

MODULE 4:

Communication



Materials Flipchart paper, pens, toffees (or other chewy sweets), empty crisp packets, other items with different textures or sounds such as rattles, squeaky toys, ball, doll, cell phone (or objects of reference for range of daily activities), communication boards for the tea game (2 boards), toy tea set.



Icebreaker Check with the participants what they have tried out at home since the previous session. Ask for a volunteer to tell the group her name, her favourite food, and what she would do if she won a large lottery sum. The hitch is that she must have three or four toffees in her mouth. How does it feel for the volunteer?



Explain

Outcomes for the module (on flipchart).
As a caregiver you will:

1. Understand what communication is and why it is so important
2. What you can do to help your child to communicate



Activity Ask the group what they think communication involves. (i.e. listening to others, understanding what they are saying, telling others what you think, want or feel). Explain the following definition (on a flipchart):

Communication means understanding what others say to us, and expressing our thoughts, needs and feelings to them. Communication is a basic human right.

Discuss *How do we communicate?* Cover the following ways:

- Talking
- Smiling
- Pointing
- Laughing
- Others e.g. drawing, reading, writing and singing

Ask for two or three volunteers. Give each volunteer one of the following sentences (either by writing it down or whispering it):

1. My foot is painful
2. I want to go outside
3. I'm tired



They need to try and “explain” the sentence to the rest of the group without using words. They can use sounds, facial expressions, gestures etc. Tell the group they need to work out what the volunteer is trying to say.

Then ask them *How did the person communicate what they meant?* Cover the following:

- Voice: crying, whining
- Facial expression: smiling, frowning, look of pain, big eyes
- Body movement: nodding head, shrugging shoulders
- Gestures: waving goodbye
- Pointing: using eyes or a finger
- Other



Ask *Why do we communicate?*
Why is communication so important?



Explain Here are some important reasons for communicating:

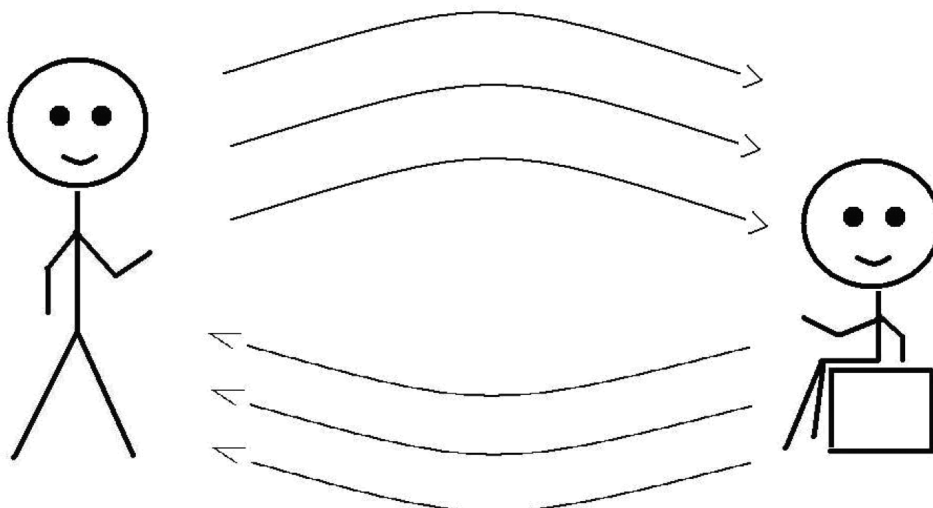
- Establishing relationships and making friends
- Exchanging information, communicating ideas and giving directions
- Communicating needs and wishes
- Developing thinking skills e.g. helping us to remember, make plans, solve problems
- Becoming happy and successful members of our community



Ask the group to think back to the activity they completed at the beginning of the session, where they were speaking with the toffee/chewy sweet in their mouth: Ask how they felt when they were the speaker, and also when they were the listener. Try to elicit that they had difficulties **expressing** themselves when they had the sweet in their mouth and difficulties with **understanding** the person who had the sweet in the mouth.



Explain When communicating with a child with cerebral palsy, the cycle of successful expression and understanding between the two of you often breaks down. Draw up the diagram below on a flipchart to illustrate the cycle of communication.



WHY MIGHT COMMUNICATING BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR A CHILD WITH CEREBRAL PALSY?



Materials

Doll



Ask What parts of your body do you use to **UNDERSTAND** a message?
What parts of your body do you use to **EXPRESS** yourself and get a message across?

Using a doll sitting on your lap, point out the different parts of the body which are used in communication, **EXPLAIN** the following:

To **understand** a message you need:

- Ears and eyes to hear and see the message
- The part of your brain that makes sense of what you have heard or seen (intellect)

To **express** yourself you need:

- The intellect to think of what you want to express
- Control of the mouth and voice, to speak (tongue and mouth)
- Control of your body parts to point, make gestures etc.

Which of these things might be difficult for a child with cerebral palsy? In the discussion they should see some, or all of these things may be difficult, depending on the child.



Explain Communication will be harder or easier depending on the severity of the cerebral palsy. It will also depend on how well the child can think and learn. A child who has cerebral palsy and has **no problems with thinking and learning easily**:

- Will not have difficulty with understanding.
- Will not have difficulty thinking about what to say but her speech may be unclear.
- If her speech is unclear and expressing herself is difficult, people may think she has an intellectual disability even though she hasn't.
- She will need to be taught and encouraged in other ways to express herself; otherwise her communication cycle breaks down.

If the child does have problems with intellect she may have some difficulties:

- Making sense of what she hears (understanding)
- Thinking about what to communicate (expressing herself)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON CHILDREN WHO MAY PRESENT CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR¹



Explain Children with challenging behaviour can often cause the most stress for parents. Discuss the issue of challenging behaviour, how they feel about this, and how they cope with it. Encourage wider discussion in the group and cover the following points:

- Your child needs love and attention. A child who feels loved will behave better.
- It is important to understand that all behaviour is a form of communication, so your child is trying to tell you something in the way they behave. Try to work out what that is.
- Make your instructions clear. Speak in short sentences and don't give too many instructions at one time.
- Be consistent in the way that you respond.
- Reinforce the behaviour you want. You can do this by:
 - Giving a reward after the desired behaviour. This could be a kiss or a snack.
 - Praising the behaviour, not the person.
- Ignore behaviour you do not like.
- Do not spank or beat your child.
- Physical punishment does not teach good or correct behaviour.
- For behaviour you cannot ignore, try "time out". This means taking the child to a safe place where you can see him but away from where the fun/activity is happening.

USEFUL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND HOW THEY DEVELOP



Explain

- Communication skills develop in a sequence of steps.
- Listening and understanding comes before talking.
- Foundation skills for developing communication include making eye contact, listening, taking turns and making choices. Playing is a great way for your child to learn these skills.
- **Important:** Make sure you attend to any sign of earache in your child. If left untreated, this could lead to ear damage and loss of hearing, which can cause additional problems in communication.



Ask *What do you think is the most important thing that you can do to help your child to develop communication skills?*

Talk to her!!!

¹ This Information on behaviour is adapted from the *CBM Prevention toolkit on cerebral palsy* (see resources in Module 10).

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD AND ENCOURAGE THEIR SKILLS TO DEVELOP



Materials

Pictures 4.01 on card (photocopy and cut out the pictures for group work) – you may need to enlarge them.



Activity

Work in small groups and share out the picture cards (Don't give out the explanations – use that to prompt discussion in the group). Ask participants to discuss what they see happening in each picture, and ask each group to feed back on one or two pictures. Go through the explanations for each.

Talk to your child about what is happening around her.

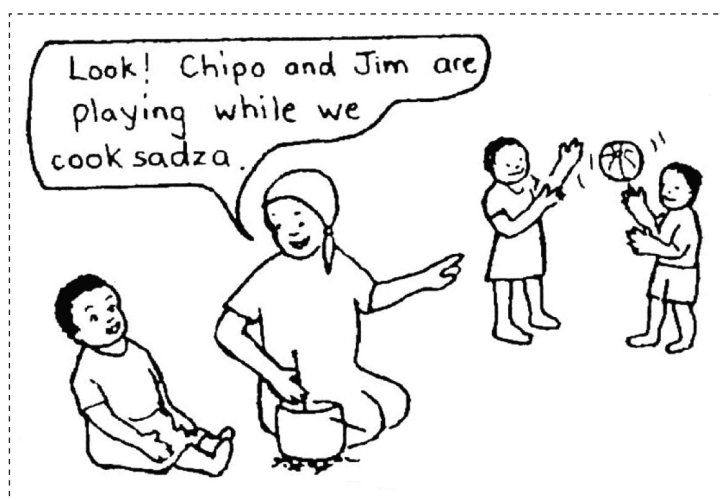
Communicate through everyday activities. Talk as you bathe, feed, and dress your child. Talk about what you are doing, where you are going, what you will do when you arrive, and who and what you will see.

Talk about the objects used in everyday activities, e.g. during dressing say *“here is your shoe; this is your jersey..... it is nice and warm; feel how soft it feels...”*

You can later ask her to identify objects, e.g. *“show me your shoes; where is the chair?”* etc.

You can teach her different categories, for example body parts; animals; food; objects in the house; people she knows.

Expand vocabulary, name body parts, and identify what you do with them.
“This is my nose. I can smell flowers with my nose”.



Get down to her level and face her when you talk.



Before you talk to your child, get her attention by tapping her and calling her name. Make sure she is looking at you when you talk.



Show her what you are talking about and, if possible, bring objects to her, to feel or look at. Tell her what things are called.

Use short and simple sentences when talking to your child.



Encourage, but do not force her to speak.



Look out for any attempt she makes to communicate and always respond to her.



Encourage any means of communication such as looking, pointing, smiling etc.

Repeat what your child says or is indicating. Build and expand on what was said. *"Want juice? I have juice. I have apple juice. Do you want apple juice?"*



Give your child time to respond. If they can't respond at all, then respond for them.



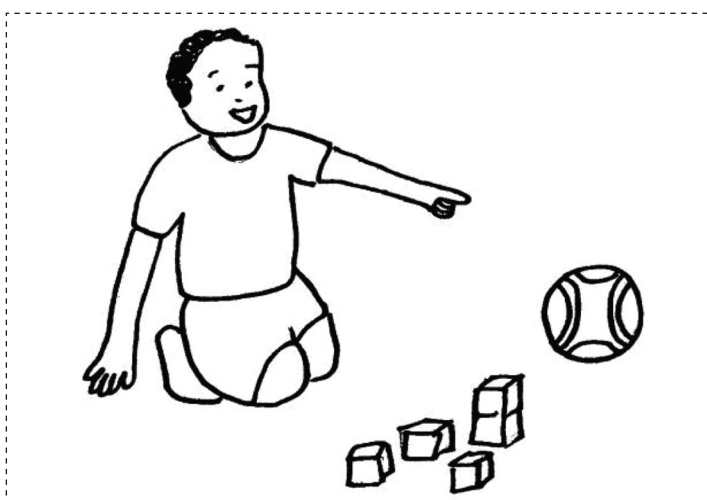
Take time to interact with your child.

Sit with your child and talk to each other without lots of other distractions.



Give your child choices during the day. This can increase her motivation to let you know what she wants. For example, let her choose between two different tops/pants or skirts when dressing her in the morning. You could also let her choose whether she wants something to eat or something to drink first at a mealtime.

Ask questions: *"Do you want an apple or an orange?" "Do you want to wear your red or blue shirt?"*



Ask the group to summarise the key points.

Checklist

- ✓ Get your child's attention first
- ✓ Make sure you are both positioned well – facing one another, on the same level, and with the child well supported
- ✓ Use eye contact
- ✓ Talk about what is happening
- ✓ Use facial expression and gestures
- ✓ Take turns, and encourage participation
- ✓ Offer choices
- ✓ Praise and encourage – clapping, cheering etc.
- ✓ Do not force her to speak, but encourage any attempt to communicate
- ✓ Do NOT use baby talk



Activity The trainer illustrates the following points through **demonstrated play** with one or two children in the group. At the end of each demonstration you should talk parents through the key concepts. You can also make short video clips demonstrating the different approaches, and discuss as a group.

In Bangladesh, the training was with groups of parents with very low literacy levels. Feedback from the groups showed that they welcomed the role plays and 'acting' out examples by the facilitator to demonstrate key issues. This was welcomed more than endless talking!

How to encourage your child to make eye contact

- Hold your face close to your child's face and talk to her. Try to encourage her to look at you.
- Call her name; when she looks at you, praise her by smiling and talking. Use lots of facial expression.
- Sing songs to her. She will enjoy the rhythm.
- Play Peek-a-Boo.
- Show her different objects. Shiny objects such as a crisp packet turned inside out will draw her attention. You can also use everyday objects with different textures or sounds. Let her play and explore objects. Talk to her about the different objects.

How to encourage your child to take turns when communicating

- When she makes a sound, or uses facial expression or body movement, copy her and then take turns talking. With babies, imitate their laughter and facial expressions.
- Respond immediately to any attempt she uses to initiate communication.
- Clap your hands and then ask her or help her to clap her hands.
- Hold a ball in front of her, ask her to wait, and then to hit the ball.
- Play music on the cell phone. When it stops, wait for a response from the child before switching it on again.

How to encourage your child to make choices

- Give her a choice of things to play with or to eat.
- Show her the things where she can see them best. Start by offering a choice between two things only, then increase it to three or four later.
- Eg. Hold one object in front of the child and say what it is. Then take it away and show them the other item and say what it is. Then take that one away. Now show the child both of the items and ask her to choose. E.g. *'Do you want water or milk?'* or *'Do you want the ball or the doll?'* Wait for a response, which could be pointing or looking towards one of the objects. Give her the object she is looking at or pointing to immediately and say *'you chose the ball by looking at it, so let's play with the ball'*.

OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATING



Materials

Display picture 4.02



Explain All young children with cerebral palsy should be helped to develop **ALL** methods of communication. As they get older, if it becomes clear that speech will be their main way of communicating, then concentrate on developing their speech.

Talking (speech) is their easiest link with other people. Sometimes, even when speech is the child's main form of communication, it is necessary to use additional methods as alongside speaking, as the child's speech may not always be clear to everyone.

However, for many children with cerebral palsy it will become clear that spoken language will **NOT** be their main way of communicating. For these children, we must concentrate on helping them to develop their skills in using **other** ways to communicate, such as using eye-pointing and finger pointing, objects, gestures, picture boards, signing or written language.

Other ways of communicating

Gestures

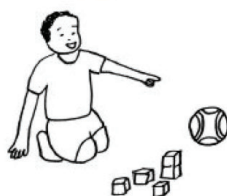
Facial Expressions

Sounds



Pointing

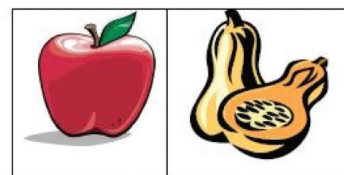
Using hands



Using eyes



Pictures



Ask the group to describe the ways of communicating that they can see in Display picture 4.02 and in which ways their children are already indicating their needs. Discuss ideas amongst the group on how they can encourage their children to express their needs non-verbally. Cover the following:

Firstly, it is important to respond immediately to any attempt she uses to initiate communication.

(i) Using sounds, gestures or facial expressions:

- Watch your child to try and understand what she means when she uses sounds, facial expressions, body movements or gestures.

- Talk to your child about what she needs or wants you to do for her. Ask her to show you how she indicates some of her daily needs such as, 'I am hungry', 'I am thirsty', 'I want to rest', 'I am cold', and then practice these together. Encourage her to indicate 'yes' or 'no' if you ask her if she is hungry, or thirsty.
- Show her how to make gestures, and help to make them by molding her hand(s).
- Encourage her to show her choices by using gestures. Ask 'do you want water, or milk?'

(ii) Pointing (using eyes, or hand) or touching

- Keep a selection of objects in a box, or hanging from a set of hooks on the wall that represent different activities of the day, e.g. a cup represent drinks time, a flannel represents wash time etc. Use these to show your child what she is about to do, holding the object up in front of her and telling her what is happening next. Also use objects to offer choices by holding two objects up in front of her and letting her show you her choice, through her eyes or by pointing or touching.

(iii) Using pictures

- Start by showing her an object or a person. Then match a large picture with the object or the person. Later, when your child points to a person or object to communicate with you, encourage her to point to the picture instead. Once your child is comfortable communicating with you in this way, she may be able to use smaller pictures, on a board.
- Some children may have just a few basic pictures which they use to express their needs. Others may have a big collection of pictures to use for quite complex communication. Pictures can include social expressions, people, things, actions, feelings, daily needs.
- In a role play of a parent and child (trainer acts as the parent), demonstrate the use of a picture board (3 pictures representing different games/play activities) for choosing which game to play. (The 'child' chooses making tea). Demonstrate the use of a picture board for 'the child' to select the items needed to have a pretend tea party (pictures include tea cup, saucer, teapot, milk jug, sugar, spoon) – ask 'the child': "What shall I take out of the box next...etc". Take each item out of the box as 'the child' selects them, and lay them out ready to 'have tea'.



Picture 4.03

Photo: Case study Parent and child, Parent training project Bangladesh

Sahid is 12 years old and lives with both his parents and two other siblings. He doesn't go to school, has very limited speech, and has an intellectual disability. He requires help with all aspects of self-care. He does not have any problems with his hands but does continuously suck his fingers, and as a result has an infection in both his fingers and mouth.



His mother reported on some of the changes after following the training course:

- My child used to drool a lot, but now through the training we have shown him how to swallow his saliva and wash his face.
- He used to put fingers inside the mouth all the time and now we encourage him not to do this, so the infections in his hands and mouth have decreased dramatically.
- He is now able to communicate about when he needs the toilet and also when he is hungry.
- Going to school remains a challenge: I took him to school 8 or 9 times last year, but after that he did not go to school anymore because other children at the school were scared of him that's why we don't take him to school anymore. Sahid cries when he sees his brother going to school.



Activity Read out the case study above from Bangladesh. Ask the group *What key issues arise from the case study?* It provides a useful summary of some of the key issues covered in this module, especially the importance of communication, and that it can improve – even with an older, non-verbal or intellectually disabled child. Encourage the group to think of some ways that the school issue can also be addressed.



Ask *Which other people should be involved in helping your child to communicate? Why?*

It is important that everyone who is involved with your child knows and uses the same ways of communicating (e.g. objects, picture board, signs etc) and so includes your child in conversations. This means the extended family, teachers, children in the local school, your child's friends and other people who know your child should all be taught to communicate with your child in a way that your child is comfortable with.

Only repetition and consistency will help her to learn this new way of communicating. If people do not respond to her efforts to communicate, she will not be motivated to use it.



Materials

Flip chart with take home messages

Take Home Messages:

- Children with cerebral palsy may need help to develop their communication skills.
- We communicate in many different ways, and there are many different ways in which children with cerebral palsy who have difficulty with speaking can also communicate.



MONITORING PROGRESS

Ask *What two things have you learnt today that you will teach to at least two members of your family in order to improve communication with your child? Be prepared to come back at the next session and tell us how it went.*

