Seeing the Possibilities

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Corrugated cardboard and duct tape make a low-tech adaptive device.

With corrugated cardboard and duct tape, Amy Henningson can change the world. Henningson, an occupational therapist with the Up to 3 Early Intervention program at Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities, recently created a device for a boy who isn’t able to use his pointer finger. Essentially, it’s a cardboard box surrounding a switch-operated computer mouse. By inserting a finger into the hole in the cardboard, the boy can activate the switch that will make something happen—music will play or a game will start—on the computer screen. The more success he has at pointing his finger at the target, the more often he will be rewarded with some activity by the computer. Often, the goal of assistive technology—to figure out what the need is and then make it possible—is not always the same thing as what is developmentally appropriate, Henningson said. And it doesn’t always have to be an expensive, high-tech solution. For ideas on ways parents can make adaptive technology for their own children, Henningson suggested Arizona State University’s Tots-n-Tech website. Photos and instructions are downloadable.

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