

COMMUNICATING

6

**This module covers
the following information:**

Communicating

How we communicate and
why it is important

Helping your child develop good
communication skills

1. Show how to encourage your
child to make eye contact
2. Show how to encourage your
child to take turns
3. Show how to encourage your
child to make choices

Other forms of communication

Additional information on children
presenting challenging behaviour

Monitoring progress

Sharing emotions and feelings



COMMUNICATING



Materials

Flipchart, paper, pens, toffees, empty crisp packets, other everyday objects with different textures or sounds such as rattles, squeaky toys, ball, doll, cell phone, 2 picture boards for the tea game, toy tea set, pictures 6.01 and 6.01, 6.02, 6.03 and 6.04 on card (photocopied and cut out for group work).



Icebreaker

In pairs: ask for a volunteer to put three or four toffees in their mouth and start chewing. Whilst they are chewing they must tell the group their name, favourite food, and what they would do with the money if they won the lottery.



Ask

Ask the speaker how it felt to do this, and ask the rest of the group how they felt listening.

The speaker will have difficulties expressing themselves with a sweet in their mouth and everyone else will find it hard understanding them.

Children with developmental disabilities often find it difficult to speak clearly, which means the cycle of expression and understanding often breaks down.



Explain

Explain what we will learn together today.

By the end of module 6, you will:

1. Understand what communication is and why it is so important.
2. Be more confident to help your child understand better.
3. Learn what you and your family can do to help your child to communicate.

HOW WE COMMUNICATE AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT



Ask

"What do you think communication is?"

This discussion should include listening to others, understanding what they are saying, telling others what you think, want or feel.

Communication is:

- Understanding what others say to us.
- Expressing our thoughts, needs and feelings.
- A 2-way process.
- A basic human right.

Discuss the ways we communicate:

- Talking
- Smiling
- Pointing
- Laughing
- Others e.g. drawing, reading, writing and singing



Activity 1

Split into groups of three. Give one person in each group one of the following sentences (either by writing it down or whispering it):

- My foot is painful.
- I want to go outside.
- I am tired.
- I am bored.

The person goes back to their group and tries to 'explain' the sentence without using words. They can use sounds, facial expressions and gestures (non-verbal communication). Tell the group they need to work out what the volunteer is trying to say.

After two minutes the person moves on to another group and tries to explain to them.



Ask

Regroup and ask:

"How did the person communicate what they meant? Was it easier or harder to explain as you went to different groups?"

Use image 6.01 to explain the cycle of communication.



Discuss the communication techniques used and what others can be used, making sure the following are covered:

- Voice: crying, whining.
- Facial expression: smiling, frowning, look of pain, big eyes.
- Body movement: nodding head, shrugging shoulders, turning themselves towards or away from someone or something.
- Gestures: waving goodbye.
- Pointing: using eyes or a finger.

Facilitator Tips:

In Uganda, the caregivers often commented that they felt their child was disturbing them with the noises that they make. It is important to emphasise that these basic noises are the start of communication and should be responded to and encouraged.



Ask

“Why is communication important to young children?”

Discuss the following reasons:

- It is an important part of **bonding**.
- **Expressing** our needs and wants.
- Establishing **relationships and making friends**.
- Key in **learning new things**.
- When communicating with a child with development difficulties, the cycle of successful expression and understanding between the two of you often breaks down.



Ask

“What parts of your body do you use to UNDERSTAND a message?”

“What parts of your body do you use to EXPRESS yourself and get a message across?”



Explain

Using a doll, point out the different parts of the body we use in communication, describing the following;

To **understand** what someone is trying to communicate, you need:

- Ears and eyes to hear and see the message.
- The part of your brain that makes sense of what you have heard or seen (intellect).

To **express** yourself you need:

- The intellect to think of what you want to express.
- Control of the mouth and tongue to speak (use the voice).
- Control of your body parts, to point, make gestures etc.



Explain

Explain communication will be harder or easier depending on the severity of the developmental disabilities, because it affects how well your child can think and learn. A child with **no problems thinking and learning**:

- Will understand what others are saying.
- Will think about what to say but her speech may be unclear.
- If her speech is unclear and expressing herself is difficult, people may think she have an intellectual disability even though she doesn't.
- She will need to learn other ways to express herself otherwise her communication cycle breaks down.

If your child **does** have learning difficulties she may find it hard:

- Making sense of what she hears (understanding).
- Thinking about what to communicate (expressing herself).

Speech is generally the easiest way to communicate, but young children with developmental disabilities should be helped to develop **all** methods of communication.

If she struggles to speak clearly, other communication methods can help get her message across, such as eye-pointing, finger pointing, using objects, gestures, picture boards, signing or written language are very helpful.

HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS



Explain

Communication skills develop in a sequence of steps:

- Listening and understanding comes before talking.
- Foundation skills include making eye contact (looking) and listening, taking turns and making choices. Playing is a great way for your child to learn these skills.

Talk to your child.

Even if your child cannot use speech to communicate, don't stop speaking to her. Other family members, friends and neighbours can talk to her too.

Important: Make sure you pay attention to any sign of ear ache in your child. If left untreated this could lead to ear damage and loss of hearing which can cause additional communication problems.

Facilitator Tips:

In the break think about which children you would like to demonstrate eye contact, turn taking and making choices and ask their caregiver if they will be happy to show the rest of the group.



Activity 2

Ask one person to:

1. Show how to encourage your child to make eye contact



Ask

"What did you see the caregiver do? What did you see the child do? What does using our eyes help us to do?"

Ensure the concepts below are covered:

- Hold your face close to your child's face and talk to her. Try to encourage her to look at you.
- Call her name; when she looks at you, praise her by smiling and talking. Use lots of facial expression. Make sure you allow her time to look at you, it may take her a little while at first.
- Sing songs to her.
She will enjoy the rhythm.
- Play Peek-a-Boo.
- Show her different objects. Shiny objects such as a DVD or tin foil will draw her attention. You can also use everyday objects with different textures or sounds. Let her play and explore objects. Talk to her about the different objects.
- Notice the things that your child looks at, if they look towards a person or an object, point to where they are looking and name it for them and show them that you can see what they are paying attention to.





Activity 3

Ask one person to:

2. Show how to encourage your child to take turns

Facilitator Tips:

Caregivers have said that they did not know that it was possible for them to help their children to make choices. This is a good time to explore this and how choice making can work for each family. Everyone enjoyed having their children in the same room so that they could practice.



Ask

"What did you see the caregiver do? What did you see the child do?"

Examples may include:

- Clap your hands and then ask her to clap hers. Help her to clap if she finds it hard on her own or has difficulty understanding.
- Hold a ball in front of her, ask her to wait and then hit the ball.
- Play music. When it stops, wait for a response from your child before switching it on again.
- Play music on the cell phone, then stop the music, or bounce your child on your knee and then stop and wait for a response from her (for example looking at the phone/looking at you/making a noise) before switching it on again/ starting bouncing again.
- Roll/throw a ball between you, or build a tower of little blocks together say eg Mummy's turn...your turn etc.

"What does waiting during play help us to do?"

- Waiting is very important, children with developmental delay are often slow to respond, so give your child plenty of time.
- When she makes a sound, uses facial expression or body movement, copy her and then take turns talking. With babies, imitate their laughter and facial expressions.
- Respond immediately to any attempt she uses to initiate communication.



3. Show how to encourage your child to make choices



Ask

"What did you see the child do? What did you see the caregiver do? How may understanding your child's choice help you and your family? How will your child being understood help her?"

- Give her a choice of things to play with or to eat.
- Show her the things she can choose from – place them in front of her where she can see them best. **Start by offering a choice between two things only**, then with time increase it to three choices.
- For example, hold one object in front of the child and name it. Then take it away and show them the other item and name it. Then take that one away. Now show the child both of the items and ask her to choose. E.g. 'Do you want water or milk?' or 'Do you want the ball or the doll?'

Wait for a response, which could be pointing or looking towards one of the objects. (Children point with their eyes (looking) before they learn to use their hands). Give him the object she is looking at or pointing to immediately and say 'you chose the ball by looking at it, so let's play with the ball'.

Facilitator Tips:

Encourage participants to call their child by her name so that she can recognize her own name, and not just a nickname. Using words and a tone of voice that people would use to talk to each other is helpful to stimulate children to learn more words.



Ask

Ask everyone to summarise the main points, and write them up on the flipchart.

Checklist:

- ✓ Get your child's attention first.
- ✓ Make sure you are both positioned well – facing one another, on the same level, and with your child well supported.
- ✓ Use eye contact.
- ✓ Talk about what is happening around you and what you are doing.
- ✓ Use facial expression and gestures.
- ✓ Take turns, and encourage participation.
- ✓ Offer choices.
- ✓ Praise and encourage – clapping, cheering etc.
- ✓ Do not force her to speak, but encourage any attempt to communicate.
- ✓ Do NOT use baby talk.

Encourage everyone to practice the three types of communication skills you have just demonstrated. Allow them time to play and interact with their child.

OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION



Activity 4

It is not possible to predict the future and no one knows how well your child will communicate when they are older.

Children with developmental difficulties differ a lot in their abilities to understand and express themselves. Many children with developmental difficulties can speak, some less clearly than others. For some children, their speech is not clear enough to communicate and some have no speech at all. It is possible for many to learn how to communicate using other methods than speaking.



Activity 5

Discuss how we can help our children express their needs non-verbally. Reinforce the following:

It is very important to respond immediately when your child tries to communicate.

Using sounds, gestures or facial expressions:

- Watch your child to try and understand what she means when she uses sounds, facial expressions, body movements or gestures.
- Talk to your child about what she needs. Ask her to show you how she communicates things like 'I am hungry' 'I am thirsty' 'I want to rest' 'I am cold' and then practice these together.
- Help her respond 'yes' or 'no' and make choices with gestures. Mold her hands for her if she needs help.

Pointing (using eyes, or hand) or touching:

- Use objects to show your child what she is about to do, holding the object up and telling her what you are about to do e.g. a cup for drinks time, a flannel for wash time etc.
- Also offer choices by holding two objects up and letting her show you her choice, by looking, pointing or touching.



NOW PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILD

Using pictures:

- Show your child an object or a person. Match the object with a picture showing the same object or person. Later, when she points to a person or object, encourage her to point to the picture instead. Once your child is comfortable communicating with you in this way, she may be able to use pictures on a board.
- Some children may use a few basic pictures to express their needs.
- Others may have a big collection of pictures to use for quite complex communication. Pictures can include questions, people, things, actions, feelings, daily needs.

A simple communication board may be useful. This is something to discuss with your speech therapist or occupational therapist. Some children may not be able to speak but they will still be able to communicate (image 6.04).



Photo by: Enablement

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CHILDREN PRESENTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR



Explain

Explain children with challenging behaviour can often cause the most stress for parents.



Ask

“What kind of challenging behaviours does your child have? How does it make you feel? How do you cope with it?”



Activity 6

Discuss the following:

- Your child needs love and attention. Children who feel loved behave better.
- All behaviour is a form of communication, so try to work out what your child is trying to tell you.
- Make your instructions clear. Speak in short sentences and don't give too many instructions at one time.
- Be consistent in the way that you respond.
- Reinforce the behaviour you want. You can do this by:
 - Giving a reward after the desired behaviour.
 - Praising the behaviour, not the person.
- Physical punishment does not teach 'good' or 'correct' behaviour – so do not spank or beat your child, instead ignore behaviour you do not like.
- For behaviour you cannot ignore, try “time out”. Take your child to a safe place where you can see her, away from where the fun/activity is happening.

MONITORING PROGRESS



Take Home Messages:

- We all communicate in many different ways.
- All children can communicate, we just have to understand how they are trying to do it.
- Children with developmental difficulties may need extra time and help to develop their communication skills.
- Opportunities to practice communication skills are everywhere, for example practice eye contact while changing your child, practice making sounds and turn taking when bathing.



Ask

"What two things have you learnt today that you will share with at least two other members of your family to help improve communication with your child?"

"Does anyone have any questions?"

SHARING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS



Ask

"How did this session feel? Did it raise any emotions or feelings that you did not expect? How have you been feeling this week?"

Allow time for discussion and interaction with each other.

Facilitator Tips:

Situations that can be challenging is if answers is unspecific: for example "everything is ok" or "I am tired". You can encourage everyone to talk more by asking "why?" or "what happened" or "how do you feel about that?"