



# Week 16: AAC Outside (continued)



## AACTion Steps

[StepInAAC.org/A-Week16](https://StepInAAC.org/A-Week16) (Online / PDF)

Core words: you, need, here  
Communication function: Making Choices



## Sign Posts (videos)

[StepInAAC.org/P-Week16](https://StepInAAC.org/P-Week16) (YouTube playlist)

16-1: AAC Always Available

Video: [StepInAAC.org/V16-1-AlwaysAvailable](https://StepInAAC.org/V16-1-AlwaysAvailable)

16-2: Comment with AAC

Video: [StepInAAC.org/V16-2-Comment](https://StepInAAC.org/V16-2-Comment)

Handout: [StepInAAC.org/H16-2-Comment](https://StepInAAC.org/H16-2-Comment)

16-3: Language Walk-Through: Park & Playground

Video: [StepInAAC.org/V16-3-LWT-ParkPlayground](https://StepInAAC.org/V16-3-LWT-ParkPlayground)



## Travelog (newsletter)

[StepInAAC.org/N-Week16](https://StepInAAC.org/N-Week16) (Online / PDF)

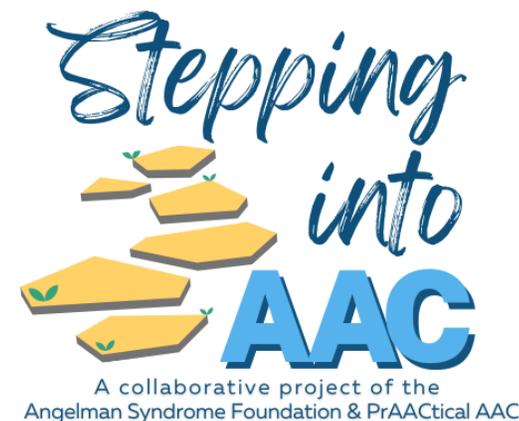
Topics:

- Valuing the Role of Social Communication
- Communication Bill of Rights: Social Communication
- More to Explore

**Question of the Week:** "I can see my child trying to engage with people. How can I help them communicate in social interactions?"



We continue our outdoor adventures this week. Take a look at the weather before you head out and talk about what type of things you might need to prepare for outdoors. Whenever possible, offer your learner choices about where you go and what you take with you. Do you need a jacket? An umbrella? Sunglasses? After you talk about the weather and what you need, it's time to head outside and explore. Bring your communication board for more opportunities to chat along the way!



## Hands-on Activities

### Day 1

**LOOK:** Either look at the weather forecast or look out the window together. Talk about what you **NEED** today. "I **NEED** a hat!"

### Day 2

**ASK:** Invite your learner to pick what they **NEED** for a walk outside. "What do **YOU NEED**?" Try to show real items to support choice-making.

you

need

here

go

up

turn

make

like

can

finish

this

who

look

different

more

### Day 3

**PRACTICE:** When you're outside together, take a moment to stop and look around. You might say, "Let's stop **HERE**." What can you see when you look around?"

### Day 4

**OBSERVE:** Watch your learner and comment on what they seem to enjoy about the outdoors. "I think **YOU** like collecting stones."

### Day 5

**SHARE:** Tell others in your family that you are practicing saying, "I **NEED**..." before you leave the house. "I **NEED** my keys, I **NEED** my phone."





# Comment with AAC

A collaborative project of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation and PrAACtical AAC

**Comments are “free” opportunities to model AAC at just about any time. Use social / chat words, share an opinion, or offer a perspective.**

These natural opportunities are fun and stress-free: they invite interaction, without putting demands on AAC learners

## Practice Commenting:

- explore the chat pages of robust AAC
- use memes, funny animal pictures, or funny videos for inspiration
- comment on the unexpected and out of ordinary in everyday life

Uh-oh

THAT'S  
CRAZY!

AWESOME!

It's nice to have the  
park to ourselves.  
It's ALL OPEN.

He was such a  
BIG HELP.

THAT'S NEW.  
I wonder what  
it will be?

## Notice & Comment on Everyday Things:

- the weather on a lovely, or not so lovely, day
- how you feel about an outing
- interactions with others in the community
- changes in the environment
- etc...

## Offer an Opinion:

- tell when you like something
- compliment creative work
- tell what you think about an activity or experience
- tell when you don't like something

FUN!

GREAT  
COLORS!

GROSS

IT'S NOT  
SAFE!

HE'S NOT  
serious. HE'S  
JOKING

THAT is NOT  
what I  
expected

## Inform and Offer Your Perspective:

- Inform about situations
- Explain and give additional information
- Tell your perspective or understanding



# Links & Attributions

Comment with AAC



**Stepping Into AAC homepage:**  
[stepinaac.org/Welcome](http://stepinaac.org/Welcome)



**Video :**  
[stepinaac.org/V16-2-Comment](http://stepinaac.org/V16-2-Comment)



**Handout:**  
[stepinaac.org/H16-2-Comment](http://stepinaac.org/H16-2-Comment)



**Stepping Into AAC, Week 16 bundle:**  
[stepinaac.org/WB16](http://stepinaac.org/WB16)





## Inside this Issue

### THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

This week, we're exploring the right to social communication.

### QUESTION OF THE WEEK

"I can see my child trying to engage with people. How can I help them communicate in social interactions?"

### MORE TO EXPLORE

References, links to videos, resources

## VALUING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

### *Communication Is Connection*

Social connection is essential to our daily lives. For our AAC learners, social connection is essential to their personal growth and inclusion. Last week, we discussed the cycle of perception, expectation, opportunity, and achievement. We must believe that our learners have the potential to effectively communicate in a social realm so that we give them the opportunities they need to be successful. We must also value any input and attempts at social communication. If our learners feel like their attempts are not valued or acknowledged, they are less likely to make further attempts.

Our learners should know that they are always welcome to the conversation, especially when the conversation has to do with them. It is so important that we make the effort to include our learners in the conversation with professionals, teachers, support staff, and others rather than speaking about our learner as if they're not even in the room.

CONTINUED ON P. 2



## THE COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS: SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

*The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships*

As promised, here is another highlight from the Communication Bill of Rights document from the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities.

### **The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships**

This week, we spoke in depth regarding the importance of social interactions. Our learners have a right to access these social interactions and form friendships and bonds with others. If they are not provided the opportunities for these social interactions, they will be less likely to seek them out.

As our learners grow, having bonds, friendships, and meaningful social opportunities are important for their overall well-being. Humans are social creatures! When frequent opportunities are provided and social exchanges are modeled through AAC, our learners will be more likely to make attempts at social interactions.

As we mentioned earlier in this week's newsletter, many social interactions follow a routine, predictable structure, which really helps our learners become socially savvy with practice overtime. So, include them as much as possible! Offer the AAC team suggestions on how to include your child in social interactions throughout the day.

“  
He's not always going to be  
in our home & so we need  
him to be able to  
communicate to others.

”  
Dawn, mother of David, age 26,  
Deletion + Angelman Syndrome

We hope you'll stick around for more highlights over the coming weeks! If you need to revisit the Communication Bill of Rights document in its entirety, check out the supplemental materials in Week 12.



## UNDERSTANDING & VALUING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

*continued*

Let's think about some communicative functions that appear frequently in social interactions:

### **Greetings and Closings**

Words like 'HI' and 'BYE' may or may not be on your child's communication board, but it doesn't mean that we can't model other modes of communication. Waving is a well-known and effective way of saying either 'hi' or 'bye' and can be a great alternative option if those words are not available on a communication board yet.

### **Asking and Answering Questions**

Asking someone 'How are you?' or 'How was your day?' and responding to those questions if they are reciprocated are part of routine conversational exchanges. Additionally, either party may seek information as part of a conversation. If you need some additional ideas of how to address asking questions if the communication board doesn't have those words and concepts yet, you can revisit the Question of the Week in week 11 for some tips!

### **Telling Jokes**

We love adding a little humor to our interactions! Not only are they fun and exciting, many jokes also have a predictable structure, which leaves a built-in opportunity for pause time

### **Retelling a Story or Experience**

Sharing an experience that happened earlier that day or that week is a common thread in conversational exchanges. If your learner makes a communicative attempt and you know the context that they're trying to communicate, share that context with those involved in the conversation. For example, if your child communicates using a fringe word 'park' and you know that you took your child to the park today, you may say something like, "Yes, we did GO to the PARK today. We had a lot of FUN!".

Do you need some tips on how to encourage and support your learner's social communication? Check out this week's Question of the Week for more information!

# QUESTION OF THE WEEK

*"I can see my child trying to engage with people. How can I help them communicate in social interactions?"*



Over the last 15 weeks, we've learned to put on our detective hats to observe all of the different ways our learners may be communicating. Whether it's a quick smile at the neighbor's dog (I like him!), taking your hand and leading you to the kitchen (I need something to eat), pushing the juice away (I don't want the juice), or an excited jump (I'm excited to see you!), our learners have so many ways of communicating with us. Once we figure out what our learner may be trying to communicate, we then use our AAC strategies to model the words that fit the interaction.

When it comes to social interactions, our job of looking for these subtle clues of communication is no different. The way our learners seek out social interactions may look different, but the desire for the interaction is there if we look for it!

Lawrence looks up and smiles at the cashier.  
"It looks like you want to say HI".

While playing on his own next to his sister, Mateo puts a piece of his puzzle near her.  
"I think you may want Mariela to PLAY, too."

So, how can we ensure that our learners are getting frequent opportunities for social interaction? First, we need to revisit their communication board. While there are ample core vocabulary words to assist in a conversation, we may need to add some chat words or phrases to our fringe vocabulary like 'hi', 'bye', or 'how are you?'. Eventually, once your learner has access to a robust device, there may be a social or a chat pageset that contains more quick phrases for social interactions.

Consider routine, predictable interactions. Many social interactions follow a predictable structure. Consider this common interaction, for instance:

"Hello, how are you?"  
"I'm good, thank you. How are you?"  
"I'm great!"

If you think about your day-to-day, this type of interaction happens frequently, which is great because it provides those necessary communication opportunities.

Let's also take into consideration the timing of a social interaction. Most of the time, these interactions are brief, which means that questions are asked and answered very quickly.

## **Be a detective.**

Look out for signs that your learner wants to join in on that interaction. Validate their intentions by saying (and modeling) things like, "It LOOKS like you might want to SAY something".

Introduce your learner to others involved in the conversation/activity.

By introducing your learners to those included in the interaction, not only are you creating a more friendly space, you are providing more opportunities for communicating greetings ("Hi") and sharing personal information ("My name is \_\_\_\_").

*continued on page 4.*



# QUESTION OF THE WEEK

*continued*

## **Explain to others that your learner's social interactions may look different.**

Other people, especially your learner's peers, may not be as good of a detective as you are (yet) when it comes to knowing your learner and their interaction style. It may be helpful to explain this. For example, "Jesenia may not talk to you, but she still wants to play. Can she sit with you?"

## **Set the pace.**

Share with those involved in the interaction that your learner uses AAC to communicate and that it may take them a little longer to respond.

## **Model your own communication.**

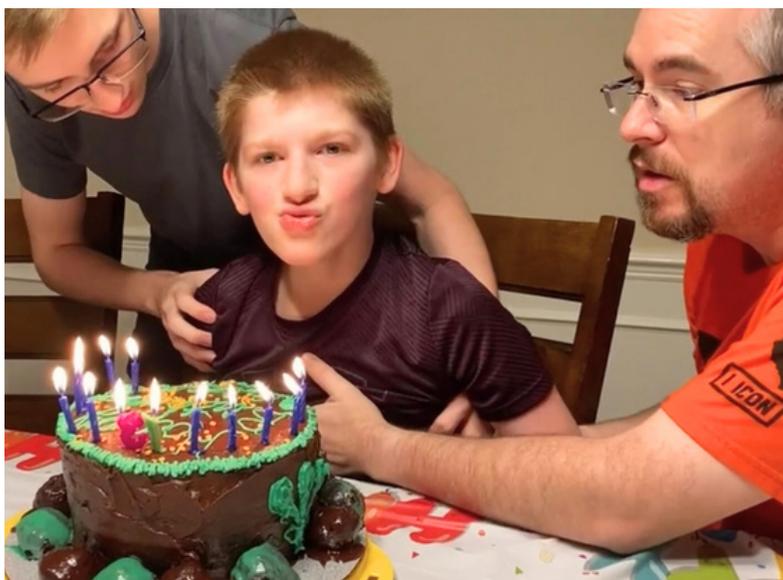
As always, don't forget to use your trusted AAC strategies by modeling your own phrases on the communication board. This, too, might help to slow down the pace of the interaction and show everyone involved (including your learner) that it is okay to take longer to respond.

It's important to remember that your learner may still be new to this world of AAC and may be even newer to being included in these types of social interactions. By using some of the tips and strategies that we've discussed, you will feel more confident in how to best support your learner through social interactions.



“  
It's about training  
the community  
around him also.

Dawn, mother of David, age 26,  
Deletion + Angelman Syndrome



# MORE TO EXPLORE

## ARTICLE

Social Interaction in the Communication Bill of Rights

<https://stepinaac.org/letstalkAAC>



## VIDEOS

The Role of Social Closeness

<https://stepinaac.org/AACintervention>



Supporting Social Connections

<https://stepinaac.org/supportingsocialconnections>



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