

# General Partner Strategies

## What can I do to help?

### **1. Create Opportunities:**

Create opportunities for your child to use their communication aid in daily routines, tasks, and everyday play. Be mindful of how often you are interpreting what they may be saying.

### **2. Model, Model, Model**

We must use the child's communication system ourselves in order to demonstrate how it can be used. Teach the language in the system AND show your child how to use the language in the system to communicate messages by using the board or device with your own words. Point towards the symbols/words as you talk in fun and motivating activities for your child (e.g. "Ready, set, GO", selecting/pointing at symbol for "GO" as you play).

### **3. Use a Variety of Describing Words and Action Words**

Many children with language learning difficulties, including those who use AAC, often use the same words over and over again. Rather than modelling the same words, begin to expand to use similar words in familiar routines. Incorporate a variety of describing and action words when communicating setting up opportunities, or using the symbols yourself. When your child uses the same word, ask them to think about another word that means the same. For example, many of our clients use the word "happy" repeatedly to describe how they feel. Help your child to start thinking about other words such as "excited", "glad", "elated" etc., by using them yourself. "I can see that you are EXCITED to go to the park!"

### **4. Ensure the System is Available and Accessible**

If the communication system is not available, then your child or their communication partners cannot use it. Encourage your child to bring the system wherever they go (e.g., different room in the house, outside, into the community, school, etc.). Remind them not to 'forget their words' when moving from place to place. You may need to facilitate the moving of the system, but try not to be the carrier. Together, we can encourage your child to realize the power their system provides them and the importance of having it closeby.

### **5. Wait**

Be sure to give your child to take a turn before you move on, or anticipate what they may be trying to say. Look at your child expectantly to help cue them that their message is important.

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Adapted from Gloria Soto and Patti Solomon-Rice ISAAC presentation "Strategies to Facilitate the Narrative Skills of Children who use AAC", 2008 by Margaret Ettore and Melanie Workentin for the Narrative Language Group at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, 2010.