



TALKING TO THE BODY

Theory

One of the less understood aspects of Autism is *cognitive-motor* challenges. Simply put, this means that an Autistic person's movements are not always under their control. Sometimes extra movements happen. Sometimes less movements happen. Other times they might get stuck on one task or movement and not be able to change to another. When this happens, it becomes useful to *'talk to the body'*.

Talking to the body means directing your instructions to the person's body, not to them. There are a list of examples at the end of this document.

Often people with cognitive-motor challenges get told to do this or that. More often than not, they want to do what they have been asked to do. However, they may not be able to do what they've been asked to do, because their body might be out of their control at their time.

When someone with CMCs is asked to do something that they're body isn't letting them to do, they may feel a degree of shame or frustration at themselves for not being able to do what they've been asked to do.

By 'talking to the body', you make a distinction between the person and the body they inhabit. Instead of the entire person feeling at fault, they can learn it's just their body that is just letting them down, and not that they are less of a person. It also shows that the person giving the instruction understands this, and that you don't think they are naughty or non-compliant.

Please note: talking to the body doesn't mean that the person is more likely to do what you ask – that is not the point of this type of language. It is a less emotionally-laden way of speaking, and the less emotional a person is the more likely they are to be able to control their body. However, this language does not take away the underlying CMCs which are the original source of difficulty.

Examples:

Talking to the person: <i>less</i> helpful	Talking to the body: <i>more</i> helpful
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Come here"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Bring your body this way"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Sit down"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Put your body on the red chair"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Stop that"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Pause your body"• "Control your body"• "Be in your body"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeating instructions several times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Trust your body"• "Trust your body to follow my words"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Why aren't you listening to me?!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I know you always try your hardest to get your body to do what I ask"

A few more tips

It's always easier to process instructions or other information which are given with:

- A soft voice volume
- A measured, unemotional tone (without being cold or robotic)
- If possible, sing instructions with a made-up melody.