

Top tips for communicating with people who have communication disabilities

1. Before you start, find out from the family / carer how the person communicates with others and how much they are able to understand.
2. Observe how the person communicates with people they know well.
3. Try to check out how much the person understands – family and friends may be able to help you.
4. Make sure the person stops what they are doing before you speak to them, can see your face and is looking at you (providing that this culturally appropriate).
5. Give plenty of time for the person to understand what you are saying and to respond in their own way.
6. If the person does not understand, say it again, but make your sentences shorter
7. Keep communication simple – short sentences, concrete ideas.
8. Using gestures and pointing to objects / pictures may help.
9. Don't assume that using sign language is the answer – it may not help much if the person has not learned sign language or has learned a sign language that other people around do not know
10. 'Tongue tie' does not prevent people from talking – so do not cut under the tongue to help someone to talk.

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