

Alternative & Augmentative Communication

Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) refers to "all of the ways humans communicate besides verbal speech." This can be gestures, written words, pictures, speech-generated devices, and so forth.

Myths

The Truth

Only those who don't have verbal language benefit from AAC systems

Nope! Those that are hard to understand or do not have verbal language (also known as non-speaking) can benefit. AAC can support communication exchanges for those that may have motor speech difficulties, such as cerebral palsy (CP), or aphasia. An AAC system can be supportive of language skills as well.

There are prerequisites, or skills required, prior to using an AAC system

Nope! There are NO prerequisites prior to starting use of AAC. In fact, the earlier AAC is implemented, the better the possible outcomes! Think of AAC as a new language: the more exposure one has, the more opportunities they have to learn the language and use it. Clients do not need to have certain skills before using an AAC system.

It's important to start with one button and then include more as the client begins to understand the system

Nope! When building an AAC system, there are a multitude of factors to consider, such as mobility, vision, hearing status, chronological and developmental age, and so much more. Regardless of these, however, it is important that clients are NOT limited in how much they can say. Clients should have the opportunity to express any message using their AAC.

Using AAC will negatively affect verbal speech and language.

Nope! Research has shown that AAC can actually boost language skills. Using AAC as a support for language can allow users to increase their opportunities to communicate and interact with others.

Ready for AAC?

Contact a speech language pathologist to determine what type of AAC is best for you or your loved one and start the evaluation process

References

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Retrieved January 7, 2022, from <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/>