

Communication and Social Interaction Right Now!

Social interaction can be very difficult for those with complex communication needs (CCN). Using an AAC system is slow, particularly in the beginning; often an interaction is fleeting and trying to say a message with an AAC system is not possible. When people have communication difficulties often social interaction happens around them rather than including them and it is easier to ask a verbal person they are with to answer. A great way to remedy this is to write stories together to help this communication. These stories then can give information quickly and allow the AAC user to become more involved in the art of conversation and storytelling. Each time the story is shared is a learning experience and helps gain skills in social interaction, one of the key reasons to communicate.

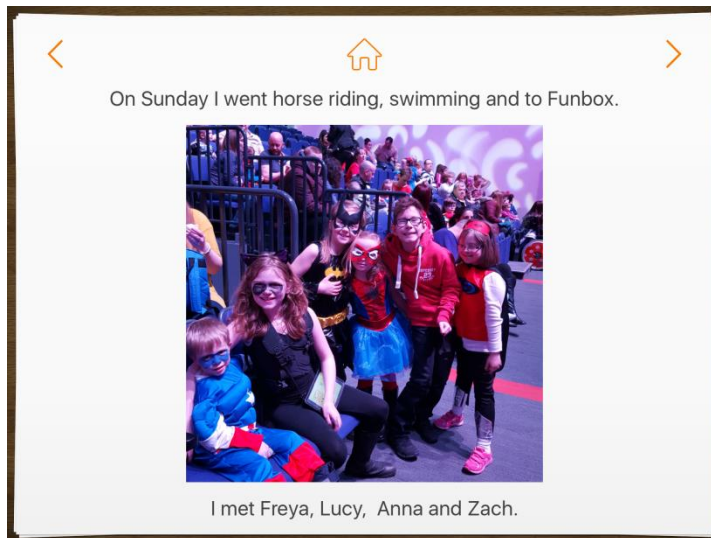
Both the content and the platform (high tech or book/page) of the story can vary depending on the information to be shared. It is worth keeping stories relatively short, 5-6 pages so the focus remains on the interaction. Using a script is a great way to help the person with CCN become as involved as possible. For example, in a story about the person's likes, each page could be I like ____ because it is _____. This allows the person themselves to choose the things they want the story to be about or, if they are still learning how to share information this way, it is a great way to model how we think about what we like and find it on our AAC system.

Remnant books (pages) are essentially scrap books of the AAC users' life. Things that can be included within remnant books include tickets, pamphlets, photos; anything that can be used as a topic of conversation. These books are then shared as a way to initiate conversation. When making these books, adding words to objects is also a very powerful way to get across the message that letters make up words and those words give us information.

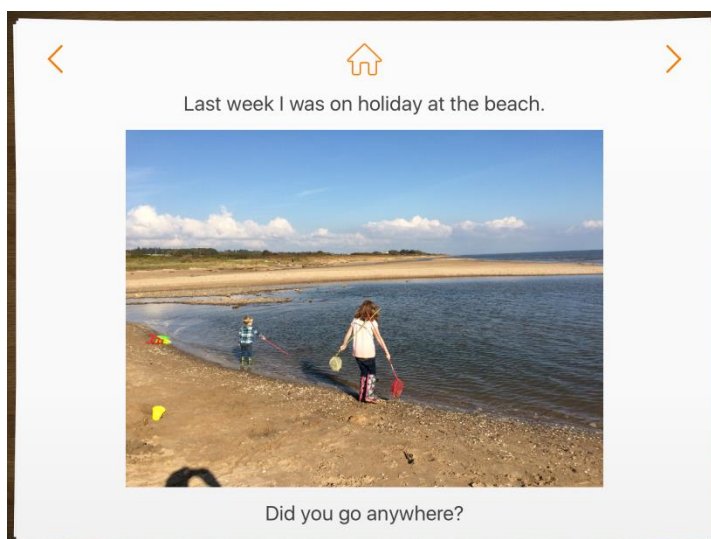


Personal experience stories are very useful as they help people know a bit more about the person with CCN. The stories can be a general "all about me book" or of a particular event or experience. Having stories made up already help the AAC user to be able to focus on the

interaction and actually telling a story. It also helps encourage interaction directly with the AAC user rather than through the person they are with.



Social Scripts are books that are made up with questions included in them to encourage conversation. This can help the AAC user to understand the flow of conversation, or as more likely in the case of AS, get the user to be involved in conversation which can lead to increased social interaction.



These stories can be made up in the apps noted below or a PC and printed out or made up as books to begin with.

The ASF Communication Series has great webinars on these types of books and more.

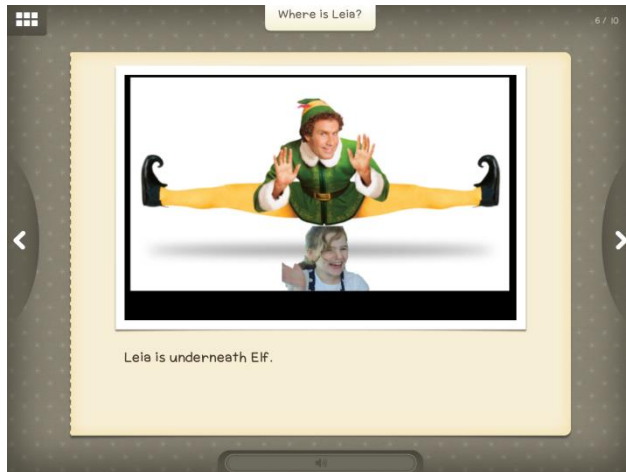
There are several apps available that can help aid communication, these are all useful:

Pictello – make up stories for the AAC user to read and share, can add videos and photos to the books for personalisation. Pictello is the only app with text to speech facility, switch

accessibility and the ability to download Tar Heel Reader books directly. The wizard makes it very easy.

Book creator – allows multiple photos, text boxes and videos per page and books can be exported to iBooks. This is one of the few good story apps available on Android. (Pictello does not support these features). Not speech generating but can record own voice.

Kid in Story – similar to Pictello but you can add the AAC user's picture (or any picture) into the book (this can be highly motivating). It has no voice input but this can be added with –



Explain Everything – not a story or communication app in its own right but very helpful for adding to different apps. It lets you highlight words and record voices allowing for creativity when writing books.

GoTalkNow – can buy the communication pages to go along with this but even if you don't it can be a good way to share a lot of information before the communication device is being used fluently. This app has much more flexibility than the others and allows the user to be more in charge of the direction that the conversation is going in. It is much more expensive than the other apps though.

