

Helping Your Non-Communicative Child Communicate

It is very challenging to have a non-communicative child in your home, but there are ways you can help him.

- 1) First, determine what items are desirable to him (e.g., certain foods, specific toys, activities such as swinging or squishing in pillows, etc.)
- 2) Next, set-up the environment so that he will have to come to YOU to get these items. Place food out of his reach, but in his sight; Put a child safety knob on the pantry; Put toys up out of reach, but in sight or in containers that child can not open; Put items for sensory activities (e.g., sheet for swinging) out of reach but in sight. Try to keep items in the same place so your child knows where they are.
- 3) In the beginning, your child may stand in front of the item, possibly crying or screaming. You will need to go over there, put your face close to his and model a word for the desired item (e.g., 'cracker', 'car', 'swing', 'open') 1-3 times and then give the child the item or complete the activity. You may have to do this many times before your child will come to you to request your assistance. When he starts to come to you, he may take your hand and lead you to the desired object. Again, put your face close to his and model the word 1-3 times and then give him the desired object.
- 4) As your child becomes more proficient at communicating with you, start to set up new situations for him to communicate. For example, instead of giving him his usual amount of a snack item, only give him a third so that he has to request more. Or, hand him items such as playdough or an individually packaged snack closed, so that he has to request you to open it.
- 5) If you are working with an SLP, please consult her about what type of cues may work with your particular child. Sometimes, children may benefit from using signs or picture symbols in the beginning as a bridge to developing verbal communication.

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