



Making Lives Personal

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Language.

While we are helping people plan and supporting them in attaining goals we connect with many people; professionals, families, community members. Are we mindful of the language we use when we make those connections?

As professionals supporting people with disabilities we are considered “the experts”. When we speak to people in the community they learn from our language and echo it to others. It is often difficult to find the “socially acceptable language” and we do our best to be respectful of confidentiality and the people we support. Often the language we use; even with the best intentions; is inappropriate. Language is also much more than just our words; it's how we act, the tone of voice we use and how we write in communication books.

For example:

Common language

vs

Person Centered language

Go on an outing

Going for a drive

Was behavioral

was angry and threw a cup

Our people

the people we support

Load the van

help people get in the van

Go out into the community

go to the library

Individuals

people we support

All language effects how others see and communicate with and about the people supported by our agency. We need to be mindful and do our best to use respectful, person centered language. A good rule of thumb is if you are using the word in the context of its definition it is a good word. Speak to and of the people we support in the same way you would like your service providers to speak of you. Watch your actions, your speech, your tone and your written word. Watch your language.

Communication Charts

Communication is much more than the spoken word. Every person communicates through body language and behavior. Behavior is communication. Every action has a message. Communication charts are a great way to record and share unique ways of communicating for all people.

There are two forms of communication charts; receptive and expressive.

Expressive Communication Chart (what is she telling us?)

What is Happening, Where/When?	When she Does this:	We Think She Means:	And We Should:
At school, during class time	Pulls hair of peer	She wants them to pay attention to her	Look at her and speak to her

Receptive Communication Chart (what are we communicating to her?)

We Want to Tell Jane Doe:	To do this We:	Helped/Supported By:
It is time to remove her boots and put on her shoes	Ask her to sit down and take her boots off	Guiding her to a chair near the door, have her shoes close to her, staying close by and give her five minutes with reminders before attempting to help her remove her boots

What are your unique ways of communicating without using verbal skills? Try recording them and sharing them with others.