



**THE LAND OF THE SINGING FISH
MENCAFEP - BATTICALOA
NEWSLETTER.**

Ministry of Social Welfare Registration Number - L - 120211.

**A PROJECT SPONSORED
TERRE DES HOMMES - NETHERLANDS.**

CODE NO. 14K.

No. 8.



In all wars and disasters it is the disabled child that is the first to die; it is the disabled child that is the first to get disease and infection; it is the disabled child that is the last to get resources when they are handed out.

**MENCAFEP
Batticaloa School and Centre:
46/2 Mylvakanam Road,
Navatkerni,
Batticaloa.
Tel: 0094-(0)60-2658889.**

**DAY CARE SCHOOL & CENTRE.
HEAD OFFICE:
26 ST. ANDREWS DRIVE, NUWARA ELIYA
SRI LANKA.
TEL : 0094-(0)52-222509.**

**E-mail: mencafep@sltnet.lk
www.mencafepsrilanka.com**

Over MENCAFEP's history many extraordinary things have happened to MENCAFEP and the people connected with it. Perhaps one of the most astonishing aspects of MENCAFEP's work over the years, has been the development of its Total Communication philosophy. That in part, has enabled MENCAFEP to be the unique programme it is today for disabled children and their families.

MENCAFEP - Batticaloa has been operating since the Tsunami of 2004 and during this time Total Communication has been introduced to the Batticaloa Project. For our readers in this Newsletter, MENCAFEP - Batticaloa would like to look at this phenomena called Total Communication and how it helps MENCAFEP and especially MENCAFEP - Batticaloa in its work

Total communication is a communication philosophy - not a communication method and not at all a teaching method...Total communication is an approach to create a successful and equal communication between human beings with different language perception and/or production...To use Total communication amounts to a willingness to use all available means in order to understand and be understood.

Total Communication is about communicating in any way you can. It's not just about talking, it's about signing, pointing to pictures, symbol, photographs or objects. It's also about using gesture or body movement:



1. Signing.



2. Symbols.



3. Photo graphs.



4. It's also about using gesture or body movement.



5. Objects.



6. Facial expressions tell people how you feel.

MENCAFEP has taken the above one step further by introducing writing, drawing, miming, drama and other art forms as ways of communicating. Over the years MENCAFEP has learnt, that when working and living with disabled children, especially the learning disabled and the severely disabled. It is through communication that we build relationships with other people. We let others know how we feel and what we think. Being able to communicate and knowing that you are being listened to is paramount. People who don't use speech can communicate. It's just a matter of being more creative. Total Communication is the key to inclusion.

A Word about understanding the majority of people with learning disabilities will struggle at times to understand spoken or written language, hence the tools used above.

Using Total Communication means a willingness to supplement the spoken word by using, as mentioned, objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols or sign. In order to do this well, we must be person centred. We need to know which method or combination of methods suits each person best.

MENCAFEP has discovered that expression is one of the best tools to be used in total communication. Expression is the act of transferring what is inside your head; your thoughts, feelings, desires, wants and wishes to another person. All people have individual ways of expressing themselves, for people with learning disabilities this may mean using other methods than speech alone. Objects, photographs, line drawings, symbols, signing and/or body language may be used to express information. In Total Communication all of these are equally valid forms of expression and need to be interpreted as such.

As MENCAFEP – Batticaloa moves forward with its work, it see's this model as two sided, because communication is a two way process. With any message, one person expresses it, and someone else has to understand it. All people connected with MENCAFEP have to take both roles, at different times.



Different ways of communication with different children.

MENCAFEP Communication model.

Written language.

Spoken language.

Signs.

Symbols/line drawings.

Photographs.

Objects.

Early gestures (e.g. pointing).

Pre-verbal/pre-intentional communication (e.g. touch, eye contact, smiles).

The words in the middle refer to different modes of communication. These are in a general order of complexity. However it's not a hierarchy, in MENCAFEP's eyes all forms of communication are equally valued. Pre-verbal or pre-intentional communication and early gestures are the building blocks of conversation and add richness to adult communication. In MENCAFEP's experience we get a lot of rich information from facial expression, body language and tone of voice. MENCAFEP has no doubt that Pre- verbal communication is very important in



Non-verbal communication in Total Communication.

working with people with learning disabilities, either understanding tone of voice for example, or using it to express themselves. MENCAFEP would suggest that all who believe inclusion is a must for the disabled need to be alert to picking up on non-verbal signals.

As the majority of MENCAFEP – Batticaloa's clients have varying degrees of learning disability. MENCAFEP's most important aspect at this level is non-verbal communication. Language is secondary but not redundant. MENCAFEP believes in talking but keep it simple. Use positive facial expression and body language. Use your voice volume tone and pitch to give meaning.

At this stage in MENCAFEP's work the person supporting the individual interprets the facial expression, body language and vocalisations made in response to an event in the environment or how the person is feeling. An obvious example would be smiling means 'I'm happy'. More detailed knowledge of the individual would be required to interpret a clicking or whooping sound as 'I'm really excited'.

MENCAFEP stresses, do not use sarcasm - it doesn't work. Make sure your facial expression matches your meaning. Use short simple sentences.

By showing an object you can support a person to anticipate/understand what is about to happen (e.g. showing a towel before going swimming).

The person can hand you or point to an object to tell you what they want (e.g. giving you a cup to ask for a drink).



Total Communication!

By showing a photograph/line drawing/symbol you can support a person to anticipate/understand what is about to happen (e.g. visual timetable to show the days activities). The person can point to a photograph/line drawing/symbol to tell you what they want (e.g. pointing to a photo menu for their dinner choice).

MENCAFEP is always mindful with regard to which picture you choose for which word. It needs to be meaningful to the individual.

Signing is a totally portable means of communication. It can be used by an individual at the level of conveying only single words through to a full and complete language.

Signing visually supports understanding as it is longer lasting than speech alone. It helps both hearing and Deaf individuals.

MENCAFEP has learnt and MENCAFEP – Batticaloa is learning that to implement Total Communication you need to be person centred and committed to developing an understanding, of how much a person understands and what helps them to gain understanding. This is a group and life long challenge and requires a commitment to life long learning with and about the person.

MENCAFEP is also aware of making limiting assumptions or under/over estimating people's abilities. An individual's language profile may vary. For instance, people who speak more than one language may understand more in one language than another.



Be aware of non-verbal communication.

In Conclusion about MENCAFEP's method of Total Communication; use plain simple language. Avoid jargon, service speak, abbreviations, acronyms and sarcasm. There is a great deal of advice available about creating accessible information. Remember information is only truly accessible when it is person centred.

Ranji and Chris Stubbs.
April 2009.