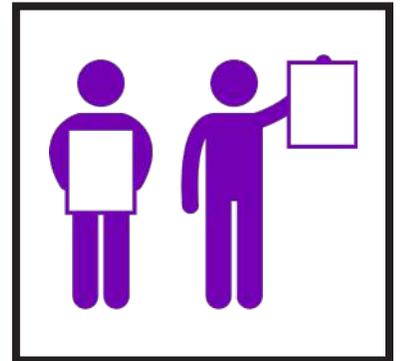




You Are A Model

People learn by watching.
And copying. And exploring.

Give lots of examples.
Use the same methods you are
encouraging others to use.



An 18-month-old child has been exposed to 4,380 waking hours of oral language. Typical AAC user exposed to two times a week for 30 minutes would take 84 years to have the same level of exposure.

Babies hear thousands of words modeled before they speak with many chances to copy what they hear. **We all need to hear the words of a language before we can speak them.** When we are immersed in a language, we make it our own. Imagine trying to learn to speak another language without hearing it spoken.

For people with complex communication needs, whatever methods we want to encourage, we need to use. The communication methods need to come alive. If we want to encourage gestures without speech, we need to use gestures without speaking. If we are trying to promote facial expressions, we become expressive ourselves. If the person has a device, we need to use it, show it, and model it.

Learning a new communication method compares to learning a second language. Most people learn second language at a basic level in 2-3 years; More complicated proficiency takes 5-7 years. If we use these time periods to set goals, we may need to model the new method for a long time.

So how do we start to model methods?

- Use the method yourself with the person and others.
- Slower is better when learning something new
- Take your cues from the situation. If the person seems to want a physical cue, do so. If not, be patient.
- Talk about what you want. (i.e. "I want to show you how to say that with your talker.")
- Mess up. Showing a person how to repair a message is part of the process.
- Say the same thing over and over. For example, if you encourage a head nod for "no"—do it repeatedly.
- Use the method in lots of different situations/places.
- Use the method throughout the day.
- Focus of key words/messages with lots of impact in many situations.