# Module 3:
Teaching Functional Communication Strategies

Remember! Behavior is Communication

Key Elements

- Function-Why do we communicate?
    - We want something/someone (requesting)
    - We don't want something/someone (protesting/saying 'No')
    - We want attention
    - We want to share information
    - We want to add to the conversation (commenting)
    - We need to know information
    - We want to engage with others (social routine)
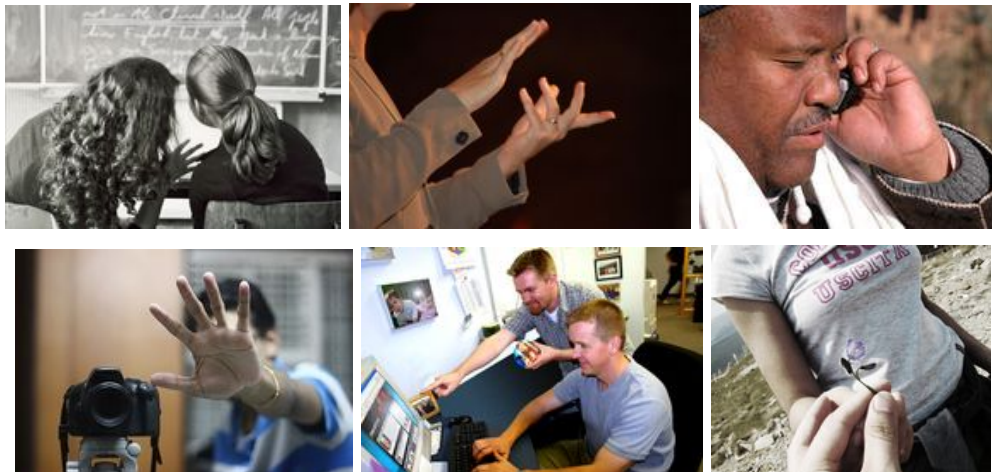
- Form-How do we communicate? How do we send and receive messages to/from a partner?
    - Eye gaze
    - Facial expression
    - Body language
    - Pictures

- ○ Gestures
- ○ Objects
- ○ Written
- ○ Signs
- ○ Verbal
- ○ Challenging behaviors!!!
- ○ Assistive technology- any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.
  For more information about using Assistive technology, see the following links:
  ATIA   https://www.atia.org/at-resources/what-is-at/
  Autism Apps   https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps

How might the characteristics of individuals with ASD affect communication?

| Social-Communication and Social Interaction Challenges	Restricted, Repetitive Patterns of Behavior
Social-emotional reciprocity	Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
Nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interactions	Insistence on sameness, routines, or ritualized patterns of behavior
Developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships	Highly restricted, fixated interests
	Hyper- or hypo- reactivity to sensory input

Remember, behavior is communication. Having a functional way to communicate our wants, needs, likes and dislikes is critically important for everyone. If the individual does not have a functional way to communicate his/her wants and needs, he/she may demonstrate challenging behavior. By teaching functional communication, we can create strategies and communication that will accomplish the same goal as the challenging behavior. The functional communication strategy must be as effective or more effective than the challenging behavior if we want the individual to use it.

One way that we can facilitate communication for individuals with ASD is through the use of a choice board. Choice boards are a visual way to teach an individual how to request desired items or activities. To create a choice board, identify what the individual likes and create a visual representation of these items/activities. Present the choice board to the individual. The individual can indicate his/her choice by touching, pointing, removing or handing the preferred

choice to you. Once the person indicates his/her choice, immediately provide him/her with the item/activity.

Another way that we can facilitate functional communication for individuals with ASD is through the use of a simple "Yes" "No" system. Using a "Yes" "No" system gives the individual a way to accept or refuse an item or activity.
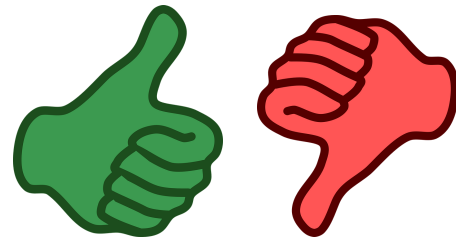
It is also important that the individual have a way to gain attention or say "hi" and ask for help.

….and take a break.

Activity

1. What do you think the individual with ASD that you care for might be trying to communicate with his/her behavior?

2. Think of a challenging behavior demonstrated by an individual with ASD. Based on strategies from Module 2, identifying the function, create a functional communication system and supports to replace the challenging behavior.

Tips and Strategies

- Acknowledge the communication attempt!
- Keep the language simple.
- Keep language concrete.
    - Avoid jargon, nuance, idioms, and sarcasm.
- Address the meaning behind the communication attempt.
- Use multiple forms of communication for the same message (pictures and gestures, written and verbal, etc.).
- Teach an alternative way to communicate the message.
- Allow processing time.
    - Avoid verbal repetition

Resources and References-Module 3

<u>Websites</u>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/

Assistive Technology Industry Association
https://www.atia.org/at-resources/what-is-at/

Autism Apps
https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps

<u>Books</u>

Carr, E.G., Levin, L., McConnachie, G., Carlson, J.I., Kemp, D.C., & Smith, C.E. (1994). *Communication based intervention for problem behavior: A user's guide for positive change*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hodgdon, L.A. (1999). *Solving behavior problems in autism: Improving communication with visual strategies.* Troy, Michigan: QuirkRoberts Publishing.

<u>Journal Articles</u>

Carr, E.G., & Carlson, J.I. (1993). Reduction of severe behavior problems in the community using a multicomponent treatment approach. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 26*, 157-172.
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1297735/

Carr, E., & Durand, M. (1985). Reducing behavior problems through functional communication training. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 18*, 111-126.
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1307999/

Fisher, W.W., Thompson, R.H., Bowman, L.G., Hagopian, L.P., & Krug, A. (1999). Facilitating tolerance of delayed reinforcement during functional communication training. *Behavior Modification, 24(1)*, 3-29. doi: 10.1177/0145445500241001

Shirley, M. J., Iwata, B. A., Kahng, S., Mazaleski, J. L., & Lerman, D. C. (1997). Does functional communication training compete with ongoing contingencies of reinforcement? An analysis

during response acquisition and maintenance. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 30*, 93-104. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1284039/

Tiger, J.H., Hanley, G.P., & Bruzek, J. (2008). Functional communication training: A review and practical guide. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 1(1)*, 16-23. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2846575/