Simple AAC Strategies; Communicating With Your Photo and Video Gallery

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Presenting photos and videos on a tablet or smartphone has proven to be a helpful supplemental AAC system, a good way to get started. Moreover, it's a great way to have photos and videos that can be added later to a more elaborate AAC system.

Flipping through photos is often as easy as swiping left or right to find the photo or video of the topic you want to share with your friends. Most Smartphones, tablets and laptops have a photo gallery where pictures and videos are stored.

The skills needed to navigate through an aac system are similar to perusing through and finding a photo in your camera roll. Both systems tend to use a categorical presentation for storing all of your photos.

It is amazing how easily young children and adults with emergent communication skills can learn to swipe through a series of photos and then stop on the picture they are trying to find. Look at the the photos and videos together making comments just as if you were a sharing a picture book. Find ways to connect the images to real objects and people. For example when

you stop on a photo name it and give that object to the AAC learner. If it is a person, pick up the phone and call them! This will help demonstrate how powerful AAC communication can be.

Collecting and organizing photos in a gallery is easier than building a paper communication board. It takes just a few seconds to capture, add to a folder and share it immediately on the same device vs. having to wait for someone to print, laminate and add to your communication board.

Keep the pictures & videos in folders by topic such as People, Places, About Me, Things to do, Jobs, Animals, Food, Drinks, Feeling, Needs, Just for Fun, Questions)

Video tutorial albums on ios:
VIdeo tutorial for albums in Android.
Video tutorial albums in Google photos

Make sure the AAC user is a part of the creative process.
If the AAC user shows an interest in ANYTHING take a picture and/or a short (5-10 second) video.
Recruit a peer and discover fun ways represent action words like hug and jump. Don't forget describing words and feelings.
Position the camera so the AAC learner can watch it being taken. Let them participate as much as possible by pushing the button or positioning the camera.

Narrate while you shoot video from the AAC user's point of view. Narrate or identify the subject of the video so the future viewer hears the audio description during video playback as if the AAC user was talking. For example, "My dog Elvis has a very wiggly tail."or, "This is my brother, Robbie."

I can be the boss! Create a folder for videos and pictures that will allow the aac user to direct their own care and train their own support staff. "This is how you position me in my wheelchair." or, "When you help me eat please blend my food like this so I dont choke."
Encourage the AAC learner to share the video and pictures with others.
This is powerful if it is new information that is actually being heard or seen for the first time. For example, "This is a really cool car we saw in the parking lot!" or "I saw my friend Greg this morning at the park"

Most Speech Generating Devices (SGD) and a few communication apps have the ability to import pictures and play videos within their communication system. The videos you capture can easily be imported into the vocabulary. We have found that adding familiar videos and photos to a new language system can be rewarding and aid in navigating to the correct page or category.

Speech Device Systems that can play video: Smartbox Grid 3, Tobii Communicator 5 & Compass, PRC Accent, and Saltillo NovaChat.
iPad communication apps that can playback videos: GoTalkNow, Touchchat, and LAMP

CTEC is a Non Profit AAC evaluation and training center in Sacramento, California. Please visit our website for more AAC resources.
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