Aided Language Stimulation
Helping AAC Learners Develop Language

Aided Language Stimulation (ALS)
Aided Language stimulation is the process of modelling Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) language in everyday settings. The communication partner talks to the person while also pointing/selecting keywords on the person’s AAC system. ALS helps develop the person’s understanding of language and symbols. ALS also enhances the person’s expressive language skills.

ALS is not about what the learner does or says, it is about what you do and say. It is about you modelling successful and meaningful AAC communication in everyday contexts. By doing so you teach them how to convey real messages in real situations. It is also about providing the learner with opportunities to communicate using his/her AAC system. During ALS you should model AAC communication but never demand the learner to repeat after you or copy the messages you are modelling.

What to Model?
During ALS, you should model what to say and when to say it.

1– Behaviour/body language: Interpret the learner’s behaviour or body language and translate it into words. For example, if the learner is yawning, you could say: “You’re yawning, you must be TIRED” (capital letters refer to the words you are pointing to/selecting on the person’s AAC system). If the learner is pushing something away, you could say: “you’re pushing it away, you DON’T LIKE IT”.

2– Describe: What you and the learner are doing. For example, when playing with playdough, you could describe what you are doing with the playdough: “You are CUTTING, I’m ROLLING PLAYDOUGH”.

3– Comment: On the situation or activity, for example: “This is FUN”, IT’S very NOISY”.

4– Questions: Ask open-ended questions which show interest and create anticipation, encourage imagination and use of language, for example: “What’s happening? What will you do next?” Avoid asking questions which can be answered with yes/no and testing questions, for example: “What colour is this?” Turn such questions into statements: “IT’S YELLOW!”.

Opportunity

[Image of a hand with a green checkmark and a red x]
5– Access: Model how you navigate through the pages, you could use self-talk out-loud so that the learner can listen to your thinking process, for example: “I need to go to colours”. If the person uses an alternate access method, you may direct access on most occasions but model using the alternate access method every now and then.

6– Social skills: Model things you might say in a social situation, for example: greeting, jokes, etc..

How to Model?
Speak and point/select corresponding keywords on the person’s AAC device.

1– Language level: Model 1-2 words beyond the person’s current language skills.

2– Recast: Respond to the learner’s ‘incorrect’ messages by repeating them back correctly, for example, if the learner says: “Her is eating”, you could respond by: “Yeah, she is eating”.

3– Expand: Add more language to what the learner says, for example, if the learner says: “She is eating”, you could respond by: “Yeah, she’s eating a delicious apple!”

4– Wait: Give the learner enough time to think and respond to your models and messages. Some people may need more time than others, it is important to get to know the person you are working with so that you have an idea about how much time they roughly need to respond. Wait expectantly while maintaining eye contact.

5– Variety: Think of multiple contexts in which you can model the a word/message, for example: ‘turn’ - turn around, turn it on, your turn. Then think of ways to involve family members, friends, and peers in ALS.

References: