

A Picture's Worth: PECS and Other Visual Communication Strategies in Autism, Second Edition

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A child literally bangs her head against a wall in frustration. She wants something, but can't seem to tell anyone what it is. Her mother gently but firmly pulls her into her arms to protect her little girl as her heart aches. It's not an unheard of scene in the autism community. And it's one that strengthens anew a parent's resolve to find a way to better communicate with their child who has autism.

In their book *A Picture's Worth*, Dr. Andy Bondy and Lori Frost explain the Picture Exchange Communication System, which assists children with autism in sharing their thoughts and needs. Better communication promotes richer relationships for everyone, as well as greater safety and increased comfort for the child. Bondy and Frost offer parents (and teachers and therapists) realistic hope that better communication may be possible as well as practical advice for how to achieve that goal.

The authors detail the communication system they created, in which children use pictures to help them communicate. They share how and when to train a child in this system. They explain the training process, how to evaluate results, and how to gradually increase the richness of the communication. As they do so, they are hopeful, but clear and realistic about expectations for results. Along the way, they allow plenty of room for differences between children, celebrate even small successes, and encourage continued growth. And throughout, they share plenty of true-to-life stories that highlight the struggles and joys of working with children who have communication challenges.

Bondy is a behavior analyst, while Frost is a speech language pathologist. Their various specialties merge seamlessly to provide a comprehensive understanding of the needs of children with autism. They've been working with such children and their families for years. Their sensitivity, expertise, and insights shine through on every page.

While the stories included draw the reader in, the book does sound a bit like a textbook at times. But that's minimal and to be expected in a manual as instructional as this one. Generally, the authors provide solid, easy-to understand advice that anyone can follow. They are clear that every child is different and that no single strategy will work in every situation, or work to the same extent. Nevertheless, *A Picture's Worth* offers a shining light for parents and teachers looking for a way to break through barriers and enrich relationships with their children.

DIANE GARDNER (September 13, 2011)

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