

Speak up and be Safe from Abuse

How to adapt communication resources for different styles

Preparing for the discussion

1) Learn more about communication skills and how to have a conversation about abuse and neglect

Before you start to have a conversation about abuse and neglect, take the time to learn more about how to have a conversation about abuse and neglect. It is recommended that you complete the Scope online learning series about communication styles and risk and strategies relating to abuse and neglect toward people with communication support needs.

2) Allowing plenty of time

Why

- Having a conversation using communication aids can be physically and mentally tiring.
- Some people may require some additional time to think about what has been asked of them, and how they would like to respond.

How

- Plan to offer the person regular breaks to support a person to rest.
- Do not be tempted to fill the silence with more talking. Be comfortable with silence. Pause and wait for the person to think about what is on the board, and how they want to respond.

3) Think about how you respond to what the person communicates

Why

- A person can be influenced by the response of the communication partner. This means that a person could be lead to say things that they would not otherwise say by their communication partner.

How

- Acknowledge what the person says. Use the exact wording that the person has used. Do not add extra meaning or inference in your response.

- If the person finds some of the pictures funny (e.g. pointing and giggling at the body parts), simply acknowledge what the body parts are (i.e. yes, that's a penis).
- Keep your expressions neutral. Remember your non-verbal language (e.g. tone of voice) could influence how the person responds as much as what you say.

Adapting how you present your Speak Up and be Safe from abuse resource

1) Reduce the amount of symbols that you expose

Why

Some people experience difficulty when there are several images on one page. This might be because of difficulty looking at lots of symbols at a time, or difficulty thinking about what all of the symbols mean.

How

You can use a piece of opaque white paper to reveal only a select number of symbols at a time. This strategy means that you are presenting the information on the page in 'small batches' this does not mean that you are choosing which symbols to show the person, and which you are not. Remember to make sure that the person has a chance to see all of the symbols on the page.

2) Include symbols that are more meaningful to the person

Why

This strategy may be appropriate, for example for the symbols for "I/me", this symbol may be more meaningful to a person.

This would also be an appropriate strategy for:

- Places communication board (you could include photos of places familiar to the person)
- Things communication board (you could include photos of the persons things)

How

- Find photos or pictures that the person finds meaningful that represent the messages (places and things) that appear on the board.

- Don't worry if your photos are not as small as they are on the communication board, you can have them next to the communication board for the person to refer to.

3) Tell the person what each of the symbols mean

Why

- If a person has not seen the resource before, and is not able to read, it is good practice to make sure that the person knows what the symbols on the board mean.
- You would use this strategy in the event that there was no better option than to use the Speak up and be Safe resource.

Ideally a person would be familiar with the vocabulary before the book would be used.

How

- Tell the person what each of the symbols on the page mean. Do this before you ask the person if there is something on the page that they would like to say.
- If the person indicates 'yes', you can ask the person if they remember where the symbol is. If the person indicates 'yes' they can point to it. If the person says no, you can re-read each line, then ask the person if the symbol is on that line.

4) Clarify the meaning of the communication symbols

Why

Some of the words that are used on the communication boards are not the words that everybody understands. In order to support the person to participate, you may need to give more information to help the person to understand.

How

First introduce the communication symbol. Then explain the symbol in words that the person might better connect with.

E.g. "this symbol says online". This means when people to talk to you through email or facebook

OR

E.g. "this symbol says penis, you might call it a 'willy'"

Note: it is important that you always use the correct anatomical when referencing body parts. However you may need to use the term that the person/child uses when introducing the symbol

Disclaimers

- These guidelines are written with reference to the Speak Up and be Safe from Abuse resources.
- If a person experiences communication support needs and does not have access to communication aids, it is recommended that they are referred to a speech pathologist for assessment and implementation of an appropriate communication aid.

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making it happen