



Communication and Idiosyncratic Speech

DEFINITION

Idiosyncratic speech or language occurs when the person uses standard words or phrases in an unusual, but meaningful way. In other words, the word used is part of the speaker’s native language however it is not typically associated with the word or phrase of reference. Idiosyncratic speech also includes pedantic speech, in which the child uses overly specific details and neologisms, or made-up words. As is a common characteristic of speech in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), idiosyncratic language is described as stereotypical and inappropriate word use.

Source: Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders



HOW IT MAY IMPACT COMMUNICATION

- Some words they use may only have true meaning to them and possibly those close to them
- May use made-up words
- May have difficulty adjusting vocabulary and tone based on the audience and/or situation
- May not know/use the standard, polite way to greet others, say good-bye, request something, etc.
- May not understand that not everyone has the same knowledge they have



THE KEY to achieving effective communication with a person with idiosyncratic speech is to consciously accept the

responsibility for it. How an individual is impacted will vary and communication access depends on individual needs, looking different for each person.



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

- Be familiar with the true meaning of the words they are using
- Explain your meaning/understanding of the words they are using to ensure mutual understanding
- Be specific, e.g. “What did you order for lunch?” instead of “How was your lunch?”
- Don’t rely on non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice
- Use concise sentences
- Be literal, e.g. “I’m joking” instead of “I’m pulling your leg”
- Minimize interruptions of their speech
- Tune into their facial expressions, body language, tone, and behaviors
- Use a familiar person to facilitate communication
- Use communication aids such as pictures or objects

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