

Communication Without Words

A How-To Guide for Connecting with Non-Verbal or Semi-Verbal Kids

If your child is working with a BC or a BA, speech therapist, or other specialist; follow their lead first.

But if you're still waiting on a diagnosis, navigating long waitlists, or just trying to connect in the meantime — this guide is a solid place to start.

You don't need to wait for an expert to begin building safety, trust, and connection. You can start today with presence, pattern, and a few simple tools.

1. Set the Goal

You're not trying to make them talk.

You're trying to help them feel safe, seen, and understood — in their body, in the room, with you.

This isn't about pushing speech.

It's about showing your child that connection is still possible — even without words.

Do this instead of saying it:

- Show love with repetition and pattern
- Let them lead. Mirror instead of push
- Use consistency like it's language

2. Choose Your Core Tools

These are just starting points — not a checklist.

Every child is different. Every connection is custom.

What matters is that the tools feel **simple, familiar, and safe** — for *you* and *your child*.
The best tools are the ones you'll actually use; especially in moments of stress, shutdown, or panic.
So don't be afraid to make your own.
Keep it consistent. Keep it gentle. Let it become part of your shared language.
These tools don't require speech — just presence, patience, and repetition.

Gesture Routines

- Create simple, repeatable signals. Use them daily.
- Example: Two taps on the chest = “I see you”
- Thumbs up, palm out, hand over heart — these become familiar and safe

Emotion Cards / Color Codes

- Use pictures, emoji faces, or colored cards to represent feelings
- Keep it simple: mad / sad / okay / happy / tired
- Let them point. No need to speak.

♀ Facial + Body Mirroring

- Match their facial expression, body posture, and pace
- Don't force eye contact — just reflect what you see
- This says: “*I'm with you*,” without pressure

Predictable Play

- Pick one small playful ritual. Repeat it every day
- Example: tickle countdown, foot taps before bed, peekaboo under a blanket
- Repetition = safety = connection

Touch Patterns

- Build a secret “squeeze language” with your hands
 - 1 squeeze = hello
 - 2 squeezes = I love you

- 3 squeezes = goodnight
- No pressure. No explanation. Just do it, gently and often.

3. Make a Plan

Use 1–2 tools per day. Keep it consistent. Keep it simple.

- Choose one gesture. Use it in the same moment every day (like when they wake up, or before bed)
- Introduce a feelings board or emotion card set, let them explore it with no pressure
- Try this 3-step rhythm:
Gesture → Mirror → Touch

Repetition builds trust. Familiarity becomes safety.

Over time, these moments turn into routines; and routines become rituals.

And rituals are powerful. They tell your child: *“This is what we do. This is how we stay connected. This is safe.”*

You don't need variety, you need rhythm.

4. Stay With It

They're already communicating. You're just learning how to listen differently

It's not about speed. It's about safety

Repetition builds trust, not perfection

These moments may feel small, but they matter.

Every squeeze, glance, pause, or mirrored breath is a brick in the bridge between you and your child.

Keep showing up. Keep it simple.

Connection is already happening; quietly, steadily, without words.

Final Note

You don't need all the answers.

You just need to keep showing up, in small, consistent ways.

The language will come — maybe with words, maybe without.

But the connection? That starts now.

You got this!

Alex Lesage