Supporting AAC Initiation

Look for Any Initiation

- Closely observe your learner and look for any non-symbolic communication (i.e., communication without symbols/language).
- For some learners, it's obvious (e.g., handing over items, pushing things away). For others, it can be really subtle (e.g., eye gaze to an item, small movements in response to an item/action).
- Model language on their AAC that relates to contexts in which you see initiation. Something about that context is likely important to them.

Teach Initiation

- Think about how your learner could initiate use of their system (e.g., go to device, touch book, raise arm, vocalize).
- Explicitly include the initiation strategy you're targeting in your models (e.g., Oo, oo, oo. I have something to say, I'm using my voice!).

Respond to Any Attempt to Initiate/Communicate

- Encourage communication by consistently responding to your learner's initiation.
  - Always attribute meaning to their AAC use (even if you think it's unintentional).
  - If you don't understand, say so! Just by responding you're treating their attempt as meaningful.

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