


Intervention Idea: Teach Icon Families

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There is a natural logic that is built into a Minspeak® system. That logic is built around the multiple meanings of each icon. Children learn this concept through the idea of Icon Families. By teaching Icon Families, the person is learning the logic of the Minspeak® system.

- Make up stories about each icon on the person's main Minspeak® display. This can be a fun activity that helps personalize the Minspeak® codes for the person. Start by reviewing and writing down the different words coded by each Minspeak® icon. Then, weave these words into a personalized story.

For example, Jonathan has the icon of an  on his display. This icon codes the words *eat, feed, delicious, hungry, awful, food, grow, bite, yum, yuk, without* and *too*. Jonathan's family and speech therapist made up a story to make these words come alive for him. With each retelling of his story, the family or therapist adjusts the story line and has fun with it. But they always emphasize the *family of words* that this icon codes.


Here's Jonathan's story....

Once upon a time, there was a handsome, intelligent boy named Jonathan. Jonathan loved **to eat** and was always **hungry**. He liked **to eat** in the morning, **eat** at night, and **eat** all day long. He really loved **eating** apples – apple pie, applesauce, apple jelly, apple tarts, and apple chips. He would see an apple, tell his mom **feed** me and try and take a big **bite** out of the apple. He even almost **ate** an apple with a worm in it. He yelled I want apples **without** worms please. He **ate** so many, they had to have an apple tree **growing** in their backyard. One day, Jonathan's mother said to him, "Jonathan, you have to eat something else. You can't live **without** other things to eat." She gave him a **bite** of a different **fruit** and he said, "**yum!** I will **eat** this **too**. It is **delicious**." Then she gave him a **bite** of a **vegetable** and he said, "yuk, **vegetables**. How **awful**." All day long they **ate** different **food** and Jonathan would tell his mom if they were **delicious** or **awful**. Finally, at the end of the day, Jonathan could not **eat** anymore. He had tried many kinds of **food** and said I will **eat** them **too**. No more just **eating** apples for me. And today, Jonathan will eat all kinds of foods – **fruit, vegetables, meat, bread** – almost anything his mom gives him. The End.


- Make a simple audiotape or digital recording of your icon family stories. Some families, teachers, and therapists have even made audio files of

their stories on their computers and downloaded them on an iPod or MP3 player. Families talk about the stories or listen to them as they are driving, playing around the house, taking a bath, etc. By repeating the stories over and over, the person is learning and associating the rationale for why certain words are coded with certain icons – and having fun at the same time!

- Sing songs about the icon families. Make up silly songs using the key words that the icon codes. The sillier the song, the better! One example of a made-up silly song is as follows:

The  Jingle, sung to the tune of *Are You Sleeping?*

I am hungry, I am hungry. (rubbing tummy)
 Give me food! Food to eat! (pointing to mouth)
 Meat and grain and dairy;
 Pasta, fruit and veggies.
 Feed me food. Feed me food.

- Draw out Icon Family Trees. Start with the icon of the main icon on top or in the middle. Draw out a family tree of words. Color code the family tree to match the color code in the Minspeak® program. The example below is the  Icon Family Tree from the Unity®84 program.

