**Talking Mat**

A Talking Mat is a communication strategy that can be used to help a child/young person to express themselves. Talking Mats can be used in different ways, for different purposes and in many different contexts.

They can be particularly helpful to find out how a child/young person feels about something.

People with autism can find them particularly helpful because:

* It is structured
* Depending on the needs/wishes of the child, you could use words or symbols
* Uses minimal language
* Scaffolds language
* Is very visual …etc…

Here is one way that a Talking Mat could be used:

Purpose – To find out how a child/young person feels about school.

**STEP ONE:** Choose your topic and place it on the table in front of the child/young person.

SCHOOL

**STEP TWO:** Present them with three categories and place underneath the ‘topic’ heading.

No Problem

Little Problem

Big Problem

You could also use, for example, ‘Good’ ‘OK’ ‘Bad’

**STEP THREE:** Give them different options. For example,

Assembly

As the adult, you would simply pass them the card and say something like “Assembly – No Problem, Little Problem, Big Problem?”

Allow them processing time and do not be tempted to suggest where you think they should place it – remember – this is all about their voice.

They could also create their own categories. For example:

* They might place between No Problem / Little Problem
* They might create a category, such as “Gigantic Problem.”

**STEP FOUR:** Where appropriate, ask for further information.

Once they have placed it, then say, for example, “Assembly, Big Problem because….?” Wait for them to answer.

Remember:

* It is important to give them processing time – don’t rush.
* Use limited language.
* You want to gather their views and therefore there is no right or wrong answer. It is important that the child/young person knows this.
* It is their views on that particular day and if you were to do it another day then their views may change. This is ok.

**STEP FIVE:** Recording

You could take a picture of the final Talking Mat or make notes whilst they are talking. Their views could then be recorded onto a table, for example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | | |
| **No Problem** | **Little Problem** | **Big Problem** |
| Playtime | Circle Time  “Because I don’t know where to sit and the carpet is scratchy.” | Assembly  “Because it is loud and echoes and hurts my ears. It is also too long and I don’t know what to do.” |
|  | Group Work  “Because I don’t know what to do. I like it when I work with my friends but other people don’t listen to me.” |  |

You could create a Talking Mat on all kinds of topics. Some examples:

Lessons

School

Sensory

Friendships

Growing Up …etc…

Please note:

For further information please visit <https://www.talkingmats.com/> .

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