

Communicating with Riders in an RDA Setting

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What is communication?

Communication involves:

- *Speaking*
- *Hearing*
- *Listening*
- *Understanding*
- *Social skills*
- *Reading*
- *Writing*
- *Using voice*

Communication Impairment

What is communication impairment?

20% of four year old children have difficulty understanding and using language

28% of teachers take time off work each year because of voice problems

Children with a language impairment are six times more likely to have a reading problem than children without

14% of 15 year olds have only basic literacy skills

13, 000 Australians use electronic communication aids to get their message across

There is a high correlation between communication difficulties and poor mental health

What is communication impairment?

People who have difficulty communicating may require assistance with:

- Speech:
 - Eg. A child who doesn't say words clearly, or an adult who slurs words after an accident
- Language:
 - Eg. A child who has trouble understanding and following instructions or an adult who can't find the right words after a stroke
- Literacy
- Voice
 - Eg. A person who frequently loses their voice or a person who has had surgery for throat cancer
- Fluency

Acknowledgement: Speech Pathology Australia: <https://speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/>

What is communication impairment?

People who have difficulty communicating may require assistance with:

- Social communication
 - Interpreting the context of a situation
 - Understanding non-verbal information
 - Understanding social rules of communication

Acknowledgement: Speech Pathology Australia: <https://speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/>

Types of Communication

How do our Participants communicate?

1. Verbally
2. Non-Verbally
3. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) user

What is Verbal Communication?

The use of sounds or words to convey a message to another person.

What is Verbal Communication?

Case Example 5 year old

- Asks questions
- Answers questions using words
- Has a growing vocabulary including: naming words, action words, descriptive words, etc

Case example 20 month old

- Says 10 words
- Babbles lots of sounds
- “Talks” but difficult to interpret message

What is Non-Verbal Communication?

- Eye contact
- Directional eye movement
- Smile
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Gestures
 - Thumbs up
 - Head nod
 - Head shake
 - Key Word Sign

Group Activity 1 – Non-verbal Communication

1. Allocate roles to each person:
 1. Communicator
 2. Listener
 3. Observer
2. Read the scenario on your card
3. Communicate your message to the Listener without using words

Considerations:

- Communicator: How did you get your message across?
- Listener: How easy/difficult was it to understand your communication partner's message?
- Observer: What did you see? Were there any communication breakdowns? If so, how were they managed?

If you have extra time...

Swap roles within your group and choose another scenario on your card

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Aided AAC	Unaided AAC
Any external item used to aid communication	Any communication technique that does not require the use of an external aid
High technology system Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speech generating device- Computer- Mobile phone- Tablet	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Eye contact- Facial expression- Body language- Gestures- Manual sign
Low/light technology system Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Object symbols- Communication boards- Key-ring mini cards	

Receptive Language

Refers to comprehension or understanding what others say.

These skills help us make sense of:

- What we hear
- What we read

Who accesses RDA programs?

Typical Participants accessing our service

- Varied function and ability
- Varied cognition
- Varied speech and language abilities

Everyone is an individual!

Intake Process

- Ask:
 - How does the Participant communicate?
 - Verbally
 - Non-verbally
 - AAC
 - Does the Participant understand 1 step instructions?
 - Does the Participant understand 2 step instructions?

How can we effectively support a Participant's communication if we don't find out how they actually communicate?

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Experience difficulties with:
 - Verbal and non-verbal communication
 - Initiating and maintaining reciprocal social relationships
- Display restricted and repetitive patterns of interest and behaviours

Autism Spectrum Disorder cont.

- Case Example 7 year old child
 - Babbled frequently as a baby
 - Said his first word at 12 months of age
 - Continued to meet all of his speech and language milestones throughout preschool
 - Very chatty child...
 - Started school at 6 years
 - Had trouble making friends
 - Couldn't initiate or maintain a conversation
 - Asked inappropriate questions
 - Poor awareness of social cues such as: maintaining personal space, making appropriate comments

Autism Spectrum Disorder cont

When a child makes these comments...

they are not being naughty

they are not being rude

they do not understand why it can be upsetting to others

they do not understand why it is wrong

So we should not tell them to stop being rude or naughty!

Strategies

Key Word Sign

What is it?

- Combination of manual signs and natural gesture
- Supports communication and language development
- Incorporates signs from the local deaf sign language (Auslan in Australia) BUT
- Uses speech + sign

Acknowledgement: Key Word Sign Australia: <https://kwsa.com.au/what-is-kws/>

Key Word Sign Features

- Use of sign + speech at the same time
- Sign the key words but say the whole sentence
- Use of visual strategies including
 - Body language
 - Natural gestures
 - Facial expression
 - Directionality and placement
 - Some use of finger spelling

Acknowledgement: Key Word Sign Australia: <https://kwsa.com.au/what-is-kws/>

Natural Gesture

What are natural gestures?

- Universally understood body language cues used to clarify a message
- Easily interpreted
- Help to clarify a message or make it more meaningful

Natural Gesture Examples

- Hello/Goodbye
- Yes/No
- Good job
- Be quiet
- I don't know
- Come here
- What's the time?
- Blow a kiss
- Stop/Wait
- Big/Little

Observe Wait Listen

Observe:

Watch the Participant

Sometimes they will initiate a clear intentional effort to communicate using words, sounds, gestures or signs

Wait:

Stay silent for up to 10 seconds!!!

Listen:

Listen with your ears and eyes – the response may be non-verbal

Allocate Roles for Volunteers

- Coach
- Leader
 - Leads the horse
- Primary Side Walker
 - Communicates with the Rider
- Secondary Side Walker
 - Supports the Rider

Use Labelled Praise

- Be specific
- Praise what the participant has done
 - Good talking
 - Great holding
 - Good matching
- Avoid words such as:
 - Lovely
 - Beautiful

Choice questions

- Use choice questions
 - My turn or your turn
 - Red or blue
 - Monkey or tiger puzzle

Lesson Planning to Support Communication

Lesson Planning: Information

1. How much information am I communicating?
 1. *Participants I want you to grab a ball and hold it whilst you walk along the long side then choose a coloured funnel to put it in*
 - VS
 2. *Choose 1 ball then put it in a (blue) funnel*

Sentence 2 is far easier for our Participants to understand and successfully complete.

Lesson Planning: Natural Gesture

2. Am I able to use natural gesture to support my instructions?

1. *Put 1 ball in the bucket.*

Natural gestures for: counting, **in**

2. *Look at me everyone.*

Natural gestures for: look, me

Lesson Planning: Vocabulary

3. Am I using words that mean successful completion is achievable?

Group Activity 2 - Vocabulary

1. Read the words provided
2. Allocate the words to the column you believe they fit:

Easy

Challenging

Considerations:

- How easy/difficult are these words to understand?
- Are there better, or alternative, words that could be used instead?

Communication Breakdown

What does a communication breakdown look like?

- Safety issue
- Loud vocalisations
- Hitting
- Screaming
- Spitting

Participants are not “being naughty” when they exhibit these behaviours. It is our responsibility to identify the breakdown and adjust it.

How do I fix a communication breakdown?

- Safety comes first
- Repeat the instruction
- Use different words to communicate the same message
- Simplify the instruction/message

Key Considerations

Key communication considerations

- Communicating effectively is *essential* to engaging with our Participants
- Allocate roles to volunteers so that the cognitive load is reduced
- Ask questions about communication at intake
- Plan for communication breakdowns and how to manage them in the moment

The end

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