

ADULT COMMUNICATION STYLES

FOR NEURODIVERGENT YOUNG PEOPLE

- **Do not insist upon eye contact.**
- Don't assume the young person isn't listening because they aren't giving you eye contact.
- Some young people will show they are listening in different ways, for example:
 - **looking down**
 - **fidgiting**
 - **being in proximity to the speaker**
 - **doodling**
 - **eyes closed.**
- Don't assume the young person can read your body language or interpret what you mean from your tone of voice.
- Be mindful of using **non-literal phrases**, **indirect requests** or **sarcasm** without also being prepared to explain what they mean.
- It may help to communicate ideas using **direct and concise language**.
 - For example, instead of saying: "Could you give me a hand?" you could say: "Please help me carry this."
 - For example, instead of saying: "Do you want to come inside now?" you could say: "The bell has rung. Come inside please."
- **Label and describe different perspectives** where possible.
 - For example: "She might feel disappointed when that happened."
 - For example: "I would feel annoyed about that. What about you?"
- Some young people prefer to say everything all at once (**'information-dumping'**) rather than take lots of turns with the other person. This may help them to formulate their ideas effectively and is a different way of interacting from neurotypical expectations.
- If necessary, allocate time for the young person to engage with other people around their interests (talking or doing). This can be helpful for regulating emotions and support wellbeing.
- Ensure the young person can access a **trusted adult** with whom they can share issues, problems, worries or concerns. Sometimes young people need to share and explore what's on their mind before they are ready to move on with the rest of their day.
- Be mindful that at times of high emotion, stress or low mood, the young person's capacity to engage and communicate may reduce. **Be prepared to accept and respond to alternative communication methods**, e.g. gesture, sign, facial expression, written messages, visual key messages.
- Be aware that a young person's **processing speed may fluctuate** across the day or week, sometimes unpredictably, in response to a variety of factors (e.g. energy, sensory, emotional, cognitive). At these times it is OK if the young person does not respond immediately, or is silent for longer than usual, or responds but much later than expected.