Have you been worried that your child may have a language delay? You are not alone. Language delays are one of the most common developmental delays, but it isn't just about if your child is talking or not. Language delays can also be related to a child's understanding of words and how they use language to communicate. That is why today I'm going to go over how to identify a language delay, the difference between language delays and autism and how you can help your child gain necessary language skills with or without an autism diagnosis. Hi, I'm Dr. Mary Barbera, autism mom, Board Certified Behavior Analyst and bestselling author. Each week I provide some ideas about turning autism or signs of autism around, so if you haven't subscribed to my YouTube channel, you can do that now. When my son Lucas was a young toddler, I remember going to the pediatrician's office and filling out developmental screeners that went over language milestones.

When the doctor asked me how many words Lucas had, I always counted many words that he said, but in reality he was not using language typically. He would fill in EIEIO sounds for Old McDonald when I sang it, sometimes he would fill them in, and he might try to say a whole sentence he had heard before. We used to visit uh, the museum and there was a sign, please do not feed the ducks. And Lucas might say that hours later or even days later. I didn't realize I was counting those as the actual words Lucas was saying, but that was actually delayed echolalia which means he's heard something before and now he's repeating it or scripting it in his head. So these aren't real words, sounds, fill in the blanks to songs and definitely delayed echolalia aren’t really using words functionally. And this is where Lucas also identified some letters.

And so he would go up to the sign at Friendly’s, the welcome sign, and he would say w and he would say egg for e because that was on a puzzle and you can see how confusing it was for me to identify that Lucas really did have a significant language delay. Lucas could also, in terms of understanding language, he didn't really understand language, but I didn't know any better and I wrote down that yes, he could touch his, his head and his toes and his belly. Um, I didn't realize that he could only touch his body parts if I sang the same song and touched at the same order and actually was doing the body part song and touching my body parts too. He was part imitating, part of it was just a routine that he would do, but he couldn't just touch your belly. He couldn't understand what I meant.

So Lucas had a very significant receptive ability to understand as well as an expressive talking, uh language delay. But because I didn't know the differences way back two decades ago, I didn't know what a language delay actually was. And that didn't help me on my path in denial that it was truly significant and that it actually was autism. So the first way to tell if it's a language delay with or without autism is to do an assessment. And like I said, I, do an assessment. If you're doing an assessment to see whether your child can touch his body parts, actually sit on your hands and say, touch belly, touch nose, touch head. Don't do it as part of a singsongy game like I did and don't show him as you're asking. As part of your assessment, you should be aware of what typically developing milestones look like for the age of your child.

So go to the CDC website to find out some of the milestones your child should be reaching both in terms of language as well as other areas. They could be physically delayed, they could be socially delayed and they could be delayed with self care tasks such as eating from utensils or still drinking from bottles or using pacifiers way too late. The other thing you could do as part of the assessment is you could download a free chat M-CHAT and watch my video blog I did on the M-CHAT. Remember there's two types of language, two main types of languages, probably others, but there's the expressive and there's the receptive. And we also want to look at whether the language is used in a functional way. Are children asking for things or are they just labeling numbers and letters or colors? Are they just having delayed echolalia or are they actually using language to ask for things, um to, um to begin talking to you in some functional way.

It is super important that you act early and that if you or your spouse or your mom or anyone is in denial or giving you free, false reassurance you can check out my blog on denial and that might be helpful. In summary, if you notice any language delay in your child, it's recommended that you start assessing and intervening today. The more time you spend in denial like I did, the harder it will be for your child to catch up. So to help you get started on the right path, go take a two minute quiz at marybarbera.com/quiz. Take my quiz, watch a free workshop that will come right along with the quiz results and get started on the right path today. If you'd liked this video, I would love it if you’d leave me a comment, give me a thumbs up or share the video with others who might benefit and for more information, don't forget to join me every week right here. I'll see you here next time.