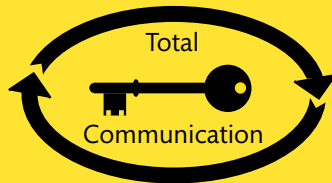


TOTAL COMMUNICATION

PERSON CENTRED THINKING, PLANNING AND PRACTICE



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“Total communication is a communication philosophy - not a communication method and not at all a teaching method...Total communication is an approach to create a successful and equal communication between human beings with different language perception and/or production...To use Total communication amounts to a willingness to use all available means in order to understand and be understood. ”

Hansen's definition of Total Communication.

“Aspects of deafness and total communication in Denmark”

Hansen, B. (1980) The Center for Total Communication, Copenhagen.



Oldham Learning Disability Service use the following definition of Total Communication. It illustrates how Total Communication underpins the value base.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION

Total Communication is about communicating in any way you can.



It's not just about talking, it's about signing



pointing to pictures



symbols



photographs



or objects.



It's also about using gesture or body movement.

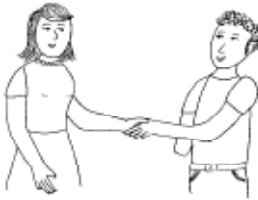




Facial expressions tell people how you feel.



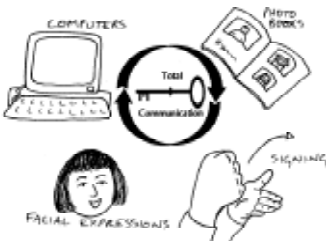
Writing, drawing, miming, drama and other art forms are all ways of communicating.



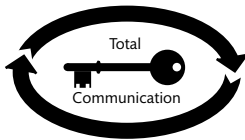
Through communication we build relationships with other people. We let others know how we feel and what we think.



Being able to communicate and knowing that you are being listened to is paramount.



People who don't use speech can communicate. It's just a matter of being more creative.



Total Communication is the key to inclusion



A WORD ABOUT UNDERSTANDING

The majority of people with learning disabilities will struggle at times to understand spoken or written language. Using Total Communication means a willingness to supplement the spoken word by using objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols or sign. In order to do this well, we must be person centred. We need to know which method or combination of methods suits each person best.

A WORD ABOUT EXPRESSION

Expression is the act of transferring what is inside your head; your thoughts, feelings, desires, wants and wishes to another person. All people have individual ways of expressing themselves, for people with learning disabilities this may mean using other methods than speech alone. Objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols, signing and/or body language may be used to express information. In Total Communication all of these are equally valid forms of expression and need to be interpreted as such.



COMMUNICATION MODEL

This is a two sided model, because communication is a two way process. With any message, one person expresses it, and someone else has to understand it. All people have to take both roles, at different times.

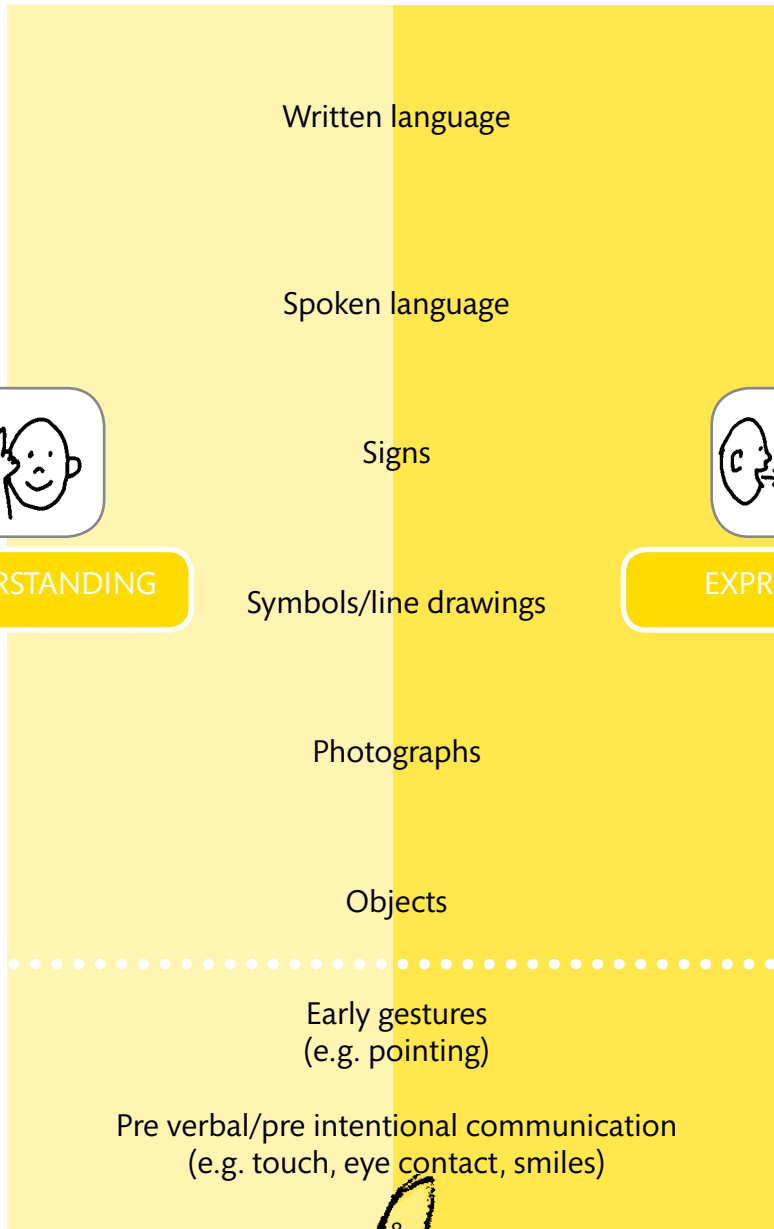
The words in the middle refer to different modes of communication. These are in a general order of complexity.

However it's not a hierarchy, all forms of communication are equally valued.

Pre verbal or pre intentional communication and early gestures are the building blocks of conversation and add richness to adult communication. We get a lot of rich information from facial expression, body language and tone of voice. Pre verbal communication can be very important in working with people with learning disabilities, either understanding tone of voice for example, or using it to express themselves. We need to be alert to picking up on non-verbal signals.



COMMUNICATION MODEL



UNDERSTANDING

EXPRESSION

PRE VERBAL, PRE INTENTIONAL AND GESTURE

UNDERSTANDING

The most important aspect at this level is non-verbal communication. Language is secondary but not redundant. Keep talking but keep it simple. Use positive facial expression and body language. Use your voice-volume tone and pitch to give meaning.

EXPRESSION

The person supporting the individual interprets the facial expression, body language and vocalisations made in response to an event in the environment or how the person is feeling. An obvious example would be smiling means 'I'm happy'. More detailed knowledge of the individual would be required to interpret a clicking or whooping sound as 'I'm really excited'.

TOP TIP

Don't use sarcasm - it doesn't work. Make sure your facial expression matches your meaning. Use short simple sentences.



TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Communication Passports, Communication Dictionaries, Intensive Interaction, Individualised Sensory Environments.

RESOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk

OBJECTS

UNDERSTANDING

By showing an object you can support a person to anticipate/understand what is about to happen.

e.g. showing a towel before going swimming.

EXPRESSION

The person can hand you or point to an object to tell you what they want.

e.g. giving you a cup to ask for a drink

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Objects of Reference, Passports/Communication Dictionaries

RESOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

Link <http://ace-centre.hostinguk.com> (go to: resources → an introduction to objects of reference)



PHOTOGRAPHS, LINE DRAWINGS, SYMBOLS

UNDERSTANDING

By showing a photograph/line drawing/symbol you can support a person to anticipate/understand what is about to happen.

e.g. visual timetable to show the days activities.

EXPRESSION

The person can point to a photograph/line drawing/symbol to tell you what they want.

e.g. pointing to a photo menu for their dinner choice



TOP TIP

Remember to be mindful with regard to which picture you choose for which word. It needs to be meaningful to the individual.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Choice Making, Decision Making Agreement, Person Centred Plans, Passports/Communication Dictionaries, Communication Charts 1 and 2, Visual Timetables, PECS, TEACCH, Talking Mats®, AAC-High and Low Tech Communication Aids, Symbol Systems e.g. Widgit, Boarmaker, Photosymbols, Line Drawings e.g. Change Picture Bank.

RESOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

Ace North - www.ace-centre.org.uk

Widgit - www.widgit.com

Change Picture Bank - www.changepeople.co.uk

Photosymbols - www.photosymbols.com

TEACCH - www.teacch.com



SIGNING

UNDERSTANDING

Signing visually supports understanding as it is longer lasting than speech alone. It helps both hearing and Deaf individuals.

EXPRESSION

Signing is a totally portable means of communication. It can be used by an individual at the level of conveying only single words through to a full and complete language.



TOP TIP

British Sign Language is a language in its own right. It has its own grammar and word order. Do make sure that you are using the same sign language/system as the individual and don't forget to sign.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Signalong, Makaton, British Sign Language, Sign Supported English, Paget Gorman, Passports/Communication Dictionaries.

RESOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

Signalong - www.signalong.org.uk

Makaton - www.makaton.org

British Deaf Association - www.signcommunity.org.uk

Paget Gorman - www.pgss.org



SPOKEN LANGUAGE

UNDERSTANDING

We need to be person centred and committed to developing an understanding of how much a person understands and what helps them to gain understanding. This is a group and life long challenge and requires a commitment to life long learning with and about the person.

EXPRESSION

The person may use spoken language in conjunction with other systems. Sometimes people can give the impression by the language and vocabulary they use that they understand more than is actually the case.



TOP TIP

Be aware of making limiting assumptions or under/over estimating people's abilities. An individual's language profile may vary. For instance, people who speak more than one language may understand more in one language than another.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Use plain simple language. Avoid jargon, service speak, abbreviations, acronyms and sarcasm. Be careful with metaphor. If you need an interpreter - use one.



WRITTEN LANGUAGE

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding it is possible to help support people to understand the written word. There is a great deal of advice available about creating accessible information. Remember information is only truly accessible when it is person centred. Not everyone will understand something because it has pictures or symbols added.

EXPRESSION

Some languages are only spoken and there is no written format or the written format is not widely used.



TOP TIP

Try pictures on the left hand side and short simple sentences on the right of the page. Consider the pictures, do they match what's trying to be conveyed? Only use them if they add meaning.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

A type of some information may work better than having something translated where not many people use the written form of the language. Various symbols and photo packages can help make written information easier to follow.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

UNDERSTANDING

EXPRESSION

RESOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

www.easyinfo.org.uk

www.plainenglish.co.uk

www.mencap.org.uk (see the booklet to download -
Am I Making Myself Clear)

IMAGES

www.changepeople.co.uk

www.mayer-johnson.com

www.widgit.com

www.photosymbols.com

www.inspiredservices.org.uk

Further copies of this book are available as a free download from www.valuingpeople.gov.uk and www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk or are available to buy from Inclusion Distribution, www.inclusiononline.co.uk

Care Services Improvement Partnership **CSIP**

Valuing People
Support Team

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