**Promoting Early Communication**

**Motivation is key:**

In order to communicate, motivation to do so must first be established.

**Understanding Communication**

In order to participate in communication, first a child needs to know the structure of a ‘game’ or communication loop; when and how their communication should occur and what the affect their communication will have. Children may need to be taught to both initiate and respond in a communication loop. This can require specific teaching steps using prompt hierarchies and appropriate levels of reinforcement. These methods could be used to target one word or full sentences.

**Choosing a Form of Communication**

Communication may be verbal, signing (Makaton), using Picture Exchange Communication (PECS) or using an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) system or a combination of these.

**Requesting and Commenting**

What items, activities or information seeking motivates your child? These are ideal places to start when choosing targets for communication.

Will your child be motivated to comment on an interesting item or activity when shown how to do so in a fun way?

Opportunities for communication can be implemented throughout the day, within routines as well as incidentally within all motivating activities.

**Non-Verbal Communication**

Much of our communication is non-verbal. As fluent speakers we use many gestures and other non-verbal cues but these can also be important methods of communication for those with limited or no speech. Non-verbal communication can also be a starting point for building on other forms of communication.

**Inappropriate Behaviours**

Inappropriate behaviours can often be a form of communication. Various behavioural techniques can be implemented to reduce and eliminate inappropriate behaviours and replace them with appropriate forms of communication. We recommend professional advice and support in identifying and implementing these.

**Some starting points for communication:**

* Motivating items, activities or information seeking.
* Engagement with others (verbal or non-verbal).
* Developmental assessment to determine appropriate targets as well as specific teaching (appropriate pre-requisite skills, prompting and reinforcement).

BUT REMEMBER MOTIVATION IS KEY!

**Stepping Stones Behavioural Consultants**

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