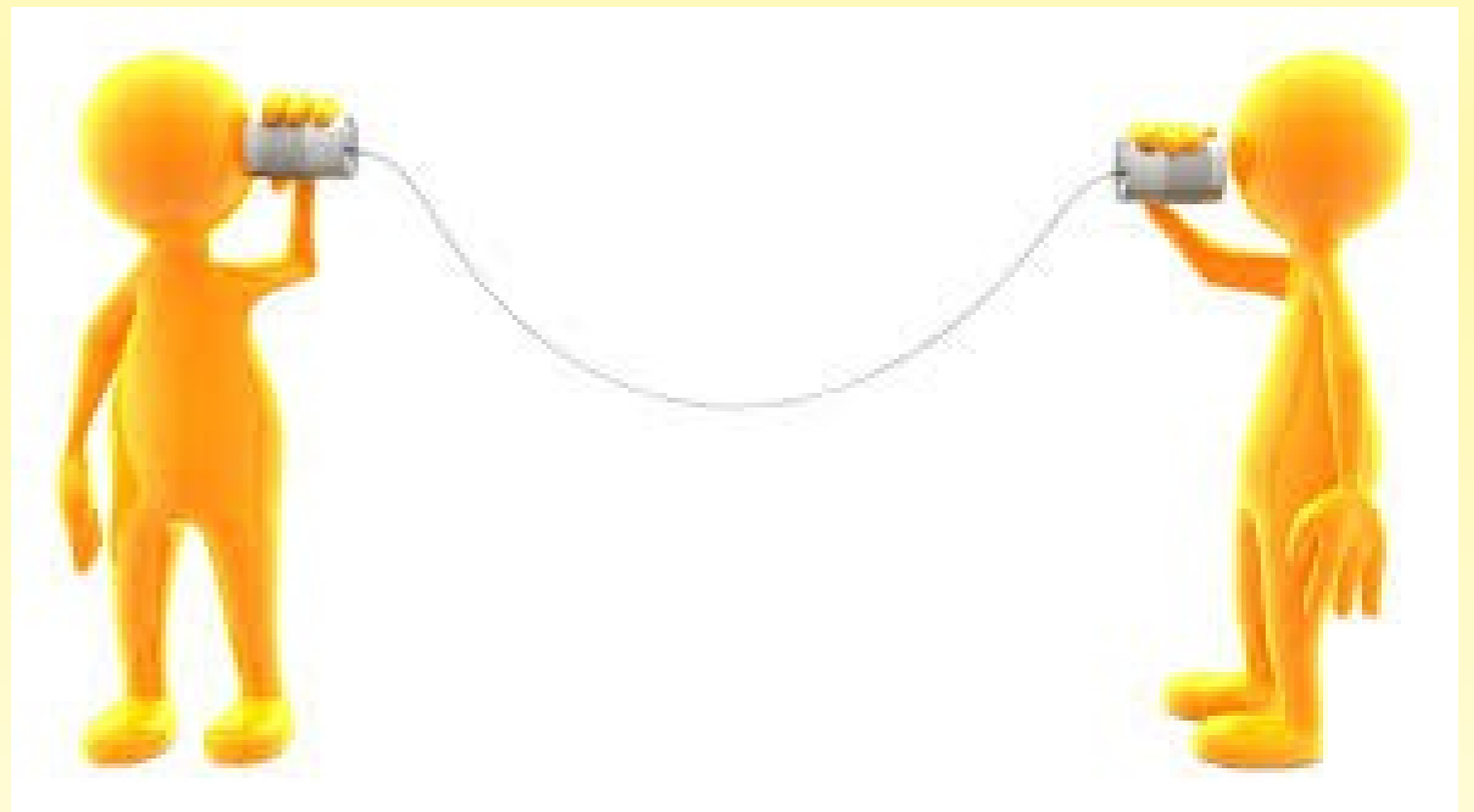


Alongside Autism: Communication and Engagement



AGENDA

Why is communication hard?

What are the problems it can cause?

Strategies to improve communication

Why can motivation and engagement be difficult?

Strategies to increase motivation

How does this make us feel?

Why is communication Hard?

- ★ Part of the triad of impairments
- ★ Difficulties in understanding verbal communication
- ★ Difficulties in understanding non-verbal communication
- ★ Theory of Mind / Mind Reading
- ★ Process Delay
- ★ Idiosyncratic language
- ★ Particular difficulties in groups
- ★ Effect of stress on communication

What are the idiosyncrasies in the way your loved ones communicate?



What are the difficulties from this?

- ★ In expressing needs
- ★ In expressing emotions
- ★ In managing social situations
- ★ In developing friendships
- ★ What else?

Anna's Experience

**What strategies
do you already
use at home?**



Visual Communication Aids

- ★ General use of images
- ★ Written Word (e.g. use of email or letters)
- ★ Use of colour (e.g. red ribbon means excited)
- ★ Body language or touch (e.g. tapping someone on the shoulder if they are talking too much)
- ★ Technology (e.g. smart phones)
- ★ It must be an agreed strategy, that they feel comfortable with

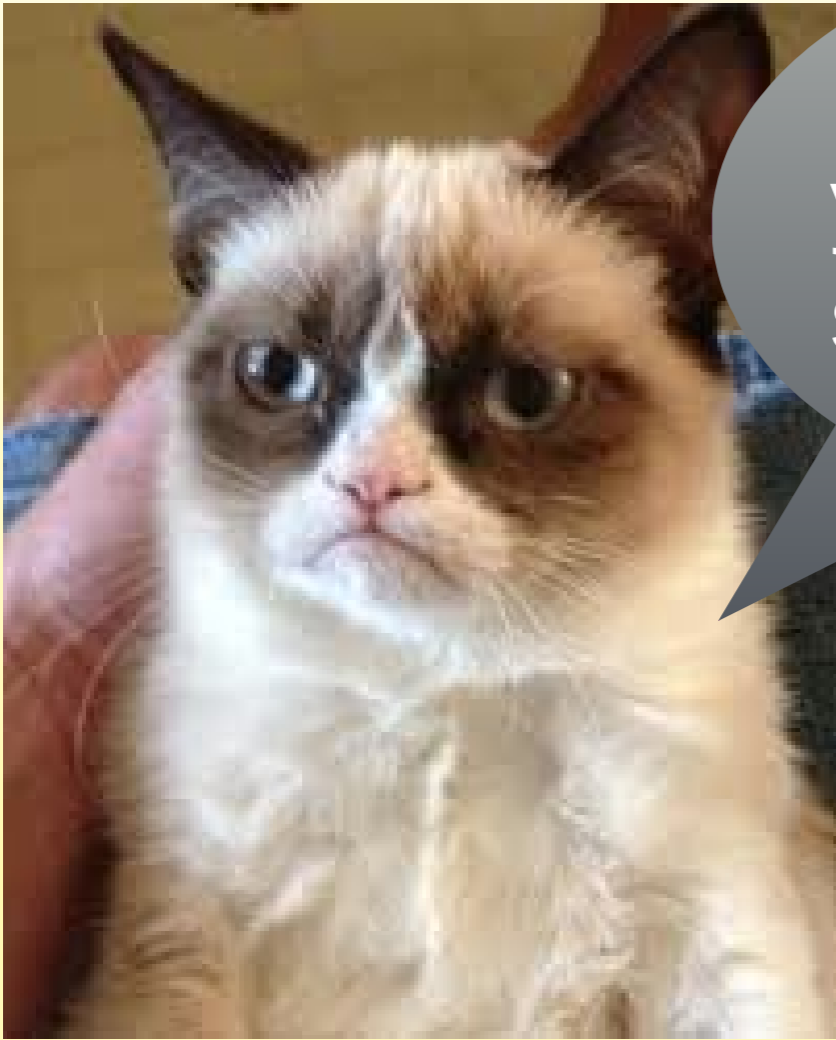


Verbal Speech

- ★ Take Time; allowing for delayed processing
- ★ Fewer words
- ★ Simple language
- ★ Less Metaphor
- ★ Short Cuts! (e.g. “Blue” means I am fixated, or “supermarket voice” means I need to speak more quietly”)

Structure Communication Times

- Chat times
- Family discussion times
- Guidelines on what to say in situations
- Scripting
- Use of social stories



I not angry with you, someone stole my catnip!

Being clear

- ★ Because of difficulties with non verbal communication individuals with autism often make assumptions about what others think or feel.
- ★ Also because of difficulties “mind reading” they may assume that you know what’s going on.
- ★ Say how you are feeling, if you are upset due to work explain this.
- ★ Encourage them to do the same, this can be part of a set chat time/family discussion time

Reducing the anxiety over communication

- ★ Sensory Issues (touch etc)
- ★ Environment
- ★ Use of special Interests
- ★ Graded approach

What else?

- ★ Does it have to be discussed/resolved now?
 - ★ Sometimes time is needed to allow for processing
- ★ Practice
 - ★ All strategies will need to be practiced/repeated
- ★ Using humour and being positive
- ★ Compassion for everyone

From the interventions that we have discussed so far think what would be useful for the person you support?



Motivation and Engagement

What do you find difficult to get the person you support engaged in?



Motivation and Engagement: why is this a problem?

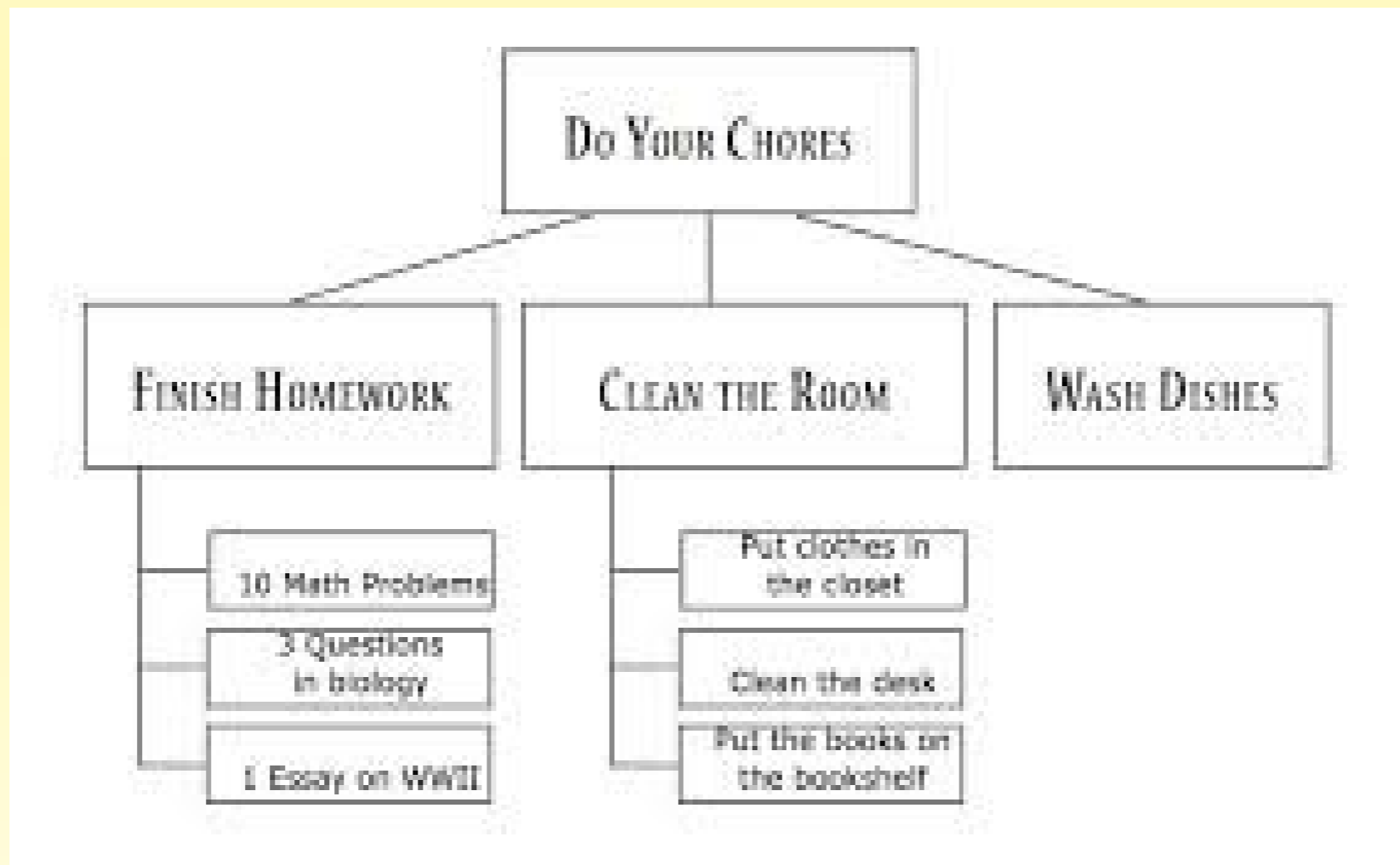
1. “Why should I bother?!”
 - Difficulties in communication
 - Difficulties in Theory of Mind
 - Difficulties in executive functioning (consequence)
2. Planning & Sequencing Issues
 - Chunking tasks (e.g. tidying rooms)
3. Preoccupation with Specialist Interests
4. Anxiety
 - The unknown and change
 - Social components
 - Sensory difficulties

Why am I doing this?

- ★ Communicate using the strategies that work best
- ★ Visual / social stories
- ★ Clearly outlining results and consequences
- ★ Explaining what you are wanting them to do before the event
- ★ Life planning (e.g. larger goals like moving out or getting a job)

Planning & Sequencing Issues

- ★ Chunking tasks
- ★ Visual / written
- ★ Planners and diaries (computer or written)



Preoccupation with Specialist Interests

- ★ Structured time that includes these interests
- ★ Reminders/alarms for when to finish these activities
- ★ Set spaces/environments where these activities can occur

Anxiety

- ★ Social Stories (e.g.)
- ★ Visual plans etc
- ★ Scripting and role-play to rehearse social elements
- ★ Sensory toys/tools

Rewards!

- ★ We all use rewards to encourage us to do things we don't want to! "After I go to the gym I can have that chocolate bar!"
- ★ Set targets and a reward closely linked to the activity
- ★ Use specialist interests as part of or after the activity

Engaging in Services

- ★ Service often have “DNA policies” however they should adapt this for those with additional needs
- ★ Where possible explaining to services how best to communicate with those you support
- ★ Ask for information about how to access services to be sent to you (they should do this anyway!)
- ★ Using the strategies we have chatted about to help the person you support understand why this service might help.

Engaging in Services

- ★ Mention any sensory issues
- ★ Don't be afraid to ask! For example if they struggle to work with men/women.
- ★ Use of advocacy services if you are struggling to get what you are entitled to.

Engaging in Services: what's worked for you?



What about us?

- ★ How does it make us feel when they don't engage/communicate?
- ★ What impact does this have? Negative cycles / expectations
- ★ How do we manage our emotions in dealing with these difficult situations?

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