



Berkshire Healthcare
Children, Young People and
Families services

Communication

Some neurodivergent children experience differences in the way they communicate and relate to others. For example, they may struggle to understand abstract language, they may interpret things very literally and they may struggle to understand other people. This can make life confusing for them.

Try the following:

- Use clear and direct language. For example, instead of saying 'the table needs to be set', say 'please put the cutlery on the table'.
 - Use their name before giving information so they know you are talking to them.
 - Avoid using metaphorical, non-literal or abstract language to make sure there are no misunderstandings. If you do use these, explain clearly what you have said and what you mean.
 - Use visual supports to help your child understand. For example, use symbols to show if they liked or didn't like something, visual timetables, communication cards, or written instructions with pictures.
 - Social stories can help prepare your child for what to expect or to help them understand certain concepts. Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991 and are descriptions of situations, events or activities which provide information about what to expect.
 - For older children, comic strip conversations can help them to understand social interactions, people's intentions and feelings.
 - Relate examples to their interests such as their favourite TV show.
 - Provide other ways for your child to communicate their needs or how they are feeling, like writing, drawing, gestures or mood bands.
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- Use communication cards or mood cards for your child to communicate their needs or feelings when they struggle to verbalise them.
- Break information down and speak slowly to avoid information overload. Repeat keywords and allow give them extra time to process what you are saying.
- Consider the sensory environment. Louder or more busy environments may affect your child being able to process information.
- Avoid open-ended questions like "how was your day?" Instead, ask specific questions such as, "Did you like your geography lesson today?"
- Interacting with others, initiating conversations at appropriate times, understanding and relating to other people and taking part in everyday family, school, and social interactions can be difficult for autistic people.

National Autistic Society

More information about autism and communication can be found on the National Autistic Society website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/about-autism/autism-and-communication>

