

# Let's Talk Specifics: Communication Strategies for Relationship Enhancement

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# Presenter Disclosures

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# Children on the spectrum sometimes have a difficult time with attention.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

- Use their name at the beginning so that they know you are talking to them.
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction.

# Some children on the spectrum are slower at processing language.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

- Slow down.
- Reduce your questions.
- If using questions, be specific?
  - What did you do in math today versus
  - How was school?
- Use visual supports
- Be aware of the sensory environment.



# Children on the Spectrum are often concrete communicators

- Avoid Sarcasm



Overtly teach jargon and colloquialisms





# Give Specific Praise to appropriate behavior.

- Make your praise highly specific and understandable
  - “That’s terrific counting”
  - “I like the way you are playing so quietly.”
  - “You did a nice job on that building.”
  - “Your design is pretty.”
  - “Thank you for showing the colors to me.”



# Why specific praise?

- Causes the behavior to increase
- Lets the child know what you like
- Increases the child's self-esteem
- Adds to warmth of the relationship
- Makes both caregiver and child feel good

“But children on the spectrum can’t learn from social reinforcement.”

● **WRONG!!!!**

- Kids on the spectrum have difficulty understanding and expressing social communication.
- Social reinforcement that is specific and understandable can have great influence on a child on the spectrum.





ASD Target Behaviors: ADOS (Modules 1 &2)	Praises	Developed by: Christina Warner-Metzger
Response to name	Thank you for looking at me when I said your name.	
Response to touch from others	I like it when you let me hug you/hold your hand.	
Response to joint attention (follows another’s gaze with or without accompanied pointing)	Good job looking at what I’m looking at.	
Affect	I like it when you smile.	
Initiate joint attention	Thanks for getting my attention. I like how you got me to look at the toy.	
Shared enjoyment	I like it when we play together.	
Requesting	I like how you asked with your words/hands	
Smiling in response to calling in a way that implies physical contact (e.g., “I’m gonna get you!”)	I like how you’re smiling at me.	
Gestures directed at others Points with index finger Open-handed reach Hands item to another person	Thank you for pointing/reaching. Thank you for handing me the toy.	
Facial expressions directed at others	I like how you’re smiling at me.	
Gaze directed at others	I like it when you look at me.	
Imitation of familiar actions	I like how you’re doing what I’m doing.	

HOW TO PHRASE DIRECTIONS SO  
THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE  
OBEYED.

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# Commands should be direct rather than indirect.

Definition: Clear that child is being told (not asked) to do something.

- Example “Please take your hand out of the cookie jar” rather than “Will you please take you hand out of the jar?”
- Direct commands give the child no illusion of choice.
- Easier for child to follow.



# Directions should be positively stated.

Definition: Tell child what *to do* instead of what *not to do*.

- Come sit beside me
  - rather than “Don’t climb.”
- Avoid
  - Don’t
  - Not
  - Stop
  - Quit
  - No





# Directions should be given one at a time.

Definition: one-step commands.

- “Please put your shoes in the closet.”
- Rather than “Put your shoes in the closet, take a bath, and brush your teeth.”
- Helps parent to know when child is obeying.
- Helps child remember command.



# Commands should be specific.

Definition: tell child exactly what to do (avoid being vague).

- “Please get down from the slide.”

Rather than

“Be careful”

- Avoids the vague commands of adulthood.
  - Behave!
  - Be careful!
  - Watch out!
  - Be good!
  - Hey!



# Commands should be developmentally appropriate.

Definition: child should understand and be able to do the command.

- “Please put up the toy,”  
*rather than*
- “Please put up the chauvinistic unrealistic 1/16 scale replica of a female.”



# Give commands politely and respectfully.

Definition: Give commands in a neutral tone of voice.

- Avoid training children to ignore parents (because only listen when parent yells).
- May start commands with “Please. . .”



## Explanations should be used *before a command* or after the child has obeyed.

Definition: giving a rationale helps compliance.

- Give child attention for obey.
- Discourages child from using “why” as a delay tactic.
- “Since, we are about to leave for the store. Please put on your coat.”
- “Please pick up the cars. (Child obeys). Thank you for picking up the cars. Now the house is safer and we won’t trip on the cars.”

# Commands should be used only when necessary.

Definition: all DC's must have follow-through, so choose wisely!

- Too many commands may frustrate child.
- Instead of commands, can give choices.



# PDI Skills Activity

- Giving Effective Commands → Simon Says
- How it's played:
  - If you think it's a DC, then follow the instruction (just like Simon Says)
  - If you think it's an IC, NTA, or other statement, don't follow the instruction (just like Simon didn't say)



# 5 Second Rule for Dawdling

- Wait at least 5 seconds after you give a direct command to see if child will comply.
- If child is complying at the 5-second mark, this is considered compliance.



# 5 second rule

- Wait at least 5 seconds after you give a direct command to see if child will comply.
- .



Consider scripting your responses to directions.

