



# On Purpose? –Or By Accident?

Does the person  
communicate on purpose  
or without meaning to?



### Communicating without meaning to (“accidental” or “unintentional”)

- Early form of communication—a newborn cries so we give them food or pick them up. It’s not “on purpose”. Still crying is how they got what they need.
- True for us all—when we are annoyed and our face gives us away!

### Communicating on purpose (“intentional”)

- We don’t need to communicate with intent.
- We all use many ways to communicate—facial expressions, tone of voice, body language. When we speak, we use language to relate our experiences.

### Adult communication may be both –on purpose (intentional) and “accidental” (unintentional).

- People who can’t speak may learn to use behaviors/ gestures/sounds (not language) to communicate but they are trying to get a message across
- Does not mean they don’t understand and probably hear everything you are saying, even if they can’t respond

### How can I tell if the person is communicating on purpose?

- Do they make eye contact?
- Is it something they do over and over?
- Do they try again if nothing happens.?
- Do they do anything to try to be recognized?

If the answer to any of these is “yes”, the person has some intentional communication.

### What if someone has never learned to communicate on purpose?

- This doesn’t mean that they can’t learn.
- Or it can be someone who has not been given a reliable way to communicate.
- This may be a person with a complex body and never have had a chance to take part in communication.
- These people are often overlooked or given up on when they need help the most.” (Robin Parker, PrAACticalAAC.org)
- We can teach them how. AAC can give someone power over their lives. We all deserve that chance.