



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders OAFCCD

The Difficult-To-Understand Child

Some children may be difficult to understand. Strategies which may facilitate communication include:

- Pay closer attention to their communication attempts.
- Respond as soon as you can so that communication attempts are encouraged. It gives the child feedback that what he/she has to say is important.
- Encourage the child to repeat information. (“Tell me again.”)
- Repeat back portions of the message that were understood and have the child fill in the blanks. (“The boy saw a _____.”)
- Ask key questions (“Kate went where?”, “Joel said what?”)
- Watch the type of questions you ask. If the child is difficult to understand, questions requiring shorter responses may facilitate success.
- Have the child provide additional information (“Tell me more about it.”) (“Tell me more about the party.”)
- Have the child “Show you” or “Take you there.”
- If you understand what the child says, do not ask him/her to repeat in order to correct pronunciation or grammatical errors.
- Once the message is interpreted, repeat it back to the child – this provides an appropriate model.
- Use others in the child’s environment to help you fill in details (e.g. parents, assistants, other children).

In some cases you may need to acknowledge that you do not understand and you will try again next time.

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