

SAFE HAVEN CONNECT CIC · REGISTERED CIC

SPEAKING WITHOUT SPEAKING

AAC, alternative communication, communication access and finding the ways I express myself
best

NEW DISABILITY WORKBOOK SERIES - BOOK 11

This workbook belongs to:

Communication is bigger than speech. People communicate through words, typing, AAC, signs, symbols, gestures, facial expression, movement, pictures, behaviour and many combinations of these.

Welcome

Speech is one form of communication, not a measure of intelligence. This workbook is about finding communication methods that give you more choice, control and access.

The easiest way for me to communicate is:

1. How Do I Communicate?

Tick every method you use - even if you only use it sometimes.

- ☐ Speech
- ☐ Typing / text
- ☐ AAC app or device
- ☐ Communication board
- ☐ Pictures / symbols
- ☐ Sign language / signs
- ☐ Gesture
- ☐ Pointing
- ☐ Facial expression
- ☐ Writing by hand
- ☐ Body movement
- ☐ Yes / no responses
- ☐ Eye gaze

My notes / what applies to me:

2. Communication Changes With Capacity

Your easiest communication method may change with fatigue, overload, pain, anxiety or environment.

Situation	Communication that works best
High energy	
Tired	
Sensory overload	
Anxious	
In pain	
Shutdown / very low capacity	
With unfamiliar people	

3. When Speech Is Easy

Notice the conditions that support spoken communication if you use speech.

Speech tends to be easier when:

4. When Speech Becomes Difficult

Speech difficulty can be situational or ongoing.

- ☐ I am overloaded
- ☐ I am exhausted
- ☐ I am anxious
- ☐ I am in pain
- ☐ Too many people are talking
- ☐ I am rushed
- ☐ I cannot find words
- ☐ I need longer processing time
- ☐ The question is too broad
- ☐ I am unfamiliar with the person

My notes / what applies to me:

5. My Preferred Communication

You do not have to use the same method in every situation.

Situation	My preferred method	What helps
Home		
Friends		
Community		
Healthcare		
Work / learning		
Phone / online		
Emergency / overload		

6. AAC Is Communication

AAC means augmentative and alternative communication. It can support or replace speech and can be low-tech or high-tech.

- ☐ AAC app
- ☐ Dedicated speech device
- ☐ Alphabet board
- ☐ Symbol board
- ☐ Picture cards
- ☐ Communication book
- ☐ Text-to-speech
- ☐ Written notes
- ☐ Yes / no cards
- ☐ Choice board

My notes / what applies to me:

7. My Useful Words and Messages

Think about messages you need often.

I need to communicate...	My words / symbol / method
Yes	
No	
Help	
Stop	
Pain	
Toilet	
Hungry / thirsty	
Break	
I do not understand	
I need more time	

8. Saying Yes, No and Not Sure

Reliable ways to express choice are fundamental.

My clearest ways of communicating YES, NO and NOT SURE are:

9. Asking for a Break

Communication access includes being able to stop or pause.

Ways I can communicate “I need a break”:

10. Saying I Do Not Understand

People should clarify rather than assume agreement.

- ☐ Please say that another way.
- ☐ Please write it down.
- ☐ One question at a time.
- ☐ I need more time.
- ☐ I do not understand yet.
- ☐ Can you show me?
- ☐ Please give me an example.

My notes / what applies to me:

11. Processing Time

Silence does not necessarily mean there is no answer.

What other people should do while I am processing:

12. Communication in Healthcare

Appointments can create extra communication pressure.

How I prefer healthcare staff to communicate with me:

How I communicate pain / symptoms:

What I need when answering questions:

What information I need in writing:

What a supporter may help me communicate:

13. Communication in Groups

Group conversations can move quickly and become inaccessible.

What would make group communication easier for me:

14. Communication at Work, Volunteering or Learning

Different formats can allow someone to show what they know.

Task	Communication format that helps
Receiving instructions	
Asking questions	
Meetings / groups	
Giving updates	
Learning something new	
Giving feedback	
Requesting an adjustment	

15. Communication During Overload or Shutdown

Plan a low-demand method before you need it.

When speech / communication becomes harder, people may notice:

The easiest way to ask me questions is:

My simplest reliable communication method is:

Please do:

Please do NOT:

16. My Communication Cards

Create short messages that can be shown rather than explained repeatedly.

I need more time	My wording / symbol:
Please write it down	My wording / symbol:
I need a quiet place	My wording / symbol:
Please do not touch me	My wording / symbol:
I need a break	My wording / symbol:
I communicate differently when overloaded	My wording / symbol:

17. People Who Understand Me

Communication partners matter as much as communication tools.

Person	What they understand about my communication	How they help

18. What Good Communication Support Looks Like

Respectful support follows the person rather than guessing for them.

- ☐ Speak to me, not only the person with me
- ☐ Give me time
- ☐ Accept AAC as my voice
- ☐ Do not pretend to understand if you do not
- ☐ Ask before helping
- ☐ Use clear language
- ☐ Do not remove my device
- ☐ Offer written / visual information
- ☐ Check meaning rather than assuming

My notes / what applies to me:

19. Communication Boundaries

You are allowed to control what you share and how.

- ☐ I do not want to answer that.
- ☐ That is private.
- ☐ I need someone I trust here.
- ☐ I want this information in writing.
- ☐ I need time before deciding.
- ☐ Please stop asking me questions for now.

My notes / what applies to me:

20. My Communication Experiment

Try one communication support in a real situation.

Communication situation I want to make easier:

Method / support I will try:

What I need the other person to do:

What happened?

Did I feel more understood?

What will I change next time?

21. Finding My Voice

Having a voice means being able to influence what happens to you, whether or not that voice is spoken.

Things I want to be able to express more clearly or more often:

22. My Communication Passport

A concise page you can choose to share with staff, supporters, groups or services.

My main communication methods	
How to ask me questions	
How much processing time I need	
How I communicate yes / no	
When communication becomes harder	
What helps me communicate	
Please avoid	
Important things to know about my AAC / communication	

23. My Quick Communication Board

Personalise these boxes with words, symbols, pictures or gestures that work for you.

YES	NO	NOT SURE	HELP
STOP	BREAK	PAIN	TOILET
HUNGRY	THIRSTY	TOO LOUD	TOO BRIGHT
I NEED TIME	WRITE IT DOWN	I WANT TO LEAVE	OTHER

24. My Voice, My Rules

Communication counts even when it is not spoken.

I want people to listen when I communicate by:

I want more choice about:

I want people to stop assuming:

A communication right that matters to me:

Something I want to say more often:

Notes

This workbook is a general disability-focused communication and self-advocacy resource. AAC and communication needs are highly individual. People who need personalised AAC assessment, access methods, vocabulary design or communication support may benefit from appropriately qualified speech and language therapy and other relevant specialist services.

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