



Using Visual Supports to Assist Supported Decision Making

TalkLink Trust: Who are we?

- Charitable Trust, established 1991 in Auckland.
- Provide services throughout New Zealand.
Regional offices: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch
- Staffed by therapists (SLTs and OTs), teachers, technical support and administrative teams
- National contracts with the Ministry of Health and ACC
- Not a therapy service; work with existing teams



What do we do?

Linking you to the right Assistive Technology

Our purpose:

To enable all people with communication impairments to interact and participate to their full potential.

TalkLink provide:

- Assistive Technology (AAC) Assessments
- Equipment Trial
- Recommendations and Reports
- Training and on-going support



Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Refers to all communication that supplements or augments speech
- Augmentative system – adds to or assists existing speech or communication
- Alternative system – another means of communicating
- Is Multimodal

<https://www.isaac-online.org/english/what-is-aac/>

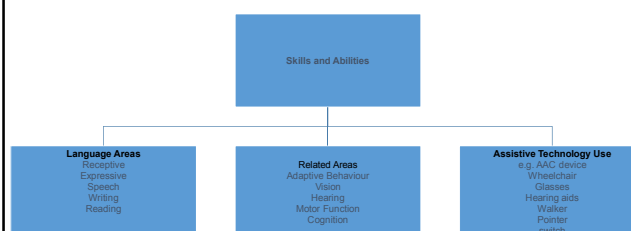


Who Uses AAC?

- Anyone who is unable to be understood. Common aetiologies include:

- Life long disabilities such as
 - Cerebral Palsy
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Learning / Intellectual Disability
- Acquired disabilities / Progressive Neurological Conditions such as
 - Stroke
 - Traumatic Brain Injuries
 - Motor Neurone Disease
 - Parkinson's Disease
 - Multiple Sclerosis
 - Dementia

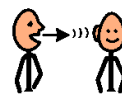
Skills and Abilities of the individual



Language

- is one means of communication
- is a rule governed system that helps us communicate
- uses symbols such as speech, manual signs, picture symbols and words

Involves:



- Speech – the combination of particular sounds to produce words
- Receptive language – the ability to understand language
- Expressive language – the ability to prepare oral, written or signed messages that are meaningful and appropriate to the listeners. It includes the capacity to organise thoughts in accordance with the capabilities of other speakers/listeners.

Functions of Language

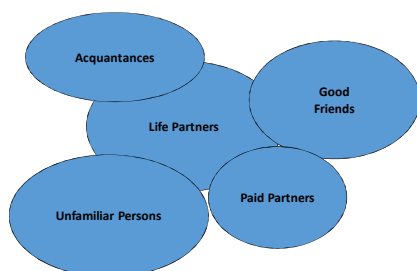
- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Requesting | • Expressing feelings & interests |
| • Commenting | • Initiating |
| • Asking questions | • Greeting |
| • Protesting | • Answering |
| • Getting attention | |

We make choices/ decisions all the time

- *what* to do
- *when* to do it
- *who* to do it with
- morning/evening routine
- clothes to wear
- menus/food
- chore schedule
- recreation / leisure / community options



Circles of Communication Partners



High Tech: Speech Generating Devices

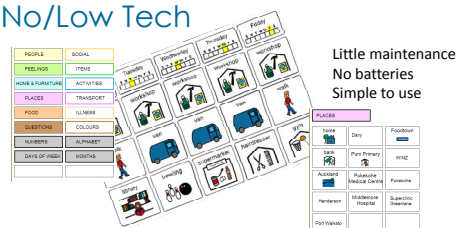


Low Tech: Visual Supports/Strategies....

- Things we see that enhance communication
 - Can be aided or non-aided
 - body language
 - natural environmental cues eg signs, logos labels
 - traditional tools for organising and giving information eg calendars, schedules, shopping lists, maps



No/Low Tech



Little maintenance
No batteries
Simple to use

- Visual Schedule Boards, Social Stories, Souvenir Books
- Simple choice making, requesting - PECs
- News: ability to share info, Share Stories
- Decisions making – Talking Mats



Why use visual strategies?

- Help people understand auditory input.
- They are non-transient -can provide a record
- Help focus attention
- Help express ideas



Core Communication Boards



Considerations when implementing an AAC strategy

- There are multiple considerations for the introduction of any communication strategy (even what may be thought of as a simple strategy)
- Step 1 = AAC strategy must be seen as useful, functional & achievable by both the individual & their support person/team
- It needs to be used all the time
- It's not a quick fix – it takes time and effort to be successful.

Develop “Listening” skills

- WAIT
 - for person to initiate topic
 - for responses
- Value communication attempts
- Respond consistently and appropriately
- DON'T fake your understanding
 - Say “sorry I missed that – can you tell me again or another way?”
- Think multimodal



Special Considerations for Progressive Conditions

- Ongoing assessment
- Consider the disease progression
- For example ↓ cognitive-communicative skills
 - have strategies in place early to try and reduce frustration now & later on
 - use strategies that are 'naturalistic' & don't involve learning new tasks
 - People need to have consistent approaches

Fletcher (1997)

Supplement your own speech



- Model the strategies that you're asking the person to use
- Reinforce understanding by using simple written language, drawing, rating scales, maps, gestures, cue cards, pointing to objects/ momentos/illustrated step by step cookbooks, memory books, reminder cards, memo boards with written activity suggestions are useful for reminding people of the activities they would enjoy doing.
- Write down possible answers so the person can point to them, NB add in 'it's none of the above'
- Ask questions, if necessary reduce to closed 'yes/no' questions
- Keep it SIMPLE.

How to support beginning communicators

- Visual Strategies help make sense of the world for people who may not gain much information from what you say to them
 - Personal Communication Dictionary / Gesture Dictionaries / Book About Me
 - Touch cues
 - Sign
 - Objects of reference
 - Photos / Symbols
 - Wait time
 - Routine/environment
 - Repetition
 - Simple Language

www.usevisualstrategies.com

Personal Communication Dictionary

- Very useful when the person cannot intentionally communicate
- Close observation may reveal communication, gestures to communicate
 - greeting, pushes away, banging
 - objects & people to reach a goal
- Everyone contributes their knowledge
- Must be updated
- May clarify similar/unique behaviours

Personal Communication Dictionary...example

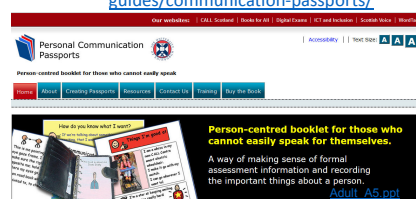
| When I do this ... | It means ... | You should ... |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Bang my head | I have a headache | Give me a paracetamol |
| Smile and flick my hands | I want a hug | Hug me! |
| Scream | The room is too noisy | Turn off the noise, or take me outside. |
| Clap my hands | I want to dance | Turn some music on |
| Cry | I am sad or in pain | Ask me to find out which. Comfort me or help me. |
| Make a "T" with my hands | I need to go to the toilet | Take me! Quick! Sometimes I don't give you much warning. |



Communication Passports

www.communicationpassports.org.uk

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/quick-guides/communication-passports/>



PECS



PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a "communicative partner", who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.



<http://www.pecs.com/>
The Picture Exchange Communication System
Developed by Andrew S. Bondy, Ph.D. & Lori Frost, M.S., CCC/SLP

Routines



- People have preferred routines
- Happen daily in a set order
- Provide consistency
- Routines help develop anticipation
- Routines help the person understand what is going to happen next

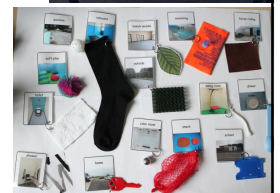
Schedules can:

- gives people info about their lives
- helps people see a logic and order to their world
- serve as a communication aid to discuss and share daily events
- improve vocabulary and language skills
- assist in developing time concepts
- teach sequence, before and after
- reduce or eliminate behaviour problems related to transitions and changing activities

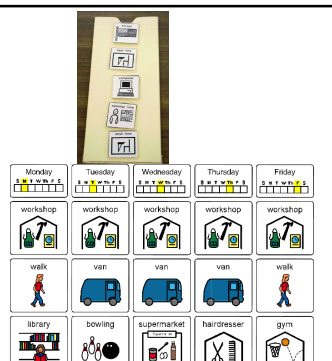


Object of Reference timetable/Calendar Boxes

- Backs up verbal with visual information
- Provides consistent visual cues about daily routine
- Teaches that symbols can represent daily activities
- Encourages participation in planning & choice-making



Symbol based Schedule boards



Who's here today?

John B



Sally

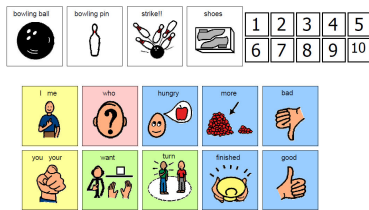


Maria



Activity specific core boards

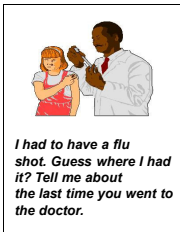
Bowling



Cafe



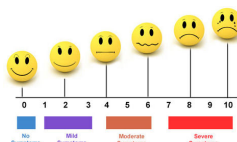
Topic Setting



- Must be self explanatory to "listener"
- Need a statement and a question for the "listener"
- Needs text which gives information & encourages interaction
- Portable & durable

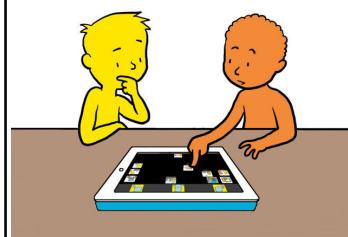


Rating Scales



| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 5 | I can't stand this and ready to explode. I need to hit someone, something, or throw something. I need an adult to help me go to a safe place and I can calm down. | 😡 |
| 4 | I am getting too angry. My brain isn't working clearly. I might say or do something I will be sorry for later. I need to go home and practice to calm down. | 😠 |
| 3 | I am getting really irritated. I need to walk away from this situation. I will tell my teacher that I need a break. | 😡 |
| 2 | I am doing OK. I'm not pleased, but I'm not upset. I'm sorry when I am not happy working. I can concentrate again to finish. | 😐 |
| 1 | I am doing great! I feel good about myself and about what I am going to do next. | 😊 |

Talking Mats



Talking Mats is used to:

- Help people with a learning disability to both understand what is involved in a decision and to then give their opinion.
- People who have had a stroke and may have problems both understanding others and expressing themselves. The visual presentation of Talking Mats helps comprehension as well as providing an effective way for people to express their views.
- The structured and consistent format of Talking Mats makes it easier both for people with dementia to keep to topic and for the listener to follow the track of the conversation

<http://www.talkingmats.com>

Talking Mats help people express their preferences or feelings

- Provides a 'thinking tool' to enable people to explore issues and help them to structure and verbalise their thoughts.
- Support people to express negative as well as positive views and reduce the tendency for people to agree with everything.
- The act of physically moving the picture symbols helps people organise their thoughts in a logical way.
- Improves quality of information by:
 - Giving control to the person being interviewed
 - Providing a structured framework for open questions
 - Avoiding direct confrontation
 - Giving people time
 - Helping people to say "no"

<http://www.talkingmats.com>

Talking Mats Supports comprehension by:

- Focusing on the essential words and omitting non-essential language
- Giving information in multiple channels – visual, auditory and tactile
- Helping people process concepts by breaking information down into small, manageable chunks
- Reducing memory demands
- Reducing distractibility
- Allowing the client time to process information and respond in their own time

<http://www.talkingmats.com>

Barriers to participation

- Policy
- Practice
- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Skills



To finish from a person who uses AAC:

- No one communication mode, no AAC device, no low-tech board, no gestures, signs or speech, could possibly meet all my communication modes. I communicate in many ways. I select the best mode depending on the location, with whom I am communicating and the purpose and content of the communication.

Michael Williams



www.talklink.org.nz

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