COMMUNITY LIVING
Toronto

Learning Together

## Specialized Services At Your Fingertips

Hello and welcome to the third edition of our newsletter. In this edition we will be discussing building relationships through communication during COVID-19.

Communication

Good communication is an essential element and foundation for establishing and sustaining social relationships. Traditionally, effective communication skills have been considered verbal communication in the form of words, however, there are different ways people can communicate with one another.
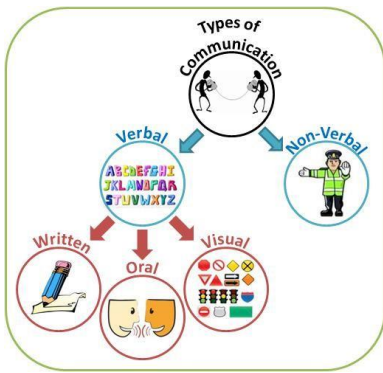
Other forms of verbal communication include written, visual, and sign language. Some examples of visual communication can include the use of schedules, first-then boards, picture exchange systems, or augmentative and alternative communication systems such as a low-tech communication boards or communication apps such as proloquo2go.

Communication is more then just the words we speak; non-verbal communication in the form of gestures, facial expressions, and body language play an important role in how people interact, communicate and building relationships.

For more information on communication click this link.

Building Relationships

Building lasting meaningful relationships are important for everyone. As social beings we are hardwired to connect with others. Relationships help increase our emotional well-being, create a sense of stability, and help us feel included. But how do you build relationships? See below for some great tips.

Tips for Effective Relationship Building
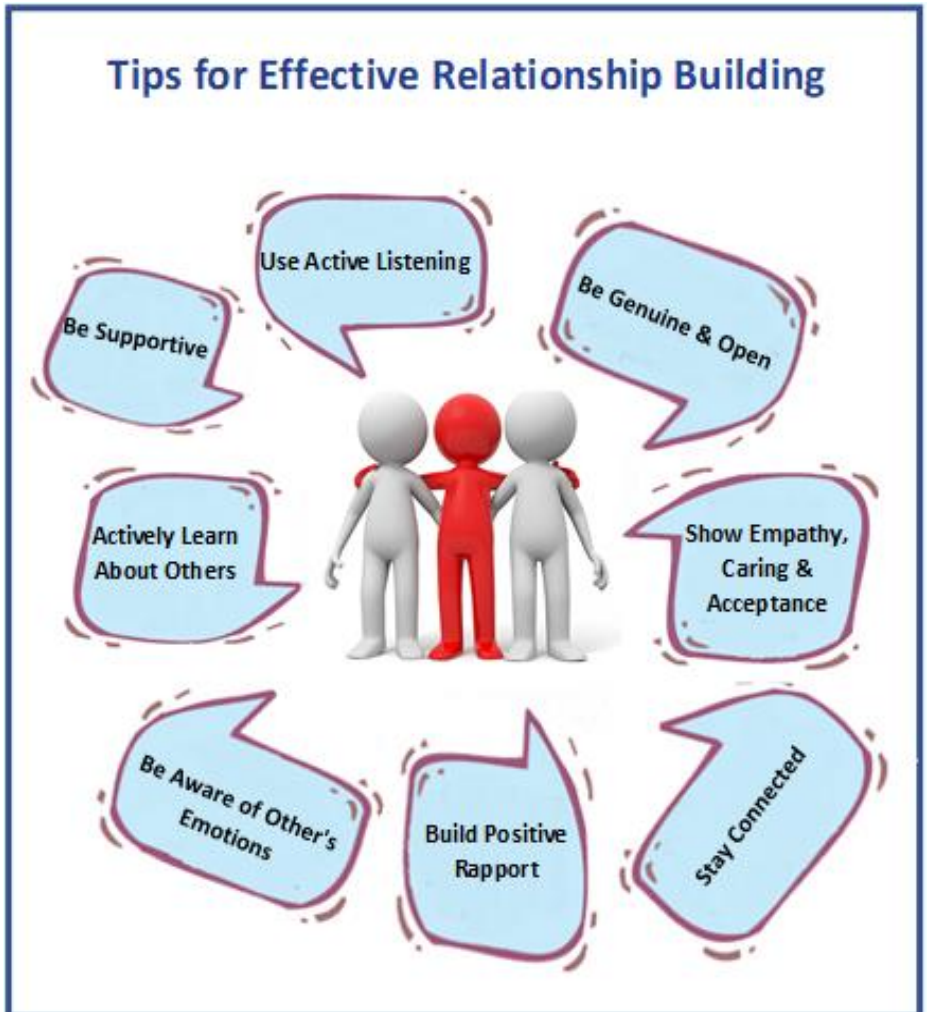
Rapport Building

Building rapport is an important step when developing relationships with individuals we support. Whether you have been working with the individual for a long time or just getting to know them by developing a positive relationship, they will be more likely to cooperate with you and you will see fewer challenging behaviours.

There are three steps to building rapport:

1. **Increase the value of staff reinforcement:** This involves using reinforcement often, as well as pairing yourself with items, other people, and activities that you already know that this person prefers. By pairing yourself with other reinforcers, you will be associated with preferred things.
2. **Increase responsiveness:** To increase responsiveness, remember to acknowledge, assess and address.
   a) Recognize an individual's communicative response
   b) Acknowledge the communication by making eye contact, getting closer and engage in other listener behaviours
   c) Assess the purpose of the communication. Try to figure out what the individual wants or needs.
   d) Address the communication
      i. Ask "How can I help?"
      ii. Provide praise for any communication attempt
      iii. If possible, honour the request. If the request cannot be honoured suggest a reasonable alternative or provide a choice of items or activities that are currently available.
3. **Increase Reciprocity**
   a) Identify an activity preferred by you and the individual
   b) List the steps involved in the activity
   c) Complete the steps of the activity together
   d) Praise any cooperation

What to do: Joan is a newly hired staff who is working with Brett for the first time. Joan sees Brett look at her as she enters the room. She approaches him and smiles, she introduces herself and ask if he would like to play on his iPad. When Brett needs to go downstairs for lunch, Joan asks him to return the iPad. When he cooperates with her request, she praises him. After lunch Brett ask if he can use the iPad again. Joan praises him for asking nicely and provides access to the item immediately.

Delivering Instructions

We often provide instructions to individuals and it is important to know how to effectively give instructions to increase cooperation and reduce problem behaviour. The goal is to provide instructions that are clear, understandable, and reinforcing. It is important to be at the right distance, get the individual's attention, and help the individual understand. As well as provide the individual enough time to respond.

How to Deliver Instructions
1. Face the individual and get within 3-5 feet
2. Say the individual's name to get their attention – use gentle physical contact if necessary and appropriate
3. Provide a simple and brief (3-5 word) instruction
4. Wait 5-10 seconds for the individual to respond
5. Verbally repeat the instruction only once
6. Provide prompts as necessary (physical, gestural, model, etc.)
7. If the individual complies, provide reinforcement
8. If the individual refuses, stop and provide the instruction at another time

Reminders!

You can't describe all tasks in 3-5 words –so consider breaking large tasks into smaller tasks

Don't forget to reinforce when the individual completes the instruction!

Avoid "nagging" the individual, no one wants to sound like a broken record!

Information retrieved from:
QBS, Inc, (2006-2013). *Quality Behavioural Competencies.*

Staying Connected

Staying connected to each other is extremely important during this time when we are unable to spend time together in person. Caregivers, staff, and families should facilitate social connections using text messaging or video apps. There are many video apps that can be used to stay connected with family and friends. Scheduling time to socialize with others using these apps to play games, catch up, and help foster connectedness.

Here's a list of some free apps available for download:
- FaceTime
- WhatsApp
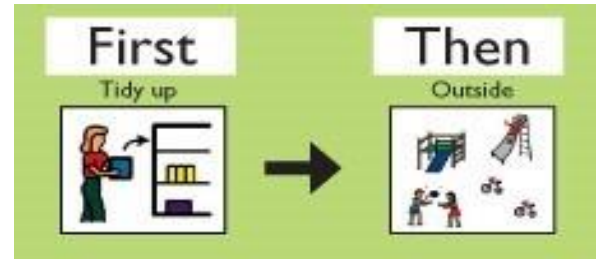- Skype
- Marco Polo
- Zoom
- Google Hangouts

How to Use

Activities at Home

Check out Variety Village's online work out videos
Check out Ripley Aquarium's shark camera
Check out Chatter Pack for more virtual tours and live webcams!

Supporting Communication with Visuals

How to Use First-Then Boards

- The "first" picture is always an activity that you want the individual to engage in such as a transition or skill-building activity
- The "then" picture reinforces the "first" activity by being an activity or object your child enjoys
- Show the first/then board to the individual and name the activities while pointing to the pictures
- Assist the individual in carrying out the sequence
- Depending on the learner; there could be multiple activities sequenced together in the "first" section

Example; a break down of steps for one task or a few novel/less preferred tasks to complete
Depending on the learner; can use pictures, written sight words, or even just the verbal instruction of "first___, then ____"

Visual Schedule Resources

Click here to access more tips on visual schedules

Click here to check out how and when to use visuals

Click here to make your own visuals

Check out Visched: Effective Visual Scheduling App

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