



Getting the environment right is a key part of supporting communication.

A child or young person who is stressed in a busy or overwhelming environment may be too anxious to process language or to interact with others. Remember that many autistic people have sensory sensitivities which means they can become easily distracted or overloaded by surrounding input.

Supporting Communication: The Environment



1

Reduce background noise:

Switch off items such as the TV, extractor fan, data projector or radio. This means the young person can more easily process what you are saying.

2

Select a quiet place for interaction:

It is much more difficult for the young person to interact in a noisy corridor or a kitchen filled with siblings. If you need to speak to them, try to find a quiet space and interact one-to-one.

3

Reduce visual distractions:

You need to grab the young person's attention if you wish to speak to them! This won't happen if there are lots of visual distractions so switch off the TV or whiteboard. Avoid crowded environments; move to a place where there are less people moving around.

4

Location, location, location!

Make sure you are not standing in front of a distracting background, such as a window or display board. This will help to focus attention on you when you are speaking.

5

Offer quiet options:

Interactions in a busy playground or noisy youth club can be too stressful for autistic young people, impacting their communication. Interaction may be easier in a quiet games room at lunchtime, or having 1-2 friends over to the house.