

Communication Challenges & Mutual Reinforcement

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Communication Challenges

Challenging behaviors may arise in individuals with CdLS, leading to ineffective communication. Frustrations often occur when the individual is misunderstood or struggles to convey their thoughts clearly.

Ensure everyone has an effective communication method to manage these challenging behaviors related to communication frustration. **Effective communication must be understandable to all.** Using signs and symbols can support those with speech difficulties, and it's important to encourage methods that work in various settings.

Any non-verbal communication system should align with the person's verbal skills. Early intervention through speech and language therapy is vital for all individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Some parents find creating a **communication passport** for their loved ones helpful. This tool keeps everyone involved and informed about how the individual prefers communicating.

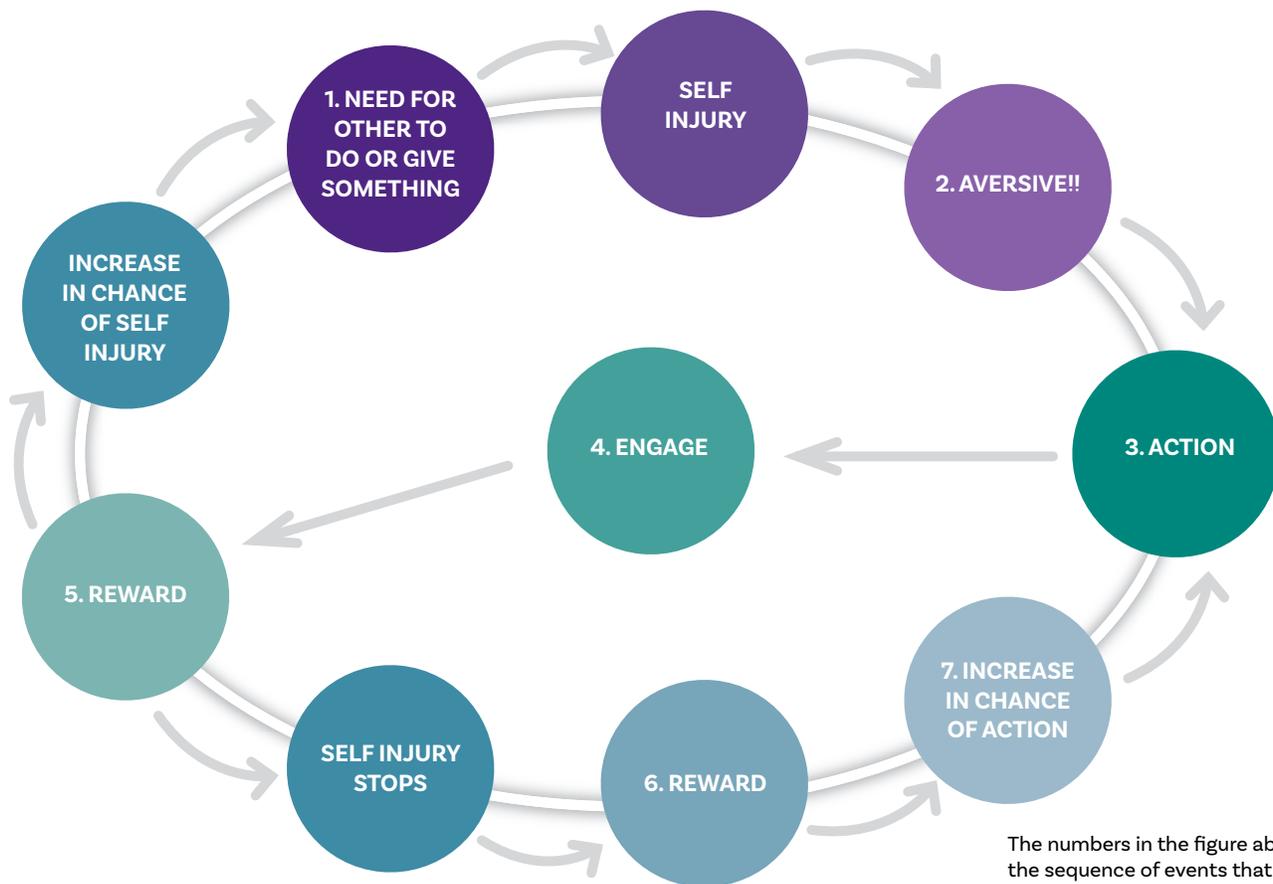


Communication Passport

A communication passport is a personalized booklet, created by you, for individuals with communication difficulties. It offers key information to help others understand their needs. It empowers users to share details and facilitates getting to know them, especially in new environments.

Types of information included:

- Name, age, and other biographical details.
- How the individual communicates (e.g., verbally, using pictures, AAC devices).
- Likes, dislikes, and interests.
- Important people in their life (e.g., family members, friends).
- Medical information, such as allergies or medications.
- Support needs and strategies.



Mutual Reinforcement

Understanding how someone with CdLS communicates is as important as recognizing mutual reinforcement. One person may be rewarded for challenging behaviors, and the other may also benefit. This is mutual reinforcement. In the context of positive reinforcement in attention-maintained behavior, it's clear that while one person rewards the child, the child also rewards the other.

1. The child is alone and lacks stimulation. Initially, the child may exhibit self-injurious behavior for various reasons.
2. A self-injury occurs and is witnessed by another person (parent or caregiver).
3. The observer finds self-injury distressing and takes action to prevent its recurrence or understand its cause.
4. The observer interacts with the child who has just exhibited self-injurious behavior. While preventing further instances of self-injury and trying to ascertain the cause, the observer may offer comfort, distraction, or restraint.
5. Now that the child has received a reward (the interaction), the self-injury is not motivated to continue, resulting in the cessation of such behavior.

6. When self-injurious behavior is halted, the observer feels rewarded by eliminating the unpleasant event. This reward is the sense of relief experienced when a child stops self-injuring, even briefly.
7. As the observer's reaction to self-injury is reinforced, they are more likely to respond similarly to future behaviors, rewarding the child again.

Consider other aspects of this process. If the other person does not respond positively to the challenging behaviors, the child will still seek a reward, leading to continued challenging behaviors. The other person will try various responses until one prompts the child to cease self-injury. In this way, the child inadvertently teaches the person how to reward the challenging behaviors. This series of events shows that while the other person unintentionally rewards the child for these behaviors, the child also rewards the other person for reinforcing them. This does not mean the child tries to control the other person; it is simply a natural consequence of socially reinforced challenging behaviors.