

Augmentative Communication (AAC), Participation and Supervision

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A person must be able to say:

Yes. No. I want this. I don't want this. I need help. Stop.

I have an opinion. I would like something else.

If a person cannot reliably express these things – whose task is it then?

Six theses

1 Communication is not an add-on – it is the precondition of participation.

AAC is about autonomy and participation: accompanying people so that they can communicate – express their needs, wishes and decisions, their will. The right to communication (UN CRPD Art. 9 & 21, national law) is the starting point, not the goal.

2 The person does not have to change – the conditions have to change.

AAC extends the form: signs, symbols, speech buttons, talkers, writing. These forms must be made available – the environment, private and professional, is proactively called upon to find out which forms of communication could be useful.

3 Communication does not only fail with the client – it also fails around the client.

In teams, between services, in professional meetings. This is exactly where supervision and coaching come in.

4 Often, a person's needs are discussed without them being at the table.

Their yes and their no must still be present in the room – someone must explicitly represent them.

5 Meaning before measures.

Most conversations jump straight from problem to solution. A measure without clarified meaning is a measure nobody carries.

6 The skipped step shows where the process got stuck.

Read backwards, the guide becomes a reflection instrument for supervision – far beyond AAC.

Participation begins where a person can say yes and no.

The goal: the person speaks for themselves.

ZoomME – a guide for professional meetings in the environment of people who use AAC

One guide – two directions of reading

Forward: as a guide for the professional meeting

1 Problem	describe: What is going on – concretely, in everyday life?
2 Significance	evaluate & confront: significant? important? consequential? Perspectives?
3 Changeability	examine: What can be influenced – what (not) yet?
4 Competence	clarify: Who can do what? What resources does the system have?
5 Prognosis	make one: What would need to be done – what can be expected?
6 Agreement	fix it: the contract – binding, verifiable.

Contract = key questions: What is to be done? Who can do it? With whom? By when? Who needs to be

Backward: as a reflection instrument for case presentations

A case is being presented – it has already happened. Read the guide from the end, from the current situation back to the beginning:

- Is there a contract – and was it agreed like this? (6)
- Was there a prognosis: what should have been done? (5)
- Were competences and changeability clarified? (4 · 3)
- Was the different attribution of meaning discussed? Which perspectives appeared – how was it discussed? (2)
- Who was involved – and who was not? What actually was the problem? (1)

Suggestions for your supervision practice

- Invest one minute in every case presentation: at which step did the process get stuck? The skipped step is almost always the answer.
- Ask about the attribution of meaning before solutions are discussed: who rates the problem how – significant, important, consequential? For whom?
- Ask about the absent person: how do the client's yes and no appear in this conversation? Who represents their needs – and how do they know them?
- Check contracts against the key questions: intentions ("We'll see ...") are not agreements.
- Use buzz groups: 3 minutes, one question – "At which step did it get stuck?" – then brief voices in the plenary.
- Experience before explanation: empathising with the situation of the person who uses AAC – as experienced today in the workshop. Empathy and systemic understanding are the foundation of all casework.

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Film "Louis Goldkind" (a boy and his talker, in German): youtube.com/watch?v=9trmUkqgUyM – also linked via uk-coach.de

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