



The Talking DLD Podcast Transcript

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S04 E05 – Parenting a child with DLD as a speech language pathologist.

In this episode of The Talking DLD Podcast we're joined by Erin Palmer who provides a unique perspective on life with DLD. Erin is a Speech Language Pathologist but most importantly, she is the mother of a child with DLD. Erin provides a raw account of what it is like to navigate DLD from the clinic to home in this revealing episode. Hear how she has juggled her professional experience with the need to be Mum in a world where Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is still a hidden disability!

00:00 - Nat (Host)

Talking DLD Developmental Language Disorder One in 14. Dld.

00:08 - Shaun (Host)

The DLD Project.

00:10 - Erin (Guest)

The Talking DLD Podcast.

00:12 - Nat (Host)

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00:15 - Shaun (Host)

Hi everyone. It's Sean here. On today's podcast, I'm joined by Erin Palmer, speech language pathologist and mum to a child with DLD. Erin provides her unique insight into life between the home and clinic. Welcome to this episode of the Talking DLD Podcast. I'm so excited to be joined by the wonderful Erin Palmer. I feel like I've known forever, but it really probably hasn't been forever. Erin, welcome to the Talking DLD Podcast.

00:47 - Erin (Guest)

Thank you, it's my first podcast ever.

00:51 - Shaun (Host)

It's so exciting. I feel like we can jump straight in and say can you tell us a bit about yourself and your connection to Developmental Language Disorder?

01:01 - Erin (Guest)

Sure, I have been a speech and language therapist for a number of years. I graduated in 2006. And then I became a mum in 2012. I have three girls. They were born in 2012, 2014 and 2016. And my middle girl went on to be diagnosed with DLD.

01:26 - Shaun (Host)

But lots of lived experience. And I feel like you wouldn't be able to tell from Erin's accent, but Erin is based in New Zealand.

01:35 - Erin (Guest)

Canadian originally and I did my training in the States and then I've worked in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, so she's been around.

01:44 - Shaun (Host)

She's got a lot of experience, guys, and it's through your work as not just a clinician but a raising awareness of Developmental Language Disorder, a rattled ambassador, that we first connected, and I would think that, Erin, you might have been probably the first person to ever do the DLD Project workshops, right back in 2020.

02:05 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah, I feel like I started asking you really big questions quite early on. Yes, big questions.

02:13 - Shaun (Host)

Questions that I probably haven't thought of before, Erin, and I think that that's where we connected, and I've invited Erin along today because she's in such a wonderful position to share her experience, both as a clinician, as a speech and language therapist, as we call it in New Zealand, or a speech pathologist or speech language pathologist, depending on where you are in the world as well as being the parent of a child with Developmental Language Disorder. So I thought, Erin, if you don't mind, we might jump in with your parental hat straight away and say, as a parent of a child with DLD, can you tell us a little bit about your journey, perhaps out of your diagnostic process, and what that looked like for you and the intervention you've received? You know, we know there's probably been some ups and downs for your family and we'd love if you could share that with our listeners.

03:05 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah, so I have always worked with DLD and so I have always worked with children and I worked in early language for a long time and so I recognized that my middle girl, her language wasn't developing kind of as I really expected it to, and we were really sure of that by about 18 months. But I really fed into a false narrative around language development and language difficulties and I really really believed that if a child was having difficulty with language that it was always a delay and that with enough input they could reach kind of typical skill. And so I just engaged in all of the early language strategies and they didn't really work the way I expected them to. She had difficulty with word learning and once we kind of

got single words, even when we got more than 50, and you know that's the magical number when kids just start putting words together we didn't get word combinations. And at that point in time I was kind of going in with my colourful semantics cards and really visually showing her how words went together to form sentences. And then when we started getting word combinations, even though we were doing the colourful semantics and showing her how words went together, everything was out of order and when we kind of kept going with that and kept persevering, things kind of got into the right order, but there were still errors with the grammar. And then, as we were getting closer to school, we realized that she just kind of had no phonological awareness skills at all. So it was kind of always something.

04:53

And by the time she was four and it was going for her before school check, the before school check lady said do you have any concerns? And I said you know, actually I do. And so we sat on a wait list for about a year and a half and then we received an assessment with the public system and that speech and language therapist did kind of a really traditional language assessment and we came out well, within the range of typical, and she just kind of said yeah, you know there are some holes there, but overall she's doing all right. And I kind of sat with that for a little while because I thought can you score that well? And I'd been questioning DLD.

05:37

By that point in time the battled committee had been formed and I'd kind of seen what you were putting out and I was really really questioning like, is this what's happening? And I started by asking therapists that I'd worked with and people that I knew really well. And I said you know, what do you know about? What do you know about DLD? Because my understanding had always been if we do the right things, then the language will come in. And if the language isn't coming in, either the parents are following through with what we've suggested or there's an underlying cognitive disability that just hasn't been diagnosed yet and that you know.

06:16

Neither one of those things sat well with me. I thought here's a kid that she's got really really great physical imitation, she's really really clever with physical problem solving, and I know that I'm doing all the right things and I know that I'm doing the things that I'm meant to be doing with consistency and with fidelity. And things just are not working the way that they're meant to work. And I said I started out by asking friends and people I was familiar with who were in the profession and they kind of all had similar thoughts to what I had and I wasn't getting anywhere there. So then I asked Meredith from the informed SLP and she was brilliant, she was really really generous with her knowledge in her time and really made me feel like it was OK to keep asking questions, because I think when you're kind of just a clinician and you're not a researcher, you can feel like the questions that you might ask are really really silly. It's really intimidating to ask those questions to people who are really super knowledgeable. But Meredith made me feel like it was OK to continue on with that. And it was actually Lisa Archibald on Twitter who I'd kind of said I feel like I'm chasing the wind and I don't know if it's worth pursuing. And she said to me think about the amount of input that your child has had. And even though she's had all of that input and it's been really really good input you're still seeing a functional impact. And she said if there's a functional impact

there off of all of that work, then I think that another assessment is worth pursuing. But there again, who do you ask to do the assessment when you've already had a failed assessment?

08:13

And so I kind of asked around and we ended up traveling to see a therapist in Christchurch and I'm really, really grateful for her. She did a lot of kind of qualitative assessments. She took the things that we had to say into account and she did a language sample and she looked at the length and the complexity of the sentences in her oral language and she said gosh, I think you're right, I think that is what it is and what an intimidating place to be and to be doing a language assessment on another language expert's child. So, yeah, super grateful for her. Because, and even after we got the diagnosis, I would say to people like nurses and teachers and other specialists coming into school I would say what do you see with her language?

09:09

Do you see the weaknesses? And they would say we just don't see the things that you see. And that feels so gaslighty to be the expert and to see the holes and to have everybody ask in your environment and say, oh, we really don't see that. She's really really chatty, she's really really pleasant and you're like well, yes, she is all of those things, she's great, but there's just holes where you don't expect them to be, and it was. There is a video on the rattled site starring a mom named Sandra Kaplan who wrote a book called Rachel's Story, who had such a similar experience, but 14 years ago, where she talked about seeing the need and asking all of the professionals, and I remember her saying surely all these professionals can't be wrong. I feel like a neurotic mother and I think that that is a shared experience among parents of children with DLD, and so there's such a lack of understanding around it that really important people don't see it.

10:22 - Shaun (Host)

Sorry, I'm just catching my breath after hearing all of those things, because all of them in a row makes it sound like we have got so much work to do here. But what we are hearing from you, though, is that that lack of awareness and lack of understanding is really why we need to keep advocating for these young people, because otherwise, you know, we feel like we're talking and nobody's listening and understanding our perspective, which is so isolating, so hard and it's so, so important to listen to functional impact.

10:58 - Erin (Guest)

If a parent is telling you there's a functional impact, just because a standardized test tells you there isn't, there might be some more digging to do.

11:12 - Shaun (Host)

Yeah, absolutely, and we know that part of that profile is you know difficulties in oral language that are ongoing and having a functional impact. But often, you know a lot of the work I do with clinicians is around well, how do you measure functional impact and what does that look like? So lots of work that still needs to be done in that sort of diagnostic space. It's so much easier when a child just struggles with a standardized assessment and you feel like all of a sudden I can be really confident with that, but it's quite. It's not as

simple as that. Yeah, absolutely, and obviously you knew a lot of this because of your clinical training and your skills. So, perhaps, switching hats now, as a speech pathologist or a speech and language therapist, what has been your experience with supporting people with DLD? How was your own experiences as a parent impacted on your clinical work?

12:04 - Erin (Guest)

Oh, Shaun, the process of understanding why she wasn't responding to language techniques has had a profound impact on my understanding of language development, my understanding of language difficulties and what to do about that.

12:24

I really really fed into that false narrative of being able to reach typical skill within enough of the right input and so, yeah, I had a really big life lesson in how that is a false narrative and I think that a lot of those traditional language techniques that we're taught as therapists are really really aimed at kids who are having difficulty but are developing language typically, and I think that we have a lot of work to do in the space of understanding language that isn't developing typically and supporting it in a really meaningful way.

13:14

I think a lot of those early language techniques and the rhetoric around them are really really parent-blamey and shaming. And it doesn't matter how good your language environment is, we cannot change a child's language trajectory and I learned that from Courtney Norbury that language disorder is genetic and it doesn't matter how much input or how much of the right input. If they're language disordered, they're going to be language disordered and you can change the distribution, you can kind of narrow the need, but you can't get rid of the disorder and I always thought that you could and I do see DLD as an neurodivergence and I think we all need to, and considering it as a difference or what my grandmother used to call the rich tap as a tree of life.

14:16 - Shaun (Host)

You know everybody is different and really helping understand what our needs are so we can adjust the environment around us. If we don't know that, we have difficulties with communication compared to other people doing the same things that we're doing and it's really hard to see how we might adjust that and how we might make that more accessible. Yes, I used to.

14:37 - Erin (Guest)

I used to think that the way that we're doing it is to understand the way that we're doing it, and I think that you treat the disorder. You find out what the disorder is and you treat the disorder. And that's not true. You treat the functional impact, you support that person, because our goal isn't typical development. Our goal is to support that person to thrive with their neurodivergence.

14:59 - Shaun (Host)

We talk about that a lot in our training and the work that we do, isn't it? It's about how do we make sure that? You know this is a life-long condition and what we're thinking about

moving forward is actually acknowledging that the differences are actually just a part of life, you know.

15:17 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah, tallness and shortness.

15:19 - Shaun (Host)

We all have strengths and challenges.

15:20 - Erin (Guest)

Everybody does yeah.

15:22 - Shaun (Host)

I'm sure if we stood next to each other at the grocery store I could probably reach some higher shelves than you could, erin Not that I think I've stood next to you but you know, I have my suspicions that I'm probably taller than you.

15:32

Yeah, yeah, and you know I'm able to access that environment in a different way to you. But what we are less aware of as a society is how to do that for somebody who has difficulties with communication, because it's invisible and it's not seen. And you know, if we don't know that there's a difference, well, how do we adjust that environment and make it more accessible for them? So yeah, absolutely, it's a huge, huge consideration when working with young people and I think, like you, I probably had some. While I don't have a child with developmental language disorder. Since having children, my perspective on the work that I do as a clinician has definitely changed. You know, with Laugh I developed the most beautiful home programs and never one, you know, always wondered why the families didn't do the home programs that.

16:18

I had set for them. Now I'm like, oh my goodness, you guys have gotten here and you're fully dressed and you had breakfast and you, you know you plead your teeth. Wow, that's amazing. Well done, guys.

16:27

You know, and so you know, thinking about the work that I do as a clinician is actually about going. You know how do I fit in this dosage and support and, you know, home-based supports in a way that's meaningful for the family and that's my job. You know, it's my job to, as a clinician, to say how can I make this as accessible for you to do at home? Because you're with them so much more than I am. You know you're with them all the time and then balancing that with you don't want to therapize them all the time.

16:58

You know you want to maintain that relationship as a mom, dad, a parent, you know, grandparent, whoever. So if you're walking around using language stimulation strategies all the time, they're actually going to get sick of you. Yes, and I mean you're somebody. This is going slightly off topic here, Erin, or slightly into a different topic, was you know? I

remember you saying to me once you know you knew all the language stimulation strategies and you did those with your child. You know how does it feel sometimes when you know you're doing the right things and it feels like it's not working.

17:32 - Erin (Guest)

Stressful? Yeah, and I did. I used to think that I used to think of training skills as like riding a bike up a hill and that it was hard, hard, hard, hard, hard. And once you reach to the peak of the hill, the hill. And that was when the child started using the skill on their own. And then I thought it was like a cruisey ride down to the bottom, where they thought about it less and you practiced it less, but it was just coming in more naturally and by the time you go to the bottom of the hill and had that, they got it. They didn't have to think about it. Yeah, and that's not how things worked for us. And pronouns, and we have her and she, him and he and them, and they muddled and I have recasted pronouns until I am blue in the face.

18:39

Everybody, everybody in my house, knows how to recast a pronoun and it has not made a difference and there have been times where you know it hasn't just been recasting. We have sat down and done some really structured work around, but it does not seem to matter how much work we do around. Pronouns we cannot muddle. I assume that it will happen eventually and that's kind of the approach that I've taken. Yeah, Because I feel like if a skill or a technique or a goal makes you want to tear your hair out, if it's stressful for you, it is stressful for the person that you are supporting and that you just need to let it go.

19:22 - Shaun (Host)

In preparing for today's podcast, we talked a lot about persistence, which continues on from what you've just said, because you know you've been working on pronouns more than anybody else I know in my life probably, and you said that there's a certain amount of being persistent in the face of adversity or even feeling burnt out as a parent. What helps you, with your knowledge as a parent, as with your knowledge as a clinician, to be resilient when you feel like the future is so unknown and parents say this all the time, like what does the future hold for my child? And I was like well, we don't have a crystal ball, so Well, we don't have a crystal ball for anyone.

20:06 - Erin (Guest)

No, yeah, so I think again, just the art of letting things go. You can't control the future and you can't control anyone's future. I've learned a lot about neurodiversity and about celebrating neurodiversity and just accepting all the different people or all the different ways that someone can be a person right, and you accept that there are difficulties but you don't dwell on them. Everybody we've said, you know, everybody has a profile of strengths and challenges and, yes, she has challenges, but there's some pretty amazing strengths there as well. You know, I talked about her physical imitation and her physical problem solving.

20:50

This is a child that I put off teaching her how to tie her shoes because I was like I just I cannot verbally mediate this child through this task, but when she said I really want to learn that I only had to show her. I had to physically show her twice and that was all she needed. From then on she knew how to tie. So there's a skill that I was like oh, no, no, and she just

got it, you know. So I mean, she's got skills that surprise me and a term that you taught me, Shaun she's incredibly pro-social, she is joyful and she is in your face and if she runs out of tomato sauce, she is the first person to slag down the waiter and say you know, can I have some more tomato sauce?

21:32

Yeah, and she's been taught self-advocacy in the classroom as well, so if something's hard for her, she will tell her teacher this is hard for me, and those are things that I couldn't have done as a child. I didn't have those skills. So really leaning into her strengths and celebrating those as well. And we are in a place where we are really well supported. We have an amazing teacher who understands neurodiversity and understands DLD and celebrates her, and so having that community of support is amazing.

22:09 - Shaun (Host)

And I think it's been open to possibilities, exactly what you're saying. I think that too often in the past we've heard a label and in the past that's meant that we've started closing doors. You know, close, close, close, close, close doors and say, well, oh, because of that they won't be able to do this and because of that we won't be able to do that. But in the neurodiversity community we're seeing people do whatever it is they want to do. You know, youtuber. You know, which seems to be every teenager's dream at the moment is to be a YouTuber or model or actor.

22:41

Or you know, I know of somebody who's got developmental language disorder and dyslexia, who's very much engaged in their higher education degree. Now she is busting her backside in order to do what she does and access it, but she's attending a higher education degree and succeeding at what she wants to do without people saying, oh, we couldn't have done that or you couldn't do this. And I often say to parents when they have, you know, the crystal ball moment oh, what does the future hold? I said, well, we're in a position, now more than ever, where we're actually understanding that differences are a good thing. You know, I've got one of my high schoolers who told me the other day she's autistic and she said it's actually really quite trendy to be autistic.

23:30

You know, and she's like, and she would have been somebody who in the old days might have been classified as more low, you know, in that sort of tiered model of support. Now she's like I'm autistic and actually now the people are saying, you know, that's a good thing, actually feel good about myself, and I feel like she's got this social group and she goes for outings and all these things that she's like oh, people told me I wouldn't do these things. And now she's like I go off and hang out with my friends on weekends and it's amazing and I feel like that has come through a huge amount of adversity for autistic people and their families and those supporting them. I feel like, with DLD being a newer term, let's kind of jump to where they're at. Why do we need?

24:12

to go through all the hard work and be like well, actually, we're a part of you know, these wonderful people are part of the new university community and those of us who sit around

them, who love them and work with them, you know, let's get to the good part. You know, it's actually great to be different and everybody is different and we can make, you know, choices that are the best thing for us, rather than going all of a sudden. The label means you cannot do this or you cannot do that. Yeah, so I'm excited. I think that the future can be bright, but gosh, we've got a bit of work to do, so I've got to keep on pushing forward. You've talked a bit about what hasn't worked for you and the things that you've shared around challenges. But as a parent and as a speech pathologist, what have you found that works at home?

25:08 - Erin (Guest)

that use evidence-based and it's across the board, because, of course, once I understood what DLD was, I could see it in kids that I work with. So, having never diagnosed a child with DLD in the first decade of my career, I now am more comfortable in identifying it and so I do work with a number of kids with DLD as well. But I stand firm on if you can do nothing else for a child with DLD and support them with self-awareness and self-advocacy. Lots of kids struggle. They know something's been hard. They might not even know it's been hard.

25:52

You might say, oh, what did you think about that? And then it went oh, sprees. And you went hmm, did you understand this word? Did you understand how they phrased that? Did you understand this figure of speech? And they'll go no, no, no, and you'll go oh, I reckon that if you didn't understand those things, that it might not have been as easy as you thought it was. And so teaching them to say hmm, didn't understand, it was hard. And then teaching them to say hmm as soon as it's a thing, if it's a word you don't understand, if it's a phrase you don't know, stop me. As soon as it's hard. And then teaching them OK, that's the bit was hard. So how do you have that need met and kind of giving them the scripts? I didn't understand that word. Can you rephrase that? Can you slow down? And I think those are skills for life. So if you can do nothing else for a child with DLD, do those two things.

26:44 - Shaun (Host)

Love that. Sorry, I'm just for those of you you can. Nobody can see me nodding along, but I, you know, it's one thing that I talk a lot about in my training is actually making sure that the first step towards self advocacy is going actually don't know, but I also need help, and knowing that help is okay to ask you know and coming up with strategies. I have one fellow who says to me, if I put my hand up every time, I didn't know I'd have my hand up all day. So it's like, okay, well, let's put up a strategy in place where he jots down a little thing to check and then either emails or checks in with the teacher at the end and grab some of that or it's going.

27:24

You know, do they put their thumb out when they need help rather than putting my hand up, or you know, what, whatever it is that works for them in that context to help them start to go Actually, you know I need this information, I need it adjusted or I need some help. Gosh, it's a long it's from there to where we get the amazing adults with DLD standing on stage and talking to politicians around what they need. You know that's. You know that that's a big scale advocacy, but actually self advocacy is where it's at, yeah, yeah. So in terms of then thinking about you know we've talked about language stimulation and it sounds like

you're actually still use language stimulation at home. You know, often we talk about language simulation for little ease, but you know.

28:11 - Erin (Guest)

I feel like.

28:12 - Shaun (Host)

I know I was going to say I feel like I've been one for a long time who's been saying we use language stimulation across the lifespan? Yeah, but all of the research is for like little zero to five year olds, you know, but it sounds like for your school age child you still use language stimulation. So like, how does that work?

28:26 - Erin (Guest)

Absolutely. I try my best to build things just into our everyday activities. She has DLD, she also. She doesn't have a formal diagnosis, but I have no doubt in my mind that she also has dyslexia, and so I do provide literacy support at school. But as far as language stimulation, we just try to build it into the things that we're doing and become really quite skilled at identifying kind of academic vocabulary and being able to break it down into words that she can understand, and we just do that as part of how we function as a family.

29:08 - Shaun (Host)

Can you give us a little example of maybe an academic word and how you've sort of broken it down?

29:13 - Erin (Guest)

Oh, I have a little.

29:14 - Shaun (Host)

I have an idea. So if you're feeling like I've just put you on the spot, I do.

29:18 - Erin (Guest)

I don't think well on the spot.

29:21 - Shaun (Host)

I was just thinking about one little one where you know they came home with all the science vocab. You know they were doing the water cycle, so we were doing evaporation, condensation, and I was like, and just like what you said. I said do you get? You know, how do you get with this? Like you're okay and she's like yep, awesome, I'm really good. I was like oh so, tell me in your own words what condensation is? And she was like oh so, condensation is when something condenses. And I was like okay.

29:52

So let's not use the word to define the word or a variation of the word. So what does it mean? And really working through getting them to put their thoughts into words was really quite tricky. So we ended up, you know, looking at the word and then talking about that word and then putting it in a sentence. So you know, condensation on the glass in the mornings or condensation on the leaves in the mornings sometimes we pull it due or

whatever. You know like we talk about it. But when I explained that to mum I'm like, oh, I do that all the time. I didn't realize that was therapy, 100%. Yes, that's like core. You know, working on vocabulary, that's a great. You know a great way of approaching it. But I think that some of those things we don't acknowledge that what parents are doing is actually really great, you know in those instances.

30:42 - Erin (Guest)

I'm not. I'm not, I agree. I think it all relates back to that false narrative of language environment, and so we automatically assumed that parents weren't doing those things, yeah, and that lots of them are.

30:55 - Shaun (Host)

Yeah, and I argue for our teacher. Colleagues listening in actually think that teachers do a fabulous job often of teaching vocabulary. I think that teachers are so well trained to look at vocab and when you explain what they've done the sporting a child with DLD they're like I do that.

31:08

I was like, yeah, you do, you're doing it really really well. You know, keep doing it, keep doing that. And let's talk about something else, like stories, story grammar or something that you know maybe they do need a little bit more support with and we can provide a bit of a framework and structure. But often what's happening is, you know there's lots of things but identifying and saying, keep doing that or do more of that would be really wonderful.

31:34 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah, I mean, that's what we know. Right is that they need more repetitions, that they have the ability to learn the things. They just need more exposures and more repetitions. So, yeah, yeah absolutely.

31:47 - Shaun (Host)

You know, I think that it's just the amount of time, and the time comes from somewhere. So if you sit down and do that, are you missing out on watching a bit of TV together, which is nice to, or are you giving up? You know something like going to the park to do something else. I mean understand that, don't we?

32:05 - Erin (Guest)

It's so important that we have a strong team, that we're all on the same page and we're all working on the same goals. You know, if we're talking about the things at home that they're talking about in the classroom, that their specialists are talking about, whatever capacity they might see their specialists, who are all working on the same, the same things, and then we're they were meeting those goals and for exposure and repetition.

32:30 - Shaun (Host)

And so you've touched on this next question, but I'd love to hear your perspective about any advice for teachers and clinicians supporting a child with the LD.

32:42 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah. And so again, I'd go back to building a strong team, having really really good communication with each other and really, really I like I keep talking about it but really really challenging those false narratives. There's a lot of stuff out there around screen time and about working parents and about socioeconomic status, and but what we know and it's a quote, but I can't tell you who it's from is that children learn language in spite of us, not because of us, and I think that we really really need to hold that when we're looking at a child who is having difficulties, and because trying to place the blame somewhere is just not helpful. And so, yeah, yeah, challenging those beliefs that we have around language development, having really good communications, building a really, really strong team it's the best advice that I would have.

33:51 - Shaun (Host)

We often think about. You know, I see people, particularly professionals, trying to explain away communication difficulties and often one of the things they do is all a language rich environment at home, you know, discussing, you know, did they have a language? It does feel a little bit judgmental, or a lot judgmental in fact, you know, because they're assuming that you know they're not getting X, y or Z. But I'd argue, short of growing up in a vacuum or a cave away from everyone else, everybody's going to be exposed to some level of language and that level of language, yes, will vary but, you know, assuming we can hear and be able to communicate, you know, and respond to information children can and should be able to learn language.

34:38

Yeah, we've actually got this beautiful ability, that language is something that's innate in human beings. We can't say the same for literacy. Literacy is this sort of secondary learned skill where we have to recycle all these neurological processes to learn how to read and do maths and all of those things. But language is very innate in order to be our as human beings. So I feel like, instead of trying to explain away problems or put the blame on other people like parents and families, you know really starting to think about. Well, maybe it is because they have difficulties with acquiring language compared to their peers and and and utilizing this label to understand hey, how can we adjust the environment to make it accessible? You know, that's, that's really powerful, and maybe we'll live in a label free society one day, because the whole world is absolutely accessible. But in the same way that you know, I can reach the top shelf of the shopping aisle and you know somebody who's a bit shorter may struggle.

35:38

You know, we want to make sure that we've got we've got that awareness and supports in place, because things sometimes will crop up. That are always easy right. Yeah we're starting to come to a close, but I'd really love to hear your thoughts, as a parent and as a clinician, on what you hope to see for the future of DLD, whether it's in your part of the world, where you know you're based, or around the world. It could be research or clinical work or service delivery. What would you hope to see?

36:06 - Erin (Guest)

Oh, Shaun, it's advocacy, it's advocacy.

36:10 - Shaun (Host)

I'm kind of ashamed you would say that, but would you like to expand on that?

36:13 - Erin (Guest)

I would. I mean, there has been so much done in the last five years but we are literally decades behind and other developmental disorders, and we still have so much work to do before somebody has heard the term DLD, before they understand what it means, before they understand what supports they can put in place for someone like that, and I think that I think that we can't. Nobody likes the name. Okay, it's just, it's a thing, but it's, it's the name that we've got. Yeah, and I think that, effectively, when we don't use the label because we're uncomfortable with it, we are gatekeeping support from people that need it and if somebody is struggling and day in and day out, they deserve to have that need identified and they deserve to have a name for it. And my child she doesn't need a label for me to understand her developmental differences and for me to love her unconditionally, but she does need a label in order to be understood in an educational setting and to receive the supports that she needs there.

37:33 - Shaun (Host)

Well, that's the quote of the podcast right there, and I think it's absolutely true because really, without that awareness of DLD, we've got this beautiful paper from J who and Kim here in Australia that was published last year, where more than 90% of the population knew about autism, knew about dyslexia, knew about ADHD, but only about 20% of the population knew about DLD, which was actually, in fairness, a lot more than I thought that they would find in that paper. And even within that, what they found was, even if you knew what had heard of the label before, doesn't necessarily know what it meant or what to do about it, not just for DLD, but other conditions as well. So really we need to be thinking about increasing awareness because, just like any other neurodevelopmental condition, our children, and adults with DLD deserve the best.

38:22

Yeah nothing, nothing but the best, and that's why we would definitely encourage you to get involved in developmental language disorder awareness day this year. If you haven't already heard, DLD awareness day is coming up on the 20th I had to think about that, Aaron, that's scary the 20th of October 2023. And this year's theme is DLD around the world and really starting to look at the fact that you know, DLD occurs everywhere around the world and there's lots of different projects being done at the moment on, you know, looking at terminology in different countries and different languages and what that looks like, but acknowledging that it's not just something that happens for one culture, it happens for many, and that people with DLD look and sound different around the world. So building this international community of people with DLD so important.

39:17 - Erin (Guest)

It's such a lovely way to celebrate. You know your neurodiversity as well. We always we contact our city and they light up our fountains in purple and we go and we have a late dinner, we eat fish and chips in the park and we wait for the sun to come down and the lights to go up and it's it's a really, really special night for us.

39:42 - Shaun (Host)

Absolutely. I really enjoyed last year our first face to face event in many, many years, where we got together with families under the big bridge that lights up here in Brisbane and we had a picnic in the park and we all just sat and watched, you know, as the bridge turned purple and yellow the same bridge that the year before I very terrifyingly climbed because, a young man with DLD said if I can, you know, communicate all day long with DLD.

40:12

You can climb the bridge, even though you're a bit. I'm not a big fan of heights, Aaron, that's not my forte, but you know it's great about bringing people together and having that shared experience and often feeling like you're not alone. And I think that that's what I love about your contribution to social media and the work that we do is that you know we're showing that we can come together and we're better than the sum of our parts. But also let's listen to people with the lived experience, whether it's as family members or the people with DLD themselves, and thinking well, what is like, what is the future hold for them if we all understand and support?

40:50 - Erin (Guest)

Yes.

40:51 - Shaun (Host)

So, as we're drawing to a close, I've got one more question for you before we sum up. But at the DLD project we're really trying to focus on self care, and I say that with a bit of a rise smile because my self care has been pretty business, not a blade and finding cell, a little bit of time to breathe in busy days. As a mom and a clinician, what do you do to look after yourself?

41:14 - Erin (Guest)

Yeah, well, I think you have to try to be mindful of things and to recognize when, when things are getting tough, and to try to kind of carve out some me time. I also have a really strong group of friends, many of whom are also parenting neurodivergent kids, and I think that that community is really important. And I also like to splash out. I like to buy myself books and hair products.

41:50 - Shaun (Host)

Great Love it. I don't have much hair, Erin, so I won't take advantage of that too, but I have definitely been getting more involved in reading books lately. I feel like I've lost the skill of attending to a book for pleasure. I'm very good at reading journal articles now and textbooks and things that will achieve a goal, but, my goodness, I used to devour books until I was in my mid to late 20s and then in the last decade or so I think I've lost the skill to sit and attend to a book because I tend to fall asleep, which is what happened last night. I've been falling asleep and now I've got a kink in my shoulder from sleeping. A bit funny on it.

42:42

But it's really nice to actually stop sometimes and think well, actually you can only pour from a full cup or a mostly full cup, and often for our parents who are listening in, cups are half empty or very empty. So it makes it really tricky to say, hey, I can do the best thing for my

young person In my life that I love, when actually I'm not taking very good care of myself. So hopefully people will have a few ideas. Take a minute to step back. Just to recap today's podcast. What would be the key points you'd like listeners to take away from our chat? Maybe give us three points.

43:21 - Nat (Host)

Three.

43:22 - Shaun (Host)

Oh, you want more. Double that. Give me your six points. Whatever you like, Erin, the floor is yours.

43:31 - Erin (Guest)

And DLD is neurodivergence. We need to step away from parents, blame and shame language and beliefs. You don't treat the disorder. You treat the functional impact. If you do nothing else for a child with DLD, support their self awareness and self advocacy. Labels are supportive of finding community and having your needs met. And the last thing I wanted to say was it's hard to tell a personal story and I really really wanted to think and acknowledge the people who have done that before. Before me there are just some, really some giants in the area of DLD Sophie Shelby, Lily Damien, Robert, Ozzie, Amelia, Carl, Parker, Juliana, Sandra and I know that there are many, many more children who have, and adults, people, people. I'm trying to really stop myself from saying children with DLD, but because it is across the lifespan, I'm trying to shift my language to people with DLD, but it is such a gift to have their advocacy and to have their voice and it makes this makes sharing our story so much easier.

44:53 - Shaun (Host)

Thank you so much for sharing your story. One of the things that Erin and I discussed at the very beginning of planning for today was you know, one day our little ones are big ones and they hear what we've said and we know that. Even when it comes to writing reports, you know I'm very conscious when I write a report that eventually that person might read that report about themselves and I want them to feel that they had somebody who had their back. And it's so amazing that we've got parents like you who are happy to share your story, because it's been a little while since I had a parent on the podcast and I really have enjoyed speaking with that Adult friends with DLD and getting their perspective. But your perspective is so unique as well as a parent of a child with DLD and as a clinician, I thought it was too good an opportunity to miss.

45:38 - Erin (Guest)

So thank you so much for your time. Thanks for having me.

45:41 - Shaun (Host)

I genuinely appreciate it and maybe you'll get to listen to yourself on the podcast now. Maybe, Thanks so much for your time, Erin. It's lovely. It's been lovely talking to you, and we'll catch everybody soon.

45:55 - Nat (Host)

Thank you, Erin, for joining us on the Talking DLD podcast. When we came up with the idea to have a podcast, one of the main things we wanted to do was elevate the voices of people with DLD and their families, because the term DLD has only been around since 2016,. We are still just finding those emerging voices, so it's really important to hear Erin talk today on behalf of her family. One of the key quotes for me was labels are supportive of finding community and having your needs met, so that's a bit more food for thought around the whole label no label conversation that's happening globally at the moment. People with DLD and their families seem very much in favour of a label and its benefits.

46:33

And lastly, a little bit of a plug for our online training. You might not realise that the DLD project is a social enterprise where, completely funded through the sales of our online training, we get no other government or private funding support, so we would love your help. If you would like to grow your skills in the DLD space, head to thedldproject.com. We've got on demand and live workshops coming up for the next few months and we'd love to have you join us. Thank you so much for helping us create a world where people with DLD are recognised, understood and empowered to live their best life.