



Communication and children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC)

Certain styles of communication are particularly effective with autistic children.

- It is important to have the child's full attention when you speak to them. Try to use their name so they can know you are talking to them and if you can, try to reduce the background noise so they can focus on your words.
- Keep language simple. Use only necessary words. For example instead of saying 'would you please come and sit over here on the chair', point to the chair and say 'Ben, time to sit down'.
- Be positive. It is really important to tell your child what they should be doing, not what they shouldn't... for example instead of saying 'don't throw the ball' you could say 'put it here'.
- Provide extra thinking time for information to be processed. Some people with autism may process auditory (through their ears) information differently or more slowly than other people. Therefore it may be necessary to allow extra time for your child to respond to a request or question. WAIT.
- Use visual supports. Some people with autism have particularly strong visual skills and may understand information that is presented to them visually better than information processed through spoken language. A hand held, card, picture, sign, symbol may help. You could take photos with your smartphone and show your child as you go round the shop for instance to help them see what they need to buy.
- Intensive Interaction (II) and early communication techniques can sometimes help to bridge the gap between those moments when your child is experiencing anxiety or overload. Use of calm copying actions, reinforcing emotions, allowing your child to lead the communication exchange, can often help them to calm enough to communicate their wants and needs effectively. Using II techniques with all children can enhance their social communication and ability to make friends.
- Using gestural support, or even some sign language, can help your child to understand what is being asked of them. E.g. If saying 'John, coat' doesn't have the desired effect, repeat (after a short time for processing) the words and mime the action of putting on the coat.

If we try to use these strategies when we communicate with our children it will mean we are able to give them the opportunity to become better communicators.