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# Understanding communication & engagement

Video audio transcription



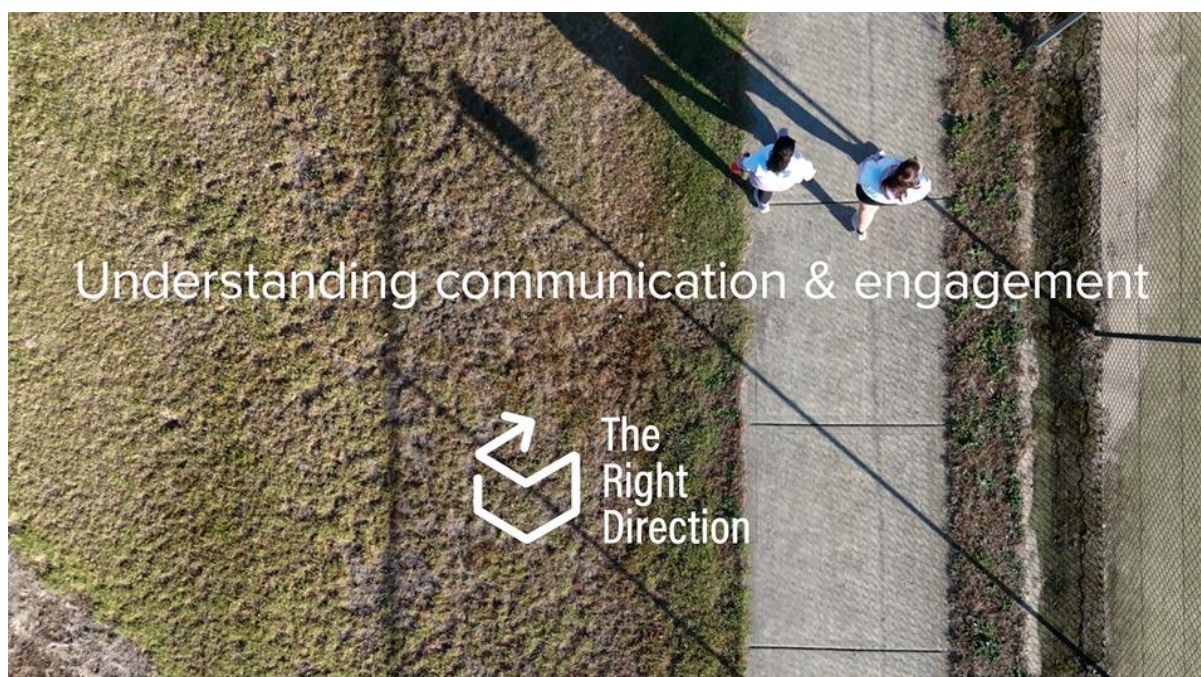
The  
Right  
Direction

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Working together on positive  
behaviour support (PBS)

# Video audio transcription

## Understanding communication and engagement



**Cherry Reynolds**, Director / Senior Clinician

(Woollybutt Specialist Services; Darwin, Northern Territory)

Communication is fundamental to behaviour in and of itself.

If you look at one of the behavioural theories around that behaviour is a form of communication for people, then being able to be heard, be listened to in itself helps to reduce those behaviours of concern.

**Keith McVilly**, Professor of Disability and Inclusion  
(The University of Melbourne; Melbourne, Victoria)

We know that people are using their behaviour as the best possible way at that particular point in time to get their message across.

**Heather Lambert**, Clinical Lead – Positive Behaviour Support  
(Marathon Health; Albury, New South Wales)

Effective communication and engagement is important and that's how information is relayed. But it's not only that, that's how relationships are developed.

**Sarah Bingley**, Core Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner  
(Marathon Health; Albury, New South Wales)

If you're not being communicated to or you're not communicating effectively, then you won't have an understanding of what's going on.

## **Cherry Reynolds**

Effective communication tools and strategies helps you know who the person is, it helps the participant feel heard and have a voice.

**Stuart Martin**, Core Positive Behaviour Support Practitioner  
(Marathon Health; Albury, New South Wales)

There's always challenges when it comes to communication and people have their own preferred way of communicating.

**Teresa Micallef**, Building Community Networks Manager  
(Belonging Matters Inc.; Melbourne, Victoria)

Figuring out what it is that people are trying to say sometimes goes beyond a face-to-face conversation.

You know, you might need to use pictures, nonverbal cues. You might need to literally go out and explore and try things.

**Danielle Quinlan**, Clinical Consultant, Speech Pathologist  
(SAL Consulting; Darwin, Northern Territory)

We can use devices to help us communicate or low-tech visual symbol-based communication as well. I am quite a fan of a talking mat, which is a symbol-based communication and it's got simple thumbs up, thumbs down and a bit so-so in the middle.

We can use that topic as our front runner to explore so many different interests, goals, challenges with our clients.

**Keith McVilly**

Oftentimes I've found that sitting down and doing an activity, maybe doing some drawing and the like is the best means of supporting communication.

**Darlane McLean**, Hayden's Mum

Hayden is a son, a brother, an uncle, a friend. He's an artist, he's incredibly artistic.

He clinically would be described as somebody with complex communication support needs. But I think he's an amazing communicator.

I think the onus is on the circle around him to pick up on when he's communicating and what he's communicating. And sometimes that can even be a facial expression or a noise.

### **Jodie Zutt**, Hayden's Friend and Art Mentor

When Hayden's relaxed and feels safe, he could talk like this.

The staff would leave the house and it would just be me and Hayden in there listening to the radio, making mess painting, drawing, showing each other drawings. And then naturally what would happen is Hayd would start to tell me about the drawings.

The drawings opened up conversations that were meaningful to Hayden, that he'd never had an opportunity to talk to other people about.

I guess over time I learnt to crack the code on what Hayd was drawing and what he needed.

He never wore shoes.

People would be like, oh my God, this guy's walking around, he's got no shoes on.

But that was because when you walk, you get feedback on your feet and that feedback is very important for his body.

I did a painting of Hayden's boots that we bought and I just left painting up next to his computer.

Anyway, he saw the painting of the boots with his laces in them and the next day put the boots on.

### **Dariane McLean**

He just really needs people to interact in a way with him so that he can build trust and rapport because, you know, his journey has included trauma.

### **Cherry Reynolds**

So it's reflecting on, well, what might make me feel safe when I'm talking with a complete stranger about things that are important to my life. For some people, that is being close and that holding the hand, or for some

people it might be, we've got to do some fun stuff to build rapport before we can have those in-depth conversations.

### **Danielle Quinlan**

I'm not someone that goes up to a stranger and would tell them my life story straight away, so we give the same benefit to our clients. We build up a relationship first before we're delving into any sort of assessments or tricky questions.

### **Doug Payne**

This idea of being with people and being it may be sitting quietly with someone enjoying the sunset.

Going out fishing with the fellows that I do, just being with them and enjoying that activity, you engage through that, and you just get a connection. This idea of humans connecting.



## **Heather Lambert**

It's not about sitting down and let's go through this assessment now, and I need you to tick these boxes and answer these questions.

It's about getting out there and, you know, going for a walk or playing basketball or, doing whatever it is that they enjoy doing and gathering the information at the same time, because that's both relationship building and information gathering, which is so important, because then the participant doesn't actually feel like they're being interviewed.

## **Cherry Reynolds**

Positive behaviour support isn't just about the behaviours that happen, it's around maximising quality of life. And if you don't know what a person's life is like and what's important to them, how can you maximise their quality of life?

## **Closing credits** (text presented on screen)

How will you use these ideas to improve engagement in your behaviour support practice?

Web address: [therightdirectionpbs.com](http://therightdirectionpbs.com)



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