

SECTION TWO



BEADS BEADS AND SPECIAL NEEDS (An overview)

*“The better I understand myself
The better I understand others.*

*The better I understand others
The better I can understand their needs.*

Thus, in a professional setting...

*The better I understand my student's needs
The better I will be able to provide teaching methods
Which will be efficient and effective.”*

Most of us have our favorite things that we like to talk about. Whether it's sports, the arts or a favorite hobby, these topics bring a personal sense of enjoyment as well as an opportunity to connect with others about shared or individual areas of interest. Many children with special needs have the same desire to communicate in this way, however, they may not have the language, the experiences or the opportunity to enjoy this social function that many of us may take for granted.

The *CMC* program provides strategies that may be of benefit for such children. In the next three lessons, the children will have the opportunity to practice a modified version of the three basic conversations which were presented in the Beginner Level of Section One of this manual. They include: The Yellow Conversation, the Short Conversation, and the Long Conversation.

The Yellow Conversation, at first glance, appears to be incredibly simple and yet its impact on others is powerful. The benefits of working on this type of conversation include the following:

- The child learns to look to others to gain and receive information.
- The ability in using this type of conversation may make the child appear to be more approachable and friendly. As such, others will be drawn to the child and may want to engage with them. This will then increase the number of opportunities that the child has to practice conversational features (i.e. the language of the conversation). More importantly, it will provide increased opportunities for the child to connect with others and build relationships.
- This Face-to-Face interaction will then be gratifying in and of itself for the child.

The Short Conversation is a very predictable and highly repetitive conversation so it is easy to learn. The benefits of working on this type of conversation include the following:

- Because it's highly repetitive, the child can learn a few generic scripts that can help them maneuver through social situations with a greater measure of competence and confidence.
- As stated previously, the ability in using this type of conversation may make the child appear to be more approachable and friendly.
- This Face-to-Face interaction will then be gratifying in and of itself for the child.

The Long Conversation has the Topics of Conversation embedded in the middle of it. If a child can learn a script for a Short Conversation, then the next step is to give the child something to say on a preferred topic of interest. The benefits of working on this type of conversation include the following::

- Though the conversations may initially appear stilted or awkward, the child's ease and skill with dialogue can be improved.
- The more topics a child can hone, the more topics the child can share with others.
- As stated previously, the ability in using this type of conversation may make the child appear to be more approachable and friendly.
- The child can gain some perspective and ability to speak on preferred topics of interest.
- The child may gain increased curiosity to want to know more about other people's preferred topics of interest.
- This Face-to-Face interaction will then be gratifying in and of itself for the child.

The following provides some examples of how the Beginner Level lessons may be used differently in Section Two:

1. Conversation Stones: The Conversation stones will be used as they were previously in Section One, with the following adaptations:

- They may be left blank more often.
- The Conversation Coach may draw more pictures rather than write words. For example, the stone may only have one simple line drawing (i.e. a stick person) on it.
- If the child has adequate reading skills, the stones may have a single phrase or a simple sentence written on them.

2. Conversation Path: The path will be used as it was previously, with the following adaptations:

- There may be more use of real objects and personal photographs used for the Topics of Conversation portion of the Long Conversation.
- The Conversation Coach may develop sentences strips to provide additional visual supports for the Conversation Starters and Stoppers. These sentence strips may be used to specifically target grammar and sentence structure.

3. Color My Conversation Game: The game may be simplified by the following adaptations:

- The child will likely use the same Greeting, Conversation Starter, Conversation Stopper and Goodbye each time.
- There may be real objects or personal photographs used in the Topics of Conversation section of the game board.

4. Conversation Recipes and Scripts: There will be fewer recipes and scripts than what might have been used in Section One and the scripts will likely be simplified in relation to grammar and sentence structure.

5. **Beading:** The use of beaded items may be used more frequently as a visual support. The caregivers will be encouraged to wear a beaded item as well. When having conversations with the child, the caregiver will model the use of the bracelet for the child.
6. **Outside support:** Outside support may vary in the following ways:
- The Conversation Coach may be more intentional in encouraging and training caregivers to engage the child in conversations outside of the practice sessions (i.e. the school secretary, the principal, grandparents, etc.).
 - More direct teaching may be provided to the caregivers as they learn strategies for engaging the child socially and expanding their language skills. For example, How to attain eye contact? How to follow the child's lead? How to model and expand on the child's utterances? How to give the child thinking time? How to build vocabulary and play activities around the child's preferred topics of interest?
 - The child's main caregivers will attend the field trip assignments with greater frequency so that modeling and coaching can be provided.
7. **Video Modeling:** Video modeling (i.e. self and other) may be used frequently to provide good examples for the conversations being targeted.



LESSON ONE

THE YELLOW CONVERSATION

ADAPTATIONS



INTRODUCTION

There are no verbal introductions to this lesson. The Conversation Coach simply puts two yellow stones on the floor, gets the ball, and then stands on the first Conversation Stone. The child will be standing a short and comfortable distance from the Conversation Coach.

BASIC TRAINING

Prepare to toss the ball to the child by first attaining Meaningful Eye Contact. You can do this by looking expectantly at the child, making some kind of noise, throwing the ball in the air or bouncing it a few times. Once the child looks in your direction, bring the ball up to your face and indicate that you are going to throw it to him/her. If the child raises his/her hands in preparation for the toss, then smile, nod and throw the ball to the child as you say a simple greeting.

NOTE:

If the child's hands are down, you can put your ball under your arm, walk over to the child and show him/her how to put his/her hands out for the catch. Then go back to your position, bring the ball back up by your face, attain MEC and then toss the ball to the child as you say your simple greeting.

Hi, Courtney!

With the ball now in the child's hands, leave your hands out in the position to receive the ball as you look expectantly and attempt to make MEC with the child. Use your body language and facial expression to demonstrate that you want the ball to be thrown back to you. You can do this for example by motioning with your hands.

If the child throws the ball back and provides a verbal greeting, acknowledge it with a smile and a head nod. Then look down at the Goodbye stone, step onto it and prepare to toss the ball to the child again. Once MEC is achieved and the child's hands are ready for the toss, throw the ball back to the child as you say a simple farewell.

Bye Courtney!

With the ball again in the child's hands, leave your hands out in the position to receive the ball as you look expectantly and attempt to make MEC with the child. Use your body language and facial expression to demonstrate that you want the ball to be thrown back to you.

If the child throws the ball back and provides a verbal farewell, provide nonverbal reinforcement by smiling, giving the "thumbs up", giving the "high five" or adding a verbal comment such as "Nice talking".

After the child has successfully demonstrated the role of the communication partner, let him/her take the role of the conversation initiator.

When the child can walk through the Yellow Conversation easily in both the role of initiator and responder, make beaded bracelets for both of you. The bracelets should have two yellow beads on them to represent a greeting and a farewell.



Yellow Conversation Bracelet

NOTE:

If the child throws the ball back without speaking, show him/her what to do by modeling the activity with the caregiver or by providing verbal prompts. If these additional strategies do not help the child achieve success with the Yellow Conversation, the Conversation Coach should consider whether or not the CMC program should be continued.

HELPFUL HINTS...

1. An individualized treatment program may be preferred over a small group setting for special needs children with intellectual disabilities.
2. If the Conversation Coach is a speech language pathologist, invite a caregiver (i.e. parent, teaching assistant) to attend the sessions so that the concepts and activities can be trained and then practiced outside of treatment sessions.
3. Meaningful Eye Contact is considered to be especially critical for children with special needs since many of them struggle with this basic skill of looking to others for information or for providing information to others.
4. Place the conversation stones on the floor in advance of your lesson. Avoid explanations as to what you are trying to teach. Instead, simply demonstrate the conversation in action through the use of signing, gestures, and movement.
5. Either leave the conversation stones blank or draw a simple stick person on them. For example, you may draw a stick person facing frontwards and waving for the hello stone and a stick person walking away and waving for the goodbye stone.
6. Limit the language for the greeting. For example, use a generic greeting like "Hi" (instead of "Good morning") and "Bye" (instead of "Bye for now").
7. The ball has been found to be especially helpful for the children with special needs or for those who have difficulty with the concept of turn taking in conversational exchanges. It is expected that this may be because the ball throwing is a motivator for the child as an activity. It also allows the Conversation Coach to have a motivating item to draw to their face so as to attain meaningful eye contact from the child.
8. Signing is optional but encouraged. You may use it as much or as little as needed to provide visual support for the children as they are learning the new vocabulary which may include the following words: hello, goodbye. If signing is a distraction for the children then just use exaggerated body gestures and facial expressions.

9. When stepping on the stones, glance down at them to demonstrate that you are getting information from them. By this role model, your children will then see that they can do the same thing.
10. Consider the use of video modeling (i.e. self or other). It can be done as the children practice their conversations on the Conversation Path or in a natural conversational setting.
11. Many of the songs may have educational information that is above the child's level of ability. In this case, they may be used simply for listening pleasure.
12. The beaded craft will likely be a good tactile/visual support for the Conversation Coach to consider for the children to use both in and outside of their lessons. The caregivers will be encouraged to wear a matching beaded item as well. When having conversations with the child, the caregiver will model the use of the bracelet for the child.



LESSON TWO

THE SHORT CONVERSATION

ADAPTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

There are no verbal introductions to this lesson. The Conversation Coach simply puts the yellow, green and red stones on the floor for the Short Conversation. He/she then gets the ball and stands on the Hello stone and starts the conversation with the child.

BASIC TRAINING

The basic training for the Short Conversation will be the same as it was for the Yellow Conversation. The Conversation Coach will decide whether or not to use a script on the stones. For example, the stones may be left blank, drawings may be used (i.e. a stick person waving, a question mark) or words/phrases may be written. The coach will want to be intentional about attaining meaningful eye contact and will use gestures or signing to show the child how to reference the stones and move along the path.

In the Short Conversation, the children will be learning about Conversation Starters (i.e. How are you?) and Conversation Stoppers (i.e. Nice talking to you.) Grammar and syntax are common areas of difficulty for some children with intellectual disabilities. Sentence strips can help. They can provide the visual support that the children need to be successful with these two conversational features.

If a child has the ability to read, consider the following two options:

Sentence Strips - With Velcro: These are laminated strips of construction paper with Velcro tabs. Laminated words and/or phrase cards can be placed on the strips to create questions and comments. The sentence strips can be placed on the Conversation Path in the area where they will typically be used. As the child walks the path, the Conversation Coach can direct his/her attention to the strip so that the phrase/sentence can be read and then spoken within the context of the conversation. A sentence strip with Velcro can be made in the following manner:

1. Cut a piece of construction paper to the preferred size and laminate it.
2. Glue Velcro squares on the blank strip.
3. Decide which comments/questions you are going to use.
4. Write the single words down on pieces of construction paper.
5. Laminate and Velcro the pieces.
6. Build your sentences by putting the words on the blank strip.
7. Place the strip in the part of the path where it would normally occur.
8. As you are walking the Conversation Path, model referencing the sentences strips.
9. When the child walks the path, encourage him/her to use the sentence strips in the same manner.

Sentence Strips for Word Matching: The children can practice matching and sequencing words as they build sentences. To do this activity, make a sentence strip and laminate it. Make laminated cards that match the words used in the sentence. Have the children match the words by placing the cards on the sentence strip and then have them read the sentence.

HELPFUL HINTS...

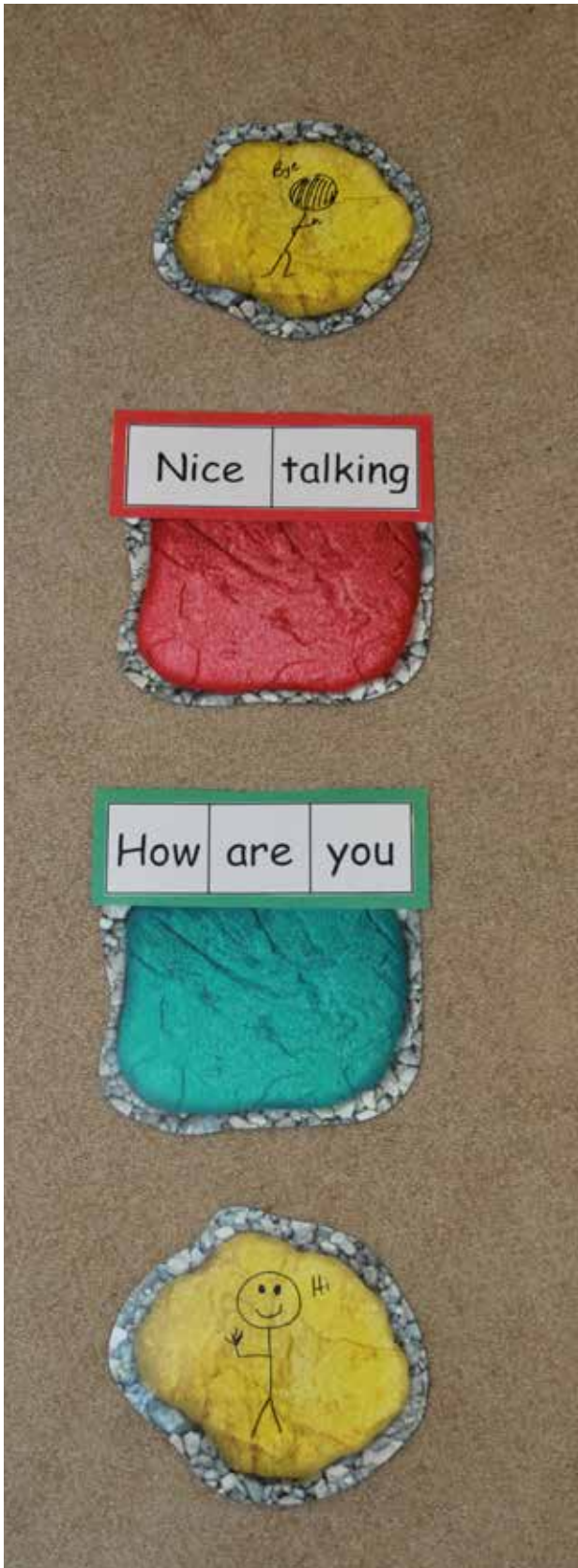
The Helpful Hints from Lesson One will apply along with the following considerations:

1. Remember to keep the Short Conversation script simple initially. Once the child can do a basic script, you can add more options for each feature (i.e. Conversation Starters, Conversation Stoppers) of the conversation.
2. Once the child can demonstrate success using the Short Conversation within the lesson setting, make two beaded bracelets for both of you. Model how to use the bracelet by pointing to the beads as you practice the Short Conversation. Encourage the child to do the same.

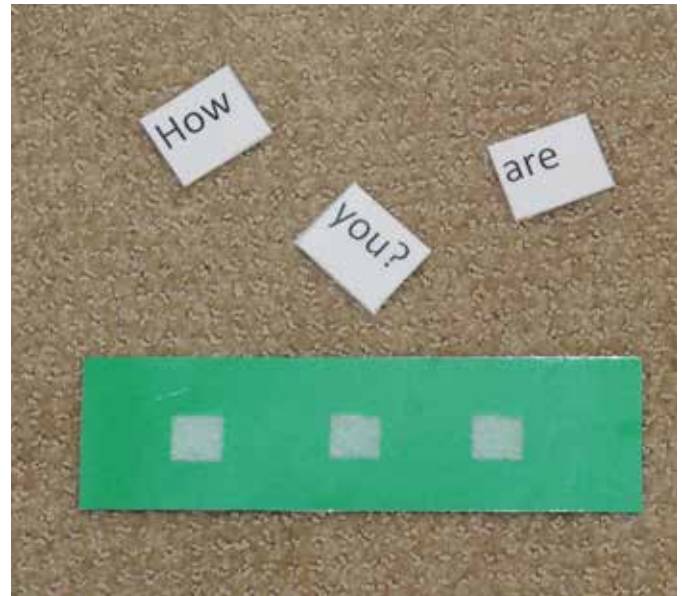


Short Conversation Bracelet

THE ADAPTED SHORT CONVERSATION WITH SENTENCE STRIPS



Short Conversation Path with Sentence Strips



Sentence Strip - with Velcro



Sentence Strip - with Matching Words



LESSON THREE

THE LONG CONVERSATION ADAPTATIONS



INTRODUCTION

There will be no verbal introductions in this lesson. The Conversation Coach and the child will start by doing table oriented activities (i.e. making a photo album) and will then move to the floor to practice having conversations on the Conversation Path. Once the child demonstrates the ability to have a modified version of the Long Conversation by walking along the stones, the coach may have the child practice conversations at the table while playing a modified version of The COLOR MY CONVERSATION Game. At this stage, the coach may also prepare a beaded bracelet for the child to practice his/her conversations with other caregivers outside of the practice sessions.



BASIC TRAINING

The Conversation Coach will prepare Conversation Recipes and Conversation Scripts to support the child's ability to practice Long Conversations in a controlled environment.

Why develop a Long Conversation Recipe for children with special needs? Why not? We all have our favorite topics that we like to talk about. If you are a sports fan, it is likely that you find yourself frequently discussing your favorite teams (i.e. how they are doing in the season). If you are a parent of an infant, there is a good chance that you frequently talk about your schedules (i.e. feeding, sleeping, routines). If you have strong political views, you may find that your opinions on certain topics are redundant from one conversation to another.

The purpose for developing a Conversation Recipe for children with special needs is to allow them the same opportunity that we enjoy – to be able to talk about our favorite topics of interest.

In order to build a Conversation Recipe, the Conversation Coach will identify 2-4 topics that the child may have a desire to communicate about. These topics may include the child's own areas of interest or those of his/her family members and friends (i.e. family camping trips). The following is a summary of how to build a Conversation Recipe for special needs children who have mild intellectual disabilities:

Select one of the child's topics of interest and ask the parents about the things that make this topic special for the child. For example, if the child likes camping, the following things may be significant to him/her: sleeping in a tent, eating marshmallows, or the fact that grandma and grandpa often vacation with the family.

Ask the parents for photographs of these activities so that their value and significance can be reinforced with the child. One way to do this is to make a photo album from the pictures provided (i.e. the child sleeping in a tent, the child roasting marshmallows by the campfire with grandma and grandpa).

Below the photographs, write a short caption of the activity so that other caregivers (i.e. teachers, teaching assistants, other family members) can refer to it when discussing the pictures with the child (i.e. "Grandma and grandpa go camping").

The Conversation Coach should listen for and write down the spontaneous sentences that the child uses when looking at the photographs because they could be used when forming a Conversation Script.

Why develop a Conversation Script? Why not? Conversation scripts are common in our day to day living. In the workplace, they are often taught so that employees can focus on completing an order quickly and efficiently. In social settings, scripts are often used without our even realizing it. For example, if you were to speak to someone whose family member had just passed, it is likely that some of your sentences may include predictable comments (i.e. "I'm so sorry to hear that") or questions (i.e. "How is the family doing?"). These scripts would be so predictable in fact, that if a person were not to use them, the conversation partner may be slightly offended or taken off guard.

Most of us learn Conversation Scripts incidentally by listening to people around us. Children with special needs may not pick up on these verbal cues and may therefore benefit from the direct teaching that is provided through the use of Conversation Recipes and Scripts. The purpose for developing a script will be to provide the children with the sentences and questions that they may need in order to successfully maneuver through the Topic of Conversation.



Long Conversation Path with Objects

The following is a summary of how to practice a Conversation Script within the context of a Long Conversation.

Take the pictures from the photo album and put them on the floor in the Topics of Conversation section.

Model a Long Conversation by engaging the child in a dialogue on their topic of interest once you get to the blue section of the path. Have the children do the same.

Once the child can demonstrate the ability to walk through a Long Conversation on the Conversation Path, the Conversation Coach may have the child practice his/her conversation using the Color My Conversation Game. Objects or photographs can be placed in the Topics of Conversation section to add variety and interest to the activity.

HELPFUL HINTS...

The Helpful Hints from Lesson One will apply along with the following considerations:

1. Remember to keep the script for the Topic of Conversation simple. Once the child can do a basic script, you can add more topics for the child to talk about.
2. Once the child can demonstrate success using the Long Conversation within the lesson setting, make two beaded bracelets for both of you. Model how to use the bracelet by pointing to the beads as you practice the Long Conversation. Encourage the child to do the same.