

Engaging with AAC Users

AAC stands for augmentative and alternative communication. Everyone communicates without speech sometimes. Pointing and gesturing is AAC. Making facial expressions is AAC. Typing on a keyboard or a phone is AAC. Using emojis is AAC.

REMINDERS WHEN ENGAGING WITH AAC USERS:



DO NOT SPEAK OVER SOMEONE

- Stop talking while someone is typing and wait until they're finished.
- Keep crosstalk and background noise to a minimum – mute your microphone when you are not speaking.



BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT TYPOS, MISCLICKS, AND PERCEIVED “ERRORS”

- If it isn't clear what a typo was supposed to be, ask for clarification
- Some AAC users, especially autistic people and people with language disabilities, may use grammar that appears unusual. Listen, be patient, and value their way of communicating; if you need clarification, ask questions when they're done.
- Rephrase what people say and elaborate and expand on it.



ADDRESS THE PERSON WITH A SPEECH DISABILITY DIRECTLY

- Understand that a support person is there to assist the person – avoid addressing the support person and communicate directly with the person directly.



LET THEM FINISH

- Do not guess what an AAC user is going to say or try to complete their sentences for them.



IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, ASK

- Do not move on until you know and understand what the person is saying. Do not pretend you understand. Ask them to repeat what they said.



OTHER TIPS INCLUDE:

- Be patient
- Ask if plain language would be helpful
- Be respectful
- Default to a trauma informed approach

RESPECT COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

- Some people with AAC communicate with their bodies (smiles, nods) – pay attention to this communication too.
- Do not comment on how someone communicates, focus on what they say, not how they say it.

To learn more, access the original resource here:

[Best Practices for Lifelines Engaging with AAC Users](#)

Adapted for use by NASDDDS