

Strategies and Supports to Improve Communication

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Supportive Data from the Research</i>
Recognize that scripting provides a multitude of benefits for the individual, and restricting scripting has very negative implications.	<i>“Scripts are very useful to survive in this world. They relieve some of the social anxiety” (014).</i>
Engage in scripting and role-plays as a way to connect, build relationships, and understanding.	<i>“We communicated in Disney movie scripts a lot in the beginning. Watching movies together was a huge part of family quality time...and it shaped our communication from the very beginning” (010).</i>
Utilize flexible scripts to support Autistic young adults in obtaining a job, and in ongoing career success.	<i>“Hugely beneficial. If I don’t script in a professional situation, I may well hit the wrong note and/or inadvertently offend” (020).</i>
Teach the important nuances of scripting and how scripts should change based on context and the needs of the autistic individual.	<i>“The kind I don’t like is when I am taught that situation X always requires response Y not matter the context or how I feel” (007).</i>
Learn the origins of scripts in order to understand the in-depth meaning of a script.	<i>“They would always broadly understand, and I don’t think anyone ever particularly recognised a source I was scripting from” (018). “A lot of meanings my scripts come from literature and poetry, so they almost always have a deeper meaning” (017).</i>
Look for opportunities to connect deeply through scripts.	<i>“My dad...he was still interested in what I had to say in the ‘wild talk’- he’d ask me about the “evil plans” I’d write...” (004).</i>

View language skills as a continuum, which is impacted by context, the communication partner, and stress. Adjust expectations and support based on this flexible continuum	<i>“It helps me to respond more authentically when stress, conflict, or social anxiety tend to steal my ability to make words on the spot” (009).</i>
Provide opportunities to utilize the Internet and social media to connect and find community, and respect the authenticity of relationships built through social media.	<i>“It got HEAPS better once I started opening up to people more, and people got to know me better when I got Facebook...” (004).</i>
Recognize the pressure that autistics constantly feel to fit in and behave “normally”. Act as a respite for this phenomenon and offer spaces for individuals to truly be themselves.	<i>. “...I was tired at the end of a long day of acting ‘normal’ and needed alone time. I called my mask my ‘retail face’ ...” (004).</i>
Look for signs of anxiety and depression in adolescents with Autism, consider the social factors that may be contributing it and look for support in this area.	<i>“I was diagnosed with depression...and they tried different medications for me, but none of it addressed the social factors contributing to it” (010).</i>
Give the option of choices of output in school, research, etc. noting that the writing process may be an area of strength for the individual, and thus should be available.	<i>“I think many of us prefer ‘talking’ through typing to speaking, for a variety of reasons, even if we tend to speak a lot... its easier, at least for me, to type at the speed of thought than to control the mouth to form the words and then get them out” (010).</i>

It is critical that we drive our recommendations, and the practical implications of this research from the experts themselves, thus in conclusion, Olivia shared the following information regarding communicating with an Autistic child that uses scripting:

I guess I’d say be patient with them, and don’t be afraid to play along. You can find out a lot from what they say, and it can help them. But it’s also ok to tell them that most people don’t script like they do - as long as you explain it in a way that doesn’t make them feel like freaks or something. Because they’re not alone. (004)

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