

Communication and Interaction Checklist

Descriptors

Play and fun in hippotherapy	Play is the way children learn and have fun in a structured, supportive stimulating hippotherapy session. Smiling, laughing, facial expression, body language and engagement in activities show level of interest and enjoyment.
Eye contact	Has a different meaning in different cultures. Can regulate conversations, shows interest and involvement and establishes connections with others.
Finger pointing / eye pointing	Indicates direction of interest often accompanied by animated body language and vocalisation when finger pointing. Eye pointing may lack sustained gaze and may be fleeting. Interpretation and reward for effort may be required.
Touch	Receives and initiates physical contact from people and objects. Broadens tolerance of different textures and sensory stimulation without adverse reaction. Positive touch from others develops relationships.
Facial expression	Shows facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, surprise. Stereotypical response may be linked to retained early reflexes.
Gesture	Uses specific body movement and facial expression to convey additional emphasis to communication.
Signing	Understands that signs convey meaning as augmentative communication and can be used either spontaneously to initiate communication, by copying and as a response.
Copying actions / sounds	Shows attention and understanding of actions and sounds by repeating, often with rhythm and rhyme. Links sounds with action.
Listening	Shows active listening by turning to speaker, paying attention and giving an appropriate response.
Making choices / selections	Makes choices by vocalisation, eye pointing or hand function.
Cause and effect	Understands that one action can make another happen and the concept of consequences.

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Need to communicate / motivation to communicate	Expresses preferences and opinions to make needs known.
Social greeting / recognition of familiar people	Encourages inter personal behaviour, encourages communication and development of relationships.
Yes / No	Shows self awareness and control, telling others about a personal choice and indicating likes and dislikes. Frequent use of No is the beginning of self autonomy and control.
Pictures / symbols	Helps develop understanding and analysis.
Use of language in appropriate context	Develops social skills, relationships and understanding.
Linking words with pictures / actions	Encourages sounds, rhyme and rhythm in context, develops communication skills
Objects of reference	Using an object that has a particular meaning associated with it to give additional information about an event or in preparation for an activity e.g. using a toy horse as a communication aid only on hippotherapy day.
Turn taking	Co operative interaction, sharing and recognising another person's contribution, encourages waiting skills and develops patience, helps with making and keeping friends.
Initiation of communication by sound / gesture	Gains attention by making a sound or by body language.
Recall with cues and prompts	Can recall previous activities with prompts and cues e.g. verbal, gesture, modelling or physical.
Appropriate response to instruction	Shows understanding of verbal or signed instruction and gives appropriate response.
Lip closure / drooling	Able to close lips together and swallow, essential for making the lip sounds; b,m,p.

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Additional Information

Culture

It is important for the hippotherapy team to remember that effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging. Cultures provide people with ways of thinking--ways of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Thus the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the "same" language. When the languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstandings increases. To reduce misunderstandings/upset for child or family/carers it may be useful for the team to be more aware of the individual cultures and languages spoken by different clients. For example, there may be behaviour constraints: Each culture has its own rules about proper behaviour which affect verbal and nonverbal communication. Whether one looks the other person in the eye-or not; whether one says what one means overtly or talks around the issue; how close the people stand to each other when they are talking--all of these and many more are rules of politeness which differ from culture to culture. There may also be emotional constraints: Different cultures regulate the display of emotion differently. Some cultures get very emotional when they are debating an issue. They yell, they cry, they exhibit their anger, fear, frustration, and other feelings openly. Other cultures try to keep their emotions hidden, exhibiting or sharing only the "rational" or factual aspects of the situation.

Hearing and Visual Impairment

It is essential to know whether there is a hearing and/or visual impairment and how this is managed and if any special strategies are used to promote communication and interaction.

Sensory

Awareness of any sensory issues can help to develop positive interaction and reduce challenging behaviour.