

SUPPORTING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

What's happening in your child's brain even without words.

01.

Communication starts before speech

Before children talk, their brains are already building communication systems for attention, turn-taking, meaning, and connection. Speech is one outcome of this process and not the starting point.

All communication use the same brain systems **02.**

The brain does not separate spoken language from gestures, facial expressions, or AAC. These forms of communication rely on shared neural pathways that support understanding, timing, emotion, and intent. Different output. Same system.

03.

Understanding comes before speaking

Many children understand far more than they can express. Speech requires complex motor planning, sensory integration, regulation, and coordination. A child may know what they want to say long before their body can produce speech reliably.

Every interaction builds communication pathways **04.**

Communication grows through connection. When adults pause, respond to gestures, narrate instead of quiz, and acknowledge attempts, they strengthen brain pathways for communication and trust without any words required.

05.

Pressure can block access to language

Stress changes how the brain functions. When a child is overwhelmed, processing slows and speech often becomes less accessible. Regulation opens the door to communication. Connection comes first, then language follows.

Alternative communication supports language **06.**

Gestures, visuals, sign language, and AAC do not delay speech. Research shows they reduce frustration, build confidence, and strengthen language networks. Communication grows when children experience success, not pressure.

