

Objects of Reference



Speech and Language Therapy Advice packages

What are Objects of Reference ?

Objects of reference is a way of using objects as a means of communicating.

Objects of reference are **objects** to which **special meanings** are attached. Objects, just like words, signs and symbols may represent activities, events, people and places. They are everyday objects that are consistently used to provide specific information.

Who uses Objects of Reference?

They can be used as a means of communication for people with communication difficulties who do not respond to sign, symbols or photographs, but use objects as part of their routine to understand what is happening.

Why are they used?

Objects of reference can be used for a number of reasons:

- ◆ To help develop an awareness and an understanding of what is about to happen
- ◆ As an aide to memory
- ◆ As a means of timetabling or sequencing the activities of the day
- ◆ As a means of supporting making choices and requests
- ◆ To promote a shared way of communicating

How are they used?

Objects of reference have a “common sense” appeal in that they can be quite straightforward. For example use a **purse** to mean 'we are going to the shops' or a **bag, coat** or **shoe** for **we are going out**. However experience has shown that different objects can mean different things to different people. Objects of reference are therefore individual.

It is important that the objects are personalised and chosen to reflect the persons individual skills, preferences and interests.

- ◆ You could use **real life** objects (index object) e.g. cooking-wooden spoon– if the person uses a wooden spoon in cooking.
- ◆ An object **related** to the activity (iconic object) e.g. bath-empty bubble bath container.
- ◆ An object **associated** with the activity (symbolic object) e.g. garden- ball.

Things to remember!

For objects of reference to work it is important that

- ◆ The reasons for using them are carefully thought through
- ◆ They are personal
- ◆ They are used consistently
- ◆ They are used frequently
- ◆ They are motivating

Sample
Only

- If you would like to know more, contact
- your local Speech and Language Therapist
 - Della Money at Della.money@nottshc.nhs.uk or Portland College Speech and Language Therapy Team.