

# Augmentative and Alternative Communication: A Quick What, Why and How

Helen Strausz Jones, MA, CCC-SLP

July 13, 2022

# Disclosures

Today's speaker has no financial relationships with an ineligible company relevant to this presentation to disclose.

None of the planners have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients

*\*All relevant financial relationships have been mitigated\**



# Objectives

1. What is AAC?
2. Identify various AAC systems
3. Identify and support individuals who may benefit from AAC

# What is Communication?

*“Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states”*

- (National Joint Committee [NJC], 1992; <http://www.asha.org/njc>).

**Goal:** To communicate about anything with anyone at anytime.

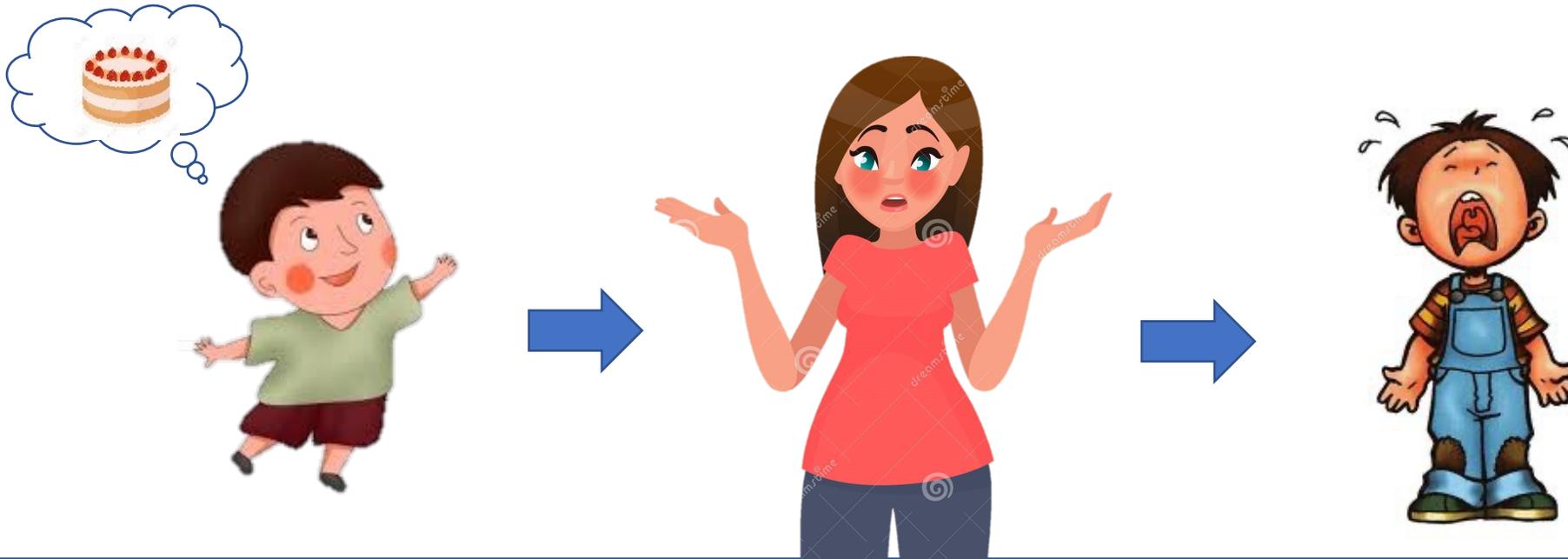
# Successful Communication

Child wants and asks for snack → parents understand & gives sack → Child feels good



# Communication Breakdowns

Child wants snack but no words → parents guess but cannot understand → child upset



# What is AAC?

## Augmentative Alternative Communication

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is all forms of communication other than verbal speech.

*“AAC is augmentative when used to supplement existing speech and alternative when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional”*

–ASHA 2020



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under  
[CC BY-NC](#)

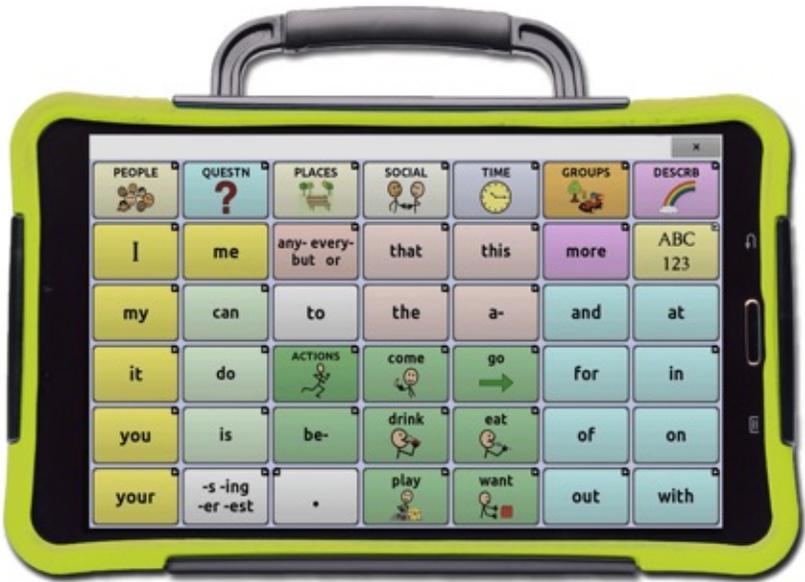
# What is AAC?

Child wants snack but no words → Child uses AAC to show → parents understand & gives sack → Child feels good



# What does it look like?

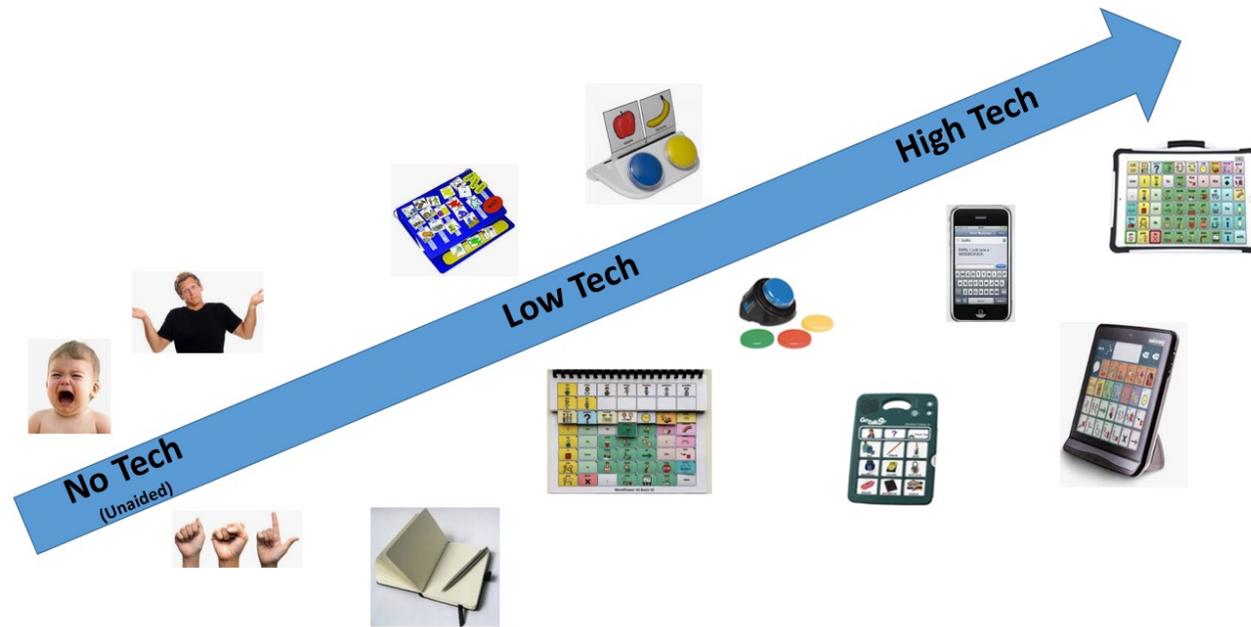
AAC technique is this.... and this!



# What are different types of AAC?

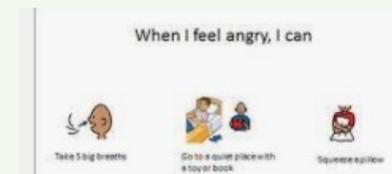
**Unaided:** Does not require any additional tools outside of one's body

**Aided:** Requires additional tools or devices (low or high tech)



**\*Visual supports:** helps when spoken language is not understood

- visual schedule
- social stories
- choice board
- star chart



# Who benefits from AAC?

## Anyone & Everyone

- If ability to speak is not meeting needs in ALL environments
- If inability to speak is holding back language development
- Not just for nonverbal communicators

## Possible causes of speech limitations:

- Autism
- Cerebral palsy
- Downs syndrome
- Developmental language delays
- Traumatic brain injury
- Progressive neurological disorders (e.g., ALS)
- Stroke
- Some genetic disorders
- Apraxia
- Aphasia
- Temporary medical conditions (e.g., tracheotomy)
- Young children at risk for communication disorders

# Why AAC?

- Provides a voice
- Supports and repairs communication
- Help organize and expand language
- Decrease disruptive behaviors
- Promote social interactions and participation
- Build independence and engagement
- Increase success in school

# Picking the right system

## AAC ≠ One Size Fits All

- HUNDREDS of systems and supports available
- Inappropriate system = frustration, limited success or system abandonment
- Doesn't have to be high tech

# Picking the right system

## Work with an SLP!

- Speech and language evaluation
- AAC evaluation
- Teamwork (family, SLP, pediatrician, school, friends, community)
- Re-evaluate often



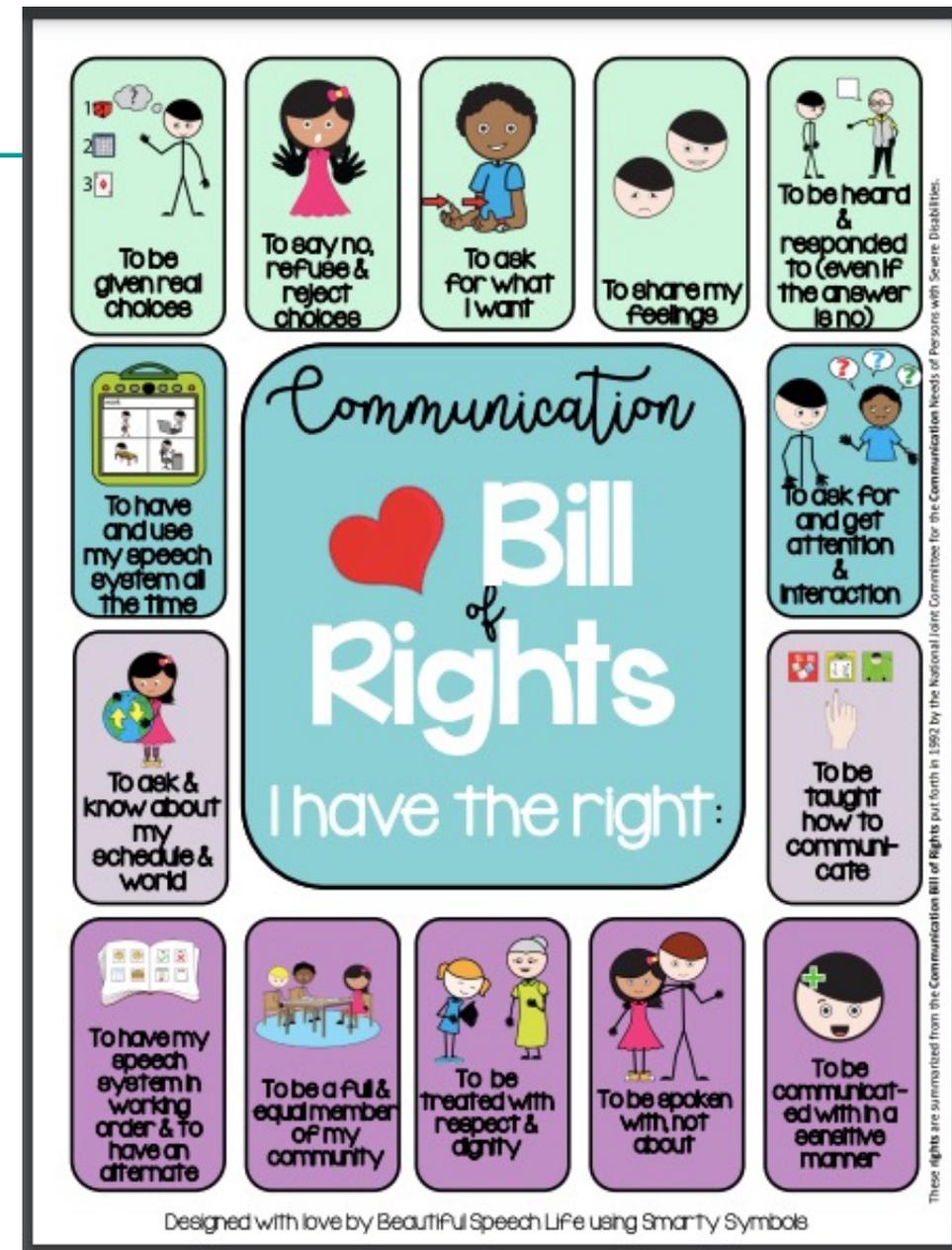
# Setting up for AAC success

- Work and connect with an SLP!
- Do not “wait and see”
  - AAC does not hinder development of speech.
- Presume competence
  - No prerequisite skills; no restrictions based on age, sensory challenges, motor challenges, behavioral challenges, cognitive skills, language skills, social skills, previous experience...
- Provide opportunities and support

# Communication Bill of Rights

*“All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights...”*

Brady, N. C., Bruce, S., Goldman, A., Erickson, K., Mineo, B., Ogletree, B. T., Paul, D., Ronski, M., Sevcik, R., Siegel, E., Schoonover, J., Snell, M., Sylvester, L., & Wilkinson, K. (2016). Communication services and supports for individuals with severe disabilities: Guidance for assessment and intervention. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 121*(2), 121–138.



These rights are summarized from the Communication Bill of Rights put forth in 1992 by the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities.

Designed with love by Beautiful Speech Life using Smarty Symbols

# Questions

---

**THANK YOU!**

Contact information:

Helen Strausz Jones, MA, CCC-SLP  
speechreachslp@gmail.com