

## Communication Bill of Rights

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. All people have the following specific communication rights in their daily interactions. These rights are summarized from the Communication Bill of Rights put forth in 1992 by the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities.

### Each person has the right to:

- ✓ Request desired objects, actions, events, and people
- ✓ Refuse undesired objects, actions, or events
- ✓ Express personal preferences and feelings
- ✓ Be offered choices and alternatives
- ✓ Reject offered choices
- ✓ Request and receive another person's attention and interaction
- ✓ Ask for and receive information about changes in routine and environment
- ✓ Receive intervention to improve communication skills
- ✓ Receive a response to any communication, whether or not the responder can fulfill the request
- ✓ Have access to AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
- ✓ Have AAC and other AT devices that function properly at all times
- ✓ Be in environments that promote one's communication as a full partner with other people, including peers
- ✓ Be spoken to with respect and courtesy
- ✓ Be spoken to directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- ✓ Have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications

From the National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (1992). Guidelines for meeting the communication needs of persons with severe disabilities. *Asilia*, 34(Suppl. 7), 2-3; adapted by permission.

## Strategies for Presuming Competence

- Attitude—Practice saying, “How can this work?”, “How can this child be successful?”
- Question your stereotypes—How someone looks, walks, or talks does not tell you about how they think and feel.
- Age Appropriate Talk—Examine your tone of voice and topic.
- Support Communication
- Listen openly - Work to shed judgments.
- Teach peers and others how to interpret potentially confusing behavior.
- Do not speak in front of someone as if they were not there.
- In conversation, refer to the person in a way that includes them in the conversation.
- Ask permission to share information with others.
- Be humble.
- If possible, always let the person explain for himself or herself and do not speak for them.
- Assume that every student will benefit from learning age appropriate academic curriculum.
- Look for evidence of understanding.
- Support students to show understanding using their

## **DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION MEANS FOLLOWING THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:**

### **Be available.**

This means showing a readiness to respond to what The other person shows you; to be able to go in the direction that they suggest.

### **Be observant.**

Use your eyes and ears to decipher what the real intention is so that you can act on it appropriately.

### **No judgment.**

Don't shoot the idea down because it doesn't fit what you were thinking. Don't prejudge behavior as 'good' or 'bad' without deciphering the intention.

### **Facilitate – be reflective.**

Work to keep your communication partner in the center of the conversation by facilitating and reflecting on what it is that they are saying or doing.

### **Create opportunities that are real.**

What you say and do should be an invitation to your communication partner to share who they are and what they are thinking and feeling. Refrain from opportunities that focus on what you want to know and cater to what you are thinking and feeling.

### **Seek to be reciprocal and equal.**

In good communication ideas and feelings go back and forth in an equal sharing between partners.

### **Honor the emotions.**

Your partner may have different emotions from you. It is important for them to know that their feelings are okay to express.

## 101 Ways To Make Friends

There is a tendency, sometimes, to think too much. Helping people to get connected to meaningful relationships can be about ordinary, everyday things. Susan Kurliak and Aaron Johannes, from the Spectrum Society for Community Living in Vancouver, BC, in their book *101 Ways to Make Friends: Ideas and Conversation Starters for People with Disabilities and their Supporters*, provide page after page of fun and thoughtful ideas for helping a person to connect.

A sampler:

### #3

Tell people you want to make friends. It's like finding a new job — the more people you know, the more likely the connections you could make.

### #4

Make a list of everyone you know — Call and invite one person out.

### #8

Find out what's special about your city or neighborhood...a certain festival or group? They're looking for you to help out — sell programs, walk on stilts, serve tea.

### #23

Have a yard sale but make the point of it to make new friends. Serve lemonade, have name tags — don't worry if you don't sell anything.

### #37

Have one good joke you can tell. Practice it so you're ready when there's a gap in the conversation — be known as the one who made everyone feel comfortable.

### #52

Be the kind of friend you'd like to meet. Demonstrate a positive attitude. Always seek solutions (don't complain). Avoid gossip.

## #67

Talk about pets. If you don't have any pets, ask people about theirs — it's simple and not too personal and it can lead to other conversations.

## #69

Shop locally. Get to know the stores in your neighborhood or go to the farmer's market.

## #75

Collect something, and talk to others who share your passion...coins, hats, ceramic elephants, Elvis memorabilia...

## #82

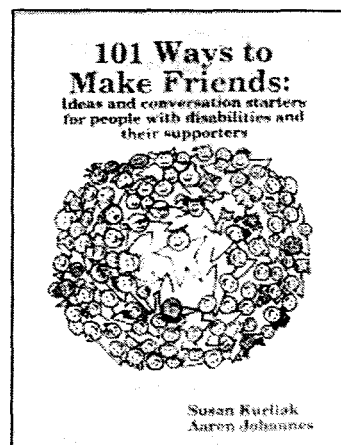
Give yourself permission to miss the mark. Nothing is going to be perfect the first time — to make one friend we need to meet a whole lot of people who won't be our friends. Just keep trying.

## #91

Organize a fundraiser for the charity of your choice. Pick something fun like a bake sale, and maybe Mrs. Smith from next door will donate a loaf of her famous banana bread...

## #101

You can go online and order a copy of Susan and Aaron's fine book for more good ideas: [www.101friends.ca](http://www.101friends.ca)



## Exercises for Moving on the Language Ladder

<b>Self Initiate Conversation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- brings up a topic</li> <li>-brings facilitator a display</li> <li>-extends a hand or finger with no prompts</li> <li>- says "type" or some personal version</li> </ul>	
<b>Participate in Conversation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-takes turns a natural part of conversation</li> <li>-asks questions, makes comments</li> </ul>	
<b>Paragraphing paragraph</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-participates in a shared paragraph</li> <li>-completes a graphic organizer then creates a paragraph</li> <li>-provides a topic sentence, body, and conclusion to a</li> </ul>	
<b>Answering Open-Ended questions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-states opinion</li> <li>-responds to "tell me about..."</li> <li>-answers open ended questions about self, academics...</li> </ul>	
<b>Less Predictable:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- name 3.....</li> <li>-give me a state that starts with the letter....</li> <li>-responds to questions with no right answer</li> </ul>	
<b>Familiar/predictable:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- questions with only one answer</li> <li>- general knowledge questions with only one answer</li> <li>- questions that are asked on a daily basis</li> </ul>	
<b>Spelling words: spelling words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- vocabulary</li> <li>-weekly spelling list</li> <li>-vocabulary presented as part of a communication display,</li> <li>- ask student to answer comprehension questions on their</li> </ul>	
<b>Word board:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- multiple choice board (a,b,c,d,) or ( word board choices)</li> <li>- determine the size of the display</li> </ul>	
<b>Line drawing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- line drawings used in communication book</li> <li>- line drawings used as part of activity                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a- ask student to identify</li> <li>b- ask student to respond to a comprehension question</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



### Share a Thought...

You and the person you are supporting will do this together. You start off by sharing a "word", you type it in yourself. Then the other person types in a related "word" (with support from you). You then type in a "word" that relates to their word.

For example..

- Boat - (water - drink - soda - Mc Donalds etc)
- Water
- Drink
- Soda
- Coke
- Store
- Etc....
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*Prompt: You can give two choices auditorially if necessary. Then based on the first letter remind the student of their choice.*

### Shared paragraph:

Write a paragraph with your child/adult. Topics are suggested. Choose a topic together. You start the paragraph with your statement, you type it in. Then your child/adult will generate the next statement, on the same topic, you give support. Each paragraph should contain 4-6 sentences. The result will be a, shared effort, paragraph.

### Suggested Topics:

- Travel to Mars
- Basketball is the greatest sport ever
- My favorite book
- My favorite vacation
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the best musical person/group I know
- other

*Prompt: You may have to give two auditory choices at first of possible sentences for the student. Let them show you which one they choose by starting with the first word. You can then provide reminders of the sequence of words when necessary.*

## Daily Journal

Use a binder with paper, or a Composition Book. Using pre cut photos (personal, magazine, etc) have the student choose a photo. Glue the photo to a page in the journal. On the opposite page affix or transcribe the student's expressive language.

*Prompt: Provide student with auditory choices (2-3). Provide physical support. Then repeat the sentence.*

Step 1: Have student generate one idea about the picture.

*"Tell me about this picture."*

- Prompt - Provide the student with two sample ideas, verbally, and ask him/her to pick one and type it (with support).
- Provide student with a verbal model of how you could expand on their idea. For example, "horse" = "Yes, the boy is riding a horse." Student does not need to generate this sentence it is just a model for the next step.

Step 2: Have the student generate one sentence about the picture.

- Prompt - Provide the student with a predictable sentence starter.
- For example, "The boy is \_\_\_\_\_". "They \_\_\_\_\_"

Step 3: Have the student generate two sentences about the picture.

- Prompt - Provide the student with a predictable sentence starter.
- For example, "The boy is \_\_\_\_\_". "They \_\_\_\_\_"

Step 3: Continue using prompts described above as needed, but ask the student to generate 3 or more sentences about the picture. Remind him/her they can include feelings, actions, colors, shapes, size, etc.

## *Current Events*

Use a magazine or knowledge from a television show/movie. Review with your student/client the topic. Provide comments on your opinion (just as you would when talking with a friend at home.)

Organize opportunities for your communication partner to participate in the conversation according to the Language Ladder. For example,

### Predictable:

- Spell vocabulary on the topic
- Ask yes/no questions
- Use a word board
- Create fill in the blank statement with the information

Write some ideas here:

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### Less Predictable:

- Tell me two/three things \_\_\_\_\_ did
- Tell me two/three places they went
- Tell me two/three people in the story

### Open Ended

- What did you think about the story
- Tell me more....
- General what questions....

### Conversation:

Remember a conversation includes, questions, comments, and statements. Model and prompt these types of interactions. Look to increase the number of turns, and be ready to support so your communication partner can begin to initiate their turns.