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Meet Michelle Eral, MS, CCC-SLP Creator of TheraSimplicity
By Erica Anderson

Relevant, customizable, advanced, invaluable. TheraSimplicity is a unique, online collection of high-quality Speech and Language intervention materials: images, activities, and reference materials. TheraSimplicity combines a wide variety of content and functionality in one easy-to-use application. It is completely customizable based on your needs. TheraSimplicity gives you access to a trunk load of materials and all you need is an Internet connection!

In part one of this *two-part interview with Michelle Eral, creator of TheraSimplicity, we learn about who Michelle Eral is and how her own intervention needs as an SLP led her to create TheraSimplicity.*

Michelle Eral lives in the small town of New Richmond, WI, with her husband, Joe, and her three children, ages 16, 12, and 3. Michelle has always been focused on education—she graduated from high school at age 15! Michelle received her B.S. in Speech Pathology from St. Cloud State University, in Minnesota, and her M.S. from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls. After college, Michelle worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist specializing in the rehabilitation of patients with brain injuries. She still works in this field today. One of the things she loves about working in this fascinating field is the tenacity of her patients. "I've always found in my patients such a desire to function," Michelle says with conviction.



TheraSimplicity

In the eight years since *TheraSimplicity* first came into being, Michelle has continued her work as an SLP in private practice. As *TheraSimplicity* took off, Michelle chose to continue working in the field on a contract basis, which allows her the flexibility to devote most of her time to *TheraSimplicity* and achieve an important balance in her life: "I value the opportunity to keep contact with patients, while continuing to improve *TheraSimplicity*," she says.

About a year ago, Michelle's commitment to *TheraSimplicity* led her to partner with AGS Publishing. Michelle's fellow SLP, Tina Eichstadt, is a Product Manager at AGS Publishing who has always shared Michelle's vision for the value *TheraSimplicity* provides to the SLP community. After many conversations with Michelle and her husband Joe, Vice President of Sales for *TheraSimplicity*, the partnership finally achieved success. Joe describes the partnership as an obvious phase in *TheraSimplicity's* life. "AGS Publishing is a highly respected company within the speech-language-hearing community," Joe said. "With a long history of well-known tests, they're recognized as a leader in the assessment of speech and language disorders. Our focus on innovative, customized therapy tools makes this a very natural partnership. Together, we can offer the speech-language-hearing professions reliable solutions for prevention, diagnosis, intervention, or monitoring."

Michelle is a self-admitted perfectionist and quite meticulous when it comes to treating her patients. From the beginning, she always liked her materials to look professional and customized. She would often go "above and beyond" to make sure they did. For example, if she were using pictures that had been photocopied over and over again, she would often scan those pictures into her computer, clean them up, and reprint them. Another example comes from her work with community reintegration for people with brain

injuries. One part of her treatment practice was to compile memory books for her patients—a kind of planner that allows memory—impaired individuals to customize things like schedules, calendars, address books, and personal information to compensate for their memory loss. Michelle got these materials from many different software programs, which was quite time consuming. This book also became a popular resource with her colleagues, however each time someone wanted to use it, Michelle had to gather and print materials from up to seven pieces of software! Her desire for an easier way led Michelle to consider the feasibility of creating a software program that combined multiple materials and resources in one convenient place. After conducting market feasibility studies, and closely studying the competition, *TheraSimplicity* was born.

Stay tuned for part two of this interview.

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