

NATURAL GESTURES

Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York
Augmentative Communication Consultation Services (ACCS)

WHAT ARE NATURAL GESTURES?

- **Universally understood body language cues used to clarify a message**
- Natural gestures are easily interpreted and do not require explicit teaching for understanding (e.g. head nod for "yes" and shake for "no", pointing)
- Provide a way to make language more visual to increase understanding

WHY ARE NATURAL GESTURES IMPORTANT?

- Pairing gestures with verbal speech is often an effective way of capturing the listener's attention
- Natural gestures can help to clarify a message or make it more meaningful
- Learning gestures is often the introduction to intentional communication (e.g. pointing, reaching, waving)
- Natural gestures make use of our "built-in" tools- our body

HOW CAN NATURAL GESTURES BE USED?

- Use gestures naturally during daily activities, always pair words with gestures
- Use gestures that are simple and easy to interpret
- Pair gestures with fun, motivating activities such as songs (use gestures for actions) and play
- Provide opportunities for the child to use gestures, for example waving "hi" and "bye" to others

EXAMPLES OF NATURAL GESTURES:

- Head nod and shake for "yes" and "no"
- Pointing
- Waving "hi" and "bye"
- Patting seat/chair for "sit"
- Extending arms up to indicate wanting to be picked up
- Shrugging shoulders for "I don't know"
- Holding out hand to indicate a request for something
- Finger in front of lips to indicate "hush"
- Blowing kisses
- Rubbing tummy for "hungry"
- Songs with gestures (Itsy-Bitsy Spider, Wheels on the Bus etc.)

TIPS FOR USING NATURAL GESTURES

1. Use natural gestures as often as possible during daily routines
2. Slow down gestures to highlight them
3. Pair natural gestures with facial expressions to enhance meaning (e.g. plug nose and scrunch up face while saying "stinky").

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