

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS – REPAIR STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

ABOVE ALL: Determine the level of URGENCY/IMPORTANCE of the child’s message: Does the child look like his/her message is time sensitive? Ask questions such as: “Do you need help?” “Do you want permission to do something?” “Do you need me to come with you?” “Can it wait?” If you perceive urgency, focus should be on solving the child’s problem, as opposed to addressing the breakdown.	
Scenario	Repair Strategies
1. Child has no AWARENESS that a breakdown has occurred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners take most responsibility to repair the breakdown by diverting focus from the child’s speech difficulties and asking questions to try guessing what the child might be saying (e.g., “Did you say ____?” “Is it about ____?”) • Give the child instructions to improve intelligibility <i>only</i> if you know this will help you understand better AND the child is comfortable with it (e.g., “Can you ... say it louder, slow down, try saying all sounds?”) • Smart use of familiar translators (e.g., sibling, peer): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you could not understand the child’s speech despite few efforts to repair the breakdown, acknowledge verbally the breakdown and involve the child in finding help (e.g., “I’m sorry, I don’t quite understand what you’re trying to tell me”, “Who can we get to help me understand?”) ○ Ask the translator “Can you help me understand what John is saying?” Repeat the message as stated by the translator and say: “Oh, <i>now</i> I know what you were saying”. “You said ____” ○ Now that you know what the child was communicating, model use of appropriate strategies (e.g., pointing at picture or item in the environment, model a pantomime, gesture, etc) ○ Look for speech patterns, learn about common conversational topics and situation specific vocabulary ○ Try at all cost to decrease communication frustration and build trust.
2. Child has no DESIRE to repair breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the child: make sure the child perceives that partner’s interest is social-based, not work-based. Get at child’s eye level. Make child feel he/she has undivided attention and is comfortable with it • Partners take most responsibility to repair the breakdown. Consistent questions across partners → Partner’s Clarification List (i.e., steps for repairing breakdowns) • Once you know what the child is trying to communicate, model use of appropriate strategies (e.g., pointing at picture or item in the environment, model a pantomime, gesture, etc) • Partners should focus on promoting opportunities to have the child experience payoff of successful repairs
3. Child has no FOCUS/CONCENTRATION to repair breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocusing child’s attention: requires switching attention from topic of conversation to “let’s-repair-this-breakdown” • Recapping conversation: going through conversational exchange step-by-step indicating what was understood and where the breakdown occurred • Once you know what the child is trying to communicate, model use of appropriate strategies (e.g., pointing at picture or item in the environment, model a pantomime, gesture, etc)
4. Child has no KNOWLEDGE of how to use repair strategies	Training/Teaching use of Clarification Skills/Strategies (i.e., picture boards, pantomimes, SGDs, etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structured practice ○ Coaching in natural contexts ○ Gradual prompting