that 2% of the tested forecasters were incredibly more effective in forecasting results in every test. These 2% were then named superforecasters, people with an amazing talent to analyse data and evidence through unusual cognitive links. This project, [which has become a book](#) when it ended, identified the following characteristics of every superforecaster:

- High intelligence – but not necessarily off the board
- Broad domain knowledge, especially of politics
- High scores on a test of actively open-minded thinking
- Willingness to seek and consider information contrary to their previous point of view
- Tendency to enjoy thinking and forecasting
- Belief that forecasting skill can be cultivated and is not just innate ability or blind luck
- Scientific worldview
- Not much faith in fate or luck

Then, the researchers have founded [Good Judgement Inc.](#), aimed to identify and train superforecasters through top-notch methodologies developed from the original research. Any person interested in testing and training their minds to become more accurate in their forecasts can apply for a [special course](#) provided by the organisation. Watch [this video](#) about the book which explains the nature of superforecasters.

Thank you for reading!

This was the fifth issue of our new Speakable Magazine, which compiled the articles and relevant news about communication, confidence and our clinic from 2021's school term 2.

In case you are interested in following Speakable's social media profiles and blog, please check the list below:

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Twitter Page: [@speakableoz](https://twitter.com/speakableoz)

LinkedIn Page: [@speakable-speech-language](https://www.linkedin.com/company/speakable-speech-language)

Instagram Page: [@speakable_speech_pathology](https://www.instagram.com/speakable_speech_pathology)

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