

# Communication Training



# What we are going to talk about?



- **What is communication?**
- **The development of communication and social skills**
- **What is necessary for successful communication.**
- **Factors that influence an individuals communication style**
- **Discuss how to recognise a breakdown in communication.**
- **Highlight strategies to help support successful communication.**

# Definition of Learning Disability



The Department of Health, 'Valuing People' White Paper (2001) defines LD as:

- A significantly reduced ability to understand complex information or learn new skills (impaired intelligence)
- A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning)
- A condition which started before adulthood (18 years of age), and has a lasting effect.

# Discussion



## What is communication?



# What is communication?



- Communication is the activity or process of giving and receiving information to other people or to other living things, using signals such as speech, body movements...

(Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary)

- Communication is any obvious behaviour, whether used intentionally or not, that makes the onlooker believe that the person is attempting to convey a message, make a demand, request etc.

# What is Communication?



- Communication is a basic human right.
- Communication is the means through which we control our existence. It is the way we make friends and build relationships.
- It is the way we become independent and make choices.
- It is the way we learn.
- It is the way we express our feelings, thoughts and emotions.
- It is the way we make sense of the world around us.

# The Development of Communication



Age	Function
Birth – 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Eye gaze, smiles, cries, vocalisations but without specific intention</li></ul>
9 – 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Begins to communicate with intent</li><li>Uses gestures and then words for the following reasons:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Seeking attention</li><li>•Requesting (object, actions, information)</li><li>•Rejecting/protesting</li><li>•Greeting others, naming something.</li></ul></li></ul>

# The Development of Communication



Age	Function
18 months – 3 years	Can now use communication to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Comment on things</li><li>•Express feelings</li><li>•Assert independence</li><li>•Begins to use language imaginatively.</li></ul>
3 – 4 years	In addition <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Uses language to talk about past and future events</li><li>•Gives detailed information</li><li>•Asks for things politely 'would you ...'</li><li>•Re-tells simple stories (several sentences together).</li></ul>



# Developing skills of working with others



Stage	Details
1) Unoccupied Play	Person sits alone, seemingly unoccupied.
2) Solitary Play	Person plays alone, independently with an activity of their choosing.
3) Onlooker Play	Observes others 'playing/activities' but doesn't join in
4) Parallel Play	People interested in their own activity, but doing this side by side.
5) Associated Play	Work separately from other person, but on similar activity and involved in what the other person is doing.
6) Co-operative play	Two or more people work together towards one goal.

# The Development of Communication



**We need to think of the adult with a  
learning disability in terms of the  
development of skills**

# Why do we communicate?



Who have you communicated with today?	Why did you communicate with that person?	Was the communication successful?	Why was the communication successful or unsuccessful?

# We use communication to:

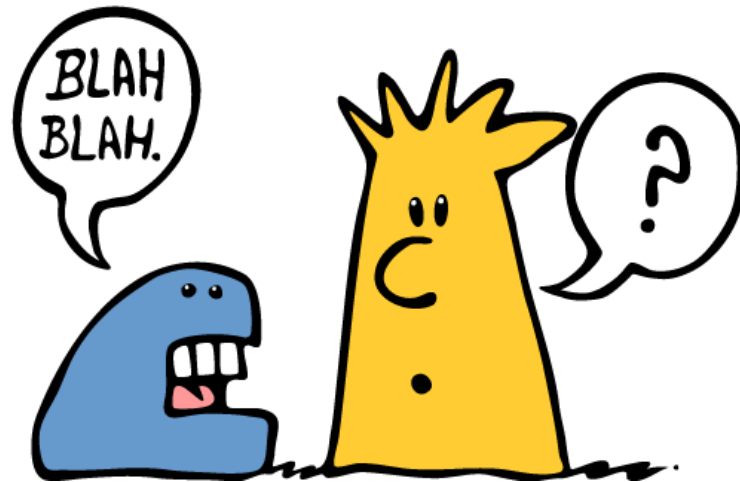


- Get attention
- Say hello
- Give information
- Get information / ask questions
- Express how we are feeling
- Give feedback / make comment
- Ask someone to do something for us
- Clarify information
- Refuse or reject something

# Successful Communication



What is needed for successful  
communication?



# Successful Communication



## MEANS (How we communicate)

Main means: understanding & using  
language  
speech  
signs/gestures  
symbols/pictures  
reading/writing

Non-verbal means: body language  
facial expression

pointing

Paralinguistic means: intonation  
rate  
pitch  
tone  
fluency

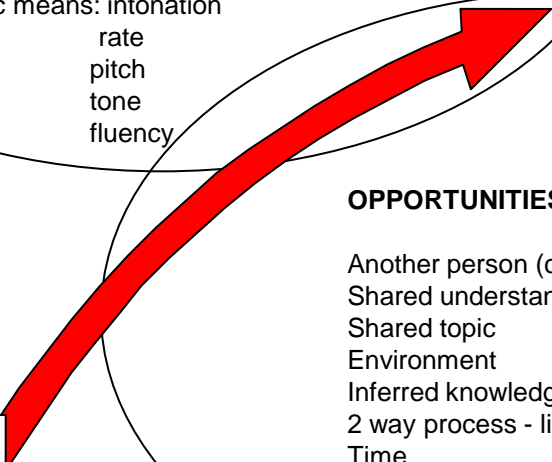
## REASONS (Why communicate)

Greeting  
Socialising  
Expressing - pain, likes, dislikes  
Give instructions  
Indicate pleasure  
Wants/needs  
Give/Receive information  
Clarification  
Get attention  
Comment  
Acknowledging (yes, thanks)  
Protests (no)

## OPPORTUNITIES (who, when, where)

Another person (communication partner)  
Shared understanding  
Shared topic  
Environment  
Inferred knowledge  
2 way process - listener/speaker roles  
Time  
Shared language/system

**Functional  
Communication**



# Other Factors which Influence Communication



- Upbringing: opportunities to learn, ‘understanding of how to relate to others’.
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Life experiences
- Hearing Impairments

# Communication Difficulties



Communication difficulties can be when other people have problems understanding the individual

OR

When an individual has problems understanding what others are saying

OR

Both



# How do we communicate?



Think of the different ways people communicate



# Methods of Communication



- Speech
- Mime
- Gesture
- Pointing
- Objects
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Non-verbal
- Writing
- Pictures
- Photos
- Formal signs
- Communication aids
- Symbols
- Behaviour



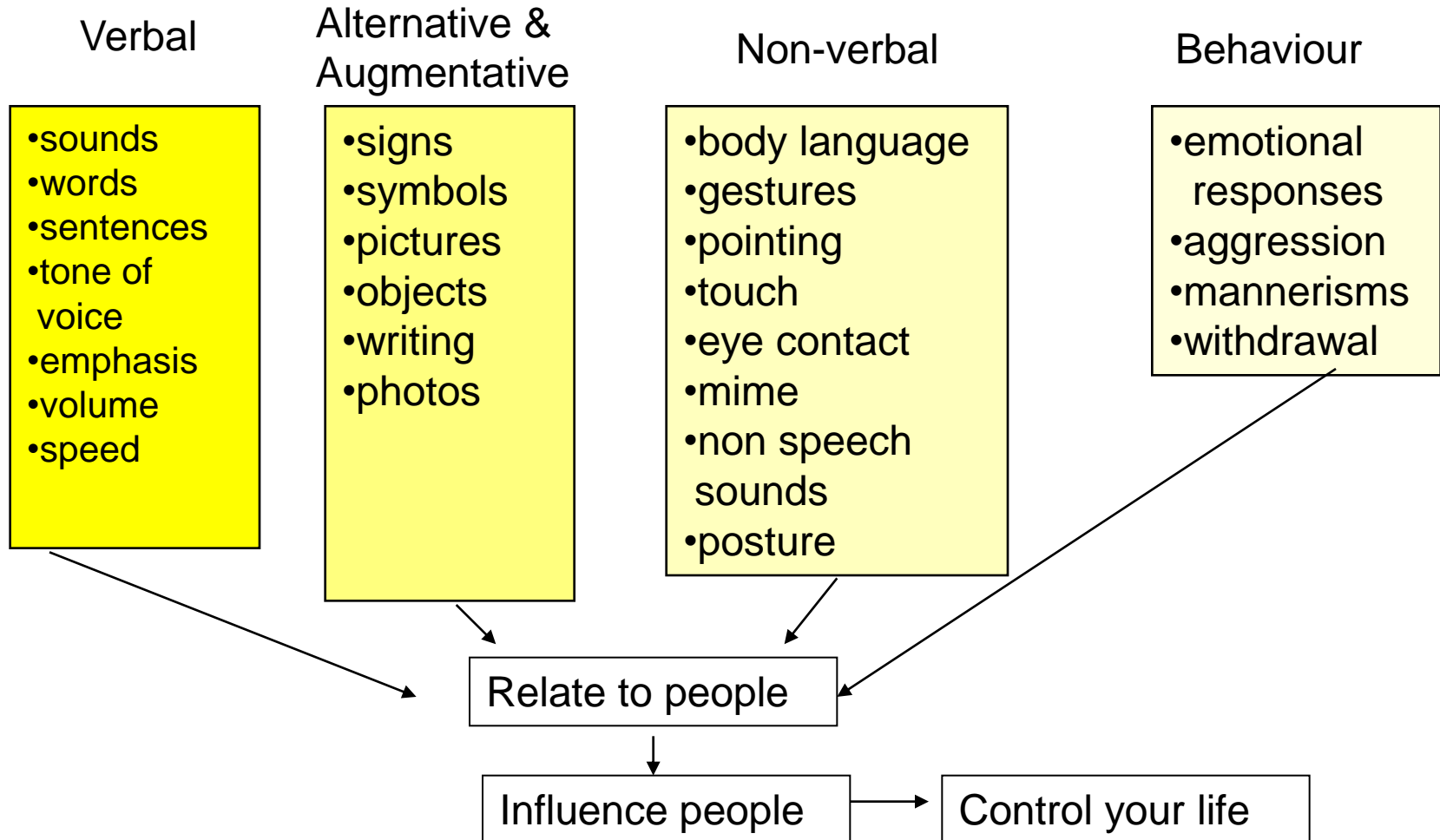
# Expressive Language



- An individual may have difficulties getting their message across.



# The Communication Means Spectrum

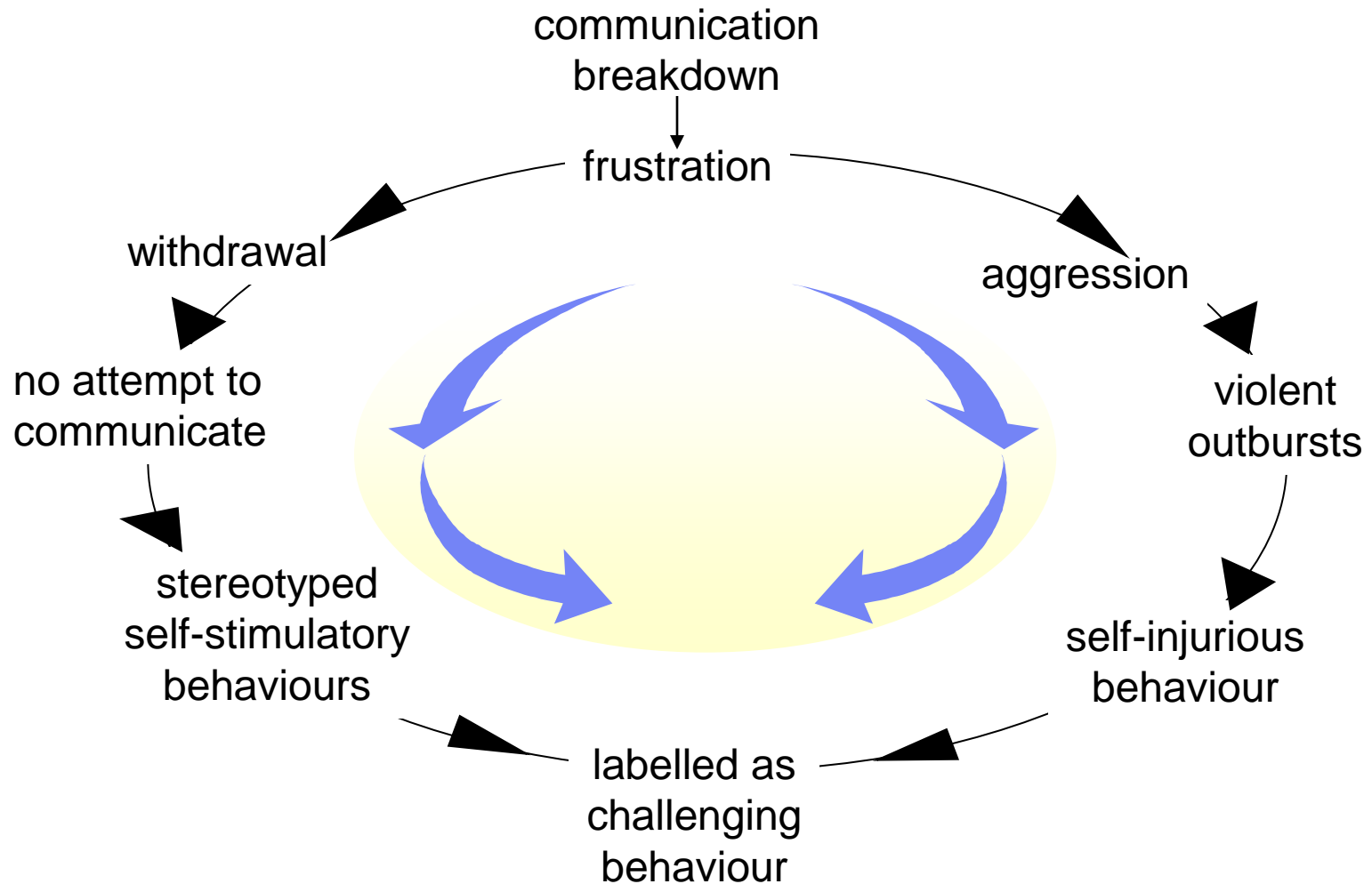


# Problems getting your message across can lead to



- Problems interacting with others
- Not able to participate fully in activities
- Difficulty conveying needs and wants
- Difficulty making choices
- Dependent on others to anticipate need
- Appearing withdrawn, bored, uncooperative

# Communication Breakdown



# “Challenging” Behaviour



- This can be a form of communication, an effective way of getting your message across e.g. *“I don’t want to do this anymore”*
- Imagine being in a foreign country where you don’t speak the language and you are going to miss your flight home...!

# Learnt phrases



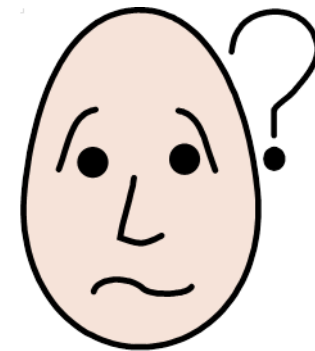
- Some people with expressive difficulties may have learnt some phrases which they often repeat
- This may give the impression that the person has more language than they actually do.
- Person may use the phrase often due to the positive reaction they get (e.g. feeling of being in on a joke, pleased someone)
- Beware – The phrase itself may be meaningless to the person (person does not fully understand what s/he is saying).



# Understanding Language



- An Individual may have difficulties understanding what is said to them.
- SLT assessment will make use of observation and direct assessment to see what the individual does understand.



# Understanding



## Verbal understanding

### words

names  
actions  
descriptions  
labels  
concrete  
abstract

### concepts

space  
time  
number  
colour  
abstracts  
comparatives

### grammar

tenses  
word order  
negatives  
plurals

### information

length of sentence  
amount of information

### question words

### emotion words

# comprehension

## Situational understanding

### situations

routines  
copying others  
object props  
location  
Environmental sounds

### non-verbal clues

gestures  
pointing  
facial expression  
body language

### experience

familiarity with situation  
regular routine  
**tone of voice**  
volume  
intonation  
Speed

# How many words do you need to understand?



1. “Go down to the dining room”

(as you’re saying this you point at the door, the noise of the dining room can be heard and it’s lunchtime)

# How many words do you need to understand?



- “Get a knife and a big spoon from the sink”

(in the sink are knives, forks, different sized spoons. The cutlery is usually kept in the drawer)

# Checking Verbal Understanding



- To check how much a person can actually understand what is said to them we need to take away these other clues e.g. gestures and visual cues.

## Key words

- These are the words in a sentence that you must understand to be able to respond correctly

# Remember!



- It is often not necessary to understand **any words** in order to know what is happening or what is expected
- We can use other clues
  1. Situational understanding
    - Situation gives all the meaning
  2. Non-verbal understanding
    - Gesture
    - Facial expression
    - Tone of voice

# Signs of Difficulties Understanding



- Unable to carry out instruction or comply with request
- Always choosing last option
- Repeat what has just been said to them
- Challenging behaviour especially noticeable in very verbal situation
- Unwillingness to answer open-ended questions
- Use of distraction techniques when asked a question, e.g. inappropriate laughing



- Misinterpreting information and people can seem to act in a strange or unexpected way
- Change the subject
- Person appearing uncooperative
- Person can become frustrated
- Person may become withdrawn
- Apparent task avoidance-could communication be issue rather than task?
- Watch your reactions as they start to respond and then change if your reaction is not positive



# Remember!



- Negatives can be very difficult to understand and they can change the whole meaning of the sentence
  - E.g. “do not kick the cat”
  - When we hear a word don’t our brain slows down and focuses on the meaning it carries, this will not always be the case with someone who struggles to process language.

# Use of Positive Language



- Sometimes negative language can potentially carry bad feelings for an individual and feelings of frustration that you are standing in the way of an individual doing something.
- It is therefore important that we replace negative language with words that encourage action such as 'can' will' 'do' 'go ahead/go on' which come across in a much more positive manner to the listener.

# Examples



1. You can't wash the car. It's slippy.' becomes...  
It's slippy outside we can set the table for dinner instead.
2. The Gateway club is not on becomes....  
The Gateway club is closed you can go to....instead.
3. There's no more biscuits you can't have any becomes....  
The last biscuit has been eaten. Let's put that on our shopping list . Which biscuits would you like to buy?  
or The last biscuits have gone we can make some biscuits?'

# Time



- Words relating to time can also be very difficult to understand
  - E.g. “tomorrow we will go the pictures” or “after lunch we will play football”
  - It can also be really important that we do not tell someone too far in advance what is going to happen as they will not understand the concept of waiting.



**How can we help communication difficulties?**



# How to help people with difficulties understanding



- Be clear about what a person can understand
- Try to keep your language simple and straightforward, e.g.

Do you want to go out now?

VS

I was wondering if perhaps whether or not you might fancy an excursion?

- Break long instructions into small steps
- Repeat your message using the same words each time
- Make the most of additional cues like facial expression, tone of voice and body language to get your message across



- If someone is having difficulties understanding avoid using open-ended questions (e.g. “where do you want to go?”). A more concrete choice is easier to understand (e.g. do you want to go swimming or shopping?)
- Show people what you are talking about, e.g. “do you want tea or juice” whilst showing them the tea and the juice
- Use pictures, objects, photos and symbols to illustrate what you are saying
- Use signs, e.g. Makaton, to reinforce what you are saying

# Visual Support



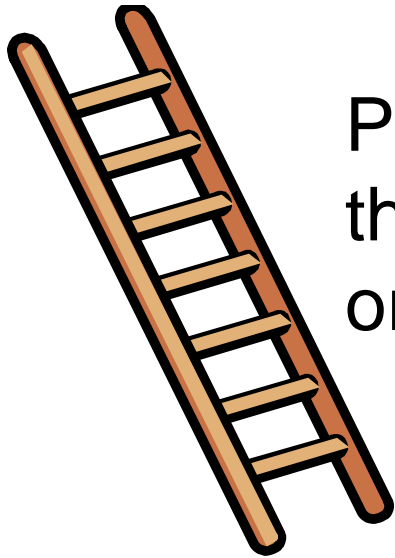
- Objects
- Photograph
- Symbol
  - A simple line drawing that represents an object, place or idea
  - **Symbols are different from pictures.** We use the word **picture** to describe an illustration in a book, or a drawing on the wall. A picture conveys a lot of information at once and its focus may be unclear, while a symbol focuses on a single concept.
  - May be coloured or black and white
- Signs



# Symbol Ladder Task



Divide into groups and put the items in order of how easy they are to recognise or understand what they mean.

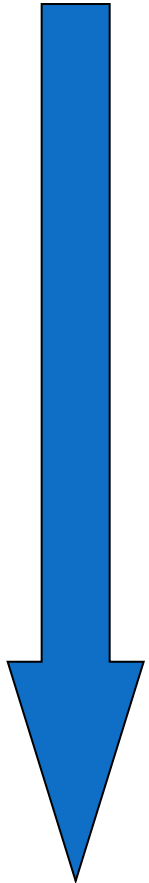


Put the easiest or more concrete at the bottom of the ladder and the hardest or more abstract at the top.

# Symbolic Understanding



Real



Less Real

- Objects** – a solid 3D representation
- Photos** – a more real picture
- Symbols** – simple line drawings
- Gestures and sign language** – supporting the words
- Words** – written or spoken

# What can visual support be used for?



- Aid comprehension
- Support expression
- Encourage choice-making
- Encourage independence
- Promote language development
- Provide a means of expression
- Reduce frustration

# Speech and Language Therapy



- Your Speech and Language Therapist will provide assessment of the individual's communication skills.
- They will then devise an intervention plan based on the outcomes of assessment.



**Any Questions?**





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