



# EPO3: Let's Talk - Ways to Communicate

Here's what you'll find in this guide:

- 'Let's Talk' Episode Notes
- AAC Resources
- Deeper Thinking Activities

Individuals with autism present marked impairments in communication. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), individuals with autism present “deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, ranging, for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.”

In addition, according to the DSM-V, individuals with autism present “deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures; to a total lack of facial expressions and non-verbal communication.

- Examples: not responding to their name, delay or lack of spoken language, inability to express their wants and needs, inability to understand directions, speech is repetitive or non-communicative (doesn't make sense/not used to communicate with others), echolalia.

Although people with autism present deficits in language and communication, this doesn't mean they can't communicate in other ways. Modes of communication include:

- **Gestures**- pointing at the things the person wants
- **Body language** – we all use our bodies to convey our emotions, state of being, and overall to express ourselves. Communication is not just through spoken language.
- **Sign** – some people with autism may use signs derived from American Sign Language; however, the signs may require modifications to accommodate fine motor abilities. This mode of communication may not be used as frequently since it is not a universal form of communication. The person with whom the individual is communicating with must be familiar with the signs in order to understand what the individual is saying.



- **Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) Includes:**

1. **Picture based communication** - the person hands over a picture or sentence strip to the individual they are trying to communicate with in order to convey their wants, needs, or socially interact. The person may use a small book with pictures, a picture board, or both. This form of communication may help the individual increase their vocal output as well.
2. **Electronic communication** –electronic tools which allow the person to use pictures, letters, and/or words and phrases to generate messages and give the person a form of communication. This includes iPads/tablets, iPods, and smart phones which use communication apps such as Avaz™. This kind of communication speaks for the individual and may help the individual increase their vocal output.

When speaking to someone who has autism, you sometimes need to keep it short and to the point. Many people with autism have deficits in their communication skills and present difficulties with understanding what others are saying (e.g., such as trying to understand a foreign language), being too wordy when trying to convey a message may result in the person with autism not understanding. Keep it simple and to the point if the person appears to not understand.

- You can use different forms of assistance in order to get your message across. For example, modeling the behavior, using pictures, gestures, helping them to use their iPad/tablet with their communication app (if they have one), or write it down if they can read.

Keep in mind that people with autism can sometimes be very literal when speaking to others, or when interpreting the meaning of a conversation, and may inadvertently say something which can sound rude, without that being the intention.

- If this happens, it's ok to tell the person how it made you feel in a respectful manner. Modeling the appropriate behavior (being considerate of others' feelings) provides a teaching opportunity for both you and the person with autism.
- Always make sure to encourage appropriate behavior and tell the person when they did or said something positive to help them learn. We all like to be praised when we do something right.

Interacting with someone who has autism involves looking beyond their disability and seeing them for the person that they are.

**Be open minded and patient, and try to see things from their perspective.**

## Assistive Technology Information

**Jesse Baker School**  
<http://bit.ly/jesse-baker>

See how the Jessie Baker School uses assistive technology in their classrooms.

**The Center for AAC and Autism**  
<http://www.aacandautism.com/why-aac>

A community to share best ways to incorporate AAC to improve language and communication skills.



## Resources

### Discover AAC

<http://actbyjackiebryla.com/>

AAC basics and help with planning, practicing and using AAC through one's lifetime.

### ACT – Apps, Consulting, Training

<http://actbyjackiebryla.com/>

Find individualized app information, creative ideas for using apps in educational settings and customized educational workshops.

### Jackie's Corner

<http://jackiescorneract.blogspot.com/>

A place to find fun, engaging apps for all ages.

### Helping Parents Understand their Not-So-Verbal Autistic Child

<http://marcilebowitz.com/>

Excellent website for understanding non-verbal children.

### Gemiini

<https://gemiini.org>

Gemiini uses play-based learning to teach speech and reading skills. Monthly tuition fees for access to 60,000+ videos and other educational tools.

Scholarships available.

## Communication Apps

### Avaz

<http://www.avazapp.com/>

AAC app with simple, practical guidance for parents and educators to extend AAC beyond therapy into homes and classrooms.

### Touch Chat

<https://touchchatapp.com/>

A communication solution for individuals who have difficulty using their natural voice.

### Speak for Yourself

<http://www.speakforyourself.org/>

Developed by two Speech-Language Pathologists who take an active role in providing training and support directly to its users.

### I Can for Autism

<http://www.icanforautism.com/>

Social skills and language learning made easy and rewarding developed by a Speech-Language Pathologist and autism expert.

### Proloquo2Go

<http://bit.ly/proloquo-aac>

English and Spanish symbol-supported communication app to grow skills—from beginner to advanced.

### LAMP Words for Life

<https://aacapps.com/lamp/>

Based on the Unity® language system, this app is designed to meet the needs of children with autism.

### iCommunicate

<http://bit.ly/icomunicate-app>

App that lets you design visual schedules, storyboards, communication boards and more.





## Deeper Thinking Activities

*Episode 3: "Let's Talk" was created to give the audience a better understanding of the many ways someone with autism can communicate. The following activities are meant to give students experience with non-verbal communication and one-sided communication.*

**Communicating without words** – Tell the students that they will be working on communicating with one another...without using any words. Select two students and hand each one a message that they must convey to the other without speaking or writing anything down. The students cannot let anyone else read the message and cannot receive help from the audience. The messages should be something that is not easily conveyed, some examples:

- a. "I would like a cup of hot chocolate and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich"
- b. "I am allergic to dairy and cannot eat pizza"
- c. "I had a bad day today and would like some alone time"
- d. "I have a new game, do you want to come over tomorrow to play?"

**One-sided communication** - Students with autism sometimes have a hard time with conversation skills. They may like to talk about one topic all the time without noticing that others are not interested or want to change the topic.

You will need two students for this activity. One student will be given a topic to discuss (e.g., dinosaurs) and instructed to remain on that topic no matter what the other student says. The other student will be instructed to begin a casual conversation and try to get the other student interested in their conversation. Keeps this going for about 1-2 minutes, and then have the students switch roles.



*Find Bluebee TeeVee, Autism Information Station on YouTube.  
[com/BluebeeTeeVee](https://www.youtube.com/BluebeeTeeVee)*