



Don't Talk To Me Lesson

STARTER ACTIVITY

In this starter activity the group will think of ways to communicate with each other without speaking.

Set up a timer with an alarm (on a Smart Board ideally). Explain to the people you support that they have 3 minutes in which to position themselves in a line along one of the walls. Tell them that they must be arranged in order of their birthdays through the year (not in age order) – starting with January at one end and ending with December at the other.

While doing this they must not talk or make any noises with their mouth.

While this activity is taking place do not give any prompts other than to inform them of the time remaining and to remind them that they should not be speaking. Try to observe the different methods that are being used to achieve the task. Once the time is up ask the group, in order, to call out their birthdays to see how effectively this has been completed.

Once the people we support have returned to their places have a discussion with them about how difficult they found the task. Ask them to explain the techniques that they used to accomplish the task and talk about other ways that it may have been achieved.

Examples of this could include:

- Holding up fingers to represent the numbers of months and dates
- Writing in the air
- Mouthing / Lip-reading
- Writing down on a piece of paper
- Sign language
- Pointing at a calendar

Explain that these methods of communication are known as “non-verbal communication” (apart from writing, which is ‘written communication’). If the group does not come up with all of the above methods then discuss them as alternatives to what they have come up with.

MAIN ACTIVITY 1

This activity works best if a projector or Smart Board is available however the slideshow can be shown on a computer monitor or printed out.

This slideshow ([click here](#)) consists of a series of 12 photographs each containing a person who is using a form of non-verbal communication.

Have a brief discussion around each photograph thinking about the aspects that show non-verbal communication.



Discuss the importance of facial expression and body language and how these features are very important components of communication. Also ask the people we support what they believe the person in the photograph is trying to communicate.

The final image in the slideshow is of two people using sign language. As part of your discussion about this image ask the group what they know about sign language. Prompt the discussion with questions such as “who would use sign language?” Encourage the people you support to discuss the fact that people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment might use sign language to communicate if they are unable to hear speech clearly.

Explain that not all people who have a hearing impairment use sign language. Sign language is used most often by people who were born profoundly deaf or became deafened at a young age (perhaps through illness or injury). People who have a mild hearing loss are unlikely to use sign language as they will probably have enough hearing, possibly with the help of a hearing aid, to use speech.

Explain to your group that sign language is a completely separate language to spoken English and it comprises of a mixture of hand signs, gestures, and body language.

The sign language used in the UK is called British Sign Language – known as BSL for short. Recent calculations estimate that in the UK there are around 156,000 people who use British Sign Language as their first language.

MAIN ACTIVITY 2

In this activity, the group is going to learn some British Sign Language. This is a great skill to learn for when they meet someone who uses BSL but it is also fun to be able to hold secret conversations with each other without other people knowing what they are talking about.

Begin by explaining to the group that almost every English word or phrase has its own BSL sign however for words that do not have a sign, such as names, and for words that you do not know the sign for, you can spell the English word using the BSL fingerspelling alphabet. Each letter of the alphabet has its own sign and this is the best place to begin learning BSL.

BSL-Fingerspelling-Alphabet

Handout available [here](#).

Provide each person with a printed copy of the BSL fingerspelling alphabet and then as a whole group, briefly go through the alphabet to demonstrate each letter.

You can now split into small groups to go through the alphabet again. Ask each person to learn their own names using the fingerspelling alphabet and then encourage them to test each other’s fingerspelling skills by spelling their names to each other – you might like to ask for a couple of volunteers to spell their names to the whole group.



PLENARY ACTIVITY

This activity will reinforce with the people you support the idea of non-verbal communication and will also expand their BSL vocabulary.

As a whole group, begin the 'Guess the Signs' document [here](#). This is best viewed on a Smart Board or projected but can also be downloaded and printed.

The group will be shown a slide containing a single word, for example; 'cow'. Ask them to make up a sign or movement that could be used for 'cow' (remind the group that they must not use speech – only gestures). This document displays a single word on a page, then the illustration of the BSL sign for that word on the following page.

Before revealing the illustration for each sign, select one or two people to share with the group what they think the sign might be. Once they have had a go at guessing the sign reveal the illustration and encourage the people you support to practice the true BSL sign with you, before moving onto the next word.