

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE?

EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT

Autism is a spectrum disorder and it is important to remember no one person with autism will have the same symptoms as another. A person's ability to communicate can often be determined by the severity of their symptoms. These symptoms can range from mild (verbal, or commonly known as Asperger's syndrome) to severe (nonverbal autism). Here are some general tips for communicating with an individual with Autism, but remember, how you communicate will vary from person to person:

- Always use their name at the beginning so they know that you are talking to them.
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction.
- Use their special interests, or the activity you are currently doing, to engage them.
- Be aware of the environment (noisy/crowded) that you are in. Sensory input may be affecting how much they can process.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Establishing relationship, while using appropriate language is crucial for successful communication with individuals who have Autism. Below are some recommendations for establishing rapport with someone who has ASD.

- Refrain from shouting or talking loudly
- Use short, simple sentences.¹
- Use concrete as opposed to abstract language. For example: *"Show me"*; *"Tell me"*; *"Do this"* with gesture; *"Come with me"*; *"I'm going to..."*¹
- Say *"Put your coat on"* instead of *"get ready."*¹
- Say *"Are you upset? Are you sad? Are you happy?"* instead of *"What are you feeling?"*¹

Those with ASD have difficulty in understanding abstract language like idioms, metaphors, or colloquialisms. A more specific and concrete language type is needed to prevent a misunderstanding and miscommunication of information. In addition, talking loudly can negatively affect their sensory input.

THE USE OF VISUAL AIDS:

Often, when someone struggles to communicate their thoughts or feelings the first inclination is to help. Instead of speaking for the individual, try listening or encouraging the individual to use visual aids or demonstrating what they are trying to communicate. Below are some resources that encourage the use of visual sources to assist in successful communication:

[Visual Supports for School, Home and Community](#)

[Visual Supports](#)

[Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorders](#)

FURTHER RESOURCES:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

CITATIONS:

(April 13, 2020). *Autism Spectrum Disorder: Communication Problems in Children*. National Institute on Deafness And Other Communication Disorders. Retrieved April 27, 2020 from <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/autism-spectrum-disorder-communication-problems-children>

¹(May 2017). *Communicating*. National Autistic Society. Retrieved April 27, 2020 from <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

Loring, W. & Hamilton, M. (March 2011). *Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorders*. [PDF File]. Retrieved from <https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Visual%20Supports%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>

Sullivan, W & Developmental Disabilities Primary Care Initiative. (2020). *Communicating Effectively*. Health Care for Adults With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Retrieved April 27, 2020 from <https://iddtoolkit.vkcsites.org/general-issues/communicating-effectively/>

(May 2017). *Visual Supports*. National Autistic Society. Retrieved April 27, 2020 from <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>

