

Myths of Using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

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- **AAC will keep a person from talking:** This is based on the belief that if we have started to use AAC, we have given up on using natural speech as a form of communication. Through research, we now know that using AAC can increase speech production and language knowledge.
- **A child can be too young for AAC:** This is based on the belief that young children are not ready to use AAC and need to be of school age before it can be introduced. Research shows that early implementation of AAC can aid in the development of natural speech/language and can increase vocabulary, even for young children (under age 3).
- **A child can be too old for AAC:** This is based on the belief that you have to learn to communicate and read when you're young, but it is possible to learn communication and literacy skills at any point in life.
- **A person can be too impaired to benefit from AAC:** This is based on the idea that if a person's cognitive and/or physical abilities are too significantly impaired, they won't be able to use AAC as a form of communication. This is not true as the only pre-requisite to using AAC is the ability to breathe. AAC can be used by anyone regardless of diagnosis or impairment level. There are a lot of adaptations that can be made to help make AAC work for someone.
- **AAC isn't necessary for someone who already has some speech:** This is based on the belief that if someone has even a little speech, there is no need for AAC as it should be enough for basic communication. The truth is that even basic communication is limiting and makes it difficult for someone to communicate what they truly want/feel/need across all potential communication settings and communication partners. These individuals may greatly benefit from using AAC.

- **AAC will fix all communication difficulties:** This is based on the idea that communication is instant and that simply putting a device in front of an individual will result in communication. The truth is, AAC is a journey that takes time and persistence to learn. Think about it as if you were learning a new language!
- **Low-tech AAC must be used before introducing high-tech devices:** The use of AAC tools and techniques does not follow any order but rather is a series of decisions that are revisited regularly based on the client's current and future skills and needs. Order does not matter. It just matters if it works for the client.