

Communication and Interaction





Aims

To explore the way communication and interaction may be different for children on the autism spectrum

To explore ways to support the communication and interaction of your child



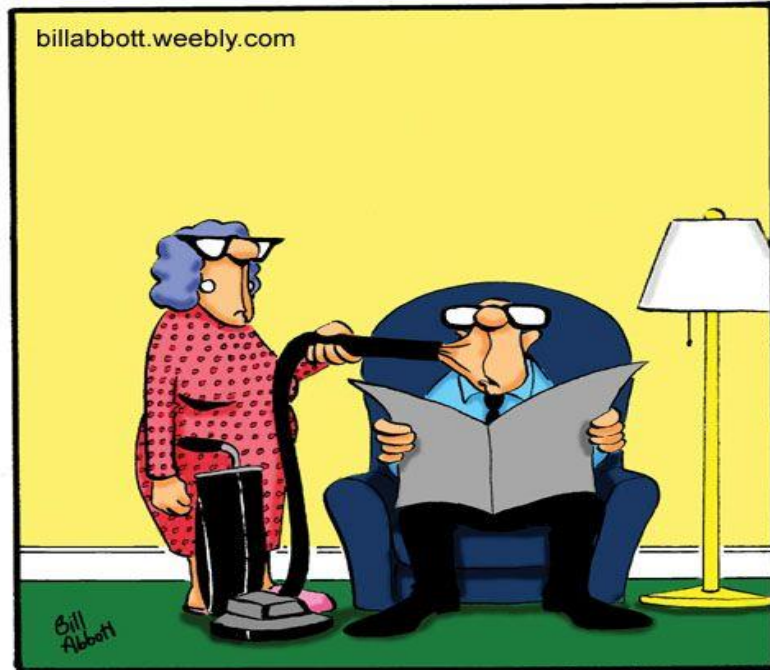
"I can remember the frustration of not being able to talk. I knew what I wanted to say, but I could not get the words out, so I would just scream."

Temple Grandin (1996)



Expressive and Receptive Language





“Shall I move?”

Communication is a two-way process for sharing information and ideas between two or more people and can be verbal or non-verbal. For most of us, communication is a tool for social bonding.

By sharing our thoughts, opinions, experiences and emotions, we get to know and understand other people and ourselves. We are also able to form and maintain relationships.



Children on the Autism Spectrum have a wide range of communicative ability. This includes differences in both verbal expression (spoken language) and comprehension (understanding of language).



They may:

- not understand the **need** for communication
not initiate communication
- not communicate clearly what they want or need
- have difficulty with **attention and listening skills**, particularly in relation to verbal communication
- have challenges **processing and understanding** language



Children on the Autism Spectrum have a wide range of communicative ability. This includes differences in both verbal expression (spoken language) and comprehension (understanding of language).

- **They may:**

- have a **literal understanding** of language, including understanding jokes and sarcasm, metaphors and idioms and not pick up on tone of voice

- not understand or use **non-verbal cues** such as eye contact, facial expression and body language

- find it challenging to **take turns** in activities and conversations

- not understand how to adapt language style depending on their audience



How do we support them to improve their communication?

Shared Attention

[May I Join You? English Language – YouTube](#)

- Mirror their play – avoid showing them how to do it
- Intensive Interactions [Autism & Intensive Interaction – YouTube](#)
- Introduce highly motivating objects – bubbles
- Introduce objects that they can't use on their own



We need to adapt our style of communication to meet the needs of children on the autism spectrum.

- Say their name and get their attention first before talking
- Use simple, clear and concise language
- Say what you mean and avoid analogies and sarcasm
- Allow time for processing and responding
- Use visual information to help understanding
- Don't rely on non-verbal cues e.g., tone of voice, body language or facial expressions
- Minimise sensory distractions
- Regularly check your child's understanding and ensure they have a means to communicate in all situations.



[Videos - Awtistiaeth Cymru | Autism Wales | National Autism Team](#)





Supporting Communication

- 1. Motivate** – your child to communicate by making yourself exciting, using their interests and ensuring they have a reason to communicate with others
- 2. Modelling** – language, communication and play appropriate to your child
- 3. Adjusting** – verbal and non-verbal communication to match your child's level of understanding
- 4. Responding** – to your child's focus of attention and their attempts to communicate
- 5. Engaging** – your child's attention by using their name and getting down to their level to communicate
- 6. Promoting independence** – by giving your child choices and opportunities for initiating interactions

Key Strategy: Top tips for developing talk



**How does your child
communicate?**

**What strategies do you use at
home which work well?**

We will share this with the group

Activity



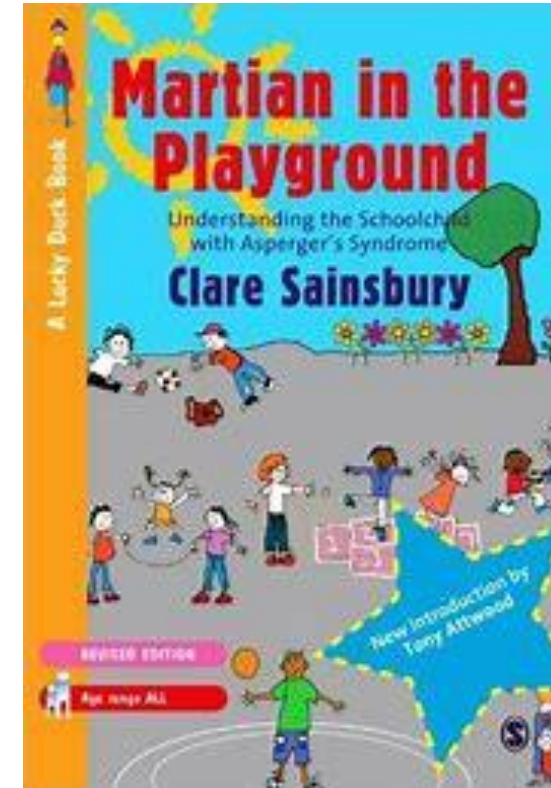
Social Interactions



“It's as if everybody is playing some complicated game and I am the only one who hasn't been told the rules”

Claire Sainsbury

Martian in the Playground:
Understanding The Schoolchild
With Asperger's, p8.



Why are social interactions challenging?

- Delayed communication
- Difficulties in understanding the intentions of others (unpredictable)
- Difficulties with social 'small talk'
- Lack of understanding of social rules
- Rigid thinking
- Sensory processing differences – overwhelming busy environments



Children on the autism spectrum have differences in the way they perceive and understand social behaviours. They may not learn social responses instinctively or through their peers.

What might we see at home or in the classroom?

Children on the autistic spectrum may need support to:



turn-taking.



actively engage with other people rather than objects.



share resources with peers.



work with a partner or in a group.



initiate, maintain and end social interactions



manage new or unfamiliar social situations and/or people



Think about your child's social interactions.

- What are their strengths?
- What do they find most challenging?

We will share this with the group

Activity





Social Interactions often require a huge effort for children on the autism spectrum. They need to be able to understand how other people behave, how to respond appropriately to social cues from others, how to express themselves and how to manage their own behaviour. The motivation to engage with other people will vary between children on the autistic spectrum. We need to understand and respect each child's social differences and preferences.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05k8jj6>



It can be helpful to teach specific strategies to support children in situations they find challenging.

These should:

- Reflect children's communicative and developmental level
- Focus on one area at a time
- Give opportunities to practice and generalise



1.
Make social rules clear



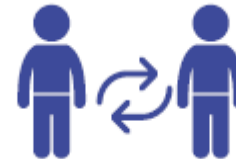
2.
Look beyond the behaviour



3.
Prompt the desired behaviour



4.
Give specific feedback about social interactions



5.
Practice turn-taking



6.
Social skills groups

Key Strategy: NAS Social Stories



Does the child know:



1. what they have to do?



2. why they have to do something?



3. what is happening next?

Countdown



Finished

4. what the steps are within each activity?



5. what to say/communicate?



6. when to take part?



7. how to calm themselves?



8. That they can ask/communicate for help?

New or unfamiliar social interactions and group activities can be challenging for a child on the autism spectrum and increase their level of anxiety.

They may need more concrete explanation and planning to understand what this will look like and how to participate.

Key Resource: NAS Visual Supports



Useful Resources and websites:

Speech, language and communication

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/>

<https://thespectrum.org.au/autism-strategy/autism-strategy-communication/>

Autism and social interaction

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/social-children.aspx>

<https://thespectrum.org.au/autism-strategy/social-interaction/>

Autism and Play

<https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Developing-play-skills.pdf>

<https://www.scottishautism.org/services-support/support-families/information-resources/play>

Key Strategy: Top tips for developing talk (The Communication Trust)

https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/617945/tct_toptips_pdf.pdf

Key Strategy: Social Stories (National Autistic Society)

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

Key Resource: Visual Supports (National Autistic Society)

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>



Books

- ***Time To Talk*** (FS,KS1) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***Socially Speaking*** (KS1/2) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***The Friendship Formula*** (KS2/3) by Alison Schroeder, LDA
- ***The Conversation Train*** by Joel Shaul, Jessica Kingsley
- **Talkabout Programme** by Alex Kelly, Speechmark
- **Talkabout Activities** by Alex Kelly, Speechmark
- **Language Builders for Verbal ASD** by Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan, Elklan



Thank you for your attention and participation.
The next session is session three:-

Sensory Processing



For effective communication to happen it is important to have **ALL** of the following:

WHAT: something to communicate - a message

HOW: a way of communicating - common to both sides

WHO: somebody to communicate with - you cannot communicate alone

WHY: a purpose - motivation to communicate



They had a tendency to talk past one another.

