

Language Functions and AAC – Teaching Protesting

Being able to refuse or reject is the basis for self-advocacy, self-determination, and autonomy! This is especially important in a world where we are taught to comply, follow the rules/directions, and generally not rock the boat.

Early words to teach:

- no, don't, not, different, stop, yucky, not like, etc.

How to Teach it:

- Model protesting/refusing throughout the day.
- Model protesting words lots of times in many different contexts and in many different places.
- Have different communication partners model refusing and protesting.
- Observe your AAC learner to figure out something they REALLY DON'T WANT, then model how to refuse/protest.
- Model how to navigate their AAC to help them find the words they need to make a refusal.
- After you have modeled protesting/refusing many, MANY, MANY times, start pausing to invite your AAC learner to try to use their AAC to refuse/reject.

Tips:

- KEEP IT FUN and STRESS-FREE ~ you want your AAC learner to keep a positive feeling about their AAC.
- Focus on times when you are not sure if they are refusing or protesting.
- Take advantage of opportunities for your AAC learner to express protesting/refusal to unfamiliar (or less familiar) people.
 - Help the interaction by cueing the communication partner to pause and wait

Reminders:

- Your AAC learner communicates in many different ways. Be sure to honor all their communication. If they protest or refuse in another way (e.g., gestures), model it on their AAC and then respond
- Communication is not a test. Do not make your AAC learner refuse or protest more than once or in multiple ways.
- Be ready - and open - to your AAC learner expressing a refusal that you do not want to hear. It is important and okay for them to refuse or protest, even when it still has to happen (e.g., for health/safety). If you can't honor a protest or refusal, acknowledge their communication and talk about why it has to happen. Give them choices about how and/or when it happens if possible.
- Do not insist on them using a complete sentence.
- Remember: there are many reasons we communicate (language functions).
- Communication is about connecting and relationships.
- Focus on connecting and interacting with your child.

*Adapted from www.nwacs.com