Decision Making Skills: 01 Emergent
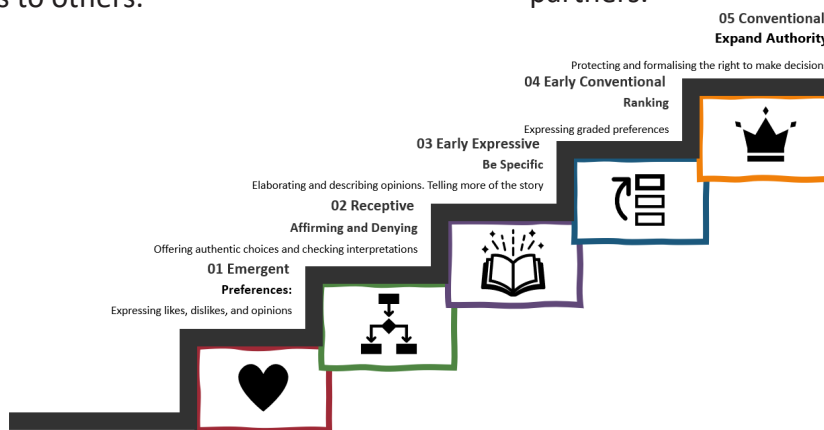
Expressing preferences

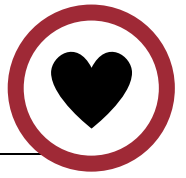## An individual demonstrating skills at this stage may:

- Rely on others to interpret their facial expressions, body language, and behaviours.

- Show (either directly or indirectly) they like an option by smiling or seeking that option out regularly.

- Show they dislike an option by frowning pushing something away, avoiding the option regularly (or by any other behaviour observed).

- Need help to understand they are expressing a preference, or establish consistent ways of expressing their preferences to others.

Goals at this stage:

- Notice and respond to the individual's expressive behaviours.

- Create experiences of being understood.

- Support the individual to express their likes, dislikes, and opinions.

- Support communication partners to be consistent in how they understand and respond to the individual's preferences.

- Increasing opportunities for interaction with diverse partners.

- Reduce misunderstandings and frustration.

- Ensuring someone has both the means and opportunities to communicate effectively with an increasing number of communication partners.

05 Conventional
Expand Authority
Protecting and formalising the right to make decisions

04 Early Conventional
Ranking
Expressing graded preferences

03 Early Expressive
Be Specific
Elaborating and describing opinions. Telling more of the story

02 Receptive
Affirming and Denying
Offering authentic choices and checking interpretations

01 Emergent
Preferences:
Expressing likes, dislikes, and opinions

Decision Making Skills: 01 Emergent

Strategies to support an individual demonstrating skills at this stage

Personal Communication Dictionary

A communication dictionary is a valuable tool for an individual who has complex communication needs.

It contains information about the unique or unconventional ways they communicate, and what others should do in response.

The dictionary acts as a common reference for understanding and interpreting what the individual is doing and how others should respond.

The individual has the chance to receive consistent feedback about their communication and enhance their learning.

Modelling Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies

Using AAC strategies to highlight spoken words can support an individual to understand what is being said to them as well as add clear language in a way they could access in the future.

Someone at an emergent stage of communication can benefit from lots of examples of lots of different communication methods being used to express real ideas.

Self-talk statements

By describing their own thoughts and behaviours, communication partners can give an individual a model for how they might express their own thoughts in the future.

Verbal referencing

This strategy is used to describe the different ways someone communicates and a description of the interpretation of that behaviour.

For individuals at an emergent stage of communicating and decision making, other people often need to interpret their actions and behaviour.

For someone to learn to be more independent in expressing their thoughts, others need to be very clear about what is being seen, and how that is being interpreted.

Steps of verbal referencing:

1. Describe the behaviour

2. Describe the interpreted meaning

3. Give time and space for contributions

Example of verbal referencing:

"You're covering your ears." ← description

"Maybe you don't like this." ← interpretation