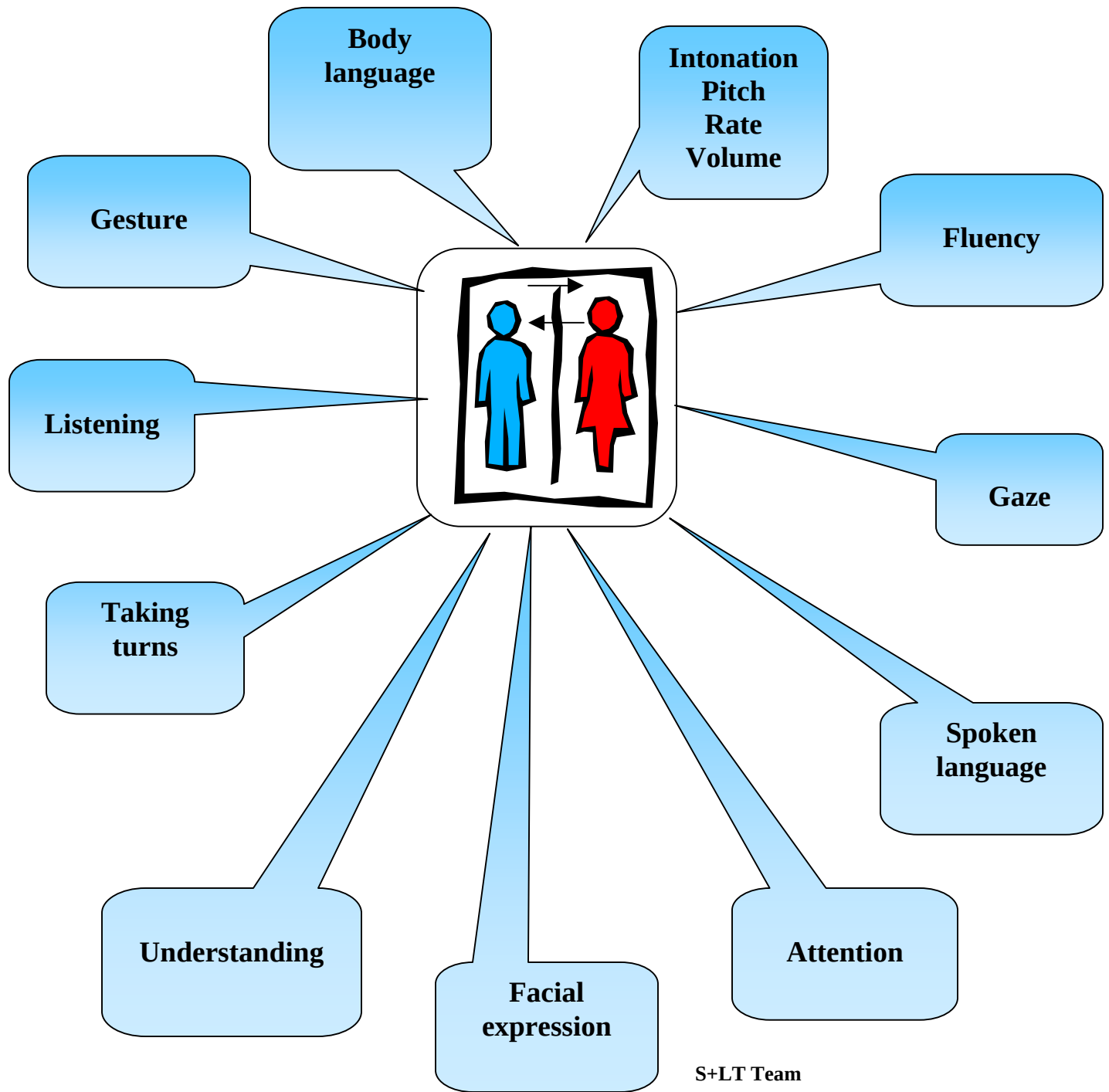


AUTISM

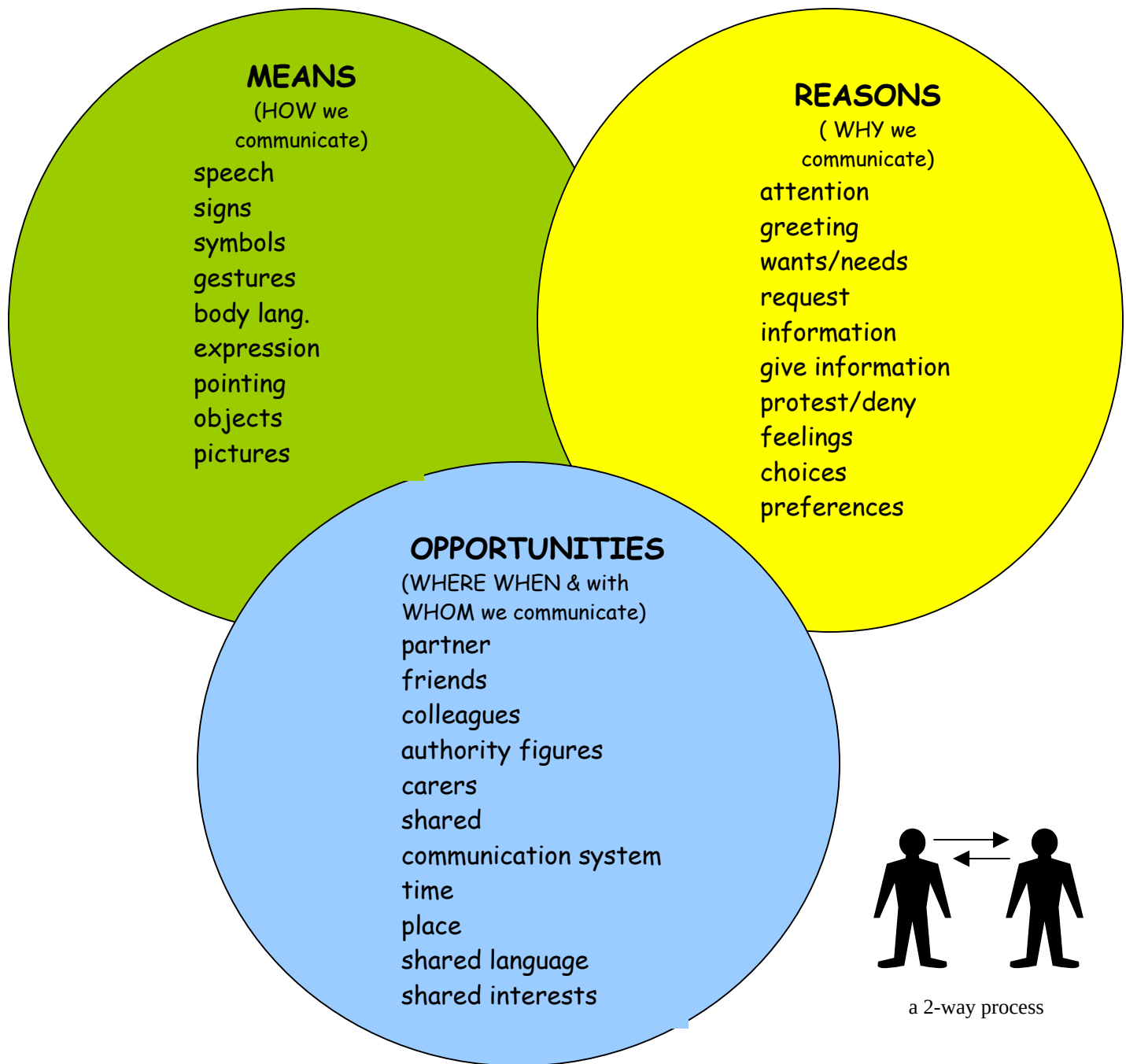
parent programme

Communication

What is Communication?

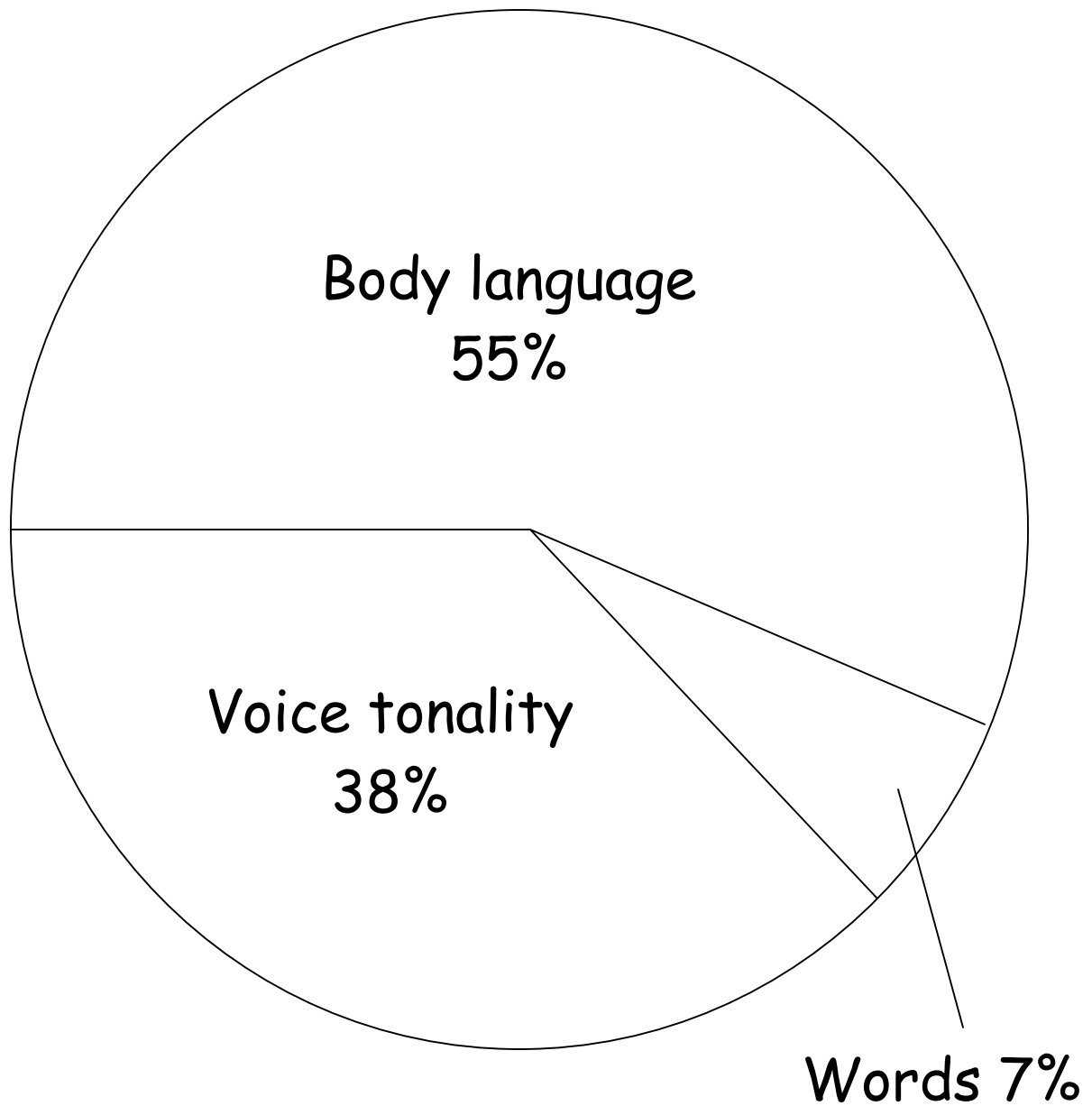
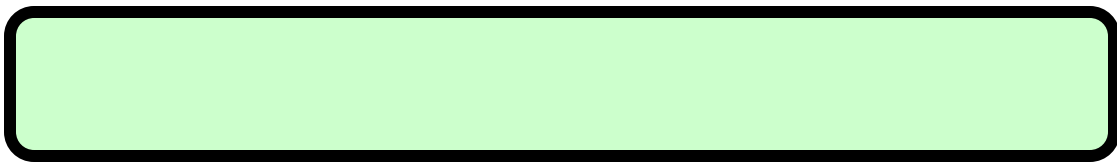


Communication



- Without a means of communication you cannot express yourself
- Without reasons to communicate there is no point or need to communicate
- Without opportunities there can be no communication

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From: British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology Vol 9,1970,pp222-31

Stages of Communication

Children with ASD will often have difficulties understanding and learning the reasons for communication. Their communication may fit into the following stages of communication:

■ Follows own interests

Often chooses to do things on own; may smile, laugh, vocalise to him/herself, but not often to communicate intentionally with others. May scream to show unhappy with a situation.



May show little preference for people rather than objects& play is often unusual. Early understanding of a few words is developing, but interactions are limited, especially with other children

■ Asks for needs & wants

May echo a few words or chunks of words during play; these are often said to self, not others and are not used to communicate information. Some of these early echoed words become part of routines e.g. greetings.

Will often reach for desired object but also communicates needs by tapping adult, leading them by hand, moving their hand to chosen object, making a sound or moving part of the body

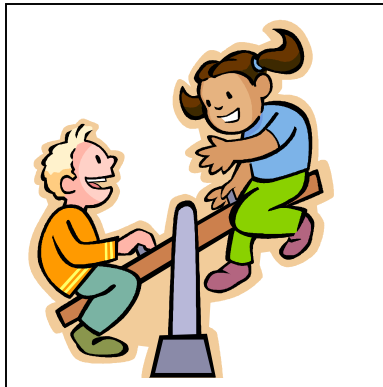
May play alone but is developing longer periods of interaction e.g. simple turn taking games like chase

Stages of communication continued

▪ **Developing turn taker**

Will communicate with people s/he knows (usually adults) in familiar settings using familiar words and phrases. Many of these words & phrases have been learned but are not being used in the correct context.

Simple social routines & games can be enjoyed e.g. turn taking games. Understands a wider selection of words and follows simple instructions



▪ **Expanding communicator**

Joins in conversations with an adult for a wide range of reasons; to gain attention, to greet to get needs/wants met, to request, to give information, to protest, deny and to make choices.

Beginning to communicate about events outside the 'here & now' e.g. past/future events, feelings, let's pretend etc. May interpret information literally and may not be aware of the different needs of the person with whom they are communicating.

Stages of Communication continued 2

▪ Partner

Communicates for a wide range of reasons. Can now use words to express feelings, negotiate, anticipate and predict. Awareness of the needs & skills of the person with whom they are communicating is expanding and they are able to adapt their language to suit different situations e.g. speak differently to a friend than a stranger

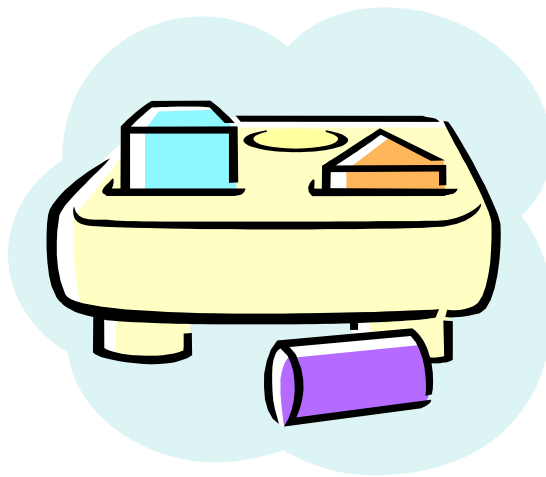


Based on 'Hanen More than Words'

Strengths of Young Children with ASD

Children with ASD may show some of the following strengths:

- Early letter and number recognition
- Good shape & colour recognition
- Good at jig-saws & shape sorting



- Good technical and mechanical skills e.g. working the video

Some children with ASD may be good at the following:

- speaking clearly & fluently
- using long complicated sentences
- imitating or copying
- learning new vocabulary (especially related to their special interests)
- rote learning e.g. sequences of numbers
- remembering things that interest them e.g. parts of videos, books, jingles, train timetables
- learning to read (though not necessarily with understanding)
- learning rules & routines e.g. following school timetables. (School structure often suits them).
- keeping school rules
- using computers & computer games



- artistic skills especially for technical drawing & memorising patterns & designs.

How Does the Communication of Children with Autism Differ?

- **Problems with Attention**

Difficulty with shared attention

- **Problems understanding language**

1. Problems processing language:

Too many words,

Speech too fast

Too many ideas at once

2. Memory problems:

Good rote memory but problems remembering meaning

3. Failure to generalise meaning:

May understand word in one setting but not in another



How Does the Communication of Children with Autism Differ? continued

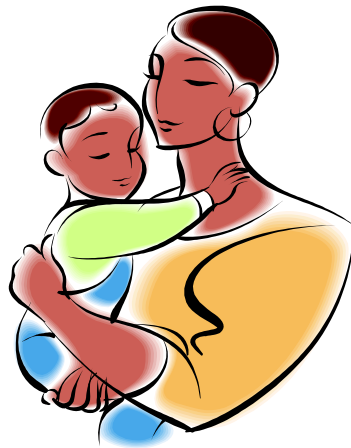
▪ Problems with expressive language

1. Difficulty with turn taking
2. Difficulty communicating about anything other than the immediate
3. Difficulty expressing feelings
4. Difficulty with gesture, facial expression, proximity
5. Don't see the point in 'chatting'



Strategies to Support Attention

- Gain your child's attention visually
- Avoid distractions e.g. background noise
- Use your child's name
- Be face to face



- Wait until your child indicates that he/she has heard before continuing
- Use visual clues to help them know how long the interaction is going to last e.g. egg timer

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Strategies to support understanding

- Use your child's name to remind him/her they need to listen.
- Avoid pronouns e.g. 'I', 'You'
- Use only key words
- Use simple words
- Only give one instruction at a time
- Give your child plenty of time to process information
- Use visual clues to help him/her understand e.g. pictures, objects. Symbols
- Tell your child what to do not what not to do
- Use 'then' to help your child understand sequencing and 'finished' to understand duration
- Say things in the order in which they will happen



Adam!

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Strategies for supporting the understanding of humour

Children with autism find it difficult to understand jokes, sarcasm, sayings. E.g. 'Chin up- it may never happen!'

They are likely to understand slapstick jokes but may have to have jokes explained to them and be assured that people are not laughing at them.

- *use 'knock knock' joke books to explain humour*
- *use books to develop humour & understanding of word meanings e.g. Fungus the Boguey Man Roobarb video*
- *play imagination games like 'The other way round world', 'What if... we walked on our hands?', 'What's silly about....?', What's wrong cards.*
- *Use games like Scruples, Guess Who?, where players have to infer information or predict what someone else is thinking.*



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Strategies to support expression

- Use an object, picture or symbol and say the word as you point to it
- Reward success to reinforce progress (make the reward appropriate to your child)
- Teach them gestures e.g. pointing and be consistent in the way you use them
- Practise what to say in particular situation e.g. role play greeting friends at school
- Give your child an object to hold to indicate it is their turn



- Tell them if they have got something wrong and teach them how to get it right

Communication difficulties of verbal children with ASD

- Listening or concentrating in group setting
- Starting & maintaining conversations
- Taking turns to speak
- Sticking to subject in conversation
- Interpreting the subtleties of spoken language e.g. 'It's warm in here' could mean 'Can you open the window?'



- Understanding abstract ideas beyond the here and now
- Understanding jokes and sayings e.g. 'I'm over the moon'.

Communication difficulties contd.

- Adjusting language to suit different situations & people e.g. not addressing Head teacher by first name
- Giving too much or too little information, not realising they appear abrupt or boring
- Making and keeping friends
- Being aware of others' needs, moods & emotions e.g. recognising body language, facial expressions



- Understanding that their own appearance & body language has an effect on other people e.g. yawning loudly in class.
- Having the same interests as their friends e.g. keeping up with latest music & fashion trends.
-

Interrupting

- Tell them they are interrupting as they may have little awareness of this
- Teach them to put up their hand
- Have a signal to use to tell them when it is their turn e.g. a card, point to a symbol

Repetitive Questions

- Think about why they are asking the question
- Try negotiating with them e.g. 'I'll tell you once but no more after that'
- Choose a time when they **can** ask questions
- Get them to write down question & answer
- Give written prompts or guidelines to help them learn what to say & how to say it
- **Remember** that they may find it genuinely difficult to process information especially in a lively discussion when many people are talking. Write down the key points and reflect on the discussion which has taken place.



Summary of Strategies to help with Communication

Use child's name first

Give child TIME to respond

Use simple language

Tell child what to do, not what not to do

Be visual: use objects , pictures, photos, writing, symbols, signs

Demonstrate what you want child to do

Helping with communication skills

Don't give lots of instructions at once

Avoid distractions

Be consistent-Don't keep re-phrasing

Say exactly what you mean- be specific

Don't insist on eye contact

Give warning when things are about to change

A turn-taking activity for a child with a few words

The following activity uses bricks to encourage turn taking & the use of simple language, but other toys can be used e.g. shape sorters, inset jigsaws, lotto. It is important to choose an activity which your child enjoys.



- Decide on what language you want to encourage: it could be whose turn it is ("mummy's turn" / "John's turn"), requesting "more" bricks, or saying "up" as a tower is built. Try to use the same language each time you play the activity.
- Keep control of the activity by having the bricks in a container and make sure your child is sitting near you.
- Shake the container to gain your child's attention, perhaps holding it near your face to encourage eye contact.
- Wait for your child to request another brick or say it's his/her turn & then take turns building a tower.
- Once the tower is built, build up anticipation with "Ready, steady..." then pause for your child to say "GO!" & knock it down.
- Once your child is familiar with the activity & is using the language you were aiming for, make the activity harder, e.g. by
 - letting a sibling or friend join in, so that your child has to wait longer for his/her turn
 - introducing more language or concepts, such as colours ("red brick" / "blue brick")

An interactive activity for a child with little or no speech

It is often difficult to find ways to share interaction with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Bubbles can be motivating for a young child and offer the opportunity of 2-way interaction



- You may need to demonstrate the activity a few times so that your child becomes familiar with the routine.
- Make sure you gain your child's attention and get down to his/her level.
- Blow bubbles and pop them a few times, then let your child pop them, saying "Pop!" as s/he does so.
- To encourage interaction WAIT for your child to request (by gesture, sound or word) that s/he wants more.
- Accept actions or sounds as requests, but try using the word that s/he might mean e.g. "More? You want more?" and blow the bubbles accordingly.

A similar activity can be played by blowing up a balloon and letting it go. Wait for your child to indicate s/he wants to do it again before repeating the activity. Again, interpret non-verbal requests by providing the appropriate language.

An interactive game to encourage more subtle communication



A game like '**Guess Who?**' is good to help develop:

- *Attention to detail*
- *Listening skills*
- *Turn-taking & following rules*
- *Awareness of others*
- *Understanding that the person with whom you are communicating may have different knowledge to you*
- *Expressive language skills & appropriate language forms*

Each player has an identical set of pictures that the other player cannot see. They each select one, secretly, whose identity their partner has to guess. They ask questions in turn to help them work out who the character is.

Your child may initially need encouragement to identify important features in the picture. E.g. 'Is it a man or a lady?' or 'Does she wear a hat?' As the questions are answered, your child will need help to work out which characters to get rid of.

You could initially introduce the game by:

- Talking about the characteristics of all the characters on the pictures
- Sorting them into categories e.g. finding all those who wear glasses
- Playing with the child against someone else
- Using gestures and/or pictures to help your child think of the type of questions to ask