



BEING A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION PARTNER

Communicating with young children who have an autism spectrum disorder

- Use the child's name first. Then pause before saying the rest of what you want to say. This will allow the child time to focus his attention on what you are saying.
- Use clear, precise language. Say exactly what you mean. Children with autism spectrum disorders do not infer meaning.
- Use positive language that tells the child what he can do.
- Allow the child time to process (think) and respond. Allow the child plenty of time to process your instruction. If he doesn't respond (you may need to wait a minute or more), repeat but do not rephrase the instruction.
- Be dramatic so that the child's attention is more likely to be drawn to you. He/she is also more likely to be able to interpret your body language if you exaggerate.
- Use one word more than the child is using.
- Sing and/or chant – as well as tapping different neural pathways to speech singing and chanting calms the child as well as helping him self-regulate his behaviour.
- Lower your voice or use a monotone – children with autism may have auditory sensitivities particularly high frequency sounds.
- Do not insist that the child looks at you. Adults with autism spectrum disorders report that it actually hurts to have to make eye contact; that they can't look and listen at the same time.
- Use visual communication strategies as well as speech. The visual symbol is a constant whereas speech is transitory.
- Use visual sequences for daily routine; child's work schedule; any change that is going to happen.
- Use specific praise, e.g. "Good putting" rather than "Good work" or "Good boy." The latter comments do not tell the child what it is that he is doing that you like.
- Avoid sarcasm. Children with autism spectrum disorders are literal – they may start hoping if you tell them to hop along to the bath!
- Choose the time of day when your child is most happy and relaxed to focus on language activities.

Recommended Resources (available online at www.suelarkey.com):

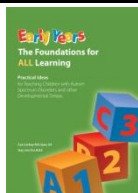
Practical Communication Programmes

By Jo Adkins and
Sue Larkey



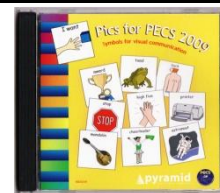
The Early Years: Foundations for All Learning

By Sue Larkey and
Gay von Ess



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