

Use of Symbol Modelling Displays
with Children with ASD:-
Yooralla's Experiences



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Evidence to support the use of symbol modelling with children with Autism

- “It is well established that most individuals with autism spectrum disorders are strong visual learners. Thus the use of the visual medium for instruction may facilitate the ability of individuals with autism to make sense of and provide order to the complex social world in which they live, work, go to school, and play”

(Mirenda and Iacono, 2009)

Outline of Session

i. Symbol Modelling Displays:

- a. Terminology
- b. Background
- c. Symbols

ii. How to use Symbol Modelling Displays with children with ASD

iii. Symbol Selection

iv. Yooralla's Symbol Modelling Displays:

- a. Situation-specific displays
- b. Symbol Modelling displays to promote social interaction
- c. Visual timetable with symbol modelling displays
- d. News sharing symbol modelling displays

Bowling Activity

Terminology

Symbol Modelling Displays: What are we talking about?

Symbol Modelling: Involves the speaking communication partner using **symbols**, as well as speech, in order to provide a model for language comprehension and expression

(Binger C & Light J, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 1477-3848, Volume 23, Issue 1, 2007, Pages 30 – 43)

- What **symbol modelling** are you currently using in your practice?
- what **situations/contexts** are you currently using symbol modelling?
- why** are you using **symbol modelling**?

WHY use symbol modelling displays?

Many people supporting children with Autism are using some type of symbol modelling however, commonly this is only within a limited context. Yooralla's Autism and Therapy team use symbol modelling in order to

- promote language comprehension,
- promote expressive language,
- expand understand and response to a range of communication functions, and
- promote social interactions

Why do we use the term Symbol Modelling Displays

Referred to by many different names

- Aided language stimulation / modelling
- Play mat/Play scripts
- Visual timetable/supports
- Chat Now boards (Gayle Porter Resources)
- Comment boards
- Specific programs – System for Augmenting Language (SAL)

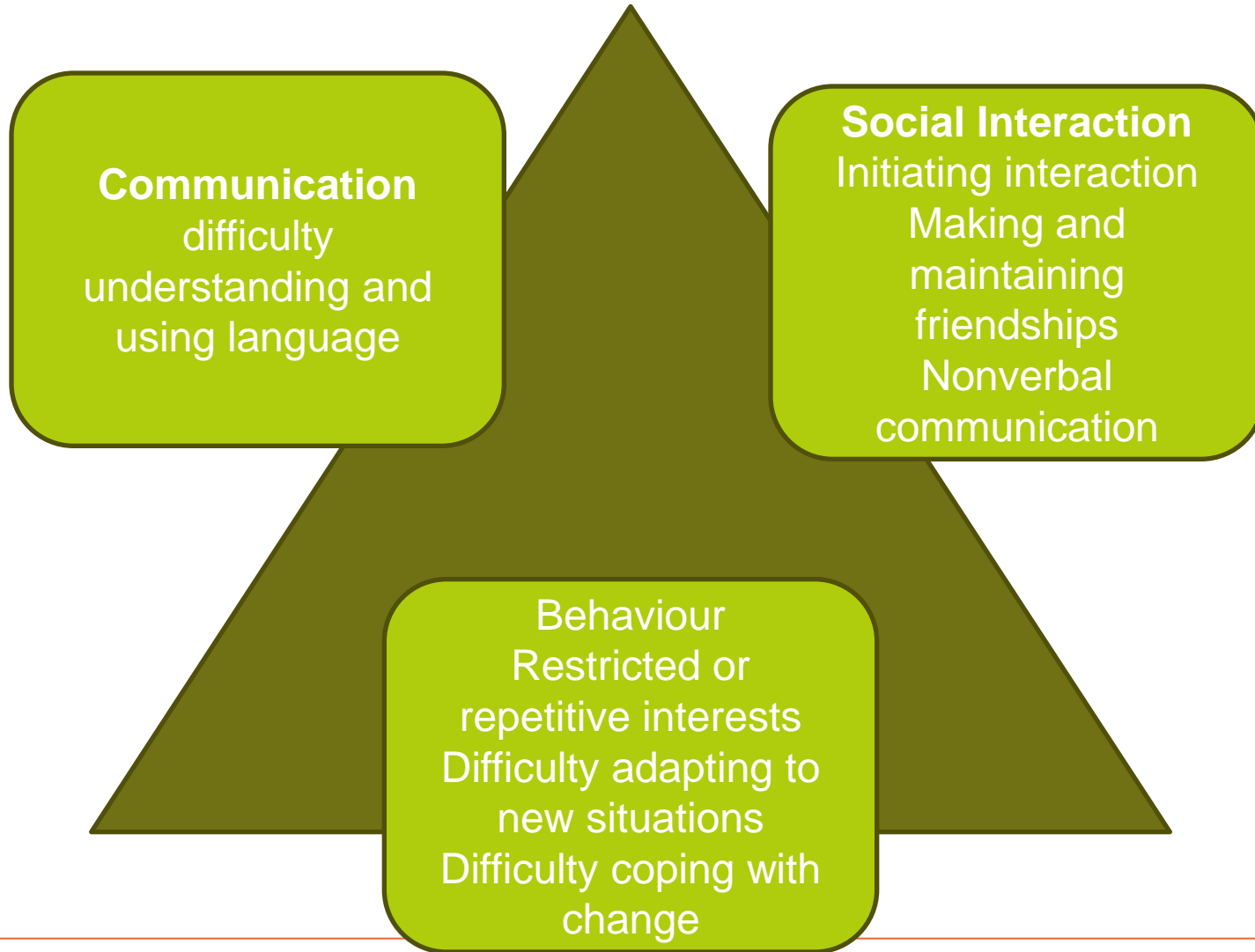
For us, Symbol Modelling describes, very clearly, what they are and what you should do with them.

Background

“To date, there appears to be a small but growing evidence base for the use of modelling interventions with individuals with Autism.....the available evidence suggests that each of the interventions and their derivations can be effective in increasing symbol comprehension and / or production in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders” (Drager, K., et al 2006).

Autism: The Triad of Impairment

(National Autistic Society, United Kingdom 2007)



Symbols

Types of symbols:

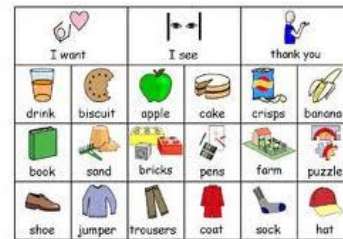
- A symbol is 'something that stands for something else'.

Examples of commercially available symbols available:

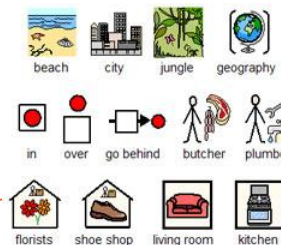
- Boardmaker/PCS symbols



- Pics for PECS



- Widgit



What Symbols to use?

“There is a dearth of evidence about the type(s) of symbols (i.e., arbitrary, pictographic) that best facilitate symbol learning by children with Autism Spectrum Disorders”. (Mirenda, 2003 pg 243)

Using photos vs picture symbols

“But my child can’t recognise symbols!”

“This empirical evidence from the literature on typical language development suggests that this myth is not based on evidence about how young children learn. In fact, during early phases of development, it may not matter for the child. The choice of symbol set may be complicated by what families perceive as appropriate for young children. (M. Ronski, 2005, p356)

Iconity of symbols Vs communication messages

Children's first words

dadda, mumma, more, help, help, me, down, up, moo,

Which if these are easy to represent in symbols (transparent)?

Which of the above are difficult to represent in symbols (opaque)?

Which of these words are important for children to learn to use?

-Vocabulary CAN be difficult to represent with transparent symbols.

-If we are going to model the vocabulary for children, we need to represent the message with some type of symbol!

-Important thing is to teach the child what the symbol means through MODELLING.

What Symbols Do We Use at Yooralla and Why?

Picture Communication Symbols – Boardmaker

- Has up to 10000 symbols plus the capacity to import and create new symbols.

Why?

-symbols represent a range of communicative functions.

-symbols represent abstract concepts e.g. Big/small, fast/slow

If we need symbols to represent words that children commonly use we need a symbol set that can be used to model and express a range of communication functions.

How to use Symbol Modelling Displays with children with Autism

Modelling

Language is very complex, as is communication.

Children with Autism can learn to use unaided or aided AAC systems when they are provided with appropriate opportunities and instructions to do so.

Drager, Light, Finke, 2009

How do you learn new symbols?

BLISS BOARD - TEN PIN BOWLING

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |















Made with Boardmaker and the Picture Communication Symbols® 1981-2001
 Mayer-Johnson, Inc. - P.O. Box 1579, Solana Beach, CA 92075 U.S.A. Phone (858) 550-0084
 web site: www.mayer-johnson.com

How to Model Symbols

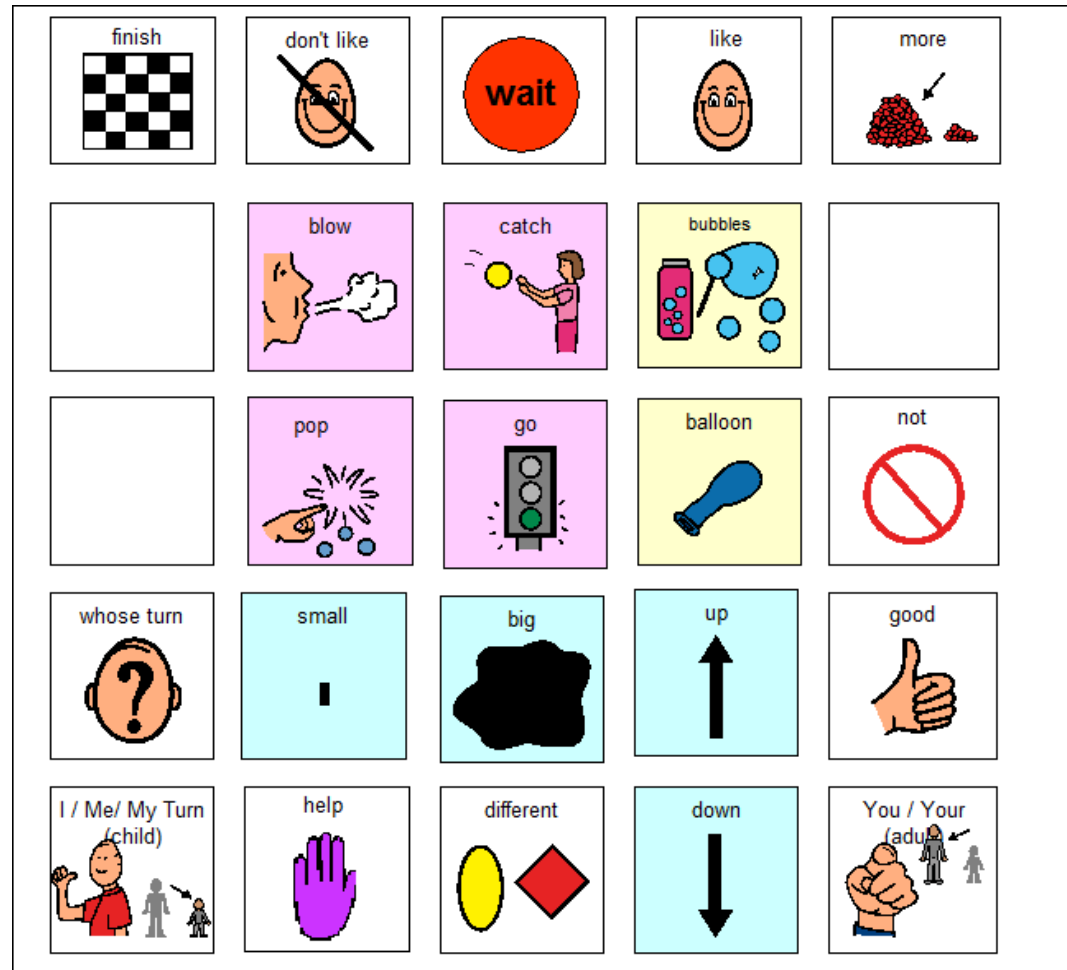
- 1) Use an index finger to point to the symbol whilst;
 - 2) simultaneously vocalising the verbal symbol for the referent
- combine symbols to extend utterance length.
 - Simplify your own language – match to the symbols: remember, you are modelling the vocabulary you want the child to use.

Symbol Selection

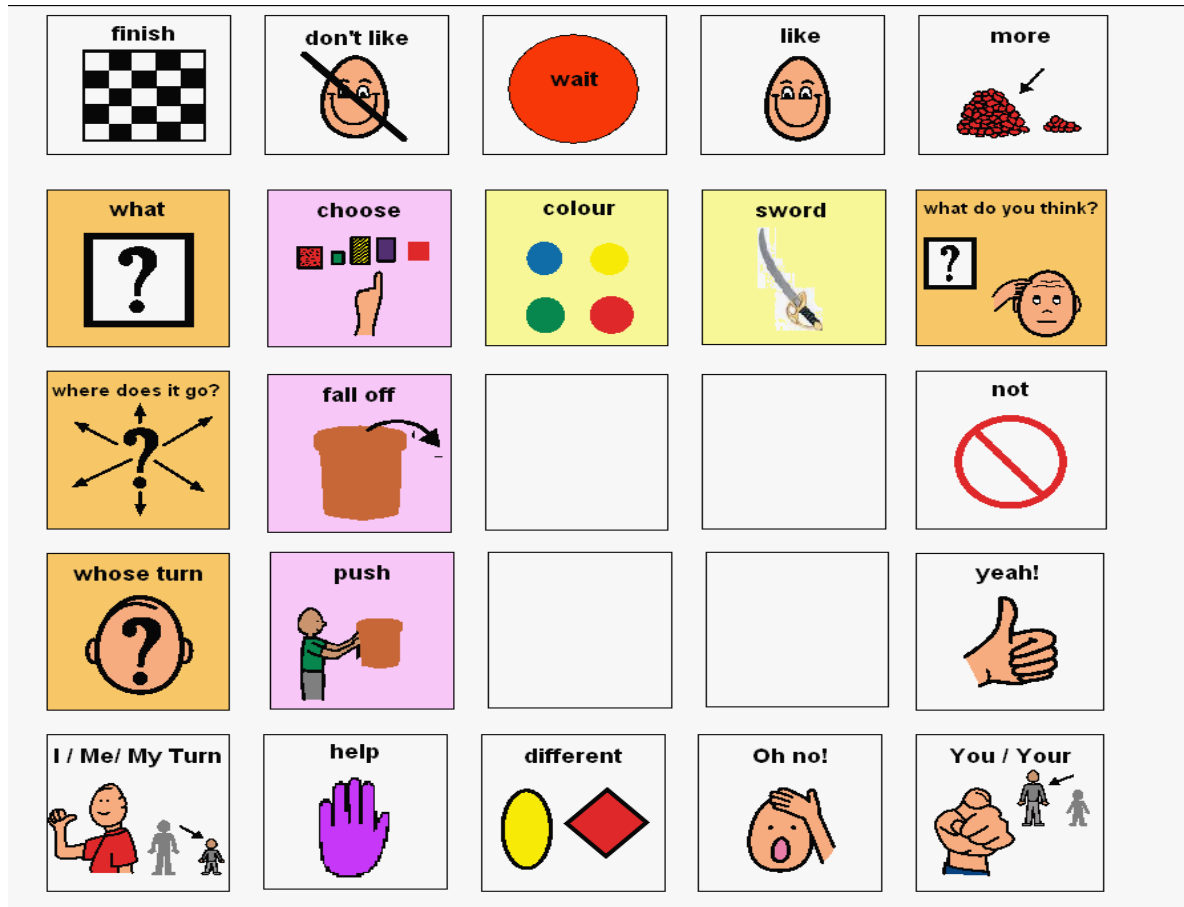
Master symbol modelling display

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <p>finish</p>  | <p>don't like</p>  | <p>wait</p>  | <p>like</p>  | <p>more</p>  |
| | | | | <p>what do you think?</p>  |
| <p>where does it go?</p>  | | | | <p>not</p>  |
| <p>whose turn</p>  | | | | <p>good</p>  |
| <p>I / Me / My Turn</p>  | <p>help</p>  | <p>different</p>  | | <p>You / Your</p>  |

Bubbles symbol modelling display



Symbol modelling display to promote social interaction



Symbol Modelling displays: things to think about

- Important to include vocabulary to represent a range of communicative functions.
- Think about;
 - Different displays for an individual activity
 - What will children say during the activity?
 - CORE vocabulary; i.e., Vocabulary that is used often and can convey a variety of messages should be easily accessible on the display.
 - keep vocabulary SYMBOLS and PLACEMENT consistent across different displays.

Using symbol modelling displays to build on existing visual supports

play dough



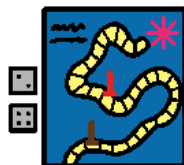
puzzle



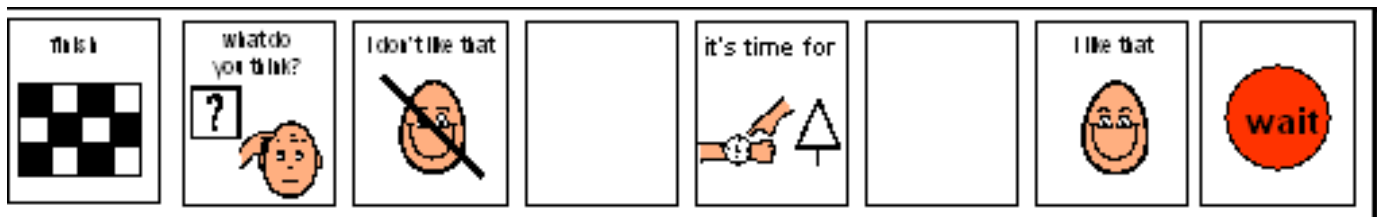
story



game














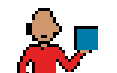




Visual timetable with symbol modelling display



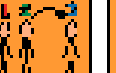









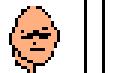
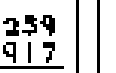


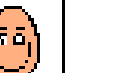


News Book with symbol modelling display

Today is

| | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Monday Mo | Tuesday Tu | Wednesday We | Thursday Th | Friday Fr |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| maths  | writing  | reading  | drawing  | music  | different  |
| library  | integrated studies  | computer  | outside  | play  | |
| how & tell  | sport/ PE  | art  | Japanese  | special activity  | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| what do?  | first  | next  | before  | after  | yesterday  | today  | tomorrow  | last  |
| what was our favourite?  | what do you think?  | don't like  | boring  | hard  | easy  | fun  | like  | |

But how to I use the Symbol Modelling display with the child?

- Use it as you would use normal language.
- Natural consequences – contingent responding has been shown consistently in the research to be beneficial to the development of language and communication for young children – including those with Autism. That is by responding , through multiple communication methods to what is thought to be the child's intent and /or expanding upon the child's message and modelling a more sophisticated communication form.
- Study found that language outcomes for preschool children with autism were positively associated with amount of time that parents talked about their child's current focus of attention (*Siller and Sigman, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, June 2002 pg 264*).


Further information/resources

- -can purchase resources through FaHCSIA money
- Communication Resource Centre: can make resources for you
- Commercially available resources: Spectronics, Novitatech

Further information: Contact Yooralla's Autism and Therapy Service

48-50 Box Forest Rd Glenroy ph: 9359 2255

autismandtherapy@yooralla.com.au

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- “A communication disability does not just belong to the individual. It belongs to the entire environment of which the individual is the focal point”.

Sandwell- Communication Aids Centre, UK.