

Shared attention and problem solving

Providing people with learning disabilities opportunities to solve problems can be effective in enabling individuals to develop communication skills and successful problem solving strategies. Shared attention is one technique that can be used to encourage two or more individuals to solve an everyday problem, Staff can create a situation such as a non-occurrence of an everyday event, which encourages individuals to work together to use different strategies to resolve the problem.

This example illustrates how an everyday situation can encourage an individual to use her non-verbal communication skills to comment on an unexpected event.

“Ayesha is asked to pour a drink for other members of the group, but the jug is empty. She attempts to pour from the jug, quickly notices nothing is coming out, then looks into the jug. She shows the empty jug to the member of staff, shaking her head, and then puts the jug down on the table, firmly, watching the teacher for a response.”

Coupe O’Cane and Goldbart

In this second example more than one individual is involved in finding strategies to solve the problem of packing away a large ball into a small bag.

Adapted from Coupe O’Cane and Goldbart

“.... the person is given the opportunity to obtain something they want which is within sight but out of reach. Clues can be provided, such as a safe set of steps nearby. Or two or three people together may be asked to put an inflated beach ball away in a bag when packing up to come home from a trip. Since the ball is bigger than the bag they will together have to think of a strategy for putting it in.”

Coupe O’Cane and Goldbart

[References and resources](#)