

This week's PODD communication focus...

Verbal Referencing

"adults, rather than just presenting what needs to be learned, support children's own active striving to communicate. They do this by participating in activities with joint engagement, attributing communicative meaning to the children's actions (overinterpretation), guiding children in expressing themselves and negotiating meaning (Schaffer, 1989; Tomasello, 1999; Wood et al 1976)."

von Tetzchner & Grove, 2003, p. 23

- In order to guide and support your child with their communication, there are a range of 'scaffolding' strategies that you can learn to use. **Verbal referencing** is a scaffolding technique used to support your child's problem solving and their learning of movements to communicate.
- You can verbally reference what you observe your child doing and how you will respond to this. For example,
 - You're turning your head to the side, you're saying 'no'
 - You're looking at 'help' and you're looking back at me, do you want me to help?
 - You're pointing to 'house and garden', I'll turn to that page.
- This type of verbal referencing particularly assists children who do not receive clear sensory feedback about where their body is in space, or have difficulty controlling the movements of their body. You are giving them clear feedback about what you have seen their body do. It is an essential tool for developing your child's consistency and clarity in indicating 'yes' and 'no'.
- Verbal referencing can also be used to outline the process for the child to communicate a message. For example,
 - assisting a child to attract their communication partner's attention and initiate communication – *"I look at (partner), I use my voice, I wave my arm / I look at my wristband"*
 - assisting a child to use eye-gaze to access their PODD communication book *"I look around (at symbols), When I'm ready, I look at (partner), Now I look at the one I want"*.
 - assisting a child to use direct access (pointing) to access their PODD communication book *"I look at symbols. I point to the one I want."*
- This type of verbal referencing may help the child internalise these intentions as self-talk to help them to independently carry out the movements required to successfully communicate their message. [Note: For some children, particularly those affected by apraxia, you may need to limit any verbal referencing when they are preparing and attempting to carry out a movement themselves.]
- Verbal referencing can also be used by the communication partner when they are modeling communication using the PODD communication book. As the person modeling communication, you can state what you are doing to operate the PODD book and why. For example,
 - As you look for a symbol on a page, you can say "I'm looking, I'm looking" as you systematically move your finger top to bottom down each column of symbols on the page, then if the word isn't there, "oh, the word's not on this page, I'd better turn the page", as you point to 'turn the page'.
 - You can verbally reference your own use of 'yes' and 'no' as you model your child's access method. You do this by first providing partner assisted scanning as you usually would, "people, actions, descriptions", and then you verbally reference your own response "I'm nodding my head, I'm saying 'yes'".

Make it your personal goal this week to use some verbal referencing as you model the use of your child's PODD, or as you help them to use their PODD to communicate.