

COMMUNICATION

Techniques to Try With Nonverbal or Preverbal Children

If your child is pre-verbal or nonverbal, there are lots of ways to help foster communication. These techniques don't take the place of speech therapy or other kinds of therapies unique to their needs, but they are supplemental things you can do to encourage communication in various ways.

Keep Talking

Even if their repetitive language is delayed or minimal, keep talking and narrating to them. Include them in conversations and don't talk about them like they aren't there.

Pay Attention

Pay attention to nonverbal signals and behaviors, as well as facial expressions. People can communicate in a lot of different ways—spoken words are only a part of this. Your child might be communicating emotions, wants, and needs to you in other ways that you might miss otherwise.

Pause

After you say something or ask a question, pause for a few moments, just as you would in a conversation with a friend or someone who is verbal. This allows your child some time to answer you in whatever way she or he can. It also models proper basic communication skills for your child.

Sit at Eye Level

Communicating with your child at eye level puts you right in their field of view and allows your child to see your hands, face, and mouth easier. This can help them interpret what you are communicating through your body language as well.

Get Smart

There are multiple apps for smartphones and tablets that can help with communication via games and learning exercises. Some even help turn your device into an assistive communication device.

Use Cues

You can present choices to your child. Label three different snacks A, B, and C, for instance, and have them pick what they want by pointing to a letter. Another option is to get flashcards with pictures on them and have your child show you what they want, or make the choice that they want. PECS (picture exchange communication system) cards are helpful for nonverbal individuals to communicate with as well.

Don't Underestimate Play

Playtime can be a great time to work on communication, especially with games or toys that involve imitation or encourage cause and effect.

Use Simple Language

Instead of using complicated, multi-word phrases, use one or two-word phrases to label things and give direction.



Use Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of the deaf community. It uses a combination of hand movements, facial expressions, and body posture. Shown in the background are hand gestures for the alphabet. Learn more from this website we found helpful. www.youtube.com/learnhowtosign

Use Alternative Methods of Communication

Children with non-verbal autism, for example, often find that they can express emotions with dancing or art or other hand movements. Try finger painting or sensory activities with them to see if that helps with their self-expression.

Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet to get a nonverbal or pre-verbal child to talk, and each child responds differently to techniques and therapies. It's important to share what you do with your child's therapists and care team and ask them for suggestions to explore something you may not have considered before.

It can be challenging sometimes to communicate with a nonverbal child, and it's important to remember to stay flexible and calm. Nonverbal children are often very attuned to the emotions of those around them, especially those of their parents or caregivers. People with Autism have a dream just like everyone else.

It is hard to communicate with nonverbal children, but having a support system is incredibly helpful. Keep practicing with your child, and eventually, you'll find what resonates and allows for the best communication.



This tip sheet was created by Rockin Happy Rocks—

We help support Autism Awareness

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