

# A Discussion of Empowering Autonomy and Self in Individuals with AAC Needs

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October 14, 2020



# Webinar Logistics

- Microphone is muted
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## ASHA CEUs? Live webcast only

- Free - USSAAC members
- \$25 – non-USSAAC members
- Participant form and instructions on USSAAC website

## Learning Objectives

1. The communication perspective and experience of a person who communicates through AAC.
2. The significance of being mindful of the cultural attitudes toward people with AAC needs.
3. Various methods of empowering individuals with AAC needs to have autonomy, independence, and a healthy sense of self

# AGENDA

- Introduction of speaker, USSAAC and topic
- Speaker introduction of self and background
- Overview of past and current cultural attitudes toward people with AAC needs
- Insights on how the support systems do not empower people with AAC needs
- Overview of strategies that support systems can use to empower individuals with AAC needs
- Q & A

# INTRODUCTION

- do not identify as “disabled”, even though **our culture assigned and imposed the identity** on me
- typical Millennial in my educational life, professional life, love life, personal life, and spiritual life

*“I have never wished that I didn't have cerebral palsy, since it's one of the wonderful millions of pieces that make up who I am.”*

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# CULTURAL ATTITUDES

- Ableism: oppression against people with differing abilities
- Shows up in many forms:
  - discrimination, prejudice, and pre-judgements
- Binary of expectations:
  - divides people from the disabled community and the hegemonic culture
- Internalized ableism → adults with differing abilities don't respect themselves as adults

# FOUR CURRENT PITFALLS OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Not having enough knowledge about the details of the communication devices
- Being unwilling to work with individuals to communicate on the devices
- Denying the significance of having access to an individual's potential abilities with the devices
- Support systems taking too much credit for individuals' autonomy and independence

## OPTIMAL GOAL

- Support those with these differing abilities to **take responsibility** to express their autonomy and independence

# PITFALL OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

- *Many of the support systems have a limited knowledge of how to support their communicative abilities with devices.*
  - Limits opportunities for them to express their autonomy and independence.
  - There is a binary of those with differing abilities and people without, as people without differing abilities have more power over the individuals with differing abilities (Vehmas and Watson, 2014).
  - My speech device was switched, which affected my autonomy and independence.



# PITFALL OF UNWILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT

- *The support systems are unwilling to work to support the individuals with their communication.*
  - There is a misconception that those with differing abilities are a burden (Manassis, 2014).
  - Support systems are not willing to invest the time, energy, and work.
  - Support systems don't have the communication devices readily available wherever the individuals go.
  - Those with differing abilities are at risk to internalize the support systems' attitudes (O'Keefe, Kozak, and Schuller, 2007), which is called "internalized ableism."

# PITFALL OF DENYING POTENTIAL

- *Support systems deny that these individuals have the intellectual potential to communicate on their communication devices.*
  - There is a cultural misconception that those with differing abilities are less intellectual (Sloane, 2014), which is exacerbated for those with complex physical and communicative differences.
  - People assumed that I did not have the intellectual ability to be able to communicate with a device due to my limited physical and speech abilities.
  - Those with differing abilities are seen as “less” in our culture (Manassis, 2014; Sloane, 2014), which limits their opportunities to express themselves.
  - My current language system’s pre-programmed words are elementary school level, so I have to program or spell out most vocabulary I use in my daily life.

# PITFALL OF TAKING TOO MUCH CREDIT


- *Support systems working with these individuals take too much credit for the individuals' autonomy and independence.*
  - Support systems often overstep boundaries by taking too much credit for the individuals' success with communication.
  - Taking credit conveys that the work of these individuals is minimized and disempowers their autonomy and independence.
  - Individuals with complex physical and communicative differences should hold themselves accountable and take complete ownership over their autonomy and independence.
  - Cultural perception implies that these individuals would be unsuccessful without their support systems, disregarding the fact that many are successful despite their support systems.

# OPTIMAL OUTCOME

- *The support systems influence and empower the individuals who have differing abilities by supporting and recognizing these individuals' communicative potential.*
  - The support systems:
    - teach the individuals how to communicate
    - have high expectations
    - expect a level of growth
    - encourage them to communicate in everyday activities
    - treat them as equals
    - let them carry their own weight
  - People with differing abilities should be expected to interact with their peers (Manassis, 2014).

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# REFLECTION



How will you be able to apply what you learned today?

- Support systems influence, whether they disempower or empower, those with significant mobility and communicative differences with their autonomy and independence.

*To help continue this conversation, feel free to send your reflections in the chat or contact me using the information on the next slide.*

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# Q & A

I will be sharing my screen while answering your questions so that you can visualize how I form my responses.

## Contact Me

email: [faso.stephanie@gmail.com](mailto:faso.stephanie@gmail.com)

[bit.ly/gs-connect](https://bit.ly/gs-connect)

Thank you for attending this webinar!



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More info at [wevegotsmarts.com](https://wevegotsmarts.com)

**Thank you**

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**ISAAC** is pleased to announce that **ISAAC 2020**, the 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, has been rescheduled for 2021. As originally planned, the Conference will be held at the Cancún International Convention Centre (ICC) in beautiful **CANCÚN**, adjoining the Riviera Maya on México's Caribbean coast.

**JULY 31 – AUGUST 1, 2021**

AAC Camp, Pre-Conference Workshops, Executive and Council Meetings

**AUGUST 2 - 5, 2021**

Main Conference at the Cancún ICC, México

Surrounded by Mayan culture and with easy access to beautiful beaches, tours, shops and restaurants of both Cancún and the Riviera Maya, the ISAAC conference will feature AAC events and perspectives; cutting edge research and clinical innovations; workshops, seminars, exhibits, social events, and entertainment, all in a unique cultural setting.

**Mark your calendar today, and save the date for ISAAC 2020 (now 2021) in Mexico!**

**For more information, visit us at [www.isaac-online.org](http://www.isaac-online.org) and follow #ISAAC2020 on Twitter.**



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**ISAAC** se complace en anunciar que el próximo XIX congreso de la Sociedad Internacional de Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa se ha sido reprogramado para 2021. Según lo planeado originalmente, la Conferencia se llevará a cabo en el Centro Internacional de Convenciones (ICC) de la bella ciudad de **CANCÚN**, contigua a la Riviera Maya de la costa del caribe mexicano.

**31 DE JULIO - 1 DE AGOSTO, 2021**

Campamento de CAA, Talleres Preconferencia, Juntas Ejecutivas y del Consejo

**2 – 5 DE AGOSTO, 2021**

Congreso principal en el ICC de Cancún, México

Rodeado por la cultura maya y con fácil acceso a playas hermosas, tiendas, restaurants y tours tanto de Cancún como de la Riviera Maya, el congreso de ISAAC contará con eventos de CAA, perspectivas, lo último en investigaciones e innovaciones clínicas, talleres, seminarios, exposiciones de las compañías más importantes, eventos sociales y entretenimiento. Todo en un sitio culturalmente único.

**¡Anótalo en tu calendario y aparta  
la fecha para ISAAC 2020 (ahora 2021) en México!**

**Para mayor información, consulta nuestro sitio web [www.isaac-online.org](http://www.isaac-online.org)  
y síguenos en Twitter #ISAAC2020**

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