



TOGETHER WE CAN

Module 2: Communication & Instruction Techniques

P2. Educational Program and Educational Materials

Project Number: 2024-1-CY01-KA210-ADU-000253720



TOGETHER

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Module 2: Communication & Instruction Techniques

The aim of this module is to strengthen communication skills for positive interactions and improved compliance with children with ADHD.

Outline (3 Units):

1. The principles of positive communication with ADHD children + Role-play exercises
2. The role of tone, body language, and eye contact + Techniques for giving clear instructions, active listening
3. Emotional triggers in communication + Communication mistakes and how to avoid them

Introduction

Effective communication is a foundational tool for parenting, especially when raising a child with ADHD. Because ADHD often impairs working memory, impulse control, and emotional self-regulation, children may misinterpret or react emotionally to instructions. When parents learn to communicate with clarity, empathy, and consistency, they can reduce conflict and foster cooperation.

This module offers parents and guardians practical strategies, exercises, and reflection prompts. It also includes links to further reading and online tools, so learners can continue deepening their skills.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of module 2, participants will be able to:

- Explain the principles of positive communication with ADHD children
- Demonstrate how tone, body language, and eye contact influence communication
- Identify emotional triggers and avoid common communication pitfalls



- Use step-by-step instruction techniques and active listening to improve compliance and connection



Unit 1: The Principles of Positive Communication with ADHD Children

1.1 What Is Positive Communication?

Positive communication emphasises clarity, respect, affirmation, and collaboration rather than criticism, blame, or sarcasm. For children with ADHD, communication that is consistent, simple, and emotionally safe can reduce misunderstandings and resistance.

Core Principles:

- Use short, clear sentences rather than long, complex ones
- Focus on what to do, not what *not* to do (e.g. “Walk slowly” rather than “Don’t run”)



- Recognise and praise efforts, even small ones
- Maintain physical and emotional presence (eye contact, open body posture)
- Stay calm and patient — your tone often sets the child’s emotional pace
- Give one instruction at a time; avoid overloading

1.2 Why This Works (Especially for ADHD children)

- ADHD compromises working memory and executive control — children better respond to simple, discrete instructions
- Harsh tone or criticism can trigger emotional reactions and defensiveness
- Positive communication supports self-esteem, emotional regulation, and willingness to cooperate

1.3 Techniques & Tools

Positive communication with children who have ADHD goes beyond using kind words or calm tones—it involves creating clear, consistent systems that help children understand what is expected of them and how to meet those expectations. Because ADHD affects attention, working memory, and organization, verbal instructions alone are often not enough.

Children may *hear* what is said but quickly forget, become distracted, or feel overwhelmed by too many directions at once. That’s why combining verbal communication with visual, structured, and reinforcing tools makes a powerful difference. These tools make communication *visible, repeatable, and predictable*, allowing children to process information more easily and feel a sense of achievement when they succeed.

1 Visual cues / checklists / charts accompany verbal instructions.

Visual cues help children *see* what’s expected, reducing confusion and memory demands. When paired with verbal communication, they turn instructions into something concrete and lasting.

How Verbal Communication Combines with This Tool:



- **Step 1: Introduce the chart verbally.** Explain what it's for in simple terms:
"This is our morning chart. It shows what we do to get ready for school."
- **Step 2: Use positive and encouraging language as you reference it.**
"You've already brushed your teeth — great job! What's next on the chart?"
- **Step 3: Reinforce progress verbally.**
"You finished all the steps! That means you're ready on time — I'm really proud of you."

2 Token / point systems to reinforce compliance.

Purpose:

A token system turns positive communication into a tangible reinforcement process. It helps the child link verbal praise to visible rewards, building motivation and self-control.

"Each time you follow directions, you earn a star. When you get ten stars, you can choose a reward."



Image: FreePik



3 Reflection & discussion:

Purpose:

This technique uses verbal repetition to strengthen comprehension, memory, and accountability. When a child restates instructions, they're actively processing and internalizing what to do — not just hearing it passively.

Practical Example:

Parent: "When we get home, what's the first thing you'll do?"

Child: "Take my shoes off and wash my hands."

Parent: "Exactly right — thank you for listening."

Repeating instructions out loud engages working memory and helps children mentally rehearse tasks, improving follow-through and confidence.

Role-Play Exercise: Effective vs Ineffective Communication

Scenario A (ineffective):

Parent: "Why didn't you do your homework? I'm sick of nagging you all day!"

Child: (shrugs or becomes defensive)

Scenario B (effective):

Parent: "Let's do this together. First, open your book. Then I'll help you with the first question."

Child: (begins)

Reflection Questions:

- What differences did you notice in tone, words, and posture in these two scenarios?



Unit 2: The Role of Tone, Body Language, and Eye Contact & Instruction & Listening Techniques

2.1 The Power of Nonverbal Communication

Tone of Voice:

- A calm, warm, respectful tone of voice conveys a feeling of safety.
- Avoid yelling, sarcasm, or abrupt loudness — these often escalate tension and can be confusing to children.

Body Language & Posture:

- Face the child, lean slightly forward (not looming)
- Use open posture (arms relaxed, not crossed)
- Avoid pointing or wagging fingers aggressively
- Lower yourself to the child's eye level when possible

Eye Contact:

- Use gentle, intermittent eye contact
- Pair eye contact with a warm phrase (“I appreciate you listening”)
- Avoid prolonged, intense staring (which may feel confrontational)

2.2 Clear, Step-by-Step Instructions

ADHD often disrupts sequential processing, therefore breaking tasks into small steps is critical.

Instruction Process:

1. **Get attention** — call child's name, face them
2. **Give one instruction** — “Put your shoes by the door.”
3. **Pause** — allow time for processing
4. **Check understanding** — ask “What do you need to do first?”



5. **If multiple steps are needed, break them up** — “First put books in your bag. Then zip it.”
6. **Praise compliance** — “Thank you for doing that so quickly!”

Example before/after:

- Instead of “Get ready for bed,” say: “First brush your teeth. Then put on pyjamas. After that, get your book.”

2.3 Active Listening

Active listening is one of the most powerful communication tools a parent or guardian can use when raising a child with ADHD. It goes beyond simply *hearing* what your child says — it means paying full attention, showing genuine interest, and reflecting understanding through words, tone, and body language.

For children with ADHD, who often experience impulsivity and frequent correction or misunderstanding, feeling truly *heard* can make a world of difference. Active listening creates a safe emotional space where the child feels valued, respected, and understood — which, in turn, builds trust, strengthens cooperation, and reduces conflict.





Why Active Listening Matters for Children with ADHD

Children with ADHD frequently face challenges that affect their communication experiences:

- **They are often interrupted or corrected.**

Because their thoughts can come out quickly or off-topic, adults may rush to steer them back — unintentionally sending the message that their feelings or ideas don't matter.

- **They may feel misunderstood or judged.**

Children with ADHD can struggle to explain their emotions clearly, leading to frustration when others misinterpret them.

Active Listening Techniques

- Remove distractions (put phone away, turn off TV)
- Use nonverbal cues: nod, lean in, maintain attentive posture
- Use verbal cues: "I see," "That sounds hard"
- Paraphrase or repeat what they say: "So you felt upset when ..."
- Ask open-ended questions: "What happened next?"
- Avoid interrupting or rushing to problem-solving

Unit 3: Emotional Triggers & Communication Mistakes

3.1 Recognising Emotional Triggers

Communication often breaks down not because of what is said, but because of how it's said — and what emotions drive it. When strong emotions like frustration, anger, or disappointment take over, both parent and child can lose the ability to listen, think clearly, or respond calmly.

For families raising a child with ADHD, these moments happen more frequently. Children with ADHD are often impulsive, easily overstimulated, and highly sensitive to tone and body



language. Likewise, parents can feel worn down by constant reminders, emotional outbursts, or apparent noncompliance. The result is a cycle of emotional triggering: one person's reaction sparks another's, escalating tension and blocking positive communication. Recognising emotional triggers — in both parent and child — is the first step toward breaking this cycle and restoring calm, respectful interaction.

3.2 Why Emotional Triggers Matter in ADHD Communication

ADHD affects emotional regulation. Children often feel emotions more intensely and have difficulty pausing before reacting. Parents, meanwhile, can become emotionally depleted after repeated conflicts. When emotions run high:

- Listening decreases.
- Instructions sound harsher than intended.
- The child's self-esteem and willingness to cooperate drop.
- Both parties feel unheard and disconnected.

Recognising triggers helps parents pause before reacting, adjust their tone, and model calm responses — teaching emotional control through example.

Common Trigger Situations for Parents

Understanding your own triggers helps prevent emotional overreactions and communication breakdowns.

1. Repeated Requests Ignored

Trigger: You've asked your child three times to do something, and they still haven't moved.

Why It Happens:

Children with ADHD often become distracted mid-task or struggle to switch focus, not out of defiance but due to neurological differences in attention control.

Typical Emotional Reaction:



Frustration or anger (“They’re ignoring me on purpose!”).

Communication Risk:

Parents may raise their voice, threaten consequences, or label the child as “lazy” or “disrespectful.”

Better Approach:

Pause, take a deep breath, and use a calm, direct tone:

“I can see it’s hard to switch tasks right now. Let’s do it together — start by picking up the first toy.”

Pairing calm verbal cues with proximity (standing near the child) increases effectiveness.

2. Feeling Disrespected or Ignored

Trigger: Your child interrupts, walks away, or responds rudely.

Why It Happens:

Impulsivity makes it hard for ADHD children to wait their turn or regulate reactions when frustrated.

Typical Emotional Reaction:

Parents feel personally insulted or disrespected.

Communication Risk:

Emotional responses can escalate (“Don’t you dare talk to me like that!”), leading to power struggles.

Better Approach:

Remember: it’s about self-regulation, not disrespect.

Use an even tone and say:

“Let’s take a break and try again when we’re both calm. I want to hear you, but we need to speak respectfully.”



Common Triggers for Children with ADHD

Children with ADHD often react strongly to emotional cues, tone, and changes in structure. Recognising what triggers them helps parents prevent meltdowns before they happen.

1. Criticism or Negative Labels

Trigger: Being told they're "lazy," "rude," "messy," or "not trying hard enough."

Why It Happens:

Children with ADHD already face frequent correction at school and at home, leading to feelings of failure or shame.

Effect:

Criticism instantly activates a defensive or emotional reaction ("You never think I do anything right!").

Better Approach:

Focus on behaviour, not character:

"Let's work on keeping your desk clear today," instead of "You're always so messy."

Pair correction with positive feedback: "I see you're trying — let's fix this part together."

2. Vague Instructions or Overload

Trigger: Being given too many directions at once or unclear expectations.

Why It Happens:

Working memory and focus are often weaker in ADHD. Multiple-step instructions can overwhelm and cause shutdown.

Effect:

The child may freeze, argue, or give up, appearing "defiant."

Better Approach:

Break down tasks into small, specific steps with visual or verbal cues:



“First put your book in the bag, then your pencil case.”

Check understanding:

“Can you tell me what you’ll do first?”

3. Yelling or Harsh Tone

Trigger: Loud, angry, or sarcastic tone from adults.

Why It Happens:

Children with ADHD are highly sensitive to emotional tone; yelling signals rejection or danger.

Effect:

Triggers fight, flight, or freeze — the child may shout back, cry, or shut down completely.



Better Approach:

Use a calm, firm tone and consistent body language:

“I’m not angry — I just need you to listen carefully.”

If emotions rise, take a pause:

“Let’s both take a minute and then try again.”



Strategies to Manage Emotional Triggers

1. Pause Before Responding:

Take a slow breath or count to three before speaking. This pause helps regulate your emotional response.

Tip: Step away briefly if needed.

2. Name the Emotion (for yourself or the child):

“I’m feeling frustrated.” / “You seem upset.”

Naming emotions reduces their intensity and models emotional awareness.

3. Use “I” Statements:

Replace blame with ownership:

- “I feel worried when you don’t answer me,” instead of
- “You never listen!”

4. Lower Your Voice, Not Raise It:

Soft tones calm both parent and child — it signals safety and control.

Reflection Exercise

Think about your last stressful interaction with your child.

- What triggered your emotional response?
- What might have triggered theirs?

3.3 Common Communication Mistakes & Corrections

Mistake	Why It Fails	Alternative / Fix
Giving multiple commands at once	Creates confusion	Give one step, wait, then next



Mistake	Why It Fails	Alternative / Fix
Using negative commands (“Don’t do that”)	Focuses on what not to do	Phrase positively (“Please walk”)
Yelling / raising voice	Triggers defensiveness	Use calm assertive tone
Criticism / labelling (“You’re lazy”)	Hurts identity and self-esteem	Focus on behaviour, not person
Ignoring emotional state	Misses root cause	Acknowledge feelings first

Conclusion

Effective communication is the cornerstone of positive parenting, especially when supporting a child with ADHD. By applying the principles of clarity, patience, and empathy, parents and guardians can transform daily interactions into opportunities for connection and growth. Understanding how tone, body language, and emotional control influence a child’s responses helps reduce conflict and increase cooperation. As parents practice active listening, step-by-step instruction, and emotional awareness, they create a calmer, more structured environment where their child feels understood, respected, and capable of success. Communication is not only a skill but an ongoing process of learning and adapting—one that strengthens both the parent-child relationship and the child’s confidence to thrive.



Further reading

Resource name	Type	Link
How ADHD Impacts Your Child's Communication Skills	Article	Communication Skills for Kids with ADHD: 11 Helpful Strategies
Active listening tips to improve parent-child communication	Publication	Active listening tips to improve parent-child communication - CHOC - Children's Health Hub
CDC ADHD— A toolkit of free resources, materials	Website	Free Materials on ADHD Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) CDC
Parent Center Hub: Active Listening & Communication Skills Downloadable guides and tips for improving listening in family settings.	Website	https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-nov2019-issue1/ Parent Info Centre
ADDitude Magazine - parent-oriented ADHD resources	Website (online magazine)	https://www.additudemag.com
Child Development Info: Communication Strategies for ADHD	Article	https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/parenting/communication-strategies-parents-children-adhd/ Child Development Institute

Final Assessment Quiz

Answer the following questions to assess your understanding of the concepts covered in this module. Select the correct answer or mark True/False as indicated.



1. Which of the following best describes positive communication with an ADHD child?

- A. Giving several instructions at once to save time.
- B. Using calm, clear language and acknowledging effort.
- C. Ignoring mistakes and hoping the child corrects them.
- D. Speaking louder to ensure the child listens.

✓ **Correct Answer: B**

2. True or False:

ADHD children respond best when parents focus on what not to do (e.g., “Don’t run!”) rather than what to do.

✓ **Answer: False**

3. Which combination of communication elements is most effective when giving instructions to a child with ADHD?

- A. Calm tone, open body language, and gentle eye contact
- B. Loud tone, firm posture, and direct staring
- C. Quick speech, hand gestures, and minimal eye contact
- D. Sarcastic tone, crossed arms, and long explanations

✓ **Correct Answer: A**

4. True or False:

When giving instructions to a child with ADHD, it is helpful to break tasks into small, simple steps and check for understanding.

✓ **Answer: True**



CASE STUDIES

Module Number:	Module 2
Case Study 1 Title:	Instruction Techniques for Neurodivergent individuals
Exercise Objective:	Instructional techniques for neurodivergent individuals are developed with the primary goals of enhancing self-confidence and reducing the impact of attention deficits.
Characters:	“P”: 13 year old boy, his mother
The Challenge/Problem:	<p>“He starts trying something new but there will appear a cause which would stop him”</p> <p>“His parents could not accept the son’s neurodevelopmental deficit.”</p> <p>“He would stay home without any close friends, eating only junk food.”</p>
The story:	<p>“P” is always polite, with social skills, he is decision maker too.</p> <p>“P” always accepts life risks, takes decisions without asking for advice and sets goals – his success exists only if his parents, help him. “He starts trying something new with passion but there will appear a reason which would stop him” as his relatives remark. His parents could not accept the son’s neurodevelopmental deficit. Since he was 4, his behavior provoked difficulties. Later on, “P” had taken “different” decisions about his sleep, games, school and his future - he would stay home without any close friends, consuming only junk food.</p> <p>The interventions designed by his therapist aimed to create a supportive and effective learning environment tailored to “P’s” neurological profile. These interventions focused on enhancing self-confidence, establishing a structured daily schedule, maintaining routines, and promoting healthy eating habits. Key strategies included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks were divided into manageable steps using clear verbal explanations and visual aids to enhance comprehension and execution. • Distractions were minimized, and regular breaks were incorporated to maintain focus. • Daily rewards were offered following task completion to reinforce positive behaviour. <p>Specific Instructional Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stop, Think, Act” Method: Encouraged reflection before action, helping “P” regulate impulses and make thoughtful decisions.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Commitment Strategies: Fostered planning and adherence to tasks by creating structured commitments in advance. • Frequent Check-ins: Regular monitoring and guidance ensured tasks were on track and provided immediate feedback. • Play the Story Technique: Used narrative and role-play as communication to make learning engaging, and reinforce desired behaviours.
--	---

Exercises

Answered by learners individually

Individual exercise 1:

Exercise/Question	Answer
What were the key factors contributing to the challenge in case study 2.1?	<p>“He starts trying something new but there will appear a cause which would stop him”</p> <p>“His parents could not accept the son’s neurodevelopmental deficit.”</p> <p>“He would stay home without any close friends, eating only junk food.”</p>

Individual exercise 2:

Exercise/Question	Answer
What objectives were established following the intervention to address “P”’s developmental and behavioral challenges?	The goals after intervention were to improve “P”’s self-confidence, attention regulation, and task completion, establish consistent routines, encourage healthier daily habits, and increase his independence and persistence in daily and long-term activities.

Individual exercise 3:

Exercise/Question	Answer
How did he succeed to follow the new norms at his life?	Daily rewards were offered following task completion to reinforce positive behaviour.

Answered by learners in a group (2+ people)

Group exercise 1:



Exercise/Question	Answer
Which are the instruction techniques	The instruction techniques from his therapist primarily have tried for self-confidence, day schedule, routine and healthy meals management.

Group exercise 2:

Exercise/Question	Answer
Give the key ways to instruct the techniques for ADHD individuals.	Instructional techniques for neurodivergent individuals are developed with the primary goals of enhancing self-confidence and reducing the impact of attention deficits.

Group exercise 3:

Exercise/Question	Answer
Give 2 techniques used by “P” to improve his ADHD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking down tasks using clear verbal and visual methods to improve understanding and execution. • “Stop, Think, Act” Method: Encouraged reflection before action, helping “P” regulate impulses and make thoughtful decisions.



Module Number:	Module 2
Case Study 2 Title:	Communication Techniques for ADHDers
Exercise Objective:	Parents / teachers / guardians will develop effective strategies and tools for improving their child with ADHD communication techniques.
Characters: (The people involved in the case study)	“D”: 11 years old girl, her mother, father, teachers-at-home
The Challenge/Problem:	“D” had been following the parental advices for less than 6 minutes, with no social life, with absences from school and no self-confidence.
The story:	<p>“D” is a tall and beautiful adolescence who has anxiety, and who was willing to start something new but after 6 minutes, she changes activity. She always accepted game proposals and she was setting goals - without the experience of success.</p> <p>To improve “D”s communication skills, her parents used to invite a friend at their house. After a month, they were inviting 2, after 3, after 4 friends. They were focusing on her interests to help with engagement, using clear, direct, and simple language, breaking down instructions into small steps, providing visual aids, offering choices, with role-playing and giving immediate, positive feedback to build skills and understanding. Her parents gave their undivided attention, distraction-free environment. “D” has been using strategies like breaking down tasks, establishing a structured and, using timers and visual aids with the help of her parents. This helped her overall communication with her parents, making her express her feelings in a clearer way and she now had a better vision of her upcoming tasks. She could also incorporate physical activity and frequent breaks. It was an important time when they were taking strategic breaks for 2 minutes, with incorporate movement, establishing routines and giving rewards after any try.</p> <p>When “D” wanted to stop trying to reach a certain goal, her parents didn’t deny that but instead they altered the activity for a little and they went back at it soon until their goal was reached.</p>

Exercises

Answered by learners individually

Individual exercise 1:

Exercise/Question	Answer
What were the key factors contributing to the challenge in case study 2.2?	“D” had been following the parental advices for less than 6 minutes, with no social life, with absences from school and no self-confidence. ”



Individual exercise 2:

Exercise/Question	Answer
Which were the techniques that “D” has used to overcome her communication deficits?	“breaking down tasks, establishing a structured and distraction-free environment, using timers and visual aids. She could also incorporate physical activity and frequent breaks. Combining these environmental and organizational techniques with active learning methods,.”

Individual exercise 3:

Exercise/Question	Answer
Which is the first tip in order to prove that the communication techniques are useful?	“They focused on her interests”

Answered by learners in a group (2+ people)

Group exercise 1:

Exercise/Question	Answer
Discuss 2 other communication techniques that could be useful.	Check for understanding and repeat if needed. Get the child’s attention before speaking

Group exercise 2:

Exercise/Question	Answer
How long is needed in order to see the benefits of the intervention?	1 month

Group exercise 3:

Exercise/Question	Answer
What is one communication technique that helps children with ADHD stay engaged during conversations?	Children with ADHD often process information better when they can see it and makes it easier to remember. Using visual cues like pictures, or written reminders helps reinforce spoken words, improves focus, and reduces misunderstandings.

REFERENCES (APA Style):

- Zwi, M., Jones, H., Thorgaard, C., York, A., & Dennis, J. A. (2011). *Parent training interventions for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children aged 5 to 18*



years. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2011(12), CD003018.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD003018.pub3>

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, May 15). *Parent training in behavior management for ADHD*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.
<https://www.cdc.gov/adhd/treatment/behavior-therapy.html>
3. Theodoratou, M. (2024). Communication issues in co-occurring ADHD and autism spectrum disorders: Evaluative approaches and targeted interventions — A mini review. *Postępy Psychiatria i Neurologia*, 33(3), 188-195.
<https://doi.org/10.5114/ppn.2024.145214>
4. Eddins, R. (2024, April 27). *How to communicate effectively with your ADHD child and support their self-esteem*. Eddins Counseling Group.
<https://eddinscounseling.com/how-to-communicate-effectively-with-adhd-child/>