
Signs of successful communication and engagement

Tips for observing communication success during conversations



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Working together on positive
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Signs of successful communication for behaviour support practitioners

Communication is a 2-way process and, as the behaviour support practitioner is usually the person leading the discussion, you'll need to pay close attention to signs that show whether the person you're engaging with understands. This is essential in respecting and upholding their rights during the behaviour support planning process.

Remember messages are communicated in many ways – not just in what you say. Body language and other things that happen during the interaction also share important information with the other person.

As a behaviour support practitioner, you'll need to be alert and adapt your communication style to ensure effective engagement throughout the behaviour support planning and implementation process.

For a person with communication difficulties, their communication partner is critical to the success of the interaction. This will also ensure you build and maintain the relationship of trust and respect that is so important in this process.

Here are some signs to help you understand whether you are communicating and engaging successfully.

1. **Responding.** A person's response is a strong indicator of their engagement with the process and also whether they have understood the information you are trying to communicate.

Signs someone hasn't understood include:

- inappropriate, short or vague responses, e.g., 'not sure' or 'maybe'; the response doesn't answer your question or is off topic.
- not following through with an instruction.
- delayed, slow or no response.
- always answering 'yes'. Someone may answer 'yes' even if they don't understand in order to please you or because they don't know what else to respond.

2. **Repeating.** Repetition can be a helpful tool for checking understanding. The person may repeat things you say, which is often a sign they understand. They may also ask you to repeat yourself if they don't understand.

You can also use repetition to check if you have understood correctly. Try saying 'I'll check that I've understood, by repeating back to you...'

3. **Summarising.** Like repetition, summarising the information is a good tool for checking understanding. If you ask the person to summarise what you have said in their words, you will have an idea of how well you have successfully communicated the key information.
As with repeating, you can use summarising back to the person to check that you have understood them correctly.
4. **Questioning.** The person's questions can tell you whether they have understood the information. If they don't ask questions or their questions don't appear to make sense in the context, it is a good sign they don't understand.
5. **Showing.** As you prepare for your conversation and as you [get to know the person you're communicating with](#), focus on understanding **their unique body language**. This will help you sense whether they are engaged in the behaviour support process you're working through together. Look for signs of confusion, such as furrowed brows, a blank stare or other signs they're lacking engagement in their body language.
6. **Feeling.** If the person is struggling to understand the conversation, they are likely to feel frustrated, upset or overwhelmed by the demands placed on them. They may express this feeling of frustration or upset through undesirable or negative behaviours (also called behaviours of concern).



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