

Facilitating People to Communicate Their Messages

Lesson 2: Handout
Communication Assistant Course



Communication Disabilities Access Canada

Assisting a person who uses a letter board

2

Find out:

- How the person communicates yes and no
- If they have important gestures and body language that you should know
- Where they keep their board and if you can get it for them
- Where they want you to sit when facilitating their communication
- How they point to items on their board
- Where they want you to put their board
- If they want you to hold their board in place when they use it
- If they have written instructions on how they communicate

Assisting a person who uses a letter board

3

Find out:

- If they want you to say each item out loud when they point to letters
- If you can write down what they are communicating
- How they will let you know if you have misinterpreted their message
- If they want you to guess what they are spelling
- If they want you to read the full sentence aloud and confirm that it is correct after they have communicated their full message



Assisting a person who uses pictures and symbols

4

- Spend time with the person, getting to know them and how they communicate
- With their permission, get suggestions from people who communicate well with them
- Find out how they communicate using pictures, symbols, body language and gestures
- Ask where to sit when facilitating their communication
- Find out how they point or select items
- Ask if they have instructions on how they communicate



Assisting a person who uses pictures and symbols

5

- If the person does not have a way to communicate a word that they want to convey, ask them to give you clues and guess.
- If their selections do not make immediate sense, rearrange the words they give you into possible sentences.
- If you cannot guess what the person is trying to communicate, ask if you can contact someone who might know.



Assisting a person who uses a Device

6

- Stand or sit in front or to the side of the person – don't look over someone's shoulder unless they ask you to do this
- Wait for the person to finish their message. Do not interrupt or guess without permission. The person may want to finish spelling the full word because the full sentence will not sound right on the device if the words are not finished.
- Tell the person if you don't understand and if necessary, prompt them to repeat the message or ask if you can read the screen on the device



Assisting a Person who Has Unclear Speech

7

- Reduce or eliminate any background noise and distractions
- Tell the person if you don't understand
- Ask the person what they do when not understood.
- Ask the person if they can repeat the word, slow down, say it a different way, spell or write it down, point to a picture or type it on a device.
- Ask the person to tell you what they are communicating about and guess what they might be saying



Assisting a person who has difficulty finding the words they want to say

8

- Find out the topic (e.g. Are you talking about a person?)
- Write down or say 2-3 options the person might be trying to say (e.g. Eric? John? Tom?)
- Show photographs, pictures
- Draw pictures
- Show diagrams, maps, calendars and objects



Tips for when you don't understand a message

9

- Tell the person what you understand so far
- Ask if you can guess
- Find out the topic of the conversation
- Ask the person to start over
- Ask the person if they can communicate it in another way
- Ask the person if they can give you any clues
- If it is important, ask if you can contact someone they know who might be able to help