



Communicating with symbols: how to teach adults

“If you expect a person to learn Spanish, they should be immersed in environments in which the Spanish language is used. The same applies for people who are expected to communicate using AAC. To do so, first they must be immersed in an environment ‘speaking AAC’” (Sennott, Light & McNaughton, 2016)

What is Modelling?

Modelling is when you talk to someone using their communication system to show them how they could use it back. It involves pointing to relevant symbols as you speak.

Modelling is a strategy that is commonly used to teach someone how to communicate using symbols in their communication system.

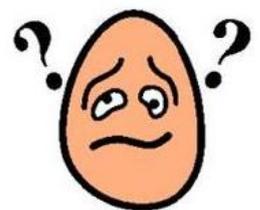
Modelling is most effective when used in lots of communication environments e.g. at the park, work, home, shops, etc. It's important that the interaction reflects natural conversation. It can take time though for AAC users to begin to use their communication systems so don't be disheartened if they don't use it straight away; keep modelling!

Modelling has different names like Aided Language Stimulation or Aided Augmented Input.

Why Model?

Modelling can help in lots of ways such as:

1. Helping an AAC user to learn where words/symbols are
2. Showing an AAC user that all forms of communication are valid
3. Helping an AAC user understand what is being said
4. Helping communication partners to slow down their speech
5. Showing an AAC user that communication system/s can be used to communicate everywhere



How to Model?

Point to / select symbols on the communication system as you talk. You do not need to choose a symbol for every word you say. If someone is not yet using their AAC system then you may model 1 or 2 key words per sentence you speak. If someone is beginning to use their AAC system 1 symbol at a time then you may model 2 or 3 symbols per sentence you speak.

How are your

I went to the shops yesterday

That's very funny!



How are you?

Tell me about what you did

Let's talk outside today

Underlined text indicates the words you might model on the device

How Can You Get Started?

- **Get involved:** Sit down and have a chat. Even if you don't know how to use the communication system perfectly, give it a go. That is how they will learn too!
- **Get friends and family involved too:** The more people who know how to use the communication system, the better. This gives the AAC user more people to interact with!
- **Start small:** Learning AAC may take some time. Start by introducing the words that are meaningful to the user and help the user to get their point across quickly and easily.
- **Lead by example:** Use the communication system. The more they see it being used the more they will learn to use it and see it as their voice.
- **Be aware of the support available:** There are a range of tutorials, webinars, user manuals and support groups online about how to use specific communication devices. Keep an eye out for community groups that support adults to develop their skills using their device with other people who are also learning.
- **Give it time:** AAC users may need more time to generate a response using their communication system. Give them time to think about what they want to say and to find the words in their system.
- **Create opportunities to talk:** The more people and situations the AAC user is exposed to, the more language they will experience and be able to associate with real situations.
- **Mistakes are ok:** When using the communication system, it helps the AAC user to see others make and correct their mistakes. This shows that mistakes are ok and how they can fix theirs.

Useful Links

- The Do's and Don'ts of AAC <http://www.assistiveware.com/dos-and-donts-aac-modelling>
- Modelling, AAC Style <http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/modeling-aac-style/>
- AAC Common Questions; <https://ilc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/AAC-Common-Questions-A4-version.pdf>
- Aided Language Stimulation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIFNMky22-U&t=1s>
- Daniel's Story; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6bWTRyQMGw&t=2s>

References

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- Sennott, S. C., Light, J. C., & McNaughton, D. (2016). AAC modelling intervention research review. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 41(2), 101-115.