

DOWNLOAD PDF ENABLING COMMUNICATION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Chapter 1 : Enabling Communication in Children with Autism - Carol Potter, Christopher Whittaker - Google

Enabling communication in children with autism is based on a two-year research project undertaken in five special schools, with eighteen children with severe autism and minimal or no speech, ranging in age from two to six.

Here are ideas you can try to support communication development that you can use alongside the quick tips above. They will be more likely to pay attention to the activity, more likely to focus on the same thing as you, and will learn how to make choices for themselves. The early stages If the person has only recently started to talk, use single words to communicate with them. For example, label their favourite toy and repeat that word when they reach for it. Use expansions - adding one more piece of information to what they say. That way you are only giving them one more piece of information to process. For example, fetching their shoes and tying their shoelaces, bringing a biscuit. However, this may reduce opportunities for the person to communicate. When at the own agenda stage, it is particularly difficult to decide how much to do for the person. Ask if they need help, wait and then ask a second time before giving the help. Be face-to-face Be face-to-face with the person so that you can more easily observe what they are interested in. Being level with them will allow them to see the variety of facial expressions that are used in communication. But be aware that having to process this visual information at the same time may make it more difficult to process any verbal information. The person may eventually become used to you playing or interacting with them and will begin to anticipate your presence, fetching you if you are not there. If they bang the spoon on the table, and you do the same, it is likely that they will pay attention to you. You could also imitate sensory behaviours such as hand-flapping and spinning. Once the person has noticed that you are imitating their actions, they may begin to imitate back. This creates the opportunity for you to add something new to the exchange for the person to copy. Try gestures and visual supports When offering a drink, gesture the action of drinking by pretending to hold a glass in one hand and bringing it your mouth. Wave your hand for "hello" and "goodbye". When talking about people, eg "grandma is staying", show a photo of who is being spoken about. Use songs and role play Sing songs with them, pausing to see if they can sing the next part. You may need to prompt them with a sound cue. Give feedback Reward attempts to understand and communicate. By doing this you can increase the likelihood that they will try and do it again. By using praise and commenting on what has been achieved, the person can make a connection between their own actions and your specific words. Give a reason to communicate You can engineer situations to create an opportunity for communication and interaction. Alternatively, place the favourite object in a container which is difficult to open, eg an old ice-cream tub or an old jam jar. This will encourage the person to ask for help and result in an interaction. Offer a toy or game that is difficult to operate Some toys and games will be difficult for some children and adults to operate alone. If they become frustrated, step in and help them. Blow up a balloon and then let it go so that it flies up in the air. Then blow up a balloon part-way and wait for a response before blowing it up to its full capacity. This could enhance interaction. A similar thing can be achieved with bubbles. Blow a few bubbles towards the person. Once their attention has been captured, close the container and wait for a response from them before you blow any more. Give them things gradually Staggering the giving of desired objects creates opportunities to express wants and needs. For example, if the person wants a biscuit, you could break it into small pieces, initially give them one piece and then gradually give them more once they have communicated a request for it. Let the person decide when to end an activity Once engaged in an activity, carry on until the person indicates that they have had enough. Look out for facial grimaces or the person pushing away the activity. For example, if a child is lining up their cars in a row, you can join in the activity by handing them the cars one by one. This way, you play a part in the game and the child includes you in what they are doing. If they are only interested in throwing the toys on the floor, you could use a basket to collect them before giving them back, establishing a pattern of interaction and communication with the child. They may begin to learn that interaction with another person can be fun. Using Augmentative and Alternative Communication AAC supports AAC is any form of language other than

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speech that can help a person in social-communicative interactions. The use of an AAC device can give them another way of communicating. There is a large range of AAC devices. It is essential that a team of appropriate professionals evaluates different AAC options with the person before making a decision about what to use. Things to be considered include cognitive and motor abilities, learning style, communication needs and literacy ability. Sign language , eg British Sign Language BSL , Makaton, Sign Supported English, or as part of a total communication approach where a combination of methods is used, eg a person might receive information via speech and signs but express themselves using signs and symbols. Communication cue cards, used primarily with people who are verbal, can be a reminder of what to say and provide an alternative means to communication in stressful situations. Conversation books, which can use text, pictures or photographs to support conversation. Voice output communication aids , eg BIGmack , generate digitised speech when the person presses a symbol or button. The person will need an understanding of cause and effect to use these devices. For others, there is some evidence of harm or ineffectiveness. For example, we do not believe that Facilitated Communication is an appropriate intervention for people on the autism spectrum, as there is evidence that it is ineffective and can lead to significant harm. Find out more about choosing an approach. Communication in schools There are many autistic pupils within mainstream schools and specialist units. Further information and resources.

Chapter 2 : Communication development - Autism Children - Autism and Neurodiversity

Addressing the complex issue of what constitutes a communication enabling environment for children with autism who use little or no speech, Potter and Whittaker show that the communication of these children can be significantly affected by a range of social and environmental influences.

People with autism may know exactly what they want to say, but may be unable to say it. They may know every answer on a quiz, but have only written down a few by the time the teacher collects the papers. They may know how to play a game, but sit motionless, or simply rock back and forth, when their turn comes. Some people might blame laziness or distraction, but another challenge is often at play for these individuals: As much as someone with autism might want to, it may seem impossible to turn a thought in his head into speech from his lips, or to convince her hand to pick up a pencil—in other words, to break free from the gap between intention and action. A research study published in by Luigi Cattaneo and colleagues investigated praxis in typically developing children and those with autism. The researchers measured the activity of mouth muscles controlled by motor neurons as children reached for a food item, picked it up, and then brought it to their mouths. The motor neurons in the typically developing children fired while the child was still in the reaching phase and increased until the child placed the food in his mouth. David and Colleen work on a craft project at the Hussman Institute. If she intends to reach out for a food item and place it in a bowl, however, a completely different set of neurons activate—despite the two action chains beginning identically. Under some conditions, it may become extremely difficult or impossible for someone with autism to intentionally control each individual step. Self-reports from individuals with autism mirror this kind of difficulty with chained movements, and the need to execute movements as single components instead: After that, focusing on the object which matched the word. I must push the button with my finger. But my hesitation grows while I try to put the sequences to go through the action. I could see the words in my brain, but then I realized that making my mouth move [was needed to] get those letters to come alive; they died as soon as they were born. What made me feel angry was to know that I knew exactly what I was to say and my brain was retreating in defeat. They confirmed that children with autism break motor activities into discrete steps. The researchers asked children to reach out for a small object and place it in either a large bowl or a much smaller bowl. Previous work showed that when neurotypical individuals carry out a sequence of motor acts, the final goal of the sequence influences the characteristics of the first acts such as speed or force. These results indicate that children with autism process the steps of even relatively simple motor movements independently. At the Hussman Institute for Autism, an important focus of research is to understand how differences in praxis affect communication and behavior, as well as how they may relate to differences in long-range brain connectivity. When people have difficulty with praxis, we may still be able to play to their other strengths by providing extra visual or physical information as they learn new skills. A tap on the shoulder or elbow is often enough to help someone translate an intent to move into physical motion. Also, watching models and practicing action chains that come up frequently in life, such as tying shoes or locking a door, can make them easier for individuals with autism. In the meantime, presuming competence and playing to strengths is always a good start. The original research articles can be found here: Impairment of actions chains in autism and its possible role in intention understanding. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Planning actions in autism.

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The researchers found that: All of the children in the study could and did communicate spontaneously with adults and, in some cases, with other children. Introducing key changes to the communication environment could sometimes immediately and significantly promote greater spontaneous communication. Successful strategies adopted by teachers and other professionals included: Teachers in this study believed that the current National Curriculum does not recognise the central importance of teaching children with autism with minimal or no speech to communicate. Yet spontaneous communication, and a conventional communication system, plays a key role in supporting children with autism to enjoy their rights as set out in the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child. It usually becomes apparent in the first three years of life. The children with severe autism involved in this study used little or no speech, and had extreme difficulties in understanding speech. Spontaneous communication and why it matters The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established the principle that all children should enjoy "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds". To enable children to enjoy this right, they need to be supported to communicate spontaneously - that is, to initiate interactions with others in order to convey their wishes and feelings, needs and wants. Children have a right to learn how to communicate spontaneously, in conventional ways, and to exercise that ability. Unfortunately, common misconceptions about the communication and interaction abilities of children with autism and little or no speech can mean that these children are not receiving the professional support they need to learn how to initiate communication. Unhelpful attitudes and beliefs Attitudes and expectations about what children with autism can or cannot do can be inappropriate and negative. I expected them not to be able to communicate with me This view was fully supported by evidence from the research, which also highlighted the potential often untapped to enable children with autism to communicate spontaneously using conventional means. Children with severe autism and minimal speech can communicate The children in this study could and did communicate spontaneously with others. They used a number of effective ways of doing so, most of which were non-verbal. Only a few children had been taught to use more conventional ways of communicating, such as pointing and multi-pointing, although these systems proved highly effective, enabling children to convey more complex messages to adults. It is important to introduce children with autism and minimal or no speech to more conventional ways of communicating as quickly as possible to ensure that they reach their maximum effectiveness as communicators, and to give them access to a wider range of academic tasks. Some children communicated much more often than others and for more social purposes. Those children who communicated most were not less autistic, nor did they differ in age from the other children, while their degree of learning difficulty and everyday living skills were similar. The significant factor that differentiated them was the quality of their communication environments, and how far these helped or hindered spontaneous communication. Creating a communication-enabling environment The level and quality of spontaneous communication by the children in this study could sometimes be immediately and significantly enhanced by changing aspects of the wider communication environment through encouraging professionals to use a range of communication-enabling strategies and approaches. One of the most successful ways of doing this was to reduce the amount of spoken language used by adults - to adopt a minimal speech approach. Example of a minimal speech approach Context A minimal speech approach Asking what a child wants to drink An adult holds up two bottles of juice in front of a child with autism and severe difficulties understanding speech and says, "Do you want orange or apple juice? If the child does not respond, the adult takes his finger and prompts him to point to one of the bottles, again without speaking. The importance of using a minimal speech approach Many children with autism, like those in this study, experience extreme difficulties in understanding speech and use little or no speech themselves. Several teachers commented on the

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ways that some children "just tune out from speech and voices" or "definitely cut out any language input". When adults used everyday speech with these children, they often withdrew from the social interaction by turning away, protesting or simply by "switching off". The essence of a minimal speech approach is straightforward. It means that adults should consistently use only one or two relevant concrete words when interacting with children who understand little speech. Figure 1 highlights the difference between minimal speech and everyday speech in a snack session. A minimal speech approach can be highly effective. When professionals used little or even no speech with children in this study, using non-verbal means of interaction instead, then children became more socially engaged and communicated more often. Maintaining a consistent minimal speech approach is often easier said than done: Appropriate training and supportive monitoring will be necessary to ensure the consistent implementation of this approach. In addition to the consistent use of a minimal speech approach, there are several other specific strategies and approaches that can be used to promote spontaneous communication. Proximal communication Proximal communication involves adults using a range of generally non-verbal strategies to encourage children to initiate communication. Examples of the major strategies are: The two case studies illustrate the beneficial effects of employing proximal communication as an enabling approach. Jo We observed Jo, a five-year-old child with severe autism and no speech, for a full school day. During that time, he communicated only 39 times - an average of seven communications per hour. These interactions lasted no more than a few seconds with any attempt to prolong them leading to him becoming distressed. By contrast, during a continuous 40 minute videotaped interaction session with an adult, who was using proximal communication strategies, Jo communicated times - all of these communications were requests for social interaction, and were accompanied by laughter and appropriate eye-contact. Tony Tony is also five years old and has severe autism and minimal speech. He communicated spontaneously an average of 9 times per hour across the school day. Only three communications during the day were requests for social interaction. Again, during a videotaped interaction, using proximal communication techniques, he communicated 71 times in a four-minute period. All of these communications were requests for social interaction. These case studies are not isolated examples. All the children who were observed in proximal communication settings showed significantly more intentional communication than in other situations. Creating opportunities for communication Children in the study communicated most often when they were provided with frequent high quality opportunities for communication throughout the day. High quality communication opportunities were: Giving children the initiative by reducing spoken prompts To communicate spontaneously, children must be given time to notice themselves that there is something to communicate about in their immediate environment. Children are often not given opportunities to do this because adults verbally prompt them to communicate, using questions, for example. When adults in this study began to use long pauses instead of spoken prompts in a range of situations, children did begin to respond to what was happening in their environment and began to take the communicative initiative. Enabling communication and the National Curriculum Teachers in this study felt strongly that the current subject-based National Curriculum constituted a largely inappropriate educational framework for meeting the needs of children with autism and minimal or no speech. In particular, teachers felt that the National Curriculum was: All teachers believed that communication was the key curricular area for the children in this study, and argued that there should be more freedom to concentrate on this aspect of the curriculum. For children with severe autism who use little or no speech, therefore, there is a strong argument that the National Curriculum should be refocused to establish communication as the core curricular area. Conclusion Children with severe autism and minimal speech form one of the most communicatively disempowered groups in our society. The issue of enabling them to communicate spontaneously is a crucial one - and one that deserves to be recognised as a key educational goal. About the study The research involved 18 children, 16 boys and 2 girls, who had an average age of 4. All had a medical diagnosis of autism, and minimal or no speech, and were based in autism specialist classes within 5 special schools in England. Five teachers and four speech and language therapists who worked with the children were interviewed. Downloads Downloads Findings Creating enabling

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communications environment for children with autism and minimal or no speech. Uniquely, we also run a housing association and care provider, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.

Chapter 4 : Communicating - National Autistic Society

This book aims to help school-based staff develop more communication-enabling environments for children with autism who use little or no speech, although we sincerely hope that parents will also find many sections helpful.

Chapter 5 : Enabling Communication in Children with Autism - Carol Potter, Chris Whittaker - Google Books

"Enabling Communication in Children with Autism" is a very practical book which helps teachers, parents and others working with Autistic children to provide an environment which will optimise the opportunities for communication to take place.

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Yet spontaneous communication, and a conventional communication system, plays a key role in supporting children with autism to enjoy their rights as set out in the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child ().

Chapter 7 : Praxis and Autism: Bridging the gap between intention and action - Hussman Institute for Autism

Get this from a library! Enabling communication in children with autism. [Carol Potter; Chris Whittaker] -- Annotation The authors of this resource show how, at an early stage, autistic children may be significantly affected by a range of social and environmental influences, including classroom.

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