Reducing your language

Why should I reduce my language?

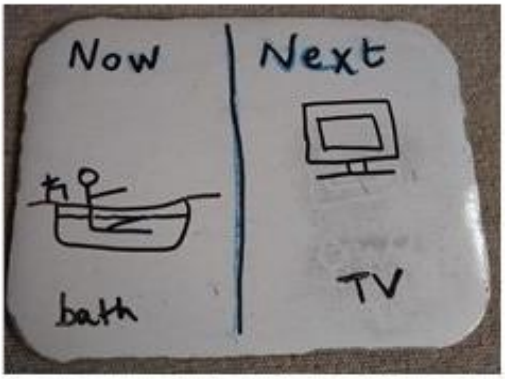
Autistic people can find processing spoken language difficult, even people who have a large vocabulary and whose spoken language appears excellent. Often, even in these instances, we find that the level of understanding is considerably lower.

Top Tips:

- ★ Use as little language as possible and support it with visuals whenever possible.
- ★ Try not to use sarcasm
- ★ Phrase instructions carefully - For example, if told “no running”, an Autisitc child may only hear the word “running”.
- ★ Consider the level of anxiety, this will alter how much language they can process
- ★ During extreme distress or a meltdown little to no language is best. Using visuals (symbols or drawn on a whiteboard or paper) and gestures is more helpful.
- ★ Task boards for multi-step tasks - This can break down tasks into manageable steps and promote independence
- ★ Draw pictures – you do not have to be Picasso, but use of pictures to show a child what you expect or what is going to come next if you don’t have symbols to hand, can help a lot.
- ★ Timers or visual countdown – reduce the amount of reminders you need to give and give warning
- ★ Gestures - pointing and gesturing can support what you are saying and provide reminders without using language
- ★ Positive language - For example, rephrasing instructions in ways such as, instead of “no running”, use “walking”, for “no touching”, use “hands to yourself” and for “no shouting” use “quiet voice”. These could be further supported with a visual or a gesture.
- ★ For behaviour that a positive alternative is almost impossible (e.g. “no spitting”) an instruction of “stop!”, supported with gestures or visuals.

Resources such as these can be laminated and used with a dry wipe marker for multiple uses.

Examples of different types of Now and Next boards



Example of a task breakdown board for homework

Task Plan

What do I need?

1 Worksheet
2 Pencil
3 Chair
4 Table
5 Homework
6 folder

What do I need to do?

1 Write my name and date ☐

2 Answer the sums ☐

3 Show my parent ☐

Anything else?

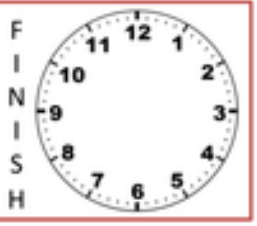
Put the sheet back in the folder ☐

Put the folder in my bag ☐

Reward

10 minutes on the ipad

How long?

10 minutes

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