



Partner Skills: Verbal Referencing

Saying what you see

What is 'Verbal Referencing'?

Verbal referencing is a strategy where someone describes what they see an individual doing, and then describes the interpretation of what is seen

The goal

- Help the individual tune in to what they are doing, and how it is being interpreted so they can do it again (or change what they do) in the future
- Adding language in a way the individual may be able to use to express that message next time
- No-one can know exactly what someone is thinking just by looking at them
- A communication partner should acknowledge that an interpretation is only a best guess, and provide a space that invites someone to correct that interpretation

Why verbally reference?

- It shows how someone communicating, and the message is 'heard'
- Helps develop problem solving skills:
 - Providing feedback about what how an interpretation is made can help make changes in the future
- Improve an individual's body awareness:
 - Providing feedback about the movements someone makes can help orientate them to what their body is doing
- Model language with individuals who may seem passive in their communication, or is learning how to use language:
 - Highlight small or early communication behaviours
- Provide experience and success in initiating
- Help others get to know the individual better:
 - When describing someone's behaviour, other communication partners can be helped to notice the different ways that individual communicates

Communication Partner Skills: Verbal Referencing

Describing and interpreting behaviour to teach communication skills

Step 1 – Describe the behaviour

Describe what is seen and answer the question:
What is the individual doing?

Use language that does not give away opinions or feelings

It can be helpful to start with statements like:

- I see...
- I hear...
- I feel...
- You are...
- I noticed...
- It looks like...

This can help individuals understand how their internal feelings relate to actions and how those actions can be communication

Step 2 – Interpret the meaning

Tell the individual how their behaviour has been interpreted in the form of a statement

It is good to include language which invites (but does not require) the individual to correct:

- I think...
- I wonder if...
- Maybe you ...

This can take the pressure off an interaction and reduce the number of questions an individual gets asked in a day

Step 3 – Model on an AAC system

Highlight key words on an AAC system the individual might be using or learning

This can show individuals a way they might communicate the next time they experience the same internal feeling

Always get consent before using someone else's aided communication system

Step 4 - Wait

Leave time and space for the individual to participate

Waiting gives individuals an **opportunity** to confirm/deny our assumptions

Waiting can provide the **space** to add more information – but never **require** someone to do this

Examples:

I see you are smiling

I think you **like** this. We can do **more**

Your eyes are closed

Maybe you **do not want** to get up

You pushed it away

I think you are **finished**. We can **stop**

You spat it out

Maybe you **do not want** it. We can try something **different**

You are looking at me

Maybe you are **not sure**. I can **help**

You are looking at your watch

I think you are telling me to **hurry up**

I see you looking around

I wonder if you need some **help**

You moved your hand away from your chest

That looks like the sign for **more**

I hear you making a noise

I think you have **something to say**

Bolded and underlined words are examples of what could be modelled in an AAC system