

NOT ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

**DISINHIBITION PART 3: FINDING RELIABLE
COMMUNICATION FOR PEOPLE WITH
MOTOR DISINHIBITION**

swipe
to learn

IN 1984, ANNE DONNELLAN ESTABLISHED THE NOTION OF “THE LEAST DANGEROUS ASSUMPTION.”

Donnelan, a special education researcher and pioneer of communication rights, proposed a new framework for approaching students with complex communication barriers.

In cases where a person’s neurology prevents them from being able to demonstrate their cognitive skills and capacity, they are typically treated as if they do not have capacity.

Donnelan emphasized that without verifiable data, professionals need to make assumptions that are the least dangerous for learners, and that means to presume competence.

This paradigm shift can dramatically help nonspeakers and unreliable speakers with motor planning and motor disinhibition that prevents them from being able to demonstrate their full potential without adequate supports.

PRESUMING COMPETENCE

Instead of relying on observable behavior to communicate a person's capacity to learn, we presume they have the cognitive capacity to understand age-appropriate educational materials and that instruction needs to be modified to support their communication needs.

Presuming competence is unpopular within disciplines that rely on data collection of observable behaviors.

When one thinks of theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who spent decades unable to control his body to speak, toilet, or walk but who composed multiple books with assistive technology, the importance of presuming competence is obvious.



ANNE DONNELLAN WAS ALSO A PIONEER OF COMMUNICATION RIGHTS:

MOTOR SUPPORTED LEARNING

Motor Supported Communication

Because of emerging understanding of the impact of motor apraxia (not being able to consistently plan and execute purposeful movement and speech) and motor disinhibition (not being able to stop unintentional movement and speech), researchers and educators developed and began implementing approaches to communication that accommodate for those differences.

One approach was facilitated communication, where a facilitator provides physical support to a person to point to letters on a letterboard.

FACILITATED COMMUNICATION & CONTROVERSY

Physical therapists were already using letterboards and supported spelling to support communication and rehabilitation for people who experienced traumatic brain injuries from stroke, impact trauma, meningitis, etc.

But pioneers in special education began developing similar techniques for individuals with conditions present since birth, like autism, cerebral palsy, and other conditions that impact motor planning and ability.

Facilitated communication became popular because for many people, it worked; however, with its emerging popularity, many lay practitioners began using the method, a method that has a high potential for facilitator influence (the facilitator consciously or subconsciously directing the hand of the learner). This vulnerability to influence gave rise to much skepticism in academia.

ENTER RAPID PROMPTING METHOD (RPM):

Tito Mukhopadhyay was born in Bangalor, India, in 1989. His mother, Soma, was told that her son was severely “r*tarded” and would never be able to learn, but she could tell he was capable. She quickly realized his uncooperative body and eyes betrayed his curious mind. So she began experimenting with ways to help support his sensory dysregulation, motor planning, and motor disinhibition so that he could have reliable communication.

And it worked! Tito, now 32, has authored many books and has published on NeuroClastic.

Soma began teaching RPM to others and still works tirelessly from HALO Soma RPM in Austin, TX.

Thanks to Soma’s work, thousands of nonspeaking, minimally-speaking, and unreliably-speaking people now have access to reliable communication.

SPELLING 2 COMMUNICATE (S2C)

Then-SLP Elizabeth Vosseller, who originally trained in RPM, would later develop S2C, an approach with many similarities to RPM.

Both RPM and S2C use a graduated series of analogue and digital technologies and sensory supports to help learners with motor planning, disinhibition, OCD, and sensory challenges.

In both methods, learners gradually move from pointing to large letter stencils to a full-alphabet stencil, then later a computer keyboard or tablet with digital AAC. There are theoretical differences between the two methods, but they both are effective at gaining reliable communication.

These methods often work for learners with motor planning and disinhibition where traditional AAC has failed because they focus on providing sensorimotor supports.



**S2C
AND
RPM**

THE SPELLERVERSE

People who use FC, RPM, and S2C, are colloquially referenced as "Spellers" because they communicate by pointing to one letter at a time.

Spellers, their families, communication partners, instructors, and the group of allies who spend time working with them and advocating for communication rights make up what is affectionately called "The Spellerverse."

NeuroClastic is an org heavily operating in the Spellerverse with many contributors, board members, and advisory board members active in our org.

You can browse our site and videos on Facebook to learn more! We are working on a list of resources for parents looking to learn more.

**A WORLD
OF LETTERS**

WHERE TO GET STARTED

9/10

Reach Every Voice is a nonprofit that works with youth to help them gain access to reliable communication. They have a virtual, self-paced course for parents and professionals called “Accessible Academics.” It teaches you how to adapt your approach to accommodate for learners with motor planning and disinhibition challenges.

Many of our contributors and several who contributed quotes for the last slideshow gained access to communication at Reach Every Voice. IEP review services also available.

Price: \$99 for course

Where: ReachEveryVoice.org

Autistically Inclined offers a variety of affordable virtual courses to help parents and professionals support learners. This site is a treasure trove of information with many free resources.

Price: Starting at \$25

Where: AutisticallyInclined.com

LIVE Q&A PANELS COMING

On Wednesday, March 2 at 1:30 Eastern, we will host a live Q and A with nonspeakers, communication partners, and autistic advocates on all things disinhibition and communication. Learn about more resources and how to get reliable communication.

More live Q&As and live streams on these topics and more coming later this week and next week! Stay tuned for announcements and leave your questions in the comments.

- Motor loops, OCD, compulsive self-harm, hypersexuality, and intrusive thoughts
- How well-intentioned professionals ruin lives by mistaking disinhibition for communication
- How medical conditions like autoimmune inflammation, epilepsy, and meningitis often get mistaken for autism and are left untreated
- How trauma, shame, and behavior-based interventions impact people with disinhibition



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