

Parent Coaching Resources

Practical strategies for supporting communication during real-life moments — because parents are powerful communication partners.

What parent coaching means

Parent coaching is not about turning you into your child's therapist. It is about helping you notice communication opportunities, feel confident responding to your child, and use strategies that fit naturally into your family's routines.

8 Strategies to Try

1. Follow Your Child's Lead

Join what your child is already interested in. Watch, imitate, and add language without taking over the activity.

2. Create Opportunities

Use a pause or small change in the environment to create a reason to communicate. Try a favorite item in sight, a pause during a familiar song, or two choices.

3. Use Choices

Offer two realistic options: "Apple or banana?" Choices can reduce pressure while creating a meaningful reason to communicate.

4. Expand & Recast

Build on what your child says. If they say "baby sleep," you might say, "Yes, the baby is sleeping." Model naturally rather than requiring repetition.

5. Comment More Than You Question

Balance questions with comments, observations, reactions, and language models so interaction does not feel like a test.

6. Pause & Wait

Give your child time to process and respond. A few extra seconds can create space for a word, gesture, AAC selection, facial expression, or other attempt.

7. Model Functional Communication

Model useful messages such as help, more, open, stop, all done, go, my turn, your turn, yes, no, hurt, and choices.

8. Celebrate Attempts

Respond to communication attempts even when they are not perfect. Children learn that communicating works when their attempts are noticed and answered.

When Communication Gets Hard

Communication breakdowns are normal. The goal is to help your child feel understood while giving them tools to repair the interaction.

Topic	Helpful guidance
Frustration	Stay calm, reduce language, and offer a simple choice or model a functional phrase such as “help” or “more.”
Not responding	Move closer, reduce distractions, use fewer words, and make sure you have their attention before giving a direction.
Repeated request	Acknowledge it and look for the underlying message: requesting, protesting, asking for help, seeking attention, or commenting.
Avoids talking	Do not force repetition. Build connection through play, gestures, shared attention, movement, and low-pressure opportunities.
Speech is hard to understand	Focus on the message first. Confirm what you think they said, model clear speech naturally, and seek individualized assessment when needed.

Conversation Builders

- Notice → “You found the dinosaur!”
- Comment → “He’s hiding.”
- Pause → Wait for your child to respond.
- Add → “He’s hiding under the table.”
- Connect → “I found one too!”

For Children Who Use AAC

- Keep AAC available throughout the day, not only during therapy.
- Model by selecting words on the system while you speak.
- Use AAC for more than requesting — model commenting, protesting, greeting, asking questions, and social interaction.
- Do not require a child to imitate every AAC model before receiving an item or participating.
- Give the child time to explore and communicate.

Your Family's Communication Plan

Choose one or two strategies that fit your family. Small, consistent changes are more sustainable than trying to do everything at once.

Topic	Helpful guidance
Our routine	
Strategy we will try	
What motivates my child	
What communication looks like right now	
How we will celebrate attempts	
What we want to learn next	

When to reach out

Consider consulting an SLP when you have ongoing concerns about your child's speech, language, social communication, AAC needs, fluency, or ability to participate successfully in everyday communication. You do not have to wait until concerns become severe.

Bloom Pediatric Speech Therapy, Inc. • Parent education resource

Information in this resource is based on current guidance from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Bloom Pediatric Speech Therapy, Inc. is not affiliated with or endorsed by ASHA. This resource is for general education and is not intended to diagnose or treat a speech, language, hearing, or developmental disorder.