

# Communication Partner Techniques

We all can benefit from support from our communication partners - asking questions, providing words when we can't think of them or prompting us to provide more detail. The issues with language experienced by those with aphasia and other diagnoses make the support of communication partners not just beneficial but essential. The successfulness of a communication interaction is not the sole responsibility of the person with complex communication needs. The communication partner is equally responsible for successful interactions. Use the three tips listed below to better support communication and independence.

## **Tip 1:** Create a Positive Communication Environment.

Our attitude, the comments that we make and the way in which we respond to the communication attempts from adults with aphasia can have either a positive or negative influence on the successfulness of communication.

A positive communication environment encourages successful interaction through the attitudes and actions of the communication partner.

A positive communication environment is...

- Where all types of communication is encouraged (e.g., pointing, sign language, speech, AAC device, body language, facial expressions, etc.).
- Where or when help is provided when communication becomes difficult (e.g., appropriate cueing, partner augmented input, wait time, drawing a picture, etc.).

When working in a positive communication environment, minimal time is spent on things that are difficult. When difficult things occur, an action plan is created to address the issues. By focusing on positive results, the AAC user is able to:

- Be more independent
- Create more and better communication messages
- Build deeper relationships; regaining their former social roles as much as possible

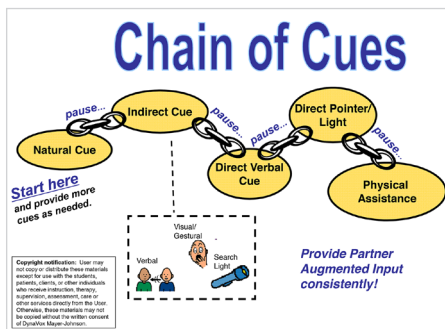
## **Tip 2:** Support Communication Through Partner Augmented Input.

The purpose of partner augmented input is to build receptive language and support understanding by modeling the use of the AAC system. The expectation is that expressive language and functional communication will follow. The AAC user should be encouraged, but not required, to use the device during these interactions. Communication partners should use the device by pointing to the symbols and words on the device while simultaneously talking. Keep in mind that the communication partner must know where the vocabulary is located on the device in order to provide partner augmented input during interaction. Partner augmented input can:

- Increase comprehension (Drager et al., 2006)
- Provide models for appropriate language and communication (Calfiero, 1998)
- Increase production of multi-symbol/word messages (Binger and Light, 2007)
- Improve utterance length and complexity (Bruno and Trembath, 2006) Partner augmented input may feel uncomfortable at first, but with practice it will begin to feel more natural and you will be well on your way to better supporting your client or loved one during communication interactions.

### **Tip 3:** Use the Chain of Cues to Encourage Communication Independence

When teaching new skills, we should use a “least to most” prompting hierarchy to elicit a communicative response. This begins with providing the least directive cue and progressively become more directive. The end goal is for the AAC user to respond with the least amount of cueing possible. The chain of cues can encourage independent communication through a planned cueing strategy.



To learn more about all of these communication partner techniques and to watch videos of these strategies in action, visit the Implementation Toolkit on the DynaVox website.

<http://www.dynavoxtech.com/implementation-toolkit/learning-paths/list/?id=3>