# MODULE 1:

## Introduction about ASD and communication with youth with ASD

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Know** about the most essential information regarding autism.

2. **Understand** the social communication needs of individuals with ASD.

3. **Distinguish** between the various communication support needs of individuals with ASD.

4. **Communicate** more effectively with individuals who have ASD.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that has both biological and environmental roots. It exists on a continuum, with varying levels of functioning. Signs of ASD can be identified in children as young as 18-24 months old and persist throughout their development.

### Diagnostic criteria:

A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction
B. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities

### Level of support needed:

Level 1: Support needed
Level 2: Significant support needed
Level 3: Very significant support needed

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8

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People with ASD exhibit atypical forms of..

## Social communication:

- Communicating and relating
- Managing verbal and nonverbal Cues
- Understanding non-Literal Expressions
- Respecting Turns
- Identifying emotions and intentions
- Behaving in Social Situations

## Flexibility of Thinking and Behavior:

- Anticipating what might happen in unexpected situations
- Adapting to changes
- Changing one's way of thinking or behaving depending on the situation
- Varying one's repertoire of interests and activities
- Repetitive manipulation of objects.
- Ecolalia
- Body rocking

## Sensory Processing:

- Experiencing sensations of hyper- or hypo-sensitivity
- stimuli can either strongly attract them or cause discomfort, stress or pain.
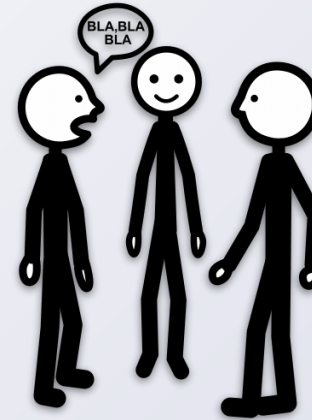
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## SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Communicative skills ranging from **social-emotional reciprocity** to the ability to **initiate, maintain or understand conversations,** and also **non-verbal communication.**

The current definition of autism only focuses on **social communication** and not on language *per se*.

If ASD concurs with **language development difficulties**, the impairment of communication skills is even more significant.

BLA,BLA BLA

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We must take into account two important questions:

The first one deals with the **communicative skills and competences of the person** with autism with the aim of expanding their language and communicative resources.

The second perspective should focus on reflecting on the **demands placed** on the individual person in the different contexts in which they actively participate; then, these should be eased so the gap between competences and demands is reduced as much as possible.
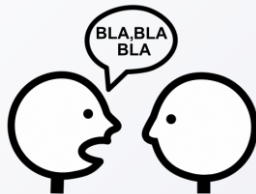
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We can find people with autism with and without oral language capabilities.

BLA, BLA BLA

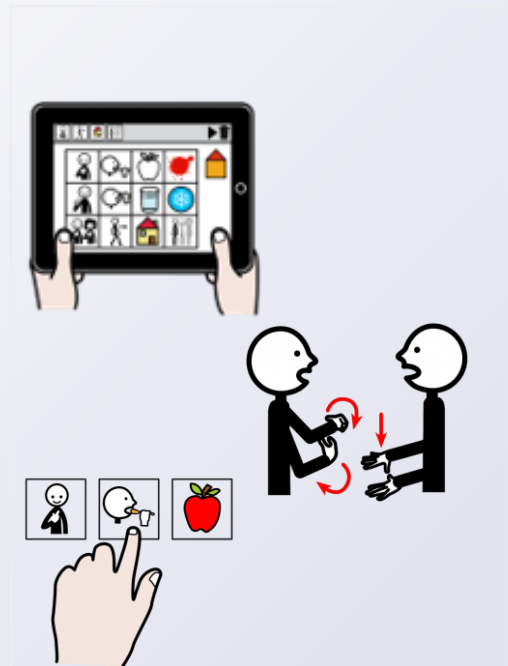People with ASD with oral language capabilities can have language difficulties (approx. 25-30%) or not.

LANGUAGE PRAGMATICS

NARRATIVE CAPABILITIES

CONVERSATIONAL CAPABILITIES

FUNCTIONAL USAGE OF LANGUAGE

EARLY ATTENTION CAPABILITIES

EARLY PREVERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Every person has the **right** to be able to communicate.

Support people must be responsible for delivering support and teaching people with autism a **functional communicative system adapted** to their needs and expectations.

Any agent that interacts in a meaningful way with people with autism should **respect and know** their own communication systems.
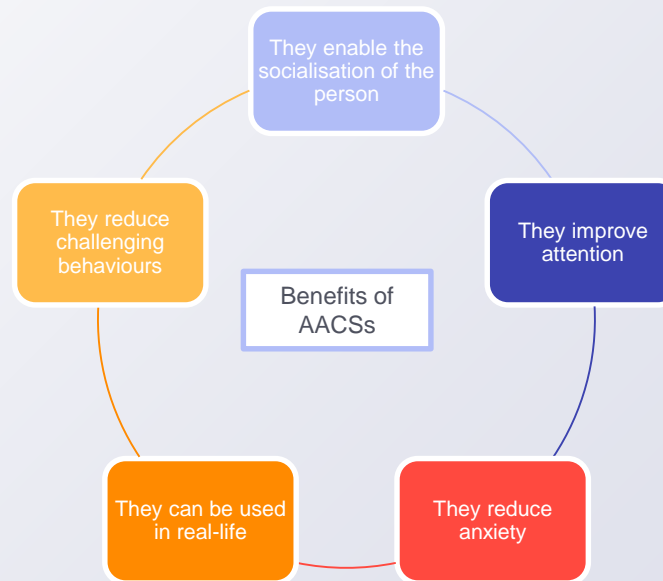
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**ALTERNATIVE AND AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS (AACSs)**

Are those methods used to complement or replace speech or writing for people with difficulties to produce or understand oral and/or written language.

Gestures and sign language.
Low-tech exchange systems
High-tech exchange systems

They enable the socialisation of the person

They reduce challenging behaviours

They improve attention

Benefits of AACSs

They can be used in real-life

They reduce anxiety

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**GESTURES AND SIGN LANGUAGE**

These are widely used models when people do not use spoken language or their spoken language must be supported.

> **Benson Schaeffer's Total Communication Programme:**
> - Its goal is to promote spontaneous non-verbal communication by using **signs by both interlocutors**.
> - These signs are **accompanied** by **speech.**



Example of signs used in sign language

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

**LOW-TECH EXCHANGE SYSTEMS**

They consist of communicators and/or selection panels for requests in which an image is delivered to a receiver to communicate what the person desires to achieve.



**Analogue communicator for pictogram exchange**

**PECS:**
- It is the most recognised image exchange system (Frost & Bondy, 1994).
- It consists in teaching to give a symbol to another person in order to get an object or initiate a desired activity.

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## HIGH-TECH EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

These are **specific applications for devices** like iOs, Android and Windows smartphones and tablets.
They consist on the usage of pictograms as the basis for daily communication and the development of language skills.
This alternative is **highly demanded.**

Some of these apps are:
Proloquo2go
Eneso Verbo
TD Snap Core First
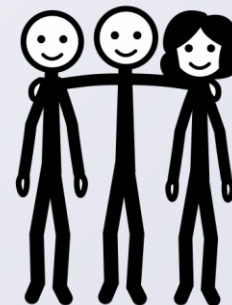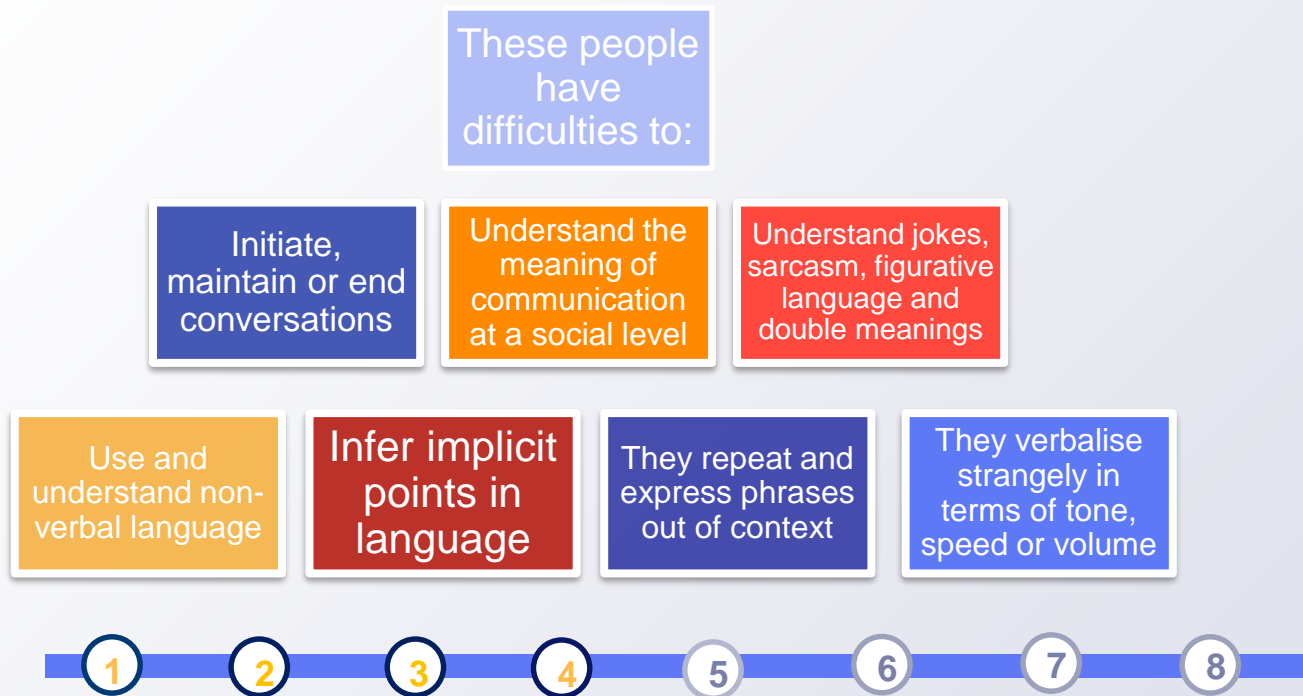
**YOUTH WORKERS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

Get information and ask which communication system or model is using the person.

Look for information and ask for specific training in case you have problems communicating with the person.

Try to perceive the communication from his/her point of view.

Always communicate using his/her communication system.

Be flexible while communicating.

Motivate others in your organisation to follow the same steps you followed.

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The difficulties are very different from those of people with ASD with language difficulties.

These people have difficulties to:

Initiate, maintain or end conversations

Understand the meaning of communication at a social level

Understand jokes, sarcasm, figurative language and double meanings

Use and understand non-verbal language

Infer implicit points in language

They repeat and express phrases out of context

They verbalise strangely in terms of tone, speed or volume

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**YOUTH WORKERS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

Be responsive to the person during communication. His/her verbal and non-verbal language will offer a lot of information.

Try to speak calmly and align your rhythm to his/her processing capabilities.

Try to avoid figurative and symbolic language, jokes and sarcasm.

Do not take for granted implicit language inferences.

Try to adapt the language to the specific context and situation.

Help him/her if you notice he/she did not understand something or presents difficulties to express him/herself.

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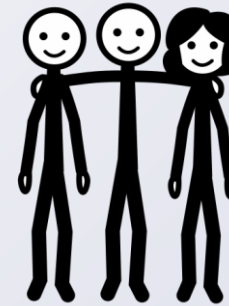
**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TIPS**

We have differences between people with language difficulties and people who only have difficulties in social communication.
We now give you some final tips that you will find useful in any case:

1. Try to **catch their attention** during communication to improve it.

2. Keep calm, use a calm tone of voice and **adapt** to their skills and competences.

3. The language used and the context must be **predictable**.

4. Do **not** base your communication **only in requests.**

5. Do let the other person **express his/her desires** and intentions.

6. Look for strategies to **ease communication**.

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**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TIPS**

7. Pay attention to his/her **non-verbal language**. It will give you a lot of information about his/her emotional state.

8. Pay attention to the stimuli of the **context**. Some contexts may make communication difficult.

9. **Respect** that person and his/her communication model.

10. **Adapt** to their characteristics. It is a matter of respect.

11. **Minimise communicative requirements** as per their linguistic and communicative profile.

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- **HIGH-TECH SYSTEMS:**

https://www.assistiveware.com/es/productos/proloquo2go

https://www.eneso.es/verbo/

https://es.tobiidynavox.com/pages/td-snap

- **LOW-TECH SYSTEMS:**

- https://pecsusa.com/

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- **INTERVENTION MODELS:**

- https://teacch.com/

- https://pecs-spain.com/

- https://aba-elearning.com/

- https://www.project-impact.org/

- https://www.hanen.org

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- **REFERENCE ORGANISATIONS:**

- https://www.autismeurope.org/

- https://autismo.org.es/ (SPAIN)

- https://aetapi.org/ (SPAIN)

- https://www.autismspeaks.org/ (USA)

- **LOCAL ENTITIES:**

- https://www.plenainclusion.org/

- https://cermi.es/

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## 6. RESOURCES

- ARASAAC (http://www.arasaac.org). License: CC (BY-NC-SA). Property: Gobierno de Aragón (España).

- DSM -5: Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders */ American Psychiatric Association (5 ed.).* (2013). American Psychiatric Association.

- Frost, Bondy, A., Vilaltella Verds, S., Gómez Boyle, A., & Bondy, R. (2002). El manual del sistema de comunicación por intercambio de imágenes: *The Picture exchange communication system training manual* / Lori Frost, M.S, CCC-SLP y Andy Bondy, Ph. D; images by Rayna Bondy; translated into Spanish by Sonia Vilaltella Verdes and Alicia Gómez Boyle (2nd ed.). Pyramid Educational Products.

- Ingersoll, Dvortcsak, A., & Hoyos Seijo, I. (2021). Comunicación social para niños con autismo y otras Dificultades del desarrollo*: guía del proyecto ImPACT para profesionales* / Dra. Brooke Ingersoll, Dra. Anna Dvortcsa, translated into Spanish by Isabel Hoyos Seijo (1st Spanish edition). Autismo Ávila.

- Lorah, E. R., Parnell, A., Whitby, P. S., & Hantula, D. (2015). A systematic review of tablet computers and portable media players as speech generating devices for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(12).

- Shic, F., & Goodwin M. (2015). Introduction to Technologies in the Daily Lives of Individuals with Autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45:3773–3776. 10.

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# ASSESSMENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **Question 1:**<br>Some high-tech systems are: | A.    Eneso Verbo<br>B.    Proloquo2go<br>C.    TDSnap Core<br>D.    All the above are correct |
| **Question 2:**<br>We must pay attention to the stimuli of the context because... | A.    The person with ASD has to adapt to improve communication.<br>B.    They ease or hinder social communication with the person with ASD.<br>C.    We cannot communicate if it is too cold.<br>D.    We must know his or her emotional state. |
| **Question 3:**<br>For the active participation of students with ASD, we should capture their attention <u>by persisting</u>, for example, by repeating a lot of times the last sentence. | A.    True<br>B.    False |

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| **Question 4:** The current definition of ASD refers to social communication difficulties and not only to language capabilities. | A. True <br> B. False |
|---|---|
| **Question 5:** Social communication consists in... | A. High social and public speaking skills. <br> B. Being capable of communication with the therapist and his/her family. <br> C. Social-emotional reciprocity communication skills to initiate, maintain and understand relationships excluding non-verbal communication. <br> D. Social-emotional reciprocity communication skills to initiate, maintain and understand relationships including non-verbal communication. |

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**Question 6:**
What does AACS mean?

A. Alternative Communication System
B. Augmentative and Alternative Communication System
C. Shared Play System
D. Combined Attention System

**Question 7:**
What factors should we take into account to choose between a high-tech or a low-tech system?

A. Factors such as price and durability. The recommendation is starting with a low-tech system and consider a high-tech exchange system in a later step.
B. None, we should always choose high-tech.
C. None, we should always choose low-tech.
D. None, the person can communicate by gestures.

**Question 8:**
The teaching of first levels of PECS system is divided into:

A. Discrimination of objects and images exchange
B. Expansion and discrimination of images
C. Physical exchange, expansion of spontaneity and discrimination of images
D. Functional usage of images

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**SOLUTIONS:**

1. Option D

2. Option B

3. Option B

4. Option A

5. Option D

6. Option B

7. Option A

8. Option C

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# End of Module

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