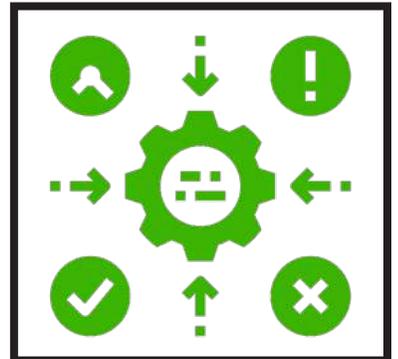




Consider Changes

We all go through changes at different points in our lives. Transitions can mean that our communication needs change, too.



As each of us faces a life transition, we adjust our needs and behaviors to respond. When I moved to Philadelphia from the Midwest, I stopped going to shopping malls. At that time Amazon came on the scene. My response to the change was to start using online shopping for my daily needs. I changed my behavior because my life changed.

Communication is particularly sensitive to transition. Our communication changes as we move through life. We use phone/video calls and texting more when we are distant from people we love. Our vocal pitch/cadence change when we communicate with a new child. As we age, we might need hearing aids—a communication tool. Vocabulary changes with our interests, jobs, and relationships.

Significant transitions include when we move from one system of support to another. We move from school to adult systems—our family home into the community. We get a new job; make new friends. With each change, there are new interactions and new communication partners.

Every time the people we support experience a transition, we have to consider Communication. Consider communication when a person with complex needs changes home situations or shows interest in new things. Consider communication when a person gets to interact with new and unfamiliar people.

We also experience micro-transitions all the time. A support person changes. And changes again. And again. Medication changes. Television shows change. Schedules change. Health changes. How resilient is the person's communication with these micro-transitions?

Familiar people may understand what the people we support are saying. However, because of change, they may need to speak with people they don't know. Maybe, a caregiver gets sick. A first responder is needed. The person gets lost.

We need to look at how the change impacts a person's ability to communicate. If a person's communication system is not agile and robust, we may need to consider expansion.