

## Supporting (Improving) Communication

*A Communication Hub resource*

(electronic bubbles pop)

(note swooshes)

(gentle upbeat music)

- Slow down. Pause, and listen, for me. Just I'm talking.
- Communication access is important. Because the last thing we want to see is a person only able to communicate a message when those stars align. Yeah? So, we need good access, and I'm thinking environmental access and I'm thinking communication partner access, so that they can communicate broadly.
- Your role as a communication partner is to only relay the message, not put your feeling on what being said. People don't know what is going on in my brain and should not cut me off or speak for me, unless I give permission.
- Communication partners can best support AAC users, by firstly giving them a lot of wait time. Giving them that time to be able to come up with their message.
- What effective communication means is that the person is supported, to be able to communicate their message and get their message across. And also, they're able to understand the message of the person who they're communicating with. So our role as speech pathologists, I think, is to support people to be effective communicators, in whatever modality they choose.
- Having access to different modalities is so important. Some days I can't move very much at all so I would use my iPad on those days because it's bigger and easier to navigate. But communication access is much bigger issue than just what modalities we use.
- When we make communication only accessible at certain times, only when you've got your communication book, only when your device is charged, only when that really good, really committed support worker is on, then we set people up for communication breakdown.
- We need to be giving people that access. We need to make sure that it's culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that it's supportive for neurodiverse populations, that it's inclusive for people with different needs.
- I think one of the most important is particularly, as you get older, face to face, speaking a bit slower than perhaps what you would normally speak, and to try and articulate your words a bit better, rather than just race through something.
- It's fundamentally important to work with the support networks around a person. Practically sometimes, because that's the network, those are the people, with whom I can make the biggest difference in the shortest amount of time.
- Observe your communication partner, and see what is the most, what style or what are they doing to communicate? Are they using nonverbal cues? Are they using an AAC device? Are they using some other form of communication? And I guess having a go would be the most simple thing.
- I think the most useful tool for supporting Leo is visual clues. Because he's 100% a visual learner. And with that tool, he's been improving a lot.

- That we start looking at shops as being: "Is this shop a communication accessible shop?" in the same way as we would look at, you know, are there ramps or are there wheelchairs spots for a person with a physical disability? What has this shop got in place for a person who comes in with a communication disability or communication difference?

- It would be easier for me to go to the shops if it was just quiet and not a lot of people, but some people. And, if we all, if we stick to a certain route so I know what we're doing, even make a plan before we go, because yeah. Maybe turn like turn the music down because they normally have it like a very high volume.

- A good communication partner, supporting somebody learning to use AAC will model messages using that person's device. So showing them messages or communication that they may need or want to be able to say so they may need to be able to be competent and fluent in using that AAC system themselves. So that person learning to use AAC can watch somebody else using their system. It's like learning any language. You have to be immersed in the language in order to learn it.

- How do you talk to somebody in a way that perhaps for example, using simple language, but you're not talking down to them?

- I was made aware that they do a video interview. So that's, and there's a time limit. Right? So two minutes per question. I'm like, "Hey Paul, but by the way so, if I like take that into you and I'm stuttering, does it just cut off in two minutes?" "Good question." So then I was able to educate them about stuttering. They now have the option that if you indicate that you have a speech communication disability like a stutter, they will double the time for you to four minutes. So, that's where I think, that's the communication rights that we're looking for.

- It's about having more awareness. And we are currently working on getting the communication access symbol internationally recognized. Just like the wheelchair symbol means physical access, we want to make places communication accessible. But that's a mighty job. But if we can at least educate big corporate companies, especially hotel chains, that communication accessibility isn't a front desk I can't even be seen from, let alone heard.

(gentle upbeat music)