



PRAYING WITH A CREATIVE COMMUNICATOR GUIDELINES

Developed by Cristina Gangemi MA



Welcome to our guidelines which have been developed directly from the experience and expression of People with Intellectual Disabilities.

Creative communication

Verbal communication is a typical way for most people to communicate, teach or support learning. However, if lessons only relies on this and are void of cues and symbols, the meaning may be lost and the process of learning for the person who learns creatively may become confused. A multimodal form of learning is necessary. Intellectually Disabled people have a different way of processing and ordering. Structure within all learning activities is vital, indeed throughout their whole life, structure is necessary. If the creative learner does not seem to understand the task they are set, a natural thing might be to do the activity for them. They may not be able to process, however, because the activity hold intellectual boundaries that dis-able them rather than make space for their personal way of communicating.

When this happens, the creator of the activity may (understandably) then feel under pressure to achieve a learning outcome rather than just spend time being together in prayer. Here we may risk forgetting that the real learning/ sharing and expression takes place *in the doing of the activity... in the ordering and building of personal skills in prayer*

The outcome, for an Intellectually Disabled person, is manifest in **the 'doing'** more so than the **'achieving of a task'**. So the achievement boundary and the learning outcome should be set at an accessible level, thus they are no longer intellectually disabled but enabled to learn creatively.

We wish you all well and safe times praying together.



Communication and Active Participation.

People with intellectual disabilities, often, have a unique and differing method in the processing of language in some of the following ways (based upon the TEACCH method of education)

- Language may be understood in creative ways. These may be different to a 'typical' way of understanding or processing information. Never make presumptions about lack of initiative.
- If intellectual activities are not designed to meet creative skills or symbolic ways of communicating, a person will have difficulty letting their needs or thoughts known. Using differing language skills, used to communicate in a way that is right for the person, will remove boundaries and make creativity possible.
- Hypersensitivity to sensory input can often lead to disturbing behaviours. Try to discern if a person is hypersensitive and plan accordingly.
- ***Symbols / schedules and memory boards help memory and order.*** Sometimes remembering how to put things in order can be difficult. Help build order, even for familiar events, it removes barriers.
- Change is challenging, it is not so easy to know what might happen next as the person may 'live in the reality of ***now***' and not really grasp the future. When something different happens, it may seem too difficult to process and the person may feel more comfortable staying with familiar activities. This may result in a resistance to learning new activities or routines. ***Structure will help ease the challenge. It also helps in prayer-times to keep us all in the present and enjoy the moment***
- Organisational skills can differ from that of a 'typical communicator'. This may seem to put limits on the person's behaviour. *Help with organisation and positive structure can make organisation more manageable and behaviour more positive.*
- Sometimes making sense of, ***or*** acknowledging, society's rules can seem complicated and unreasonable within the person's skill set. This can result in trying to get others' attention in inappropriate ways or preferring to be alone.

- *Positive coaxing, encouragement and reminders help to recognise how we are connected and how it might be good to interact. The person may be seem to be unmotivated or may feel they have to over please where there is no praise, the person could feel unrewarded and filled with reproaches;*
- *Be happy to spend time with the person, it isn't about putting information *IN* but **receiving from God and one another**. This removes intellectual expectations and creates a **sacred place for prayer**.*
- *Being easily distracted, alongside differing skills in *perception and organisation of time* can also lead to behaviours that get in the way of learning. Be creative, share cultures and traditions, be open to using symbols and **get to know faith traditions together**.*

We hope this will help your sharing