
AND ABA MINI SERIES

EPISODE 1

NON-VOCAL COMMUNICATION AND ABA

Workbook



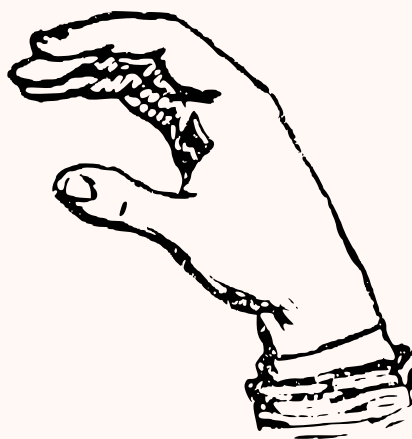
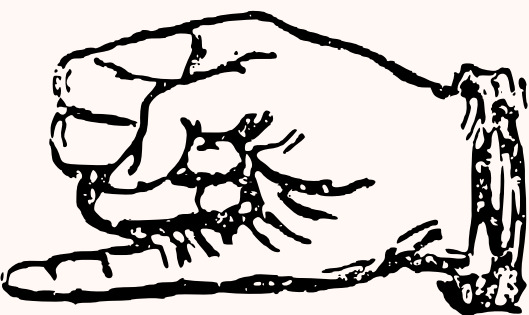
CREATED BY NICOLE PLUMRIDGE

Contents

NON-VOCAL COMMUNICATION AND ABA

This workbook has been designed for you so that you don't have to take notes. Simply flip through the pages and all the information is there with additional quizzes, thought exercises and action plans to try out!

1. Quiz
2. What is non-vocal communication?
3. Picture Exchange Communication System
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Quiz

Using the scale below, rate the impact you believe lack of ability to communicate is having on your child.

Question	Always	Almost Always (frequently)	Sometimes	Almost Never (infrequently)	Never
Does my child have difficulty communicating his wants/needs?	1	2	3	4	5
Does my child's communication skill level impede learning new skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Does my child's communication skill level result in problem behavior (ex. tantrum/aggression etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5
Does my child's communication skill level limit his ability to make friends?	1	2	3	4	5
Does my child's communication skill level limit his ability to partake in activities his peers are a part of (ex. school, soft play area, after school groups)?	1	2	3	4	5
Do strangers have difficulty understanding my child when he tries to communicate with them?	1	2	3	4	5



Quiz

Total Score = /30

The rating scale is designed to give you an idea of how important communication is in many areas of life and how lacking communication skills can have adverse effects. Some children may communicate vocally using speech, however, others may not. Just because your child may be non-vocal or acquiring speech at a slower pace than his peers, does not mean that your child cannot communicate. Alternatives to vocal communication will be discussed to ensure that whether your child is vocal or not, they can communicate with others and be part of their community.



What is Non-Vocal Communication?

Vocal speech is by no means the only method of communication. There are a myriad of other ways in which we communicate our wants and needs. Understandably, many parents want their children to be able to talk for the reason that it is simply the most straightforward form of communication. However, from the child's point of view, it may not be the most straightforward form of communication system for him to learn.

Non-vocal communication is any form of communication apart from speech. It can be a child pointing to the food they want to eat or an adult using sign language in a conversation. It can be a toddler taking their parents hand and guiding them to the play area or using an iPad to say, "I want more."

To gain a deeper understanding of why your child is not talking, it is important to contact a qualified Speech and Language Pathologist. This episode, however, does not focus on the *why*. It focuses on the alternatives to speech as a primary form of communication and *how* those alternatives can be used and taught to help your child communicate their wants and needs.



Picture Exchange Communication System

What is it?

PECS is an augmentative and alternative communication system for non-vocal individuals using pictures as the main form of communication. It can be used in conjunction with vocal speech if the speech is not clear or consistently understandable.

How does it work?

Essentially, children with PECS books learn to communicate by exchanging the picture of what they want with their communication partner for the actual item. What they are exchanging can vary from concrete, tangible items ("I want chips") to more abstract concepts ("I want a break"). Children can also expand their vocabulary and work towards building sentences, using grammar correctly, labeling things in their environment, answering social questions and much else.

Materials You Will Need

- Your child's preferred items
- A5 size binder with several A5 blank sheets of paper
- Velcro
- Camera
- Shoulder strap
- Paper
- Printer
- Laminator
- Laminating sheets
- Scissors



Picture Exchange Communication System

Steps to preparing a PECS book

1. Take pictures of items, activities, places, food, drinks objects, people etc.
2. Copy these onto a word document and print out
3. Cut out the pictures
4. Buy/cut several pieces of paper into A5 size
5. Laminate the A5 paper and the pictures
6. Cut out the laminated pictures
7. Place several rows of Velcro onto A5 laminated sheets
8. Stick opposite texture Velcro onto the pictures so that they stick into the PECS book
9. Arrange the pages according to some sort of order: ex. page 1: food/page 2: drinks/page 3: toys etc.
10. Attach a shoulder strap to the PECS book
11. Repeat taking a photo/printing/laminating/attaching Velcro to picture for new items, activities, people etc. that enter into your child's life



Picture Exchange Communication System

Advantages

- Fairly inexpensive to prepare
- Most people will be able to understand what the child wants/needs
- Fairly easy to teach and use. As it is a visual system, learners may find it easier to pick up than other alternative systems to speech
- Can be an effective communication system for many learners



Disadvantages

- Takes time and resources to make a PECS book
- PECS book can get damaged and/or lost
- Need to continually photograph/print/laminate any new items/activities/places/people etc. in your child's environment (may make PECS book very large/heavy for child)
- Child needs to carry their PECS book around with them everywhere
- Child needs to have the below pre-requisite skills for PECS to be an option



Picture Exchange Communication System

Pre-requisite skills

These are a list of skills that should already be in your child's repertoire in order for them to be able to successfully learn to use their PECS book. If your child does not know how to perform the below skills, either you would need to work on teaching them or PECS may not be the right communication approach for your child.

Child must be able to pay attention to you - *attending skills*

Child should be amenable to accepting prompts/help

Child should be able to follow simple instructions

Child should be able to scan items visible in the environment

Child should have basic discrimination skills, ie. She can tell the difference between two items/pictures placed in front of her

Child should have adequate fine motor skills in order to be able to remove the picture from the PECS book and hand it over

Child should demonstrate basic matching skills, ie. she should be able to match similar objects/pictures together



Speech Generating Devices

What is it?

SGD's are used as part of an augmentative and alternative communication system for non-vocal individuals. Speech generating devices use a voice output system which can be used in conjunction with vocal speech or as a replacement to speech if the speech is not clear or consistently understandable.

Materials You Will Need

- Your child's preferred items
- Speech generating device
- Device charger
- Speech app
- Device cover
- Shoulder or neck strap to help carry the device around with ease

How it works & Pre-requisite skills are similar to that of PECS



Speech Generating Devices

Steps to preparing a speech generating device

1. Ensure device is in good working order, i.e. charger and speaker are working, no cracks in the screen, device is updated (to prevent it from functioning slowly) etc.
2. Pay for and download the speech generating app you have decided to use (my personal recommendation is Proloquo2Go, PLQ)
3. Set up the account with all the necessary details (if using PLQ, follow below steps)
 - a. Create a user
 - b. Select language/region
 - c. Choose a voice
 - d. Manage grid size (i.e. this will help you manage the number of icons that show up)
 - e. Select include speech option (advanced set-up)
 - f. Select language/region
 - g. Choose a voice
4. Take pictures of items, games, activities people, places etc. that the child comes into contact with frequently. Many speech apps also have an in-built store of pictures to choose from
5. Familiarize yourself with the multiple functions, i.e. how to add/remove pictures, create new folders, increase/reduce the grid/visual field, enable restricted access, change voice output options, change visibility, background colors, icon border width etc. In Proloquo2Go this will be in the edit mode on the app



Speech Generating Devices

Advantages

- Easy to upload new images of stimuli in your child's environment
- Most people will be able to understand what your child wants/needs
- Fairly easy to teach and use. As it is a visual system, learners may find it easier to pick up than other alternative systems to speech
- Can be an effective communication system for many learners
- SGD's have auditory output, therefore, the child does not necessarily have to be physically close to someone in order to get their attention
- It is easier to communicate longer sentences using SGD's than using PECS which mimics typical conversation more closely



Disadvantages

- It is more costly upfront – you need to pay for the device and the app
- Device/charger could get damaged and/or lost. May not be appropriate for a child with problem behavior involving property destruction (i.e. throwing/ripping/tearing/damaging objects in any way)
- Child needs to carry their SGD around with them everywhere
- The iPad/App may require considerable upkeep/maintenance. It would require frequent updates to ensure it continues to function smoothly



Sign Language

What is it?

Sign language is an augmentative and alternative communication system for non-vocal individuals whereby those individuals learn to communicate using hand movements.

How does it work?

1. When your child reaches for a preferred item, block access to the item
2. Prompt your child to make the appropriate sign
 - Model prompt: if your child is able to imitate, use a model prompt whereby you perform the sign and wait for your child to imitate the model
 - Physical prompt: If your child has difficulty imitating, use a physical prompt whereby you physically manipulate your child's hands so that they perform the sign correctly
3. Once your child has independently/with assistance performed the sign, provide access to the item/activity/game etc.



Sign Language

Advantages

- It is a complete language system which enables fluent back and forth conversations
- Sign language is a portable system – does not require the child to carry anything around
- Many signs look like the object being signed for
- It is free!



Disadvantages

- Your child may reach a smaller audience as not everyone is fluent with sign language
- Your child needs to have the below pre-requisites in order for sign language to be an option



Pre-requisite skills include having motor imitation skills, good coordination and adequately developed fine motor skills.





THOUGHT EXERCISES

These questions help you gain perspective over the skills you want your child to achieve short-term as well as long-term while take into consideration where they are currently at.

What are your short-term goals for your child's communication?

What are your long-term goals for your child's communication?

When considering the skills you want them to learn, ensure to take into consideration what is important for your child, ie. what would their preference be/what would they like to learn.

Specific Communication Skills in their Repertoire

Specific Communication Skills You Want Them to Learn

List the skills with regards to priority and when you would like to start actively teaching these skills

Skills 1	tomorrow
Skill 2	next week
Skill 3	next month

Take stock and TAKE ACTION!

Create some visuals or (if possible) download a speech generating app on a trial basis and see which one your child prefers. If you know sign language, see if your child picks up few signs quickly (try “more” or “all done”). Assess your child’s preferences and strengths

1. What communication system did your child prefer/pick up most quickly?

2. List your observations when trying out the different communication systems.

3. Do you have a preference towards any specific communication system? If so, has this influenced your decision as to how your child should be communicating?

4. Once you have tried out one communication system and have been practicing communication with your child for at least 2 weeks, have you noticed any changes in your child’s behavior?

General reflections, observations, further courses of action you would like to take:

1st Key Reflection/
Observation

Action 1

2nd Key Reflection/
Observation

Action 2



INVOLVE YOUR CHILD

Plans and Priorities

If your child can write out, tell you, express what their goals are and how they would like to work on them, this page helps them get involved with the learning process! It also teaches responsibility and accountability.

My Top 3 Priorities

My Goals

What I Must Remember

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Obstacles:

Distractions:

Action Steps:

Reflections

REFERENCES

For further information on what has been discussed here, feel free to check out the below references:

Baer, D. M., Wolf, M. M., & Risley, T. R. (1968). Some current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of applied behavior analysis*, 1(1), 91–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1901/jaba.1968.1-91>

Collet-Klingenberg, L. (2008). PECS: Steps for implementation. Madison, WI: The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, The Waisman Center, The University of Wisconsin.

For questions, comments, concerns, or just to say hi you can reach me on the below handles:

- Website: www.psychminds.com
- Instagram: @psychmindspodcast
- Facebook: Psychminds