

Opening up: routes to autistic communication

Non-speaking in meltdowns or shutdowns?

- [Text to speech app](#)
- Carry a notepad
- Have an autism card or sunflower lanyard if you need support in public places

Emotional expression:

- [Paper tantrum](#)
- [Feelings wheel](#)
- [Expressive badges](#)
- Do you have a special interest? Connecting ideas to this can be really helpful, making it easier and more appealing to reflect on feelings. e.g. a wildlife fanatic could have a scale of animals from sloth to sabre-toothed tiger, or a car fanatic could use different makes and models to represent moods (mini, monster truck, Ferrari?)

Conversations:

- Ask specific questions: open questions can be overwhelming due to all the possibilities. You may have more success with questions like 'What was for pudding?', 'Did you do more wavelengths in Physics today?' or 'Did anyone get any injuries in hockey?'. These are narrow but can spur other thoughts and connections.
- Reduce excess stimulation: washing machine running in the background, brother in and out of the room, phone ringing etc. all makes it hard to think and verbalise.
- Reduce processing by making exchanges predictable. If you have a daily routine such as [rose, bud, thorn](#), then after a little while, it gets easier and more comfortable to talk about.
- Be side-by-side rather than face-to-face.
- Using stress putty can help keep hands busy and allow thoughts to formulate.

Written correspondence is excellent for allowing processing time, for putting thoughts into words, and for taking the emotional charge out of a situation. You can also make it fun by adding little doodles or knock-knock jokes to the bottom of your message.

- Deliver notes under the door
- Pass a whiteboard back and forth or keep in a visible location (the temporary nature of whiteboard pen can make expressing yourself less scary too!)
- Make or buy an indoor postbox
- Email or text