

Transition to Independence

Talking About Things You Feel Strongly About:

Talking about stuff you care a lot about can be hard. Maybe it's having a serious talk with your girlfriend or boyfriend. Maybe it's telling your IEP team what you think. Maybe it's reminding your family that you don't want to be treated like a child. It's tough to know how to do it. Your muscles get tense. That makes it harder. You want them to listen to you and not get mad.

At times, everyone feels uncomfortable with conversations like these.

Here are some tips to make it easier. And here are some assignments to practice talking about the tough stuff, too. The more practice you get, the easier it will be. And the more you'll be able to take charge of your own life and see it going the way you want it to go.

Tips:

Tip 1: Plan a time to have the talk. Don't just wait for the time to be right. If you need to talk about something important, make a special time for it. Let the other person know you need to talk about something important and you want them to have plenty of time to listen to you.

Tip 2: get your ideas ready ahead of time. Figure out what you want to say and get your AAC device ready. Put each idea you want to say in your device so that you can say them one at a time. That way, the person who is listening can hear one thought at a time. This will help them to think about each of your ideas better. Then they can talk about each idea with you.

Tip 3: if you start to get upset, it's OK to tell the other person you need a break. Sit quietly for a minute. Take deep breaths. Look at the things you planned to say. Figure out what to say next. Once you feel calmer, talk some more.

Tip 4: try hard to communicate your feelings with words. Using your body to communicate your feelings may show how you are feeling. But it won't explain why. It may also make you or the other person feel more upset and out of control. Using words helps you to be in control of the conversation.



Tip 5: agree to disagree. The other person may not agree with you. If this happens, tell them that you can see they don't agree. Doing this doesn't mean that you are giving in. It just lets them know you understand that they think differently than you. You may not be able to change their mind right now. They may need time to think. You may not be able to change their mind at all.

Tip 6: sometimes you need to stop talking before the problem is solved. It's OK to do this. Someone may need a break. The meeting time may be over. If the problem is not solved yet, you can talk about it again later.

Practice Situations:

IEP meeting:

Practice talking about something that's important to you that you'll want to share during your next IEP meeting. Here is an example: Faye wants to go to class without the paraprofessional (Para) following her. She needs help from the Para in the bathroom and at lunch, but she doesn't feel that she needs help in the classroom. School staff say she needs help getting her books out and turning pages. **What can Faye say in the IEP meeting to explain what she wants? How can she solve the problem about getting out books and turning pages without a Para?**

Problem with parents:

Jim thinks his parents are too nosy. They read over his shoulder when he's e-mailing his friends. It makes him very angry. He feels like they are treating him like a little kid. **What can Jim do to solve this problem? Every time he tries to talk about it, he gets so angry that it's hard to talk. Write down 3 ideas Jim should tell his parents.**

The future:

Mary's parents and teachers have been talking a lot about what Mary should do after she finishes school. Sometimes they talk about it like she isn't even there. Mary thinks that they spend too much time talking about it, and not enough time listening to her ideas. **How can Mary get them to listen to her more?**

Guy/Girl problems:

You want to ask someone to the prom. But it's embarrassing because you can't drive yourself and will need a personal care attendant to feed you supper and to help you in the bathroom. **How can you start this conversation?**



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