

# Developing Communication Skills

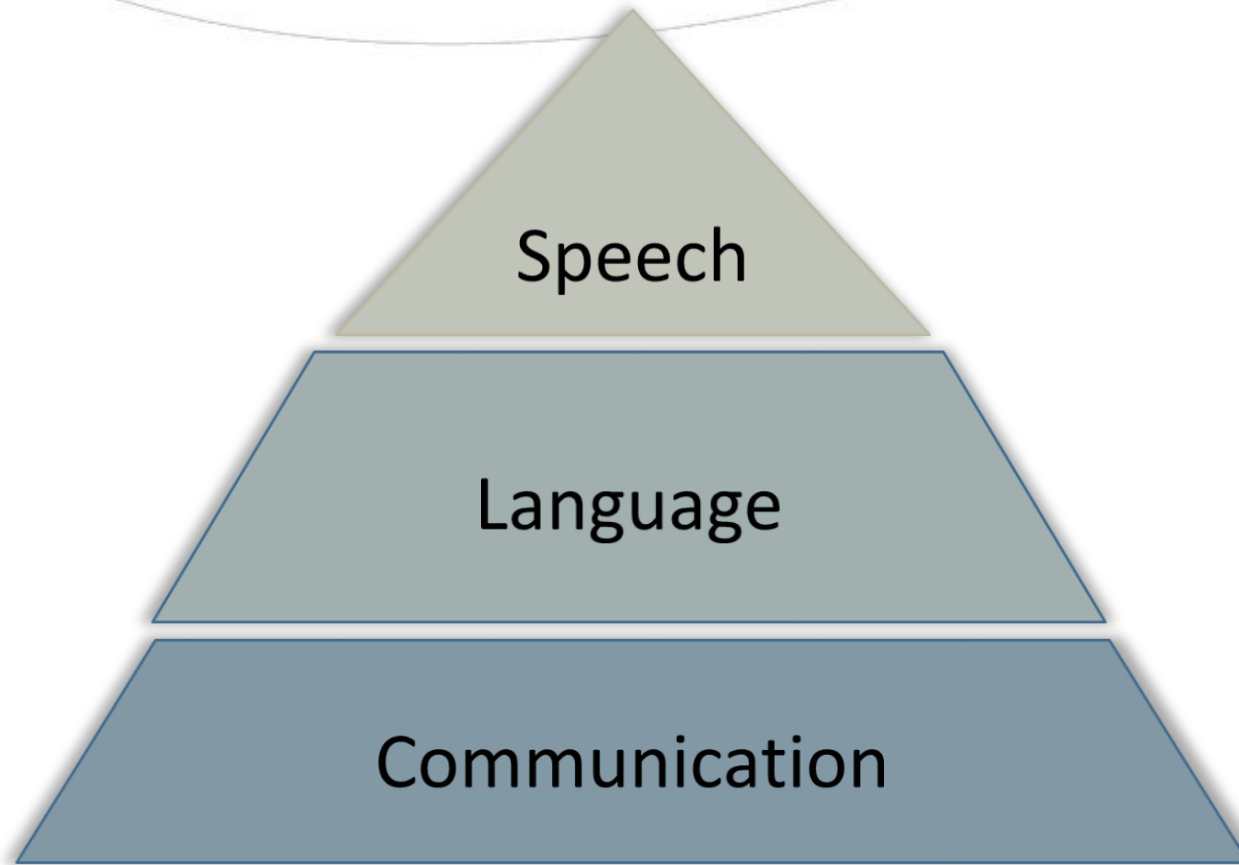
# Learning Objectives

To identify what is communication, and how and why we communicate

To review the functions of communication and strategies for teaching them

To consider your own child's communication and identify strategies to specifically support your child's communication development

# What Is Communication?



# Ways we communicate

## Vocal communication

- spoken words

## Non-vocal communication

- gestures
- eye gaze
- augmentative and alternative communication

# Gestures

Gestures are one of the first ways a child learns to communicate and they can be an indicator of a child's communication development

Early common gestures can include: hold out hand, shaking head, reaching, showing an item, waving, pointing

# Gestures

Later in development gestures may begin to be paired with speech sounds and may also become more symbolic

Eye gaze is also an important skill in communication development

Copying the actions of other's is also considered a communicative gesture and a good indicator of observational learning

# Augmentative and Alternative Communication

- Augmented and alternative communication are methods used to enhance an individual's communication by using non-vocal means
- Augmented and alternative communication, as spoken words, can be used to express needs, wants, and feelings

# Why we communicate

Responding to  
others



Requesting



Protesting



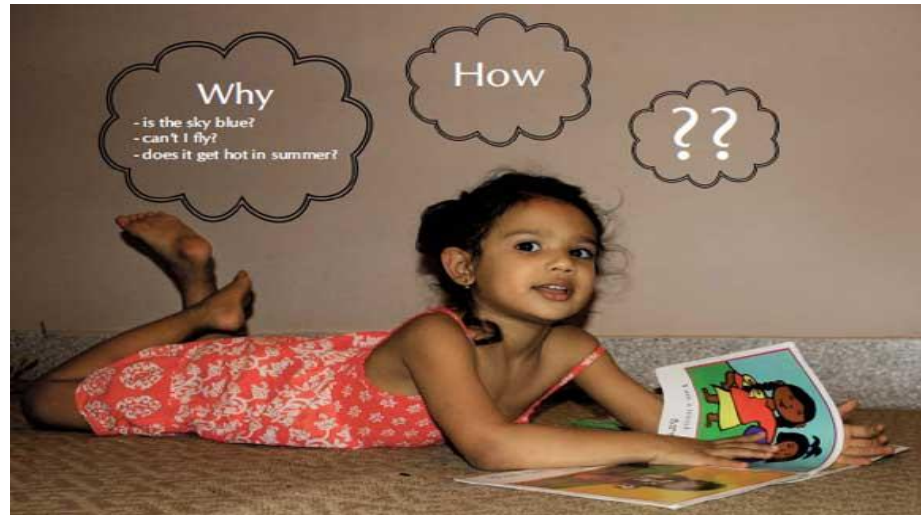


# Why we communicate

Commenting



Asking and  
answering questions



# Homework

As we go through the different functions of communication think about your child. Think about how and why your child is communicating. Think of some examples.

# Requesting

Requesting (AKA manding) is asking for what you need and want.

Requesting can come in different forms:

- Vocalizations
- Gestures
- Eye Contact
- AAC

# Why teaching requesting is so important

- Requesting delivers specific reinforcement to the person making the request
- Teaching requesting helps a child develop functional skills to access desired items and activities
- Being able to request is linked to a reduction in challenging behaviour such as aggression and self-injurious behaviour

# Protesting

- Protesting is also form of a request used to get needs and wants met, however protesting is often to indicate something is unwanted
- Protesting, like requesting, can be vocal or gestural, and/or may look like a challenging behaviour

# Strategies for teaching requesting and protesting

- Follow your child's lead and motivation
- Prompt an appropriate request
- Set-up opportunities to teach requests (communication temptation)
- Reinforce!!

# Following your child's lead and motivation

When teaching both requests and protests it is important to ensure that what we are teaching is functionally equivalent to what your child wants

# Prompting an appropriate request/protest

Teach your child to request at the level they are at and continue to expand as your child develops more communication skills

Common prompts used when teaching requesting/protesting include:

- Physical guidance when teaching gestures
- Modeling/Echoic training when teaching vocal requests
- Time delay



# Communication Temptations

Communication temptations are ways to set-up the environment to motivate a communication response (request or protest)

Essentially we are giving a reason to communicate

# Ways to set-up communication temptations

- Place items out of reach
- Try hard-to-operate toys
- Be silly
- Give a little bit at a time
- Offer choices
- Wait and see

# Reinforce!!

- Reinforcement, both positive and negative, increases the probability of a behaviour occurring again
- Positive reinforcement involves the presentation of a desired item/activity
- Negative reinforcement involves the removal of an undesired item/activity

# Reinforcing requests and protests

- Typically requesting is reinforced by using positive reinforcement and protesting is reinforced by using negative reinforcement
- Another important factor when delivering reinforcement is the time between when the request is made and access to the reinforcement
- Better responses equals better reinforcement

# Some additional considerations

- Try to limit distractions when practicing
- Get down to the child's eye level
- Reduce amount of questions

# Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Reg74LRVXFM>



# Homework

Think about how your child is requesting/protesting.

Does your child need more opportunities to practice requesting/protesting in a functional way?

Think of one example of what your child is motivated by, and one strategy you can use to teach the appropriate request or protest.

# Commenting

- Commenting serves a social function, and ranges from commenting on items right in front of you to commenting on internal feelings
- Labelling common items, actions, properties and relations are important early components for more advanced commenting
- As labelling skills develop, language can expand to sharing feelings, ideas, and interests



# Modelling language

The more language is modelled, the more a child hears the word.

The more the child hears the word, the more likely they will understand the word, and the more likely they will start to use the word independently.

# Strategies for Modelling language

- Pair a gesture with a word and a word with a gesture/speech sound
- Put into words what you think your child may be saying
- Use comments instead of asking questions during routines and play
- Keep language at your child's level and add on as their language develops

# Insert a video on commenting?

# Homework

Think about a routine activity or play activity you do with your child. Consider what items or actions you can label/comment on in the activity.

Try one of the strategies for modelling language next time you do that activity.

# Asking Questions

Asking questions is another form of a request. It is a more advanced request in which you are asking for information

Requesting for information can be questions including: what, where, who/whose, which, when, how, why

When children ask questions they are learning to reflect on the world and demonstrating curiosity

# Teaching how to ask questions

Strategies for teaching how to ask questions is similar to the strategies for teaching requesting. Modelling language and setting-up opportunities to teach different questions types may help develop this skill

Remember your child has to be motivated for the answer to the question. The answer is the reinforcer!

# Teaching how to ask questions

**What:** Place an item in a bag and say “There’s something fun in the bag.” Your child can respond “What’s in the bag?”

**Where:** Say “I put a surprise for you in a special place.” Your child can respond “Where is the surprise?”

**Who/Whose:** Say “There is someone at the door.” Your child can respond “Who’s at the door?”

# Teaching how to ask questions

Which: Say “I have two different cookies, but only one is my favourite.” Your child can say “Which one is your favourite?”

When: Say “Your friend is coming over.” Your child can say “When are they coming?”



# Teaching how to ask questions

How: Say “ We need to put this toy together.”  
Your child can say “How do we put it together?”

Why: Say “It’s time to turn off the tv.” Your child  
can say “why do we have to turn off the tv?”

# Homework

Think about a way you can set-up a new opportunity for your child to ask a question. Try it!

# Communicating Socially

## Important social skills

- Joint attention
- Greetings
- Responding to and initiating interactions

# Joint Attention

Joint attention is the communication used in an activity in which two people are actively engaged in

When a child initiates joint attention it can involve:

- Coordinating looks (eye gaze)
- Showing (to share attention to the same item)
- Giving to share (turn taking)
- Pointing (to show something of interest)

# Joint Attention

When a child responds to joint attention from an adult it can involve:

- Following the point of an adult to look at the same object
- Following the eye gaze of an adult to see what the adult is looking at

# Strategies for promoting joint attention skills

- Join in on your child's play
- Play face-to-face games
- Get excited if your child looks at you for even a short moment
- Be interesting enough to get their attention
- Imitate your child's actions and sounds
- Try anticipation games/activities

# Greetings

Greetings involve both saying hello and goodbye to a person, and also involve initiating and responding to greetings

Greeting can develop early on using a gesture “wave” to both initiate a greeting and respond to a greeting. It may later develop in a vocal greeting and/or a verbal greeting paired with a gesture

# Strategies for teaching greetings

- Practice, practice, practice
- Prompt when needed
- Reinforce!



# Responding to others

Responding to others means you are responding to another person's communication. You are the listener in the interactions

# Some early listening skills

- Responding to name
- Responding to gestures
- Responding to instructions

# Strategies for developing listener skills

- Be at your child's level and face to face
- Comment, comment, comment
- Add gestures to your comments
- Know your child's level and use language at their level
- Reduce distractions
- Help your child follow through
- Reinforce!

# Final Thoughts

All children are different when it comes to their communication styles. These styles vary from person to person/situation to situation. Some children are more receptive than others, some initiating more than others, and some are a mix of both even a very little of both

The strategies and amount of support your child needs depend on their current communication style

All of the communication skills we discussed throughout this presentation have a foundational role in the development of responding to and initiating interactions

# Questions?

We appreciate your participation and feedback.

Please fill out and hand in your feedback form

# Summary

Please try these strategies at home on your own. If your child continues to experience difficulty with these approaches, and is **not** making progress despite consistent use of targeted strategies, please:

- 1) Speak to your Lead Professional or
- 2) For more support you can purchase focused consultation by called 905-855-2690 ext. 4

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