

# Supporting Nonspeaking Autistic People Through the Framework of Self-Determination

Cole Sorensen

## Cole's Introduction



- Educator, public speaker, author, and consultant
- Autistic full time AAC user
- Degree in Foundations of Special Education



ABA AND  
NONSPEAKING  
AUTISTIC PEOPLE

- Nonspeaking autistic people, as well as autistic people with intellectual disabilities, are disproportionately subject to ABA interventions
- Two major uses:
  - Dealing with “challenging behavior”
  - Teaching skills such as use of AAC

## AUTONOMY AND SELF DETERMINATION

- **Autonomy:** Treating a person as their own independent person, a full human being
- **Self-determination:** The ability to make decisions concerning your own life



# COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

## My Communication Bill of Rights



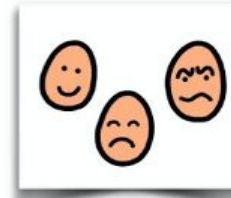
I have the right to my own friends and social life.



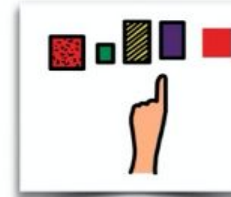
I have the right to ask for what and who I want and where to go.



I ALWAYS have the right to say, "no!"



I have the right to say what I feel.



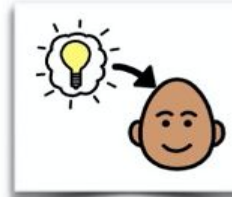
I have the right to make my own, real, choices.



I have the right to say what think.



I have the right to ask for, get and give information.



I have the right to know about the people in my life and everything happening to me.



I have the right to be taught to communicate and have what I need.



I have the right to have my communication system (and other tools), to have them working and to be with people who know how to set up, use and fix my communication system.



I have the right to be heard and answered, even if I can't have what I want.



I have the right to be part of my community



I have the right to be treated with respect.

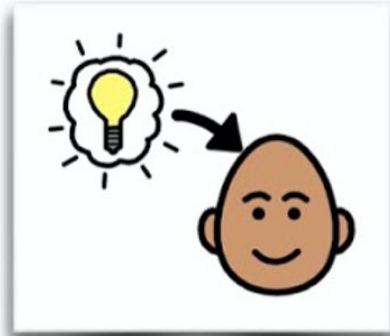


I have the right to be talked to and not about.

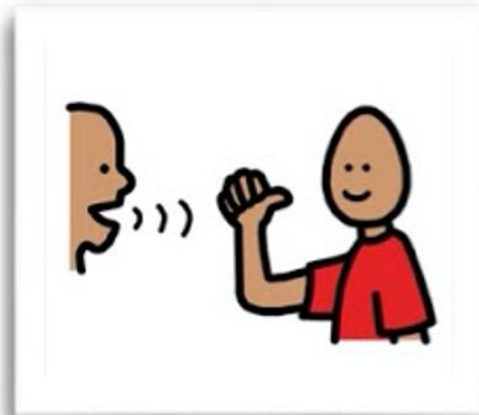


I have the right with be talked with in a way I understand.

# PRESUMING COMPETENCE



I have the right to know about the people in my life and everything happening to me.

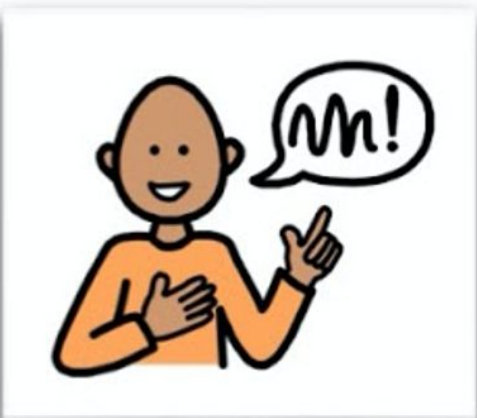


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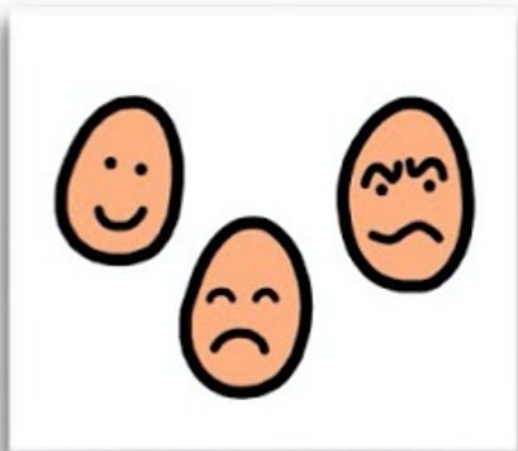


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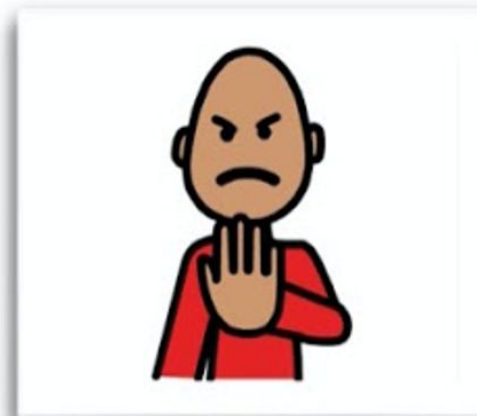
# AUTONOMY



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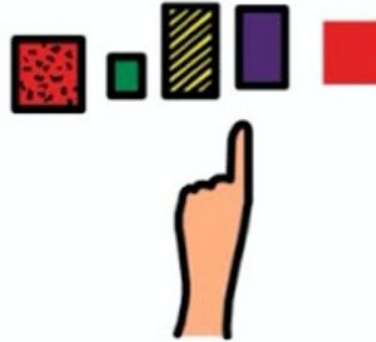


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# SELF DETERMINATION



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## ABA IN AAC INSTRUCTION

- PECS: Picture Exchange Communication System
- Withholding desired items until AAC user requests it in desired way using AAC system
- Students start to see AAC as another task they need to comply with and as a demand, rather than as a tool to communicate what they want to say

## MODELING AAC

“The average 18-month-old has been exposed to 4,380 hours of oral language at a rate of 8 hours/day from birth. A child who has a communication system (AAC) and receives speech/language therapy 2 times/week for 20-30 minutes will reach the same amount of language exposure (in their AAC language) in 84 years.”

-Jane Korsten, SLP

# HOW TO MODEL

## AIDED LANGUAGE STIMULATION

- Speak full sentences, use AAC for key words
- Model only slightly more than the person does independently

## IMMERSION METHOD

- Treat AAC as a language
- Use AAC, not your mouth, to talk
- Done with intent to communicate, not just teach

- Regardless of someone's specific support needs, alternatives to ABA exist that can meet those needs
- Being aware of the ways that an intervention enables or prevents self-determination is essential
- Nobody is “too disabled” to deserve human rights



TAKEAWAYS



# QUESTIONS?

- Contact information
  - [cole.m.sorensen@icloud.com](mailto:cole.m.sorensen@icloud.com)
- Please give me time to compose my answer
- I will get to as many questions as time allows