

Module 895.69

Supporting Communication

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Supporting Communication

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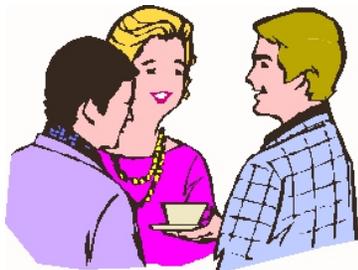


Chapter 1: Understanding Interactions

Purpose: Some people have significant support needs. They may use only a few words or talk in short phrases. Some people may not read, write or even use words at all. Social skills and communication are still very important. Direct support professionals help people learn to communicate and connect successfully with others.

Objectives: You will learn to:

- organize activities to support interaction and communication
- discover what a person is attending to during any activity.
- create a shared focus by taking turns
- start the turn-taking pattern even when someone is not engaged
- identify and respond to simple and complex activities
- match activities to an individual's turn-taking abilities



Most people are social. They like to be together. If we can communicate, we can get along with other people. When we communicate, we send messages to others. We change our surroundings. Communication gives people control over important parts of their lives. When we communicate, we need a partner. Communication partners send messages to each other. The messages help them connect and be aware of each other.

Here is an example of a person sending a message without using words:

Example: *Tom comes into the living room. Although he does not speak he communicates in many ways. He glances at the TV which is tuned to a talk show program. He looks at the Sara and Jane who are watching the show and laughing. They do not notice him. Tom draws close to Sara. She looks up at him. Tom holds out his hand to show her his Reba CD. Sara says, "Did you want some help with that, Tom?"*

People send messages using words or symbols. Does that mean they are really connecting with others? Not always. To interact you need two events.

First, you need a **shared focus**. This happens when two people look at (or focus on) one common object or activity.

Second, people take turns. **Turn-taking** is a "give-and-take" pattern of interaction. People take turns sending messages using words or actions. Each time they take a turn, they have a chance to connect.

Here are some additional examples of communication exchanges.

- Frank is riding a horse. He gestures in the direction he wants to go. The trainer guides the horse in that direction.
- Marty is sharing a pitcher of pop. He shyly reaches out and touches the pitcher to request more. His communication partner pours some more pop in his glass.
- Susan is shopping with Mary. She touches a dress she likes and looks at Mary who leans over and feels the fabric.

Each of these interactions allowed opportunities for turn-taking.

Whenever supporting communication skill development, turn-taking should be set-up around something or an activity that the person has already selected. This is a good way to begin because:

- 1) The person is already doing something which is motivating.
- 2) By looking at or talking about what she is doing or looking at, you show her that the activity or object has value to you also.



To find out what the person is paying attention to, you should:

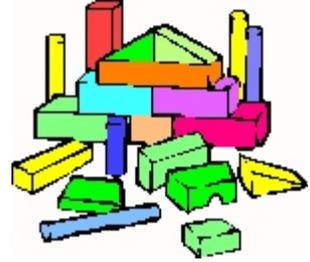
- Stop and **OBSERVE**
- **MOVE NEAR** or **FACE** your communication partner
- **WAIT** for an invitation to join (a glance in your direction)
- Take a **TURN**
- **WAIT** for your communication partner to take a turn

Sometimes it's difficult to take several turns. There may not be that much to say about what the person is looking at or doing. If that happens, you can modify or change the activity slightly to extend the turns.

When someone is not doing anything or is doing something that is not appropriate, you can introduce a new object or activity. Hopefully he/she will find this new activity more interesting.

Example: Carla has noticed that Russell is sitting by himself in the living room. Russell does not see or hear. He often spends time flapping his hands or swaying in the chair. She brings Russell a box with large textured puzzle pieces. She places Russell's hands on the box and waits. When he pushes at and shakes the box, she guides him to open the box. Soon Russell and Carla are taking turns completing the puzzle.

Getting Started: You can organize activities and the immediate space around you so that communication is more likely to happen. Select **materials** that can be acted on in different ways. Find or do things that are interesting and motivating. These steps will help you start the turn-taking pattern and keep it going over time.



Community based activities offer the best opportunities for communication. When it is not possible to go out, common rooms at home and at work should provide many interesting things to do. Look around the workplace or home where you provide services.

- *Can you identify interesting activities?*
- *How age-appropriate are these activities?*
- *How available are the materials? Are materials locked away in closets?*
- *Are people aware the activities are available?*
- *Can they choose and select these activities on their own?*
- *What could you do to make the workplace or home more interesting?*
- *Check with a supervisor and brainstorm ideas.*

Simple Action Activities: Simple action activities happen when two communication partners repeat the *same motor action* in a give-and-take pattern. A simple interaction usually begins with a novice (beginner) and a skilled communication partner. The skilled communicator tries to get the novice to imitate or repeat a simple motor movement in a turn-taking pattern. Moving a toy (child) or throwing a ball (adult/fitness) are examples of simple action activities.



Once the person is taking his turn consistently with the skilled communication partner, we can encourage simple interactions with peers who have also learned to take turns.

Example: Peter has few turn-taking skills. Mike, the direct support professional, is showing Peter how to use a simple turn-taking device. A ball is dropped in one side by Mike and comes out on the other side. Mike helps Peter pick up the ball and drop the ball in a hole on his side. The ball then comes out on the opposite side where Mike retrieves it. After repeating this activity with Mike many times, Peter can anticipate where the ball will drop and take his turn. Mike then invites Tom to join the game. Soon Peter and Tom are enjoying this game together. After about 15 minutes, Mike shows them a football and suggests they go outside to “take turns” throwing the ball. Soon these two men signal their willingness to go outside.

Complex Action Activities: In complex action activities, communication partners try *varied actions* in a give-and-take pattern with two or more people. Everyone needs to follow rules to complete the activity. Considerable practice and prompting may be needed when an individual is learning to take her turn in a complex action activity. Playing a game or doing a chore are examples of complex action activities.



The chart below shows a list of simple and complex activities. Can you think of more examples for each type of activities?

Simple Activities	Complex Activities
1. Roll a ball back and forth	1. Play blanket volleyball
2. Stir some soup	2. Make a cake with a friend
3. Turn pages in a book	3. Play a simple board game
4. Watch a bird at the bird feeder	4. Groom and play with a dog
5. Fold a towel	5. Put away clean clothes

When the person is taking his turn consistently in complex activities, he/she is ready to advance to complex interactions with other people who have also learned to take turns.

Turn Dominance: Turn dominance (taking all the turns) happens when one communication partner does not allow the other to participate equally in the turns. All partners, including staff, may be guilty of turn dominance.

Example: Katie is helping John and Jordan with an afternoon snack. Katie believes it is her job to make sure that John and Jordan get a nutritious snack so that they will not become hungry and irritable before supper is ready. She believes that they do not make good decisions about what to choose without staff help. Because of her beliefs about staff roles and responsibilities, Katie prepares the snack, passes out the cups and plates and organizes everything. She doesn't pay attention or notice if Jordan or John try to communicate with words or gestures about the snack. She is not sure what John or Jordan might do if she doesn't help, but if she keeps everything under control, her shift will go smoothly.



The story above is not finished. Although it is Katie's job to offer John and Jordan a nutritious snack, she has other important responsibilities. It is also her job to offer choices, and to organize the activity so that John and Jordan have many opportunities to communicate. It is also her job to listen and respond, to take turns to support communication.

- What can Katie do to support John and Jordan?

- How can she overcome a natural tendency to dominate (taking all the turns) and control the activity?
- If you were helping John and Jordan with a snack, what would you do to start the turn-taking process?
- How would you respond?

The issue of turn dominance can be solved in several ways.

First, remember to pause after offering a choice to give people more time to respond. Count to five silently.

Second, set the pace for turn-taking through verbal cues, "My turn, your turn." You can also introduce objects to further highlight the turns and make them stand out for people involved. (Check items off a list, turn over cards in a pile after each turn, or ring a bell after a turn in a game).

Example: Mavis and Freda are baking a cake together. To help show Freda the turn-taking process, Mavis set out all the ingredients and utensils in a long line on the counter. After each step they went down the line to the next tool or ingredient. Mavis says "My turn" and points to herself. Then she says "Your turn" and points to Freda. Soon Freda is anticipating her turn and watches Mavis when it's her turn.



Communication Feedback Questions Key

Chapter 1: Understanding Interactions

1. List at least two reasons why communication is important. Why do we teach communication behaviors?
 - a.
 - b.
2. List three different ways that people might use to communicate in symbols.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. People may communicate but not interact. Describe the two basic behaviors that allow people to interact as they communicate.
 - a.
 - b.

4. Match each of the following terms to the examples that best describes it.

___ *Using a gesture*

a. Susan feels the material. Mary feels the material

___ *Taking a turn*

b. Fred says "No pudding" when you offer some

___ *Having a shared focus*

c. Marty points to the pitcher of pop

___ *Using words*

d. Stella hands you a photo of popcorn

___ *Using pictures*

e. Bob and Briana both look at the TV then at each other

5. Describe four methods for selecting an activity to encourage the development of communication skills for a specific person.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

6. Pick one of the items below and describe several different things you might do to create opportunities for communication with or within the activity. Popcorn is listed as one example.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Things You Can Do With the Item</u>
Popcorn	<i>pour it, pop it, eat it, butter it, look at it, decorate</i>
a.	
b.	

7. Good communication partners can build on both simple and complex action activities. Describe examples of each type of communication activity.
(Accept any reasonable example)

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Simple Action Activity	
Complex Action Activity	

8. Turn dominance (taking all the turns) happens when one communication partner does not allow the other to participate equally in the turns. Describe two ways you can act to avoid turn dominance.

- a.
- b.

9. Which of the following are true about complex action activities:

- a. Communication partners try varied actions with two or more people
- b. Considerable practice and prompting may be needed before individuals with significant disabilities will be successful
- c. Everyone needs to follow rules to complete the activity
- d. One partner takes all the turns
- e. Examples include playing catch, folding diapers, looking at a magazine

10. What steps can direct support professionals take so that communication is more likely to happen?

- a.
- b.
- c.

Chapter 2: Recognize and Respond to Communication

Purpose: This chapter will explore how to recognize and respond to different forms of communication.

Objectives - Participants will learn to:

- understand the difference between dual focus and single focus
- identify if communication involves a contact or distal gesture
- recognize and respond to various forms of communication
- identify if a person is responding to symbolic or non-symbolic communication
- help people develop higher rates and better forms of communication

Most of the time, messages are sent by talking to another person. These spoken messages contain information. They are also expected to be clear and polite. Communication efforts must "work" or "make sense" if they are to continue. When people have significant intellectual disabilities, their efforts to communicate must be acted upon. If not, the person probably won't make the effort again. We need to **accept** and **respond** to any communication messages sent. This helps people make the connection between their behavior (sending a message) and the response.



When we accept and respond to communication, people discover they can influence other people's behavior. How does this work?

When an individual shifts his attention between an object and a person, he is using **dual focus**. By using dual focus, the individual shows us he expects a response and is intending to communicate.

Example: Paula is riding in the car with James. She turned on the radio. After a few minutes she turned it off. After another few seconds she reached for the radio but hesitated. James looks at her and then at the knob. Paula says "Oh, you'd like more music? That sounds good." She turned on the radio. James used dual focus to show that he intended to communicate and expected a response.



Some people use gestures to communicate. **Gestures** show or direct attention to things. Showing or directing attention to an object through gestures and then looking at a person is an example of dual focus. There are two types of gestures: contact and distal.

Someone who physically contacts the object or person about which he is communicating is using **contact gestures**. Examples of contact gestures include:

- touching an object and looking to a partner
- extending an object and looking to a person

Example: Myron is waiting near a table at the work center. He knows the newspaper will be delivered soon. When the newspaper comes, he retrieves the paper and puts it on the table where a group of people meet to speak about current events over coffee. Myron does not speak but he knows the paper belongs with the group. When the first person arrives, he reaches for the paper and pushes it toward that person. Myron is using contact gestures to communicate.



When there is some distance between the gesture and the object or person the individual is using **distal gestures**. Examples of distal gestures include:

- reaching for an object and looking to a partner
- extending an open palm and looking to a partner
- pointing and looking to a partner
- banging on a table and looking to a partner

Look at the chart below. The chart shows examples of different kinds of contact and distal gestures. Can you think of more?

Action	Gesture
1. Look at the radio & then the partner	a. Distal
2. Hold out a magazine	b. Contact
3. Pick up the shaver and hand it to you	c. Contact
4. Pointing at the fridge and rocking	d. Distal

Distal gestures may be easier to recognize than contact gestures. Individuals who use distal gestures often continue to send a message until someone responds to them. Some gestures may be used at the same time as other repetitive behaviors.

Example: Ron bangs on the table and flaps his hands rapidly. Then he pushes the casserole dish toward the direct support professional. He continues to flap his hands and rock. He pushes the dish once more with his left hand while his right hand flaps rapidly. Even though other behaviors occurred, Ron used contact gestures to communicate to the direct support professional and draw her attention to the casserole dish.



The communication intent is still important even if other behaviors are also used. Pay attention to the communication and do not comment on the other behavior. This approach is more likely to strengthen communication. **Your responses** will help each person see the connection between a gesture and getting the results they want.

A **symbol** represents, or stands for, something. When we use symbols the object, event or person that we are communicating about does **not** need to be present. Symbols also allow us to communicate about things in the past or in the future. Examples of symbols include: pictures, manual signs, tangible symbols (a small set of keys is used to indicate time to hop in the van and go), and speech.



Example: Maria is learning to use symbols to communicate. Her parents took a photograph of Maria wearing her coat. Whenever it is time to go outside, they draw her attention to the photograph and then help her get her coat. Soon Maria is handing the photo of her coat to her family when she wants to go for a ride. Maria is now using a picture to represent her request to go outside.

Individuals who use **single focus** do not shift their attention from object to person or person to object in an effort to send a clear message. The experienced communication partner must interpret the single focus behaviors and guess their meaning.

Example: Tom goes to the dining room and waits. He does not look at the direct support professionals or other people who receive services. Staff must guess if Tom wants coffee or breakfast or a snack.

Single Focus	Behavior must be interpreted by the experienced communication partner
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Individuals who use **dual focus** shift their visual attention between an object and a person to show us they are intending to communicate.

Example: Larry see's a direct support professional reading the newspaper. He sees a photo of the circus on the page. He squeals and looks at the staff person, then back at the picture of the elephant. Staff can see that Larry is excited about the photo and looking at them for a response.

Dual Focus	Symbols Distal Gestures Contact Gestures
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How we respond to someone who uses single focus may have a big impact on whether they learn to use dual focus. When guessing about what the person may be trying to say, we can pause, make eye contact and be pleasant. This will help increase the likelihood that the person may start to look to others for support. In doing so, they will begin to move to dual focus.

Sometimes people use behaviors that fall just short of looking back and forth from a common object to you. They may come and stand near you when they want something. Or they might take your hand and place it on the object. These behaviors show understanding of a connection between you and communication.

Example: Stephanie has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She does not have dual focus but is beginning to make a connection between other people and communication. One day she wanted help to start her CD player. She found Frank, a person she trusts and stood near him. Frank sensed that Stephanie wanted something as she usually stayed farther away. She had an intent look on her face although she did not look at Frank. He followed her to her room and she stopped by the dresser. Frank decided to guess what she wanted and he held out a necklace. "Did you want some help to put on a necklace, Stephanie?" Finally, Stephanie took his hand and put it on the DVD player without looking at him.



In situations like the example above, you can casually draw the person's attention to your eyes or face (very briefly) and act quickly to give them what you think they want. Looking at you is reinforced by getting what they want. Do not try to force people to look at you or perform to get items. Instead try to make eye contact briefly as you respond to their communication so that eye contact and desired results are paired. Some people with ASD will always be uncomfortable with complete eye contact. In that case it may work best to accept whatever level of shared focus the person can tolerate.

Respond to Challenges – What should you do when:

You don't understand the message that the person is sending?

When the message is not clear or does not provide enough information for you to respond:

- Attempt to make eye-contact with the person.
- Invite the person to tell you more.
- Say aloud what you think the person might be saying with their behavior to confirm.
- Offer the person a choice of what you think they might want.



- Ask the person to show you what they need.
- Ask the person to send the message in another way.
- Repeat as much of the message as you can.
- Ask the person to try again later.

You understand the message but the person is using a self-defeating form of communication?

There may be a problem when aggressive or self-injurious behavior is used. These behaviors are powerful and can be used to get results. The person may be trying to say “No”; “Leave me alone”; “I’m frustrated”; “This is too much for me”; “You’re not listening”; etc. When behavioral challenges occur, work with the team to decide if these behaviors serve as a form of communication. Some sources estimate that 90% of challenging behavior has communicative intent. If the team believes the behavior’s function is communication, it should develop a plan to teach more effective ways to communicate. Limit extra attention when self-defeating behaviors are used and respond eagerly when they are not.

The message is clearly sent, but the team recommends that the person be assisted to learn to use a more advanced form of communication?

When this happens, follow the team's recommendations. This may involve reminding the person to “try another way” to send the message. Perhaps he or she can be assisted to use objects or symbols to increase understanding. Or the team may recommend that direct support professionals demonstrating how to send the message and then ask the person to practice what was just demonstrated.

Example: Petros bangs on the table and looks at the casserole dish, then at you. He repeats this behavior several times and appears to be frustrated. Try handing Petros a serving spoon and saying “What?” If he gestures toward the dish or hands the spoon back to you and looks at the dish, use words to say what he might be thinking. “Oh, more hot dish? Why not help yourself?” Assist him as needed to serve himself. You are responding to a more advanced form of communication (gesturing vs. banging).

The message does not match the situation or is repeated frequently?

Sometimes the message does not seem related to the context or the same message is repeated frequently. When this occurs, consider the situation and how the individual could be using these communication forms. Discuss this information with the team.

Example: Sara is telling everyone about her birthday 10 to 20 times a day. "My birthday is soon!" She is excited and it is fun for her to talk about her birthday. It is not so fun for her peers. You realize that Sara needs to get excited and talk about a variety of things but her statement about her birthday is the only one she knows. You work with her team about teaching her new conversational phrases.



Example: Wayne's team is using a set of keys to help him communicate his desire for a ride to the store. You notice that Wayne will bring his shoes to someone when he wants to go for a ride. The keys don't mean anything to him. You realize you need to talk with the team about changing the symbol. In this case, he found his own way.

The person requests something he/she cannot or should not have.

While we need to honor choices most of the time, sometimes it's not possible. Maybe the person wants chocolate ice cream and you don't have any. When this happens, it is important to let the person know that you heard him or her. Acknowledge the person's communication first. "You want chocolate ice cream?" Then say "No" and briefly explain why you cannot help with that. "No, not tonight. We don't have chocolate ice cream." Follow up with a new offer. "Would you like vanilla ice cream with chocolate syrup instead?"



Chapter 2: Recognize and Respond to Communication

1. The most effective way to strengthen communication attempts by people with significant support needs is to _____ and _____ those attempts. This helps the person understand the _____ between their action and the result.
2. Describe the difference between shared focus and dual focus.
3. Describe the purpose of using gestures.
4. Name two types of gestures. Tell which is easier to recognize.
5. Describe how the use of symbols differs from the use of gestures. What do symbols allow us to do in communication that gestures do not permit? Why is the use of symbols preferred when possible?
6. Look at the chart below. Write the kind of gesture it is after each example below.

Action	Gesture
1. Look at the tractor & then another person	1.
2. Hold out a bottle of ketchup	2.
3. Pick up the brush and hand it to you	3.
4. Pointing at the fridge and rocking	4.

7. Name as least three things you can do to help people move from single focus to dual focus:

8. People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may _____
_____ to communicate.
The use of eye contact may not be _____ for a person with ASD.
Brief attempts at eye contact can be _____ with getting a response to their message so that people with ASD are more willing to use it.

9. Name at least four ways to respond when someone's message is not clear or does not provide enough information for you to understand:

10. If the person communicates but the team wants to teach a more advanced form of communication, direct support professionals need to follow the _____ recommendations. These types of plans generally call for the experienced communication partner to _____ what to do and invite the person to _____ your behavior. Then _____ the person when he or she makes an attempt.

11. Describe what you might do if a person communicates a desire for something that you don't have or would not be good to give.

12. Some experts estimate that 90% of challenging behavior has _____ intent.

13. Limit extra _____ when self-defeating behaviors are used and respond eagerly when they are not.

Chapter 3: Increasing Understanding

Purpose: This chapter will show you four ways to make your messages easier to understand. Problems in understanding, even if you have followed these four strategies, will also be discussed.

Objectives: You will learn to:

- get a person's attention before sending a message
- match communication to the person's level of understanding
- match the communication symbol forms with the forms the person uses
- recognize when an individual has not understood the message
- modify a message that has not been understood and send it again
- make adjustments if problems occur

In all social situations, there are "rules" which guide interactions. Some of these rules include:

- People talk about things their communication partners are interested in and know about
- People ask for only the information they need
- People wait for the other person to respond

It is very important to help each person learn to follow these rules and understand the message sent by the other individual.

You can support a communication partner's understanding and ability to respond to messages by using these strategies:

- **Get the person's attention before** sending the message
- **Match communication to the individual's level** of understanding
- **Match your communication symbol** with the forms the person uses
- Talk about **things** your communication partner **likes and knows about**
- **Check his/her understanding** by giving time for him or her to respond (at least five seconds)
- **Modify (change) the message** and send it again, if needed



Before sending a communication message **get the person's attention.**

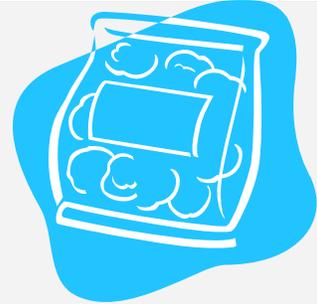
- It is easier to get a person's attention when you are near. Do not communicate from across the room. Stand close to them.
- Avoid getting too close and crowding the individual. Respect boundaries. A comfortable distance is about an arm's length away from each other.

- Make eye contact briefly (unless they show you that they are not comfortable with eye contact).

Important: Make sure you **keep** his or her attention throughout the interaction. This may mean moving into his or her line of sight, starting over, etc.

Messages should **match your communication partner's level of understanding and symbol forms.**

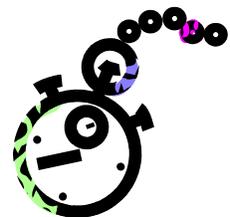
Example: Melody is helping Kyle, Teresa and Patros to prepare and enjoy an afternoon snack. As she approaches the group, she sits near them so that she is at the same level. They can look at her without straining. She smiles and calls each person by name. She makes eye contact and waits. After they look at her, she asks each person what sounds good. She also has photos of possible snacks. For Patros she brings mini-objects (milk carton, bag from Oreo cookies, a baggie with carrot sticks inside).



Melody does not assume or guess what someone may want. She does a lot of work to get people's attention first and give each person an opportunity to communicate. Later, when people are consistently responding to questions about snacks she starts to make several comments about snacks ("I was thinking about having a snack" or "Mmmm! I'm hungry") and waits before asking people what they want. This gives the group members time to initiate a comment instead of just responding to questions.

Communication messages may not have enough information for people with developmental disabilities to fully understand. **Supportive information** can be provided by using gestures, objects, and touch cues to help the person understand the message. There are several ways to make messages clear.

- Keep your sentences short and simple.
- Use every-day words that the person is likely to hear (e.g., "cut" not "trim").
- Emphasize **key words** (that carry the most important part of the message).
- Talk about things that you can see or touch that are near you. When it is necessary, talk only about the **immediate past** or **immediate future**.
- Use **simple negatives**. If you mean no, say "No" not "I don't think so," or "That's not a good idea", or "Not today." Begin with the word "No." Adding a head shake makes the message easier to understand. Likewise, if you mean yes, say "Yes" not "Okay" or "I suppose so," or "Why not?"
- Ask **simple questions** (who, what, where).
- **Offer choices.**
- Comment on what is happening rather than directing or quizzing.
- Use age appropriate tone and inflection.



Next, **check understanding** by waiting for a response.

- How long you must wait will depend on the individual
- **It is reasonable to wait about five seconds** (longer for some people)



There are several ways to recognize that your communication partner did not understand your message. Watch for these signals. The person may:

- Say that they did not understand
- Ask to have the message repeated
- Appear confused or puzzled (facial expression)
- Repeat a question just after the answer was given
- Respond incorrectly
- Not respond at all (they may also be ignoring you)

Example: Sara is watching someone prepare supper. She is interested in the activity. The direct support professional is opening a can of corn. She says, "Do you want to help me prepare supper?" Sara does not respond at first. Finally she says "What's that?" The direct support professional is aware that Sara knows what she is doing and knows that it is a can of corn. So she repeats her message using simpler language. "Do you want to help me fix supper?" This time Sara says "Yes".

When the individual has not understood the message, **modify (simplify) the message and send it again.**

- **First**, check to see if you still have the person's attention
- **Second**, check to see if you can more closely match the individual's level of understanding and symbol forms

Potential Problems: Many problems can interfere with communication. What do you do when:

You think the environment may be too distracting?

There may be a problem when the environment is too distracting or the individual is too preoccupied with some competing activity. When this occurs wait for a better time to communicate, or try to remove the distraction so you can get the individual's attention.



The person may not see or hear the message you are sending?

Sometimes a person does not consistently respond because he does not see or hear the message clearly. When this occurs, ask if the person's hearing and vision have been checked recently. Find out if there is a functional vision and hearing evaluation that can

tell you exactly what the person can see and hear. Use this information to change how you communicate.



- It is difficult for an individual with a hearing impairment to see the speaker's face and hands (e.g., when she turns her back to the individual, when she chews gum, when she stands behind something, etc.).
- The individual with a visual impairment cannot see the supportive visual (e.g., gestures, pictures, distant objects, etc.) that is presented.

When this occurs:

- Make sure that you are in clear view of the person with a hearing impairment so he can receive your message
- Make sure that your speech is "easy to see" (e.g., do not chew gum or turn your back on the listener, etc.)
- Provide auditory cues such as hearing the pitcher of juice being mixed, or tactile cues like feeling a washcloth just before clean up time
- Consult the hearing or vision specialist to determine the supportive information that would most help your partner

The person cannot reach or control body movement well?

Sometimes a person with physical disabilities is positioned so he cannot see, hear, or respond to your communication message. Consult with a physical or occupational therapist to find out the best positioning for each activity.

The person uses an aid or device for communication but the item is not available or working?

Make sure that these devices are available to the individual throughout the entire day and in good working order. Support the person to remember to bring or carry the device with them. People who need such a device often do not have the skills necessary to assume that level of responsibility.



Proper maintenance includes:

- Checking to make sure that the device is properly charged and/or has good batteries and is working properly
- If equipment problems occur frequently, the team member who is responsible for communication goals needs to be alerted and steps taken so that the problem can be corrected

You are not familiar with the person's symbols?

There may be a problem when you are unfamiliar with specific vocabulary required or are unfamiliar with a person's way of communicating. When this occurs:

- Ask for training
- Team together with another person skilled in your partner's symbol system
- Remember to provide supportive information when symbols other than speech are used (i.e., more gestures, pictures, objects, etc.)

Example: Tom uses PEC (Picture Exchange System) symbols. He has a sheet protector with his schedule printed on the paper inside. About seven PEC symbols are included in the sheet protector. Mark is a direct support professional. He has not used PEC symbols before. Some seem clear to him but with other symbols he is not sure what they mean. Also he is not clear how to use the schedule and symbols with Tom. Instead of guessing he asks his supervisor for assistance. She reviews what to do with these materials.

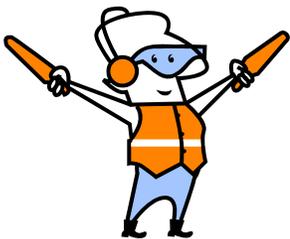
The person does not have enough symbols to express a range of needs?

There may be a problem when:

- A communication board or device has a limited display area and only holds a small number of symbols
- An individual only knows a small number of manual signs or tangible symbols

When this occurs:

- Develop specialized boards or symbol displays that can be used within specific activities
- Increase the supportive information provided (i.e., more gestures, pictures, objects, etc.)



What happens when the person does not respond or cooperate or is combative in some situations?

Sometimes even after you send a message you think he/she could understand, the person may not respond or may respond in a self-defeating way.

When this occurs, consider whether or not:

- you may have mismatched the message to the person's level of understanding
- the person may be able to produce messages that are less complex than those they can receive
- the person may be choosing not to respond

If this problem occurs frequently, consult with the team



Chapter 3: Increasing Understanding

1. What steps should staff take to ensure that they have the person's attention before communicating?
 - a.
 - b.
2. Strategies that support a communication partner's understanding and ability to respond to messages include:
 - a. Get the person's _____ before sending the message
 - b. Match your communication to the individual's level of _____
 - c. Match your communication _____ with the forms the person uses
 - d. Choose _____ your communication partner likes and knows about
 - e. Check his/her understanding by giving time (at least five seconds) for him or her to _____
 - f. _____(change) the message and send it again, if needed
3. Mary uses picture symbols, gestures and only 1-2 words to communicate. Patty, who is the direct support professional, chats away to her and gives her lots of verbal instructions. What is the communication problem?
4. Describe one thing you might do to check understanding.
5. Describe at least two ways that someone might signal you that they don't understand.
 - a.
 - b.
6. Ways to provide supportive information during a communication exchange with someone who does not understand words with the same level of sophistication as the speaker include:
 - a. Provide _____ and _____ to help the person understand the message
 - b. Keep your sentences _____ and _____
 - c. Use _____ words that the person is likely to hear

- d. Emphasize _____ words that carry the most important part of the message
 - e. Talk about things that you can _____ or _____ that are near you
 - f. Use _____ negatives like "No". Add a head shake if that will help.
 - g. _____ gestures and words
 - h. Ask _____ questions (who, what, where)
 - i. Offer _____
 - j. Comment on what is _____ rather than directing or quizzing
 - k. Use Age appropriate _____ and _____
7. Guidelines to follow when direct support professionals believe the person does not understand the message include:
- a. _____ the message. Make it simpler.
 - b. Wait for a better _____ or eliminate _____ if possible
 - c. Make what you are saying easier to _____ or _____
 - d. Give the person an _____ way to signal their responses through movement
 - e. Check to make sure the person's communication device is _____ and working _____
 - f. Find out how to use the person's communication device and _____ the message using the device
 - g. Work with the team to add needed _____ so the person has some options for understanding and responding
8. Tell what you can do to enhance communication when the person does not respond or is combative? *When this happens you can:*
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
9. What should direct support professionals do if they are not familiar with the person's symbols?
- a.
 - b.

10. What are the direct support professionals' responsibilities when the person they support uses an aid or device for communicating?

a.

b.

c.

Chapter 4: Increasing Communication

Purpose: The first part of this chapter will identify eight basic messages of communication. The eight messages are: request item, request action, comment on self, comment on other, reject/stop, request information, request permission, and socialize. In Part II, you will learn how to structure the environment to support communication. You will also learn strategies that can increase the need and opportunity to send a variety of communication messages.

Objectives: You will learn to:

- recognize and respond appropriately to eight basic messages of communication
- increase the need and opportunity to send a variety of communication messages

There are eight basic messages that can be used to help people live, work, and play together. These messages include:

- Request an item
- Request an action
- Comment - on self
- Comment - on other
- Reject/Stop
- Request information
- Request permission
- Social (greet, please, etc.)



Example: Mavis and Freda are baking a cake. Mavis is hoping to include as many different kinds of messages in the activity as she can. Using the list above, Mavis plans these statements and activities.

- I really like cake (Comment on self)
- You look like you're ready to start (Comment on other)
- No, let's get the eggs out first (Reject/Stop)
- Could you turn on the mixer? (Request action)
- Please give me the measuring spoons. (Request an item)
- How old are you? (Request Information)
- Is it OK if I eat this broken one? (request permission)
- Happy Birthday! (Social)

What other messages might Mavis send that would support Freda in developing her communication skills?



Example: John and Richard are going to rake the lawn. John always tries to take advantage

of natural opportunities for building communication skills. During the activity he made these statements/comments/questions:



- Good morning, it's good to see you. (Social)
- It looks like you have a good pair of gloves. (Comment on other)
- I'm kind of tired today. (Comment on self)
- Where are the rakes? (request information)
- Will you hold the garbage sack for me? (request an action)
- Stop the bag is full. (Stop/reject)
- Could I borrow your wheelbarrow? (request permission)

To make sure that you provide communication opportunities, select materials carefully. Choose materials that:

- Are interesting
- Are age-appropriate
- Promote shared focus and turn-taking
- Include new (novel) or unusual items

Once the environment has been set up to support communication you can begin to introduce other activities that will **increase the need and opportunity to communicate**.

Opportunities for communication may be missed or lost if you are in a hurry. **Expect** a response and **wait** to give the person time to form a message. People with developmental disabilities may be used to waiting for others to make decisions or complete actions for them. When you expect and wait, these individuals will learn to independently send their own communication messages. You should wait at least five seconds, when necessary, for your partner to send his or her message.

Another way to create the need and opportunity to communicate is to put a preferred or needed item where it **is in-sight but out-of-reach**.

Example: Carla is working with Bob on wrapping a present for his family. She has a sack of bows that is available nearby but the sack is not opened. After the box is wrapped she picks up the sack of bows and holds it over the box looking puzzled. "Now what?" she says. Bob laughs and gestures to the scissors. "Oh right," Carla says. "I need to open the sack."



Offering choices is effective in creating communication opportunities. This works when people do not request objects or actions on their own. However, be careful not to overuse this strategy. It limits the individual's choices to only those that have been made available.



Giving small amounts of an item provides someone with a chance to request more. This strategy is especially useful with a communication partner who is just learning how to communicate a request, or who is learning how to use a new or more difficult form of request. Be careful to use this naturally and not to tease or make someone perform for you over and over to get small amounts of something they want. This can be demeaning. Instead just naturally give a little less of one item at a meal or during an activity.

Example: Debra is enjoying a pitcher of pop with Felicity. Debra knows she can pour just a sip of pop into Felicity's glass as a way of getting her to request more. However that seems demeaning to her. She does not want to make Felicity perform. So Debra fills the glass one third full. She knows that Felicity will still have 3 chances to ask for more. She also fills her own glass with just a little. Debra asks Felicity for more and gives her a chance to at least push the pitcher in her direction.

Activities that occur on a regular basis should be structured to make them into a routine. Once an activity has become a routine, there are a variety of additional strategies a service provider can use.

"Forget" a needed object or action to give someone a chance to communicate. For example, "forget" the spoon when it's time to stir, or "forget" to open the detergent before you try to pour it.



Do something different or unexpected, or even make a mistake on purpose. For example, spread peanut butter on rice cakes, instead of on the crackers which you frequently have, or give your communication partner the ball when he asked for the Frisbee. Or set out a plastic windmill instead of the serving spoon that is needed. Novelty or the "unexpected" will often surprise people into making a comment or response.

Respond literally or do only what is asked. For example, when the person asks for the paint, but doesn't have a brush, give him only the paint, and wait for him to ask for a brush. By doing only what is asked, you help the individual learn how his communication works and how to repair communication breakdowns.

Chapter 4: Increasing Communication

1. Eight basic messages that can be used to help people live, work, and play together include:
 - a. Request an _____
 - b. Request an _____
 - c. Comment - on _____
 - d. Comment - on _____
 - e. _____ /Stop
 - f. Request _____
 - g. Request _____
 - h. _____ greet, please, etc.)

2. Guidelines for setting up the environment to increase opportunities for communication include:
 - a. Take your _____, don't hurry
 - b. Do something _____ or unexpected
 - c. Set things _____
 - d. Offer _____
 - e. Give _____ portions
 - f. _____ something important
 - g. _____ on what you do
 - h. Respond _____ – do only what is asked

3. Explain why the strategies above help increase communication.

4. In each of the activities below give three examples of actions you might take to enhance opportunity for communication.

Going to the drugstore for some medicine

- a.
- b.
- c.

Washing the car

- a.
- b.
- c.

Having a picnic

- a.
- b.
- c.

5. Match each message with its example

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------------------|
| ___ | Hi, Mary. | a. Request an item |
| ___ | Pass the cheese. | b. Comment on other |
| ___ | Would you like to help me make pizza? | c. Social |
| ___ | May I have a slice? | d. Comment on self |
| ___ | I like pepperoni pizza best. | e. Request permission |
| ___ | You like cheese pizza. | f. Request an action |
| ___ | Stop! There is too much sauce on that one. | g. Request information |
| ___ | Where should we go to eat the pizza? | h. Reject |

6. Give one example of how a person who doesn't use words to communicate might send each of the following types of messages.

- a. Request an item
 - b. Request an action
 - c. Comment - on self
 - d. Comment - on other
 - e. Reject/Stop
 - f. Request information
 - g. Request permission
 - h. Social (greet, please, etc.)
7. What are three reasons why people might not make the effort to communicate?
- a.
 - b.
 - c.

Supporting Communication Feedback Questions Key

Chapter 1: Understanding Interactions

- List at least two reasons why communication is important. Why do we teach communication behaviors?
 - People are social – communication helps us get along in groups*
 - Communication helps people exchange messages*
 - Communication gives people control over important parts of their lives*
 - Communication helps people connect and be aware of each other*
- List three different ways that people might communicate using symbols.
 - Words*
 - Gestures*
 - Pictures*
- People may communicate but not interact. Describe the two basic behaviors that allow people to interact as they communicate.
 - Having a **shared focus**. This happens when two people look at (or focus on) one common object or activity*
 - Using turn-taking**. This happens as people take turns sending messages using words or actions*
- Match each of the following terms to the examples that best describes it.

<u>c</u> ___ <i>Using a gesture</i>	<i>a. Susan feels the material. Mary feels the material</i>
<u>a</u> ___ <i>Taking a turn</i>	<i>b. Fred says “No pudding” when you offer some</i>
<u>e</u> ___ <i>Having a shared focus</i>	<i>c. Marty points to the pitcher of pop</i>
<u>b</u> ___ <i>Using words</i>	<i>d. Stella hands you a photo of popcorn.</i>
<u>d</u> ___ <i>Using pictures</i>	<i>e. Bob and Briana both look at the TV then at each other</i>
- Describe four methods for selecting an activity to encourage the development of communication skills for a specific person.
 - Look for an activity the person has already selected (motivation)*
 - Observe the person in their natural environment*
 - Make many highly motivating activities available in the setting*
 - Find materials that can be acted on in different ways*
- Pick one of the items below and describe several different things you might do to create opportunities for communication with or within the activity. (*Accept any reasonable example*)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Things You Can Do With the Item</u>
<i>Popcorn</i>	<i>pour it, pop it, eat it, butter it, look at it, decorate</i>
<i>Backyard</i>	<i>watch birds, pick flowers, mow grass, walk, garden</i>
<i>Trains</i>	<i>watch, ride, paint, operate or collect</i>

7. Good communication partners can build on both simple and complex action activities. Describe examples of each type of communication activity.
(Accept any reasonable example)

Activity

Simple Action Activity

Complex Action Activity

Examples

playing catch, taking turns stirring batter

Playing a game, baking cookies, or cleaning a mirror

8. Turn dominance (taking all the turns) happens when one communication partner does not allow the other to participate equally in the turns. Describe two ways you can act to avoid turn dominance.

a. Pause after offering a choice to give people more time to respond.

b. Set the pace for turn-taking through verbal cues, "My turn, your turn." C.

Introduce objects to highlight the turns and make them stand out for people involved. (Check items off a list, turn over cards in a pile after each turn, or ring a bell after a turn in a game).

9. Which of the following are true about complex action activities?

- a. Communication partners try varied actions with two or more people
- b. Considerable practice and prompting may be needed before individuals with significant disabilities will be successful
- c. Everyone needs to follow rules to complete the activity
- d. One partner takes all the turns
- e. Examples include playing catch, folding towels, looking at a magazine

10. What steps can direct support professionals take so that communication is more likely to happen?

a. Select materials that can be acted on in different ways

b. Have these materials available and encourage people to use them

c. Find and do things that are interesting and motivating to the people supported

Chapter 2: Recognize and Respond to Communication

1. The most effective way to strengthen communication attempts by people with significant support needs is to accept and respond to those attempts. This helps the person understand the connection between their action and the result.

2. Describe the difference between shared focus and dual focus.

Shared focus occurs when two people look at the same object or action.

Dual focus occurs when one person looks back and forth between the object or action and the other person.

3. Describe the purpose of using gestures.

Gestures draw attention to an item or activity of shared focus.

4. Name two types of gestures. Tell which is easier to recognize.
Contact gestures - Someone physically contacts an object or person to communicate
Distal gestures - There is some distance between the gesture and the object or person
Distal gestures may be easier to recognize than contact gestures
5. Describe how the use of symbols differs from the use of gestures. What do symbols allow us to do in communication that gestures do not permit? Why is the use of symbols preferred when possible?
- Symbols represent items*
 - The items need not be immediately present*
 - Symbols can be used to communicate about items or activities from the past or the future.*
 - Symbols allow for more sophisticated and complex kinds of communication.*

6. Look at the chart below. Write the kind of gesture it is after each example below.

Action	Gesture
1. Look at the tractor & then another person	1. <i>Distal</i> 2. <i>Contact</i>
2. Hold out a bottle of ketchup	3. <i>Contact</i>
3. Pick up the brush and hand it to another person	4. <i>Distal</i>
4. Pointing at the fridge and rocking	

7. Name as least three things you can do to help people move from single focus to dual focus?
- Smile*
 - Make eye contact*
 - Be pleasant*
 - Repeat what the person may have tried to communicate*
 - Help the person get what they want*
 - Do these things immediately after they communicate*
8. People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may use language differently to communicate. The use of eye contact may not be reinforcing for a person with ASD. Brief attempts at eye contact can be paired with getting a response to their message so that people with ASD are more willing to use it.
9. Name at least four ways to respond when someone's message is not clear or does not provide enough information for you to understand:
- Attempt to make eye-contact with the person
 - Invite the person to tell you more

- Say aloud what you think the person might be saying with their behavior to confirm
 - Offer the person a choice of what you think they might want
 - Ask the person to show you what they need
 - Ask the person to send the message in another way
 - Repeat as much of the message as you can
 - Ask the person to try again later
10. If the person communicates but the team wants to teach a more advanced form of communication, direct support professionals need to follow the team's recommendations. These types of plans generally call for the experienced communication partner to demonstrate what to do and invite the person to imitate your behavior. Then reinforce the person when he or she makes an attempt.
 11. Describe what you might do if a person communicates a desire for something that you don't have or would not be good to give.
Any acceptable description of:
 - a. *repeating what the person wanted*
 - b. *saying no*
 - c. *offering a brief reason*
 - d. *offering an alternative*
 12. Some experts estimate that 90% of challenging behavior has communicative intent.
 13. Limit extra attention when self-defeating behaviors are used and respond eagerly when they are not.

Chapter 3: Increasing Understanding

1. What steps should staff take to ensure that they have the person's attention before communicating?
 - a. *Stand about an arm's length away and in front of the person*
 - b. *Make eye contact briefly, unless they show you that they are not comfortable with eye contact.*
2. Strategies that support a communication partner's understanding and ability to respond to messages include:
 - a. Get the person's attention before sending the message
 - b. Match your communication to the individual's level of understanding
 - c. Match your communication symbol with the forms the person uses
 - d. Choose topics your communication partner likes and knows about
 - e. Check his/her understanding by giving time for him or her to respond

- f. Modify (change) the message and send it again, if needed
3. Mary uses picture symbols, gestures and only 1-2 words to communicate. Patty, who is the direct support professional, chats away to her and gives her lots of verbal instructions. What is the communication problem?
 - a. *Patty is not matching her communication form (words) with the one that Mary knows.*
 - b. *It is OK to use some words with Mary but they should be matched with a form she understands.*
4. Describe one thing you might do to check understanding.
 - a. *Wait for a possible response. While the time will vary with the individual, generally wait about five seconds.*
 - b. *Observe what and how the person responds*
5. Describe at least two ways that someone might signal you that they don't understand.
 - a. *Say that they did not understand*
 - b. *Ask to have the message repeated*
 - c. *Appear confused or puzzled (facial expression)*
 - d. *Repeat a question just after the answer was given*
 - e. *Respond incorrectly*
 - f. *Not respond at all (they may also be ignoring you)*
6. Ways to provide supportive information during a communication exchange with someone who does not understand words with the same level of sophistication as the speaker include:
 - a. Provide gestures, objects, and touch cues to help the person understand the message
 - b. Keep your sentences short and simple
 - c. Use every-day words that the person is likely to hear
 - d. Emphasize key words that carry the most important part of the message
 - e. Talk about things that you can see or touch that are near you
 - f. Use simple negatives like "No". Add a head shake if that will help.
 - g. Pair gestures and words
 - h. Ask simple questions (who, what, where)
 - i. Offer choices
 - j. Comment on what is happening rather than directing or quizzing
 - k. Use Age appropriate tone and inflection
7. Guidelines to follow when direct support professionals believe the person does not understand the message include:
 - a. Modify the message. Make it simpler.
 - b. Wait for a better time or eliminate distractions if possible

- c. Make what you are saying easier to see or hear
 - d. Give the person an easier way to signal their responses through movement
 - e. Check to make sure the person's communication device is available and working correctly
 - f. Find out how to use the person's communication device and repeat the message using the device
 - g. Work with the team to add needed vocabulary so the person has some options for understanding and responding
8. Tell what you can try to enhance communication when the person does not respond or is combative in some situations?
- When this happens you can:*
- a. *Match the message to the person's level of understanding*
 - b. *Show the person a better way to respond*
 - c. *Consider that the person is choosing not to respond and voice that option*
 - d. *Consult the team*
 - e. *Wait for a better time and try again*
9. What should direct support professionals do if they are not familiar with the person's symbols?
- a. *Ask for training*
 - b. *Team together with another person who is familiar with the person's symbol system*
10. What are the direct support professionals' responsibilities when the person they support uses an aid or device for communicating?
- a. *Support the person to bring or carry the device with them. If they are not yet able to assume this responsibility, staff are responsible to ensure the devices are available to the individual throughout the entire day and in good working order.*
 - b. *Check to make sure that the device is properly charged and/or has good batteries*
 - c. *If equipment problems occur frequently, follow agency guidelines for notifying the appropriate team member so that the problem can be corrected.*

Chapter 4: Increasing Communication

1. Eight basic messages that can be used to help people live, work, and play together include:
 - a. Request an item
 - b. Request an action
 - c. Comment - on self
 - d. Comment - on other
 - e. Reject/Stop

- f. Request information
- g. Request permission
- h. Social (greet, please, etc.)

2. Guidelines for setting up the environment to increase opportunities for communication include:

- a. Take your time, don't hurry
- b. Do something different or unexpected
- c. Set things out of reach
- d. Offer choices
- e. Give small portions
- f. Forget something important
- g. Comment on what you do
- h. Respond literally – do only what is asked

3. Explain why the strategies above help increase communication.

These actions create a need to send a message to get something done or explain what is happening or make things clearer.

4. In each of the activities below give three examples of actions you might take to enhance opportunity for communication.

Going to the drugstore for some medicine

- a.
- b.
- c.

Washing the car

- a.
- b.
- c.

Having a picnic

- a.
- b.
- c.

5. Match each message with its example

- | | | |
|----------|---|------------------------|
| <u>c</u> | Hi, Mary. | a. Request an item |
| <u>f</u> | Pass the cheese. | b. Comment on other |
| <u>a</u> | Would you like to help me make pizza? | c. Social |
| <u>e</u> | May I have a slice? | d. Comment on self |
| <u>d</u> | I like pepperoni pizza best. | e. Request permission |
| <u>b</u> | You like cheese pizza. | f. Request an action |
| <u>h</u> | Stop! There's too much sauce on that one. | g. Request information |
| <u>g</u> | Where should we go to eat the pizza? | h. Reject |

6. Give one example of how a person who doesn't use words to communicate might send each of the following types of messages. (There are many possible answers to this question, the following are just one of many correct answers)
- a. Request an item – *Samuel signs “pop” to the waitress at the diner.*
 - b. Request an action – *Anna brings the keys for her locked jewelry box and the jewelry box to Susan.*
 - c. Comment - on self – *Darren signs “sick” when Jim came into his bedroom.*
 - d. Comment - on other – *Ava pointed to the bird in the bird bath and then to the picture in her bird book.*
 - e. Reject/Stop – *Steven unplugged the vacuum cleaner when staff were vacuuming the living room while he was watching TV.*
 - f. Request information – *Ellen is helping Ben bake a cake. Ben goes to the cupboard and shows Ellen a round cake pan and a square pan while vocalizing.*
 - g. Request permission – *Doug opens the refrigerator, points to the leftover pumpkin pie and vocalizes.*
 - h. Social (greet, please, etc.) *Teresa hugged Dawn when she saw her at church.*
7. What are three reasons why people might not make the effort to communicate?
- a. *There is nothing new or interesting(to them) to communicate about in their environment*
 - b. *They don't need to communicate – staff take care of their needs before the person attempts to communicate.*
 - c. *They haven't gotten their needs met from previous efforts to communicate*
 - *Communication partners don't give the person time form a message*
 - *Decisions are made for them.*