

Let's Talk Specifics: Communication Strategies for Relationship Enhancement

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Children on the spectrum sometimes have a difficult time with attention.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

- Use their name at the beginning so that they know you are talking to them.
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction.

Some children on the spectrum are slower at processing language.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

- Slow down.
- Reduce your questions.
- If using questions, be specific?
 - What did you do in math today versus
 - How was school?
- Use visual supports
- Be aware of the sensory environment.



Children on the Spectrum are often concrete communicators

- Avoid Sarcasm



Overtly teach jargon and colloquialisms



Give Specific Praise to appropriate behavior.

- Make your praise highly specific and understandable
 - “That’s terrific counting”
 - “I like the way you are playing so quietly.”
 - “You did a nice job on that building.”
 - “Your design is pretty.”
 - “Thank you for showing the colors to me.”

Why specific praise?

- Causes the behavior to increase
- Lets the child know what you like
- Increases the child's self-esteem
- Adds to warmth of the relationship
- Makes both caregiver and child feel good

“But children on the spectrum can’t learn from social reinforcement.”

- **WRONG!!!!**

- Kids on the spectrum have difficulty understanding and expressing social communication.
- Social reinforcement that is specific and understandable can have great influence on a child on the spectrum.

ASD Target Behaviors: ADOS (Modules 1 &2)	Praises Developed by: Christina Warner-Metzger
Response to name	Thank you for looking at me when I said your name.
Response to touch from others	I like it when you let me hug you/hold your hand.
Response to joint attention (follows another's gaze with or without accompanied pointing)	Good job looking at what I'm looking at.
Affect	I like it when you smile.
Initiate joint attention	Thanks for getting my attention. I like how you got me to look at the toy.
Shared enjoyment	I like it when we play together.
Requesting	I like how you asked with your words/hands
Smiling in response to calling in a way that implies physical contact (e.g., "I'm gonna get you!")	I like how you're smiling at me.
Gestures directed at others Points with index finger Open-handed reach Hands item to another person	Thank you for pointing/reaching. Thank you for handing me the toy.
Facial expressions directed at others	I like how you're smiling at me.
Gaze directed at others	I like it when you look at me.
Imitation of familiar actions	I like how you're doing what I'm doing.

HOW TO PHRASE DIRECTIONS SO
THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE
OBEYED.

Commands should be direct rather than indirect.

Definition: Clear that child is being told (not asked) to do something.

- Example “Please take your hand out of the cookie jar” rather than “Will you please take your hand out of the jar?”
- Direct commands give the child no illusion of choice.
- Easier for child to follow.



Directions should be positively stated.

Definition: Tell child what *to do* instead of what *not to do*.

- Come sit beside me
 - rather than “Don’t climb.”
- Avoid
 - Don’t
 - Not
 - Stop
 - Quit
 - No



Directions should be given one at a time.

Definition: one-step commands.

- “Please put your shoes in the closet.”
- Rather than “Put your shoes in the closet, take a bath, and brush your teeth.”
- Helps parent to know when child is obeying.
- Helps child remember command.



Commands should be specific.

Definition: tell child exactly what to do (avoid being vague).

- “Please get down from the slide.”
Rather than
“Be careful”
- Avoids the vague commands of adulthood.
 - Behave!
 - Be careful!
 - Watch out!
 - Be good!
 - Hey!



Commands should be developmentally appropriate.

Definition: child should understand and be able to do the command.

- “Please put up the toy,”
rather than
- “Please put up the chauvinistic unrealistic 1/16 scale replica of a female.”



Give commands politely and respectfully.

Definition: Give commands in a neutral tone of voice.

- Avoid training children to ignore parents (because only listen when parent yells).
- May start commands with “Please. . .”



Explanations should be used *before a command or after the child has obeyed.*

Definition: giving a rationale helps compliance.

- Give child attention for obey.
- Discourages child from using “why” as a delay tactic.
- “Since, we are about to leave for the store. Please put on your coat.”
- “Please pick up the cars. (Child obeys). Thank you for picking up the cars. Now the house is safer and we won’t trip on the cars.”

Commands should be used only when necessary.

Definition: all DC's must have follow-through, so choose wisely!

- Too many commands may frustrate child.
- Instead of commands, can give choices.



PDI Skills Activity

- Giving Effective Commands → Simon Says
- How it's played:
 - If you think it's a DC, then follow the instruction (just like Simon Says)
 - If you think it's an IC, NTA, or other statement, don't follow the instruction (just like Simon didn't say)

5 Second Rule for Dawdling

- Wait at least 5 seconds after you give a direct command to see if child will comply.
- If child is complying at the 5-second mark, this is considered compliance.



5 second rule

- Wait at least 5 seconds after you give a direct command to see if child will comply.

- .



Consider scripting your responses to directions.

