Autism Association of WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dads Autism Connect

Support Communication

Create Opportunities

Be Like a Commentator

Model and Recast

The Rule of Five

Quality Questions

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5 Communication Strategies

1 Create Opportunities

One of the first things that we need to do is create meaningful communication opportunities. Opportunities should be **authentic**, use **real situations** and **materials**, and look and **feel age appropriate**. An opportunity to communicate might start with a **choice** (like "The swing or the slide?"), or a **temptation** (like popping your child on the swing and then waiting for them to give you an indication that they want a push!).

Remember to link in with your Therapist for ways to create communication opportunities for your child.

2 Be Like a Commentator

Talk about what's going on! ***Self-talk*** is when you describe what **you're** thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing. In ***Parallel-talk*** you link words directly to **your child's** actions and experiences. It's a bit like being a sports commentator giving the 'play by play' in real-time. Not only does this provide valuable language enrichment, but it can also help your child to understand that different people have different perspectives. Remember, communication is a two-way street, so balance is important—It's not just about us talking a lot! Follow your child's lead, become familiar with their cues, go slow, and give them a chance to tell or show you things too. Communication is more than just talking, it's connection.

3 Model and Recast

Modeling is when you provide opportunities for your child to hear speech and language used in the right form and context through everyday routines and conversations. It involves using **slow, clear speech, short sentences, appropriate words, and lots of repetition. Recasting** is a type of modelling—simply **rephrasing what your child says** to you correctly while confirming that you understand what they mean. Recasting allows your child to hear more accurate and descriptive language and gives them loads of opportunities to listen to and figure out how the language system works. You recast your child's language by adding something to it, rather than correcting them or insisting that they repeat the correct form if they've made a mistake. When done in the right way recasting helps keep the conversation going and shows your child that you're really listening to them.

Remember to link in with your Therapist for advice on how to use modeling and recasting with your child.

4 The Rule of Five

This is all about the power of the pause! Just **waiting** a little while can often be enough to tempt your child to try and make something happen.

It's also important to wait because it gives your child time to process information and formulate a response. If you've asked a question or given an instruction, remember **The Rule of Five.** Pause for as long as it takes you to repeat the question or instruction **five times** in your own head. This will give your child enough time to make sense of what you've said and respond. If they don't, **then** repeat or try asking the question or giving the instruction in a different way. Supplementing the message with a visual support like a gesture or picture can also help.

5 Quality Questions

Expose your child to a variety of questions **(like who, what, where, how, and why)**, not only ones that have a yes/no answer. This can help them to expand their vocabulary and use language to make sense of the world around them (predict, infer, and draw conclusions).

Open ended questions like "I wonder what would happen if…?" or "What do you think about…?" are great for extending communication. Remember, you can incorporate other strategies like self-talk and parallel-talk to model the answer if your child doesn't know how to respond.

Try to keep a balance between the number of questions you ask, and other things you say. In short, ask questions, but not too many!

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