COLLECTIONS: Topic Setting for People with Significant Cognitive Delay

Musselwhite, 2006

Intro

This tip was developed about 20 years ago by the Mother-to-Mother group at the Irene Wortham Center in Asheville, NC. We tried to think about a way to help strangers interact more appropriately with students who didn't have a way to initiate an interaction. We realized that one strategy could be using existing collections or starting new ones! This can help individuals: a) initiate interactions; b) change perceptions of partners. Pairing these concrete objects with step-listing devices such as: Sequencer (Adaptivation), StepbyStep (AbleNet), Hip Step Talker (Enabling Devices) or Stepper (AMDI) will make these conversations rock!

Who is This For?

This activity is for individuals with very significant cognitive delays, who have great difficulty initiating conversations. Collections can be a very concrete way to start a topic with peers, and even with unfamiliar partners.

Sample Stories

Nick's Baseball Caps: 'Nick' often wears a baseball cap when he went out, as he is sensitive to light, and hates sunglasses. His Mom reported that, when wearing a cap, strangers would often approach him and interact in a natural manner, such as: 'Hey! Are you a Tar Heel fan too? Go Heels!' The only change needed was for Nick and his Dad to co-construct verbal messages about the message on his hat! (See sample script on page 3 of this tip*).

Annabel's My Little Pony: 'Annabel' loves her My Little Pony collection, and enjoys stroking the manes of the ponies (YES, this tip is 20 years old!!) Her Mom often packs one in the bag when they go to the grocery store. Mom observed that people often come up to them to talk about the ponies. This included little girls as well as adults! Annabel and her Mom worked to co-construct a script to talk about her pony collection.

More Info?

*See: *Can We Chat* **book and** *Sequenced Social Scripts CD,* **by Musselwhite & Burkhart, www.aacintervention.com/Products)**

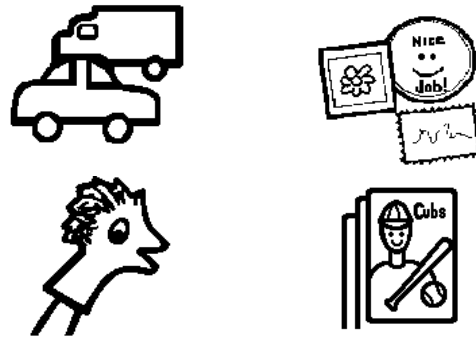# COLLECTIONS: Normative Play Materials (Musselwhite, 2006)

RATIONALE: Collections can be appropriate at any age, and offer a way to "normalize" unusual interests. Collections can also serve a variety of functions for persons with severe handicaps.

FUNCTIONS OF COLLECTIONS:
- A topic of conversation
- Something to look for on field trips or vacations
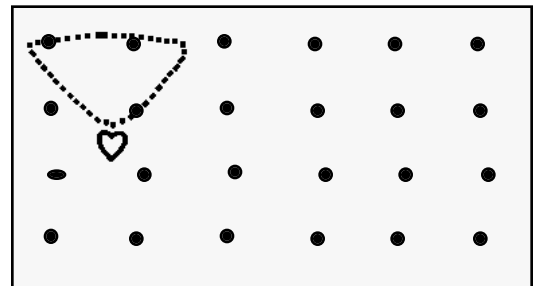- A joint activity (e.g., with peers, clubs, volunteers)
- A gift idea

SAMPLE ITEMS:

matchbox cars   jewelry   key chains
puppets   post cards   patches
message buttons   baseball caps transforming
toys   stuffed animals   stamps
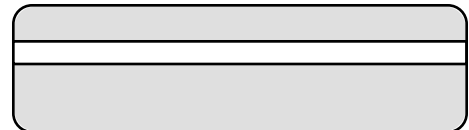squirt guns   sunglasses   baseball cards
comic books   stickers

STORING COLLECTIONS:
Pegs on the wall (hat), or pegboard (necklaces)
Tackle box (key chains, jewelry, matchbox cars)
Wall displays — use Tempo Display fabric to mount:
        Elastic: squirtguns, sunglasses, small animals
        Velcro: hankies, bandanas
        Hooks: ncklaces, bracelets, key chains

CHOOSING ITEMS:
Various displays can be used to select the item of the day; for example, a Choice Board could be used.

DISPLAY ITEMS:
Affixed to waist by spiral key chain (e.g., whistles, toys)
Worn on body (e.g., hair ornament, message button, bandana)
Affixed to chair (e.g., sunglasses velcroed to chair) or laptray
        (e.g., toy attached with elastic)

MAXIMIZING USE OF COLLECTIONS:
Use a wall reminder chart to prompt appropriate use of collections. Include information such as: Name, collection; storage (e.g., wall display); display (e.g., laptray / elastic); choice method (e.g., choice board - 3 items - reaching); and use (e.g., choosing, turntaking, eye-gaze to comments, visual tracking).

Sample Collections Scripts

<u>Nick's Hat Collection</u>

Greeting   Hi.

Starter   Are you looking at my hat?

Maintainers I loooooove the Tar Heels!

       Heels are THE BEST!

       Go Heels!!

Closing   See you later!

<u>Annabel's My Little Pony Collection</u>

Greeting   Hi.

Starter   This is My Little Pony.

Maintainers I have 27 ponies!

       I like their manes best.

       Do you want to pat my pony?

Closing   Well, goodbye!