

Using Video Calling as a Distance Communication Tool for Adults with Autism

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Introduction

Many of us may know what video calling is and may have been using it through work or other family contact during this time.

If you are unfamiliar with video calling, they are typically free one-to-one or group video and voice calling systems. This means that friends and families around the world can connect virtually through them.

Using a video communication tool such as Microsoft teams can be a useful tool for families to connect with their loved ones who have autism when regular visits are unable to happen.

Why Use Video Calls to Keep In Contact?

There are times when physical barriers can stop us from visiting or seeing the people we love and support in person. This can be difficult for adults with autism as it can cause disruption to their routines as well as inhibiting them from seeing people important to them.

Finding alternative communication systems for

these circumstances can help individuals to fulfil their routines in an alternative way. For example, if they were due to visit home for the weekend, calling their family on the days they were due home could give them that contact they seek.

Conversation Starters

If you're finding it difficult to know what to say on a video call, we have a handy video call pack that can be used with visual supports for adults with autism. This was created by Hayley Gazeley, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist at Options Malvern View.

A list of the Questions used in this pack can be found below and a link to the pack is here - <http://ow.ly/Ny1y50C7dve>

1. What did you have for breakfast?
2. What did you have for lunch?
3. What did you have for dinner?
4. What have you done today?
5. What are you doing today?
6. Where have you been for a walk?

Finding Conversation Challenging

When using video calls to interact with adults with autism, sometimes saying less is more. A great way to communicate and interact is to simply do something together on a video call, such as; having your lunch or dinner together, drawing or colouring, or making a good cup of tea.

It takes very few words but can be more meaningful, engaging and interactive for those with autism than any spoken language.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is a way to communicate and engage with an individual in a way that places no emphasis on conversation and 'typical' spoken conversation. It is a way of copying an individual's movements, vocalisations, facial expression and eye contact. This copying is not imitating.

This technique was first developed in the 1980's as a way to understand and develop communication in children, however it can be used for all ages.

This type of interaction uses the "fundamentals of communication" to build interaction. Some of these fundamentals include:

- Enjoying being with someone
- Turn taking when exchanging social interaction
- Using and understanding; eye contact, facial expressions, body language and other non-verbal communication.
- Developing the ability of attending to another person and their social behaviour.

In summary, intensive interaction is a way to develop an individual's communication skills but it is also a way to connect with someone on a different level as you begin to understand them and how they communicate in a non-verbal way.

You can find some great video examples of intensive interaction on YouTube if you would like to learn more, or you can go to www.intensiveinteraction.org.

Conclusion

Video call software is a great way of keeping in touch with those we love and support when physical barriers to contact occur. This way of communicating can be used to maintain our relationships and ensure that regular contact and structure can still be in place. This can help to limit the distress caused when typical routines are interrupted.

Training Support for Video Calls

Microsoft Teams

- Video Training - <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7>

Spread the word...

If you found this help sheet useful please feel free to share it with anyone who you feel may benefit.

The complete series of help sheets can be found on our website www.optionsautism.co.uk/resources