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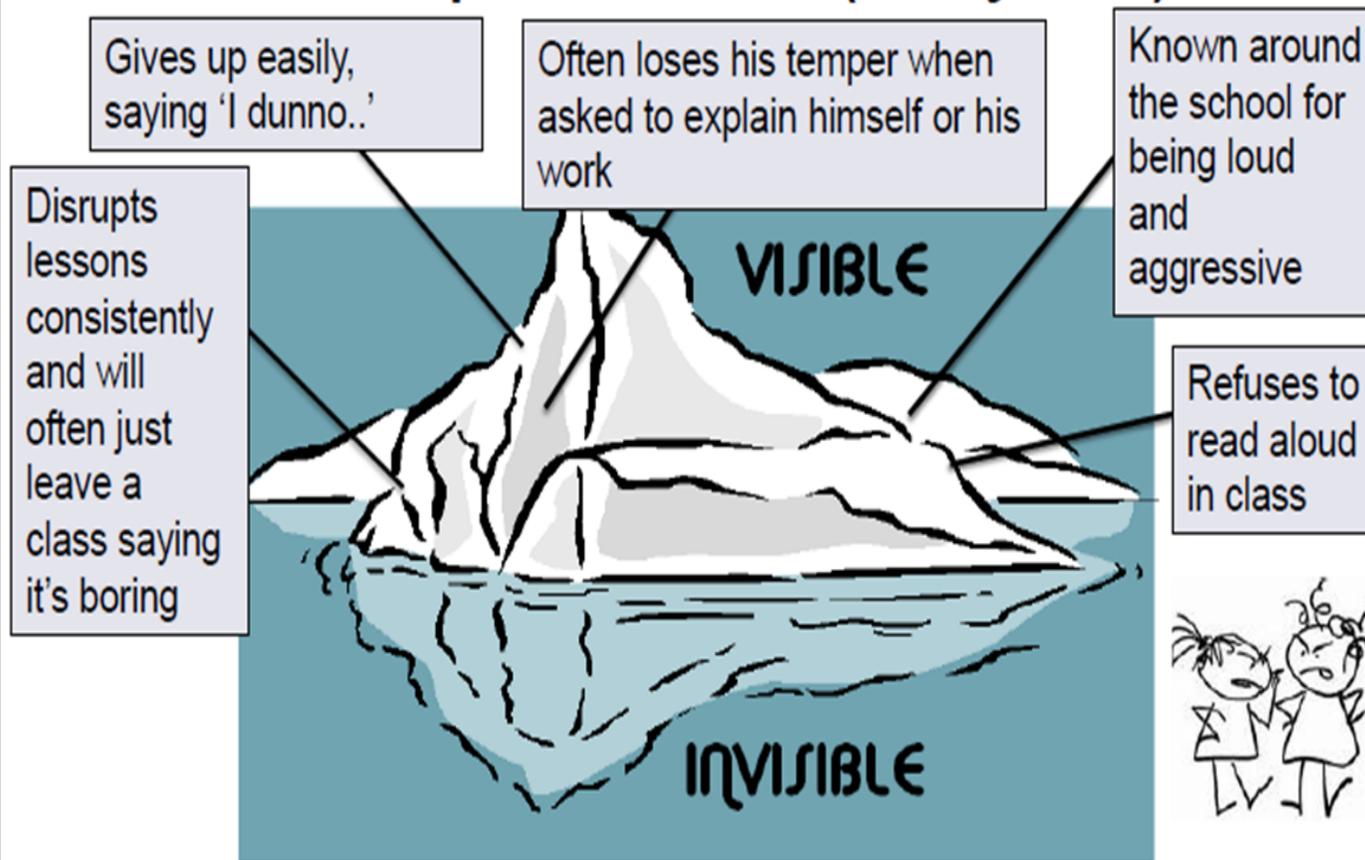
Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall
Place, Dublin 7

Speech, Language and Communication Challenges for Juvenile Justice

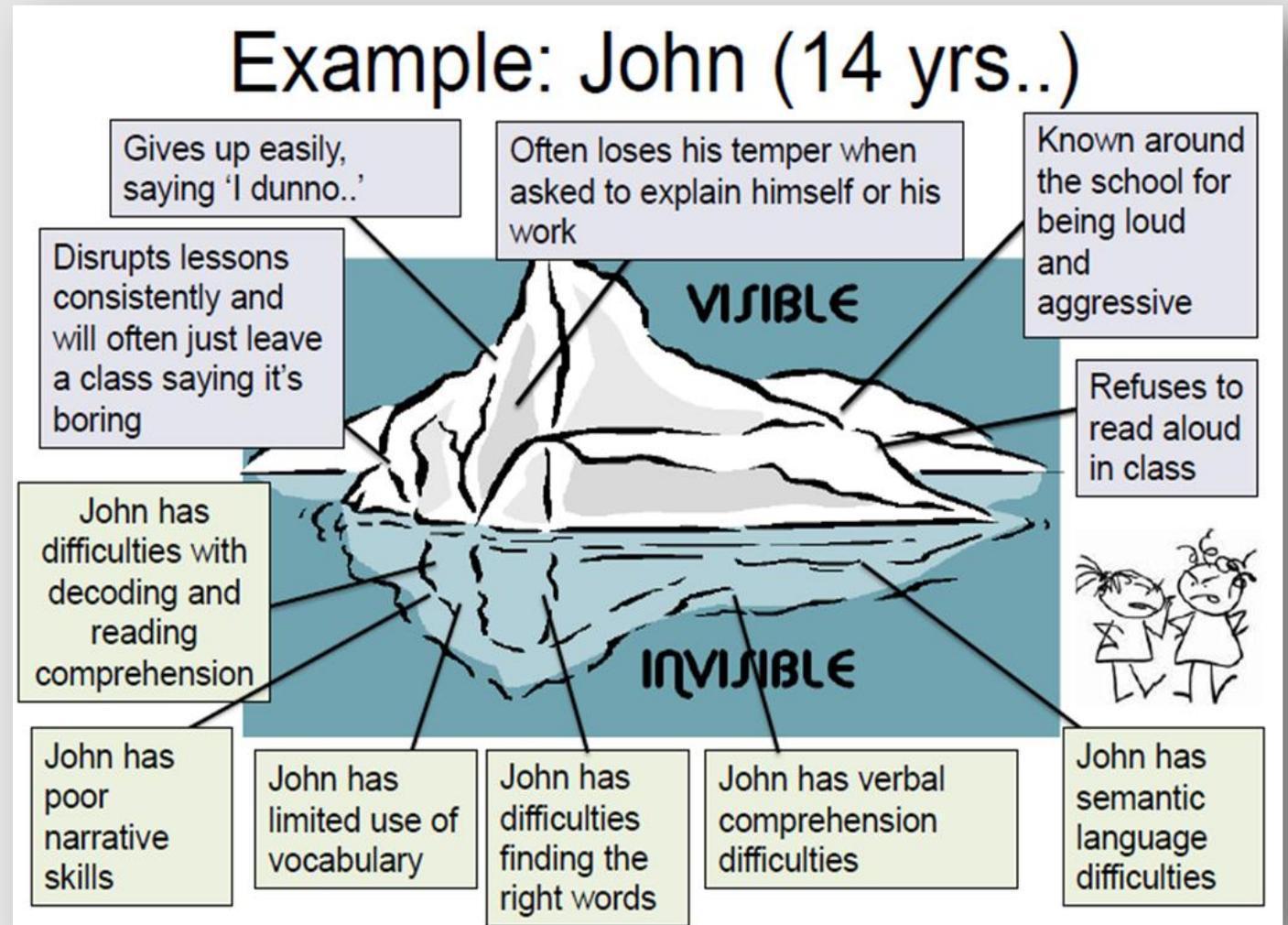
29 November 2018

Working with Teenagers: **Visible** and Invisible Problems

Example: John (14 yrs..)

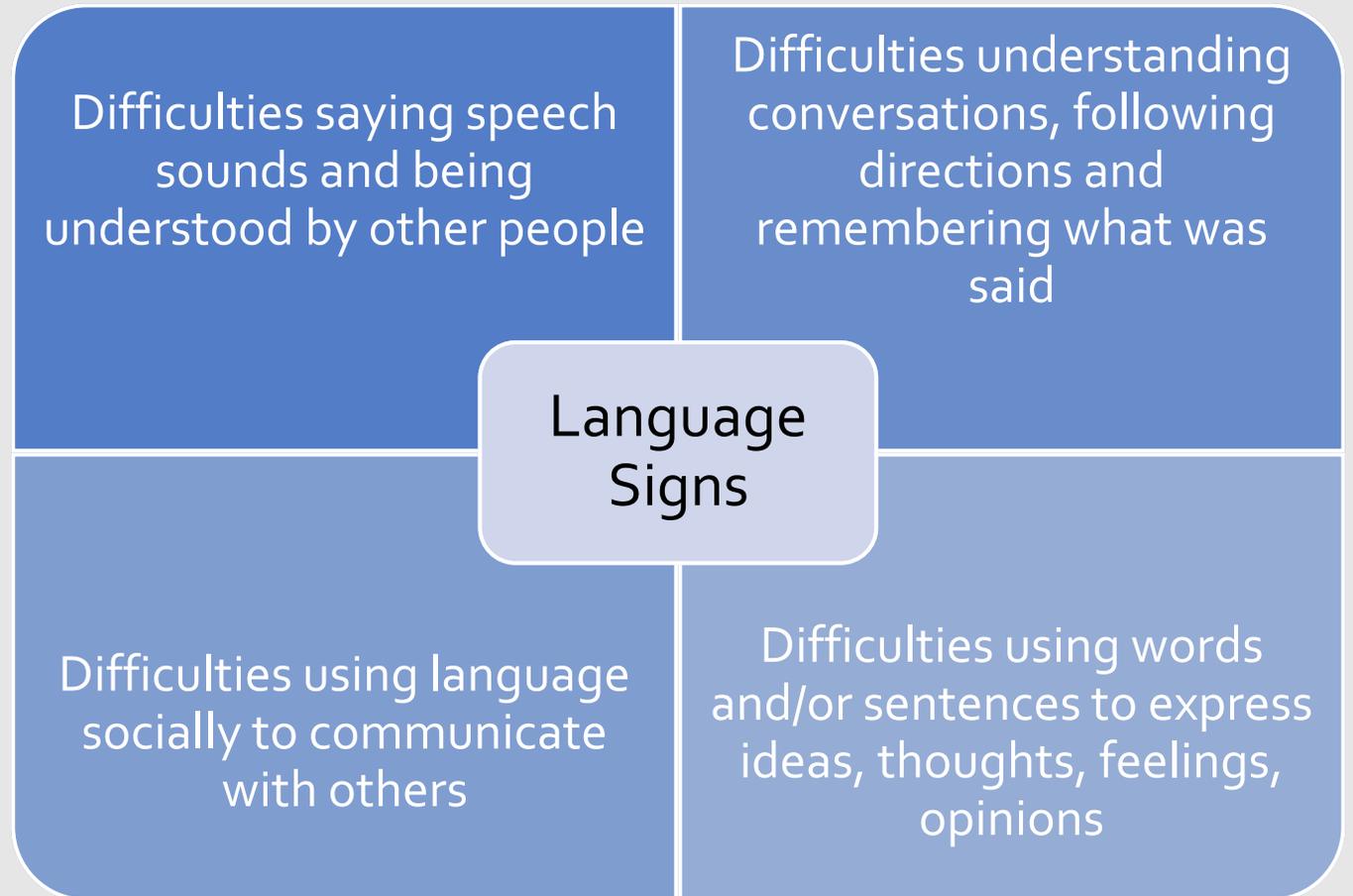


*Working with Teenagers:
Visible and Invisible Problems*



Language Impairment

What are the signs?



Developmental Language Disorder (*DLD*)

What is it?

- Language problems **severe** enough to interfere with daily life, **poor prognosis**, not associated with a clear biomedical aetiology (Bishop, 2017).
- May be primarily receptive, expressive or mixed.
- Those with diagnosis of a **receptive language disorder** most at risk
- Obstacles to **learning, making friends and emotional well being**
- DLD may co-occur with other neurodevelopmental disorders like ADHD and ASD.

Persistence and Severity

Hidden but common

- A significant proportion of language difficulties can be **long term** even with intervention (Stothard , Snowling et al , 1998)
- Educational achievement and self-esteem is negatively impacted
- Literacy research study of students in Junior Cycle in a disadvantaged area indicated literacy several years below age level (Bizell & Foley, 2011)

DLD

- Can be lifelong, with continuing language difficulties
- Can have a functional impact on participation in many aspects of life
- Can be helped with specialist support
- Affects about 2 in every class of 30 primary school children

Hidden
but common



RADLD Campaign Raising Awareness of DLD

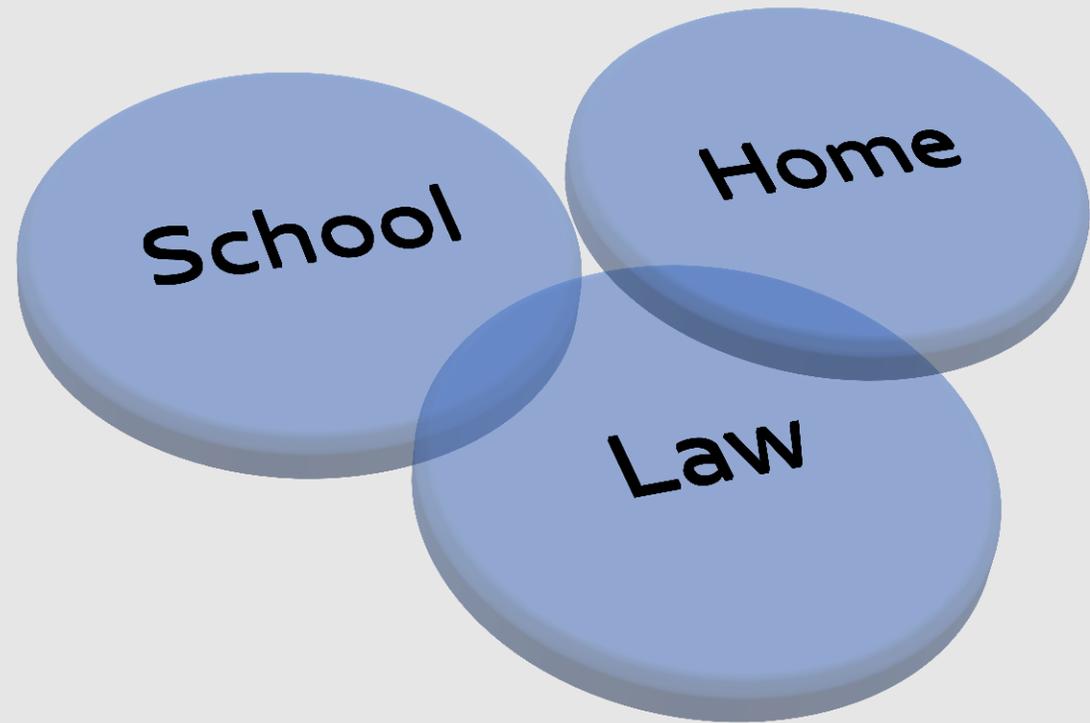
Receptive Language Impairment (SRLI)

- Comprehension difficulties make children very vulnerable in relation to education (Hooper et al, 2003). Implications for self-esteem, social-communication and mental health;
- **Receptive language** (comprehension) deficits mirrored in **reading comprehension** and **social comprehension** impairments.
- Adolescents develop strategies to 'mask' these hidden difficulties

Impact on Teenagers



Impact on Teenagers



Young Offenders

Oral Language Competence, Risk
Protector/Predictor, Prevalence



Language Impairment and Risk

- Language difficulties **rarely recognised** in young offenders and never cited as a risk predictor
- Prevalence in adolescents in custody is **much higher** than that seen in the general population, estimates ranging from 60-90% compared to 7-12%, respectively
(Hughes, N. et al. 2012) .
- New Zealand study identified 64% of Young Offenders had language impairment compared to 10% of youth in controls
(Lount, Purdy & Hand, 2017)
- 75% of youth in a community centre in the U.K were found to have speech, language and/or communication need (SLCN)
(Gregory & Bryan, 2011)

Oral Language Competence and Disadvantage

- Oral language is a key competency acquired in the first 5 years of life
- Interpersonal, academic and vocational goals are facilitated in a pro-social way which reduces the risk of offending (Snow & Powell)
- Research indicates that up to 42% of young children in disadvantaged areas of Cork city presented with language delays and impairments. This was reduced to expected estimates of up to 7-8% with early intervention
- **Happy Talk** is an **early intervention** approach which empowers parents and teachers to facilitate language development in the 0-6 year age group

Education & Exclusion

- Education is protective factor (Smart et al, 2003) and there is an over-representation of young people **excluded from school**
- Young people who are not in school miss opportunity to form positive peer relationships where language plays a central role
- These young people are more likely to **associate with others who are involved in criminal activity** (Quintin et al, 1993).

Compounding Risk Model

- Children who start school with language difficulties are **immediately disadvantaged** (Snow, 2001, Locke et al. 2002)
- Without age-appropriate language, literacy and numeracy skills, pupils have difficulty accessing the curriculum successfully
- Low levels of language leads to literacy difficulties and lower educational achievement which are risk factors for **mental health and offending** (Tomblin et al, 2000)
- Young offenders are a vulnerable group whose difficulties may best be understood as a **compounding risk model** (Bryan et al, 2015)



*'The basic motivating
factor for all human
social behaviour is a
lifelong need for human
recognition'
(Dusay & Dusay, 1989)*

Co-Morbidity

- ASD clients may present with most complex presentations: low mood, challenging behaviour, severe anxiety, language and literacy disorder, eating disorder, psychosis, selective mutism
- **The universal deficit in autism is an impairment in social judgement**
- Social deficits that are part of ASD may mean that social **anxiety** is more common in this population (Chang et al, 2010)
- Challenging behaviours occur at higher rates in ASD population due to poor communication and problem-solving skills (Matson & Williams, 2013)
- Up to 45% of young offenders in UK have ADHD

Co-Morbidity

- Persistent difficulty with language and literacy development has been linked with a greater chance than normal of the development of both **mental health problems** and involvement in **criminal activity** (Clegg et al. 2005).
- A review of the literature by Benner et al. (2002) suggests that 71% of children with identified **emotional and behavioural difficulties** have underlying language difficulties.
- Beitchman et al. (1999) suggest that communication difficulties tend to be misinterpreted as **non-compliance and conduct problems** in the classroom environment.

The Court Context

Youth Justice:
Young person's experience



- Formal, unfamiliar environment
- **Language demands increase** in length and complexity
- Vocabulary and concepts are challenging: intention, motivation, prediction, decision making, inference
- **The voice of the young person needs to be heard**

The Court Context

Youth Justice:
Young person's experience

Language Difficulties impacting YP
in Court (Lavigne and van Rybroek, 2011)

- Difficulty processing complex sentence
- Difficulty following directions
- Poor auditory memory & sequencing
- Restricted vocabulary
- Topic continuity
- Deficits in narrative skills
- Failure to grasp inferences
- Difficulty reading social cues
- Limited ability recognising and expressing emotions
- Deficits in higher order thinking skills involving thoughts and motives of others
- Emotional dysregulation



The Court Context

Role of the Lawyer

- Promote a fair outcome
- Support YP in understanding
 - What wrong it was alleged was committed
 - What are the key issue(s) involved
 - What defences are available to him/her
 - What are the possible consequences
- Scaffold like a teacher in supportive education
- Build bridges to understanding
- Key strategies to address deficits
- **Intervention needs to be specific to the YP's identified needs**



Communication Strategies

- Engagement in face to face manner
- Neutral, **gentle** tone
- Address the young person by name
- Pause, **wait for 10 secs at least**, Listen
- Speak **slowly** & use simple vocabulary
- **Repeat** key information
- Use concrete language, avoiding abstract constructs involving inference
- Allow YP to tell **or draw** their story
- Choose questions carefully - not too many
- Avoid tag questions and negative statements e.g. "*you didn't do that, did you ?*"
- Open Questions involve what happened, how, why, where. Closed Questions are easier (who, what , where, when)
- Time concepts are difficult (involving before and after)

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

1
Visual Schedules for Understanding & Predictability

2
Receptive Language / Comprehension

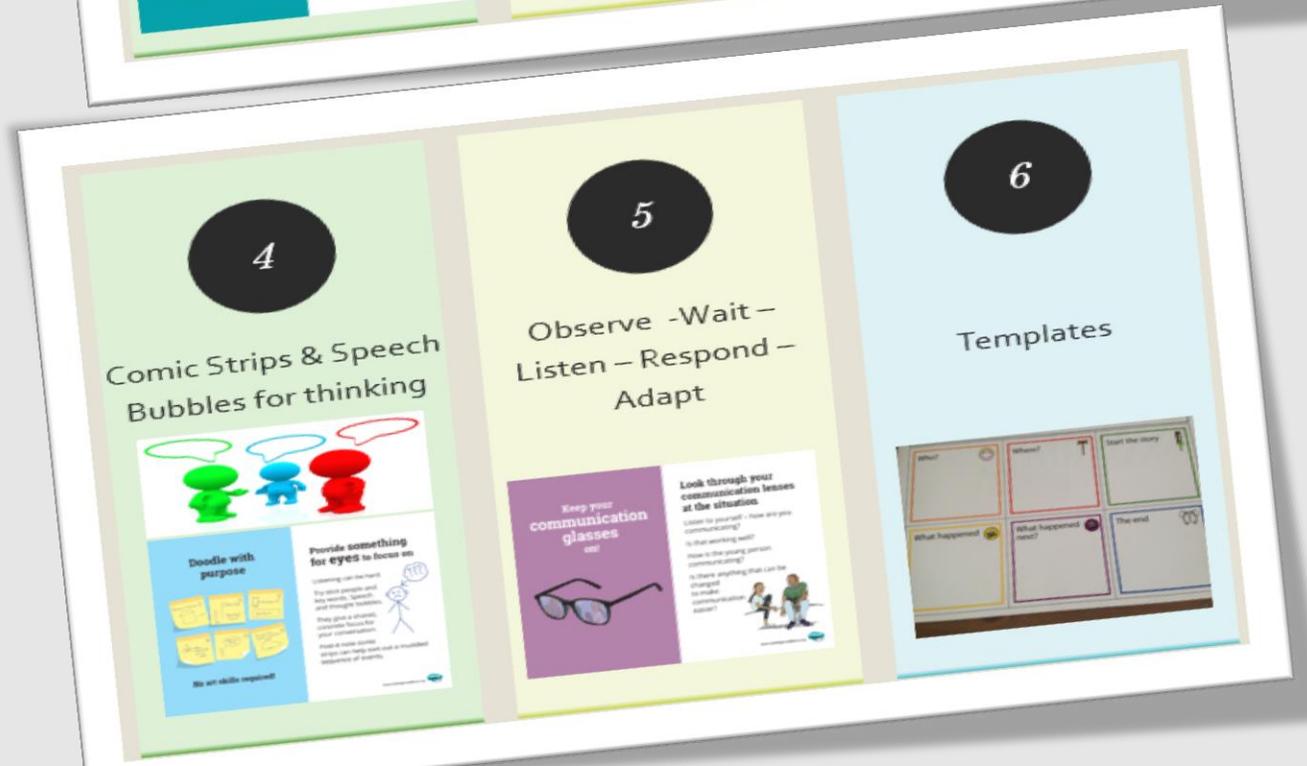
3
Restrictive Vocabulary Code



4
Comic Strips & Speech Bubbles for thinking

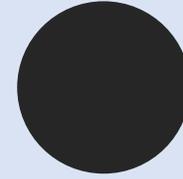
5
Observe - Wait - Listen - Respond - Adapt

6
Templates



Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Visual Schedules for understanding & predictability

What is this about?
How long will it take?

What this is all about...

| | |
|--|----|
| The things we need to talk about/decide are... | 1) |
| | 2) |
| | 3) |

We are going to talk for _____ minutes

We will finish at _____

I can have a break. I can tell _____ I want to stop.

I can say if people are not making sense or I want them to say something again.

What is this about?
How long will it take?
What was that all about?

How will they let you know if it is not making sense?

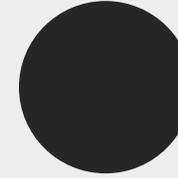
Did you check at the end that they knew what that had been all about?

Do they know what is going to happen next?

www.talkingtools.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Receptive Language / Comprehension



The infographic is split into two vertical panels. The left panel has a yellow background and contains five speech bubbles with the following text: "Do you understand?", "Got that?", "All OK?", "That makes sense, doesn't it?", and "Yep, all good". The right panel has a white background and contains the following text: "Watch out - are you checking understanding effectively?", "Most of us won't say when we are confused or unsure. We do not want to feel shamed or stupid.", "Try asking young person to tell you what they think you said.", and "Review and write it down." Below the text is a cartoon illustration of a person with a question mark above their head, looking confused. At the bottom right of the infographic is the URL "www.collegeadmissions.org" and a small logo.

Do you understand?

Got that?

All OK?

That makes sense, doesn't it?

Yep, all good

Watch out - are you checking understanding effectively?

Most of us won't say when we are confused or unsure. We do not want to feel shamed or stupid.

Try asking young person to tell you what they think you said.

Review and write it down.

www.collegeadmissions.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

3

Restricted vocabulary Code

Break it down

"You are charged with Possession of Instruments for Conversion."

Charge
Possession of Instruments for Conversion
Charge - what the Police says you did

You had things to use for stealing a car

Wrench
Screwdriver
Pliers
Saw
Hammer
Nails
Screwdriver
Pliers
Saw
Hammer
Nails

Car

Person running with tools

Look out for jargon
Explain it

What words might be confusing?

Write down the jargon word or phrase if you need to use it

Explain it simply

Draw it

If it is important, make sure you check it now makes sense

www.eatingproblems.org

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section, titled 'Break it down', features an orange background. It starts with a quote: "You are charged with Possession of Instruments for Conversion." Below this, a white box titled 'Charge' contains the text 'Possession of Instruments for Conversion' and 'Charge - what the Police says you did'. A blue arrow points down to the heading 'You had things to use for stealing a car'. Underneath, there are icons for various tools: a wrench, screwdriver, pliers, saw, and hammer, each with a label. A green stick figure is shown running while carrying a bag of tools. A car icon is also present. The right section, titled 'Look out for jargon', has a white background. It includes the heading 'Look out for jargon' and 'Explain it'. Below this, there are four bullet points: 'What words might be confusing?', 'Write down the jargon word or phrase if you need to use it', 'Explain it simply', and 'Draw it'. A final line of text says 'If it is important, make sure you check it now makes sense'. At the bottom right of this section is an illustration of a woman with a confused expression, sitting at a desk. The website 'www.eatingproblems.org' is mentioned at the very bottom.

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

4

Comic Strips & Speech Bubbles for thinking

Doodle with purpose

No art skills required!

Provide something for eyes to focus on

Listening can be hard.
Try stick people and key words. Speech and thought bubbles.
They give a shared, concrete focus for your conversation.
Post-it note comic strips can help sort out a muddled sequence of events.

www.staringproblems.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

4

Comic Strips & Speech Bubbles for thinking

Doodle with purpose

No art skills required!

Provide something for eyes to focus on

Listening can be hard.
Try stick people and key words. Speech and thought bubbles.
They give a shared, concrete focus for your conversation.
Post-it note comic strips can help sort out a muddled sequence of events.

www.stillproblema.org

The infographic features two columns of text on a light blue background. The left column is titled 'Doodle with purpose' and includes the phrase 'No art skills required!' below several yellow sticky notes with simple drawings. The right column is titled 'Provide something for eyes to focus on' and includes a drawing of a stick figure with a speech bubble containing '???' and a thought bubble containing '???'.

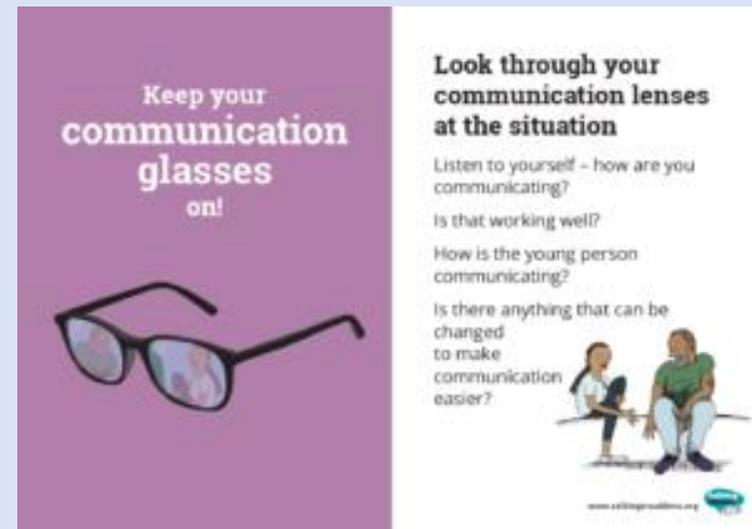
The illustration shows three 3D figures in green, blue, and red standing in a row. Each figure has a speech bubble above it, colored to match the figure. The green figure is on the left, the blue figure is in the middle, and the red figure is on the right.

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools

5

Observe -Wait -Notice - Respond -Adapt



The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section has a purple background and features the text 'Keep your communication glasses on!' above an illustration of a pair of black-rimmed glasses. The right section has a white background and is titled 'Look through your communication lenses at the situation'. It contains three reflective questions: 'Listen to yourself - how are you communicating?', 'Is that working well?', and 'How is the young person communicating?'. Below these questions is a fourth question: 'Is there anything that can be changed to make communication easier?'. At the bottom right of the white section is a small illustration of a young woman and a young man sitting on a bench and talking. The website 'www.zingproblems.org' and a logo are at the bottom.

Keep your communication glasses on!

Look through your communication lenses at the situation

Listen to yourself - how are you communicating?
Is that working well?
How is the young person communicating?
Is there anything that can be changed to make communication easier?

www.zingproblems.org

Communication Strategies

Resources & Tools



Template



*Children need to
understand
and
be understood*

- Strengths and challenges - tailor language to the appropriate level of understanding
- Effective communication the bedrock of the legal process
- Is it possible to have a fair trial without a language profile?



Recommendations

- Up to date assessment report with a profile of Young Person and a signposting for future
- Verbal intermediary who can interpret reports and young person, guide and support in court.
- Training for professionals involved in the justice system
- Research base in Ireland to promote better outcomes

References

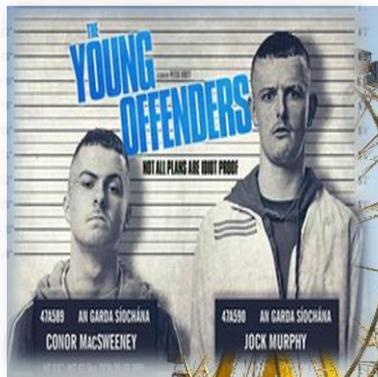
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- www.talkingtroublenz.org



Questions



Language & Communication Challenges



Co-Morbidity



YP Experience



Ground Rules



Adapting Communication



LANGUAGE PROFILE