

HOW TO ADJUST YOUR COMMUNICATION

You can help children by adjusting the way YOU communicate.

Say the child's name first, to get his/her attention!

You need to get the child's attention, so that he/she realises that you are talking to him/her. Always say the child's name first,

E.g. "John, dinner time."

Reduce your language

Adjust the words that you use, to suit the child's level of communication development.

Use key words only for a child at an early stage (or when a more verbal child is upset or anxious, as a child's level of understanding falls when this happens.)

E.g. Don't say, "Come on Sally, hurry up now, switch off the computer, it's time for PE."

Instead say, "Computer off, PE time."

Say things in the order in which they will happen

The child will understand more easily if you say things in the order they will happen.

E.g. Don't say, "I'll read you a story after you've put on your pyjamas and brushed your teeth." Instead say, "Pyjamas on, brush teeth, then story."

Give choices

The child will understand more easily if you give him/her a clear choice.

E.g. Don't say, "What would you like for snack?" Instead say, "Banana or yoghurt?"

Tell your child what to do, not what not to do

Try to give positive instructions, and avoid saying simply "no."

E.g. Don't say, "No, don't touch that vase, you'll break it."

Instead say, "Give me the vase. Let's read a story."

Use gesture, objects, pictures and symbols to help your child to understand

Some children are visual learners and will understand more easily if we use visual cues along with our speech. They have difficulty understanding tone of voice or facial expression, but using gesture, objects, pictures or symbols to reinforce what you say can greatly help in getting your message across.

Use "finished" to help your child understand the duration of an event

You can use the word "finished" to praise and encourage the child when he/she has completed a task, or when a feared activity, like a haircut, is over. You can also take control when the child is involved in an inappropriate behaviour, by insisting that it is "finished." Using the word "finished" consistently will help the child to understand the concept of time and help to keep him/her calm.

Use "then" to help your child understand the sequence of events

Using the word "then" to link events will also help the child to understand the concept of time and the sequence of activities.

E.g. "Lunch then computer." "Coat on, then car, then swings."

Use questions only when the child really has a choice

E.g., "Would you like to paint?" implies a choice, where as "Time to paint!" does not.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY!