

IMAGINE

MAKING CHANGES THAT MATTER

SETTING GOALS OPENS UP
A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

CONTRIBUTED BY MONIQUE NELSON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meet Bryanna, a 35-year-old woman who recently experienced a huge leap forward with her communication skills, rapidly opening doors to a world of possibilities in her life! With the support of her team of carers and consultants like CAYA (Communication Assistance for Young Adults), a program to assist Bryanna with using a communication tool called the GoTalk20+ has been implemented and is showing great success.

This device is customized with several tailored sheets of vocabulary/symbols that are changed as needed. When the user makes a selection on the device, it is read aloud. Using GoTalk20+ has been a great way to expand Bryanna's expressive communication beyond the 40 or so words she typically says. It allows her to express her needs and wishes without using behavioural communication to obtain tangible things, which had been socially challenging for her carers at home and made Bryanna particularly vulnerable when out in the community. Given that she uses so few words, another communication system was essential in meeting Bryanna's needs and in learning how to manage her expectations.

Brandon recognized that by putting Bryanna's communications goal into sharp focus, progress in this area could unlock progress on her other life goals. The work he and the team have done over the past two months in particular has been transformative. He has set achievable communication goals for Bryanna, uncovered the motivation, teaching and positive reinforcement strategies that are most helpful towards achieving them, and continues to monitor her progress and propose changes that will promote further her growth.

Recently, Bryanna used her device spontaneously—a huge leap in and of itself! Perhaps most importantly, behind the science of positive behaviour support and all of her hard work developing new skills, is the promise of a good and full life. The simple pleasures of having a friend over for tea, and getting out into the community, are now a part of Bryanna's life, too.



BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION

CONTRIBUTED BY MAGDALEN DYDULA, ECE, ABS, MPED, BCBA, BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

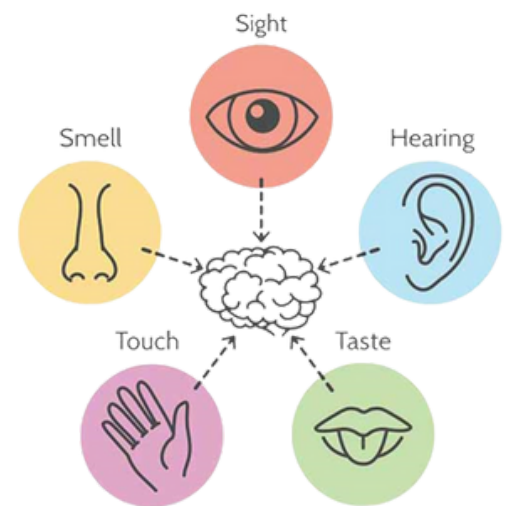
All behaviour is communication. This means challenging behaviours are a way of gaining something the individual you are supporting wants (e.g., access to a preferred activity, attention, or escaping an unpleasant situation or non-preferred task). Caregivers/staff should be aware of common triggers that increase the likelihood that the individual engages in challenging behaviour.

It's important to remember *behaviour is communication and behaviour is influenced by our environment*. Therefore, if the individual engages in any form of challenging behaviour (e.g., verbal aggression, etc.), then it is necessary to consider and reflect on the following questions: 1) What was the person served trying to communicate? and 2) What can I do differently next time?

..... *The individual does not engage in challenging behaviour for no reason, there is always a trigger that initiates the behaviour.*

As caregivers/support staff, it is your job to anticipate situations in which the person served may be tempted to use challenging behaviour to communicate. To do this, it will be important to understand the four functions of behaviour.

- **Attention**
 - Positive (e.g., praise, compliment, interaction, etc.)
 - Negative (e.g., reprimand, aggression from peer, teasing from a peer, etc.)
- **Escape/Avoidance**
 - Escaping from an activity that is already in progress (e.g., the individual has been loading the laundry and begins engaging in challenging behaviour during the completion of this chore).
 - Avoiding an activity prior to it occurring (e.g., engaging in challenging behaviour prior to an unpreferred activity)
- **Tangible**
 - Item (e.g., candy, iPad, video games, coffee, music, etc.)
 - Activity (e.g., water park, trip to the pawn shop, camping, etc.)
- **Automatic**
 - Any item or activity that provides the individual with sensory feedback (e.g., taste, smell, hearing, sight, touch). This sensory feedback is provided to the person served by themselves (i.e., it does not require the assistance of another person to access). This can look like clicking a pen, tapping one's foot, rocking back and forth, self-gratification, etc.)



In order to address challenging behaviours or teach new socially adaptive behaviours (e.g., functional communication, tolerance, increasing skill repertoire, etc.), one must identify not just what the behaviour looks like, but what function or purpose it serves (i.e., what is maintaining the behaviour – a consequence).

INCLUSION TIP

CONTRIBUTED BY ALYSHA BOOI, M.SC., BCBA, CLINICAL SUPERVISOR

After two years of many changes and adjustments surrounding the pandemic, restrictions have finally come to an end. Many will have different levels of comfort when resuming in-person activities and it is important to remain respectful of other's preferences.

Here are a couple tips on how you can continue to support persons served and colleagues through these changes:

- 1 Provide choice – continue to offer the choice to wear PPE and maintain physical distance if others feel more comfortable doing so.
- 2 Be flexible with returning to in-person activities – some may prefer to return to in-person activities slowly, so continue to offer virtual options when possible and preferred.
- 3 Maintain hygiene – continue to prioritize hand washing and stay home if you are feeling ill.
- 4 Stay positive and supportive – check in with others more frequently and be patient and kind, respecting each person's level of comfort.



TECH TIP: FRIENDLY SELF-CARE EXPERT

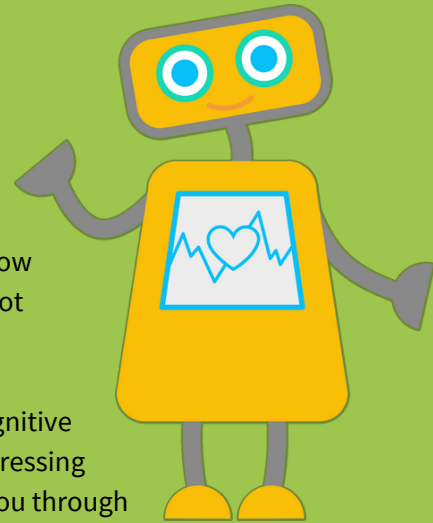
CONTRIBUTED BY EMILY INSTON, MSC, BSC., BEHAVIOUR CONSULTANT

If you or someone you are close to is experiencing big feelings: low mood, worry, or just not feeling yourself, you are in luck – Woebot may be able to help.

Woebot is an AI-powered chatbot that uses the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help users through managing distressing thoughts and feelings. Woebot is a free app that gets to know you through quick conversations and check-ins, that is grounded in clinical research.

Woebot helps users by prompting them to enter their mood and details explaining their situation and thoughts and feelings, and then offers tactics by responding with suggested tools, skills, and strategies that can help. Maybe you just need someone to talk to, or maybe you need some ideas of self-care exercises to try, Woebot can help guide you. For example, Woebot uses exercises such as “challenge negativity” and offers an “SOS” mode with tools and strategies to try and do immediately. These include “problem solving” and “mindfulness”.

A benefit of Woebot being an app means that you are able to track your moods, thoughts, and feelings over time which can help you to see patterns that may emerge.



DANCE IS FOR EVERYONE

CONTRIBUTED BY ALICIA NEPTUNE, COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

A new hip hop dance video series by posAbilities and Curiko teaches people of all abilities how to dance.

One of our behaviour consultants in the Lower Mainland, Kelly Riccardi, is helping to making hip hop more accessible. Kelly is a choreographer and one of *posAbilities*' artists in residence. Along with dancers Harmanie Rose and Janan, he features in a series of three hip hop dance videos hosted on the Curiko platform.

Kelly believes dance is for everyone. Pushing for more diverse representation and a thriving “adaptive dance” scene is a shift in not only how we consider movement, but on a bigger scale, how we may invite more diversity into our spaces beyond the dance floor. Adaptive dance is the mindful curation of an inclusive environment for folks with different abilities to have fun while exploring dance and culture.



Kelly, Harmanie, and guests from the local dance community celebrated the launch of the video series with an event at Alternative Creations Studio on April 22. It was one of Curiko's first in-person events since the start of the pandemic. The event featured a DJ, original artwork, and dance tutorials to give everyone the chance to try out some moves.

The hip hop video lessons are now available on Curiko for anyone to watch, anytime. Lesson one begins with the history of hip hop, a warm up, and some basic steps. The other two lessons are tutorials on a variety of hip hop moves, with simple instructions and adaptations to make the moves accessible to people of all abilities.

Viewers are encouraged to adapt moves in whatever way works for them. ASL translation is also provided by Nigel Howard, who is known to many of us for translating BC's COVID-19 provincial updates.



To watch the videos, visit [Curiko.ca](https://curiko.ca)!

You can find them under Video Experiences or search for "hip hop."