

# The four-object method of validating Facilitated Communication

How can one be sure that the answers given via facilitated communication are coming from the autistic or other handicapped person, and not the facilitator? I suggest the "four object" method. This simple test can be done in 15 or 20 minutes in any setting, and has been used in courtrooms. It does not require the use of earphones, tape recorders, tables with partitions along the top, picture cards, or any other paraphernalia.

How does one conduct the "four object" test? The parent (or judge, or experimenter) requests that the facilitator go to another part of the building, so that he or she cannot hear what is going on. The parent then selects four objects from his or her person, or from the room, and shows these objects, dramatically, one at a time, to the autistic person. For example:

1. Pull a comb out of your pocket or purse. Say, very clearly, "This is a *comb*." Comb your hair with it a few times. Comb the child's hair with it a few times, saying the word "comb" very clearly. Replace the comb in purse or pocket.

2. Open a desk drawer. If you find a pair of scissors, look delighted and say, "Here are some *scissors*!" Use the scissors to cut a few strands of your own hair, saying, "I'm giving myself a haircut with the scissors." Then do the same to the autistic person, laughingly saying, "I'm using the scissors to give you a haircut." Cut some scraps of paper, clearly demonstrating the scissors before they are replaced in the drawer.

3. Pull a dollar bill from your wallet. Look disgusted, saying, "This is only a *one* dollar bill, I wanted a *ten*!" Crumple up the dollar bill and throw it in the wastebasket. Then, after a few seconds, say, "Well, the dollar bill is still good *money*, I think I will keep it." Retrieve the dollar bill. Perhaps you will get the scissors out of the drawer, and cut a little corner off the dollar bill, saying, "I am cutting the dollar bill with the scissors."

4. Take a book off the shelf, open it to find a picture of a horse or a dog, or a fish, or whatever. Talk about the horse or the fish or the dog emphatically. "Have you ever been horseback riding?" "Someday we ought to go horseback riding," etc. Replace the book.

5. Take off your shoe, say, "This shoe hurts my foot. There is something wrong with it." Feel inside the shoe, then perhaps put the shoe on your head and say, "I wonder if this shoe can be used as a hat?" Walk a few feet with the shoe on your head, to dramatize the shoe. Then replace the shoe on your foot.

Call the facilitator back into the room, and ask what was discussed or shown to the autistic person during the facilitator's absence. If the handicapped person types things such as "shoe," "hat," "dollar" (or "money"), "scissors," "comb," "haircut," etc., that suggests real communication.

If the facilitator tells you that autistic people don't like to be tested, or that an autistic person has "word finding problems," or whatever . . . you can decide for yourself whether to accept those reasons.

But—before you give up on a child's ability to communicate, make sure he can read: Send us a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a free copy of "Teaching a mute autistic child to read."

—BR

## Clomipramine: positive results, but caution urged

(continued from page 1)

reports of "rage reactions" occurring in children taking clomipramine. Here is a recent report from a reader:

"As a parent who enjoys reading and writing about autism on computer forums, I've had contact with many parents of children with autism as well as other neurobehavioral disorders. There have been a flurry of anecdotal reports about seizure-like rages in children while taking the drug Anafranil [brand name for clomipramine]. Some people, including M.D.s with experience, have never seen rages with Anafranil; some have seen them frequently enough to be reluctant to prescribe the drug for children with Tourette's or attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder. The discrepancy is unexplained and may reflect any number of possibilities [drug interactions, etc.]. The drug really does seem to stop disabling obsessions and compulsions, but if a child develops rages while on Anafranil, there is some reason to suspect the medication might be involved."

"Clomipramine ameliorates adventitious movements and compulsions in prepubertal autistic boys," James R. Brasic, Jacqueline Y. Barnett, Diana Kaplan, Ileana Bernal, Patricia Aisemberg, R. Todd Lafargue, Brian Sheitman, S. Kowalik, Margaret O. Tsaltas, Madeleine Studnick, Raheela Ahmad, and J.G. Young; *Neurology*, 43, April 1993, A250.

## Controlled Evaluations of Facilitated Communication

Compiled with the assistance of Gina Green, New England Center for Autism

### F/C Study Results (continued). TABLE III: Update through 8/93

SOURCE	DIAGNOSIS	METHOD	F/C CONFIRMED
27. Eberlin, Ibel and Jacobson (DD Institute, New York)	MR/autistic	Message passing, picture naming; facilitator blind	0 of 1
28. Cobay (University of Arizona)	autistic	Fill-in and short answer questions; blind	0 of 4
29. Marks, Conrad and Hurt at AAMR 1993	autistic/PDD	Several word identification tasks; video descriptions; visual, auditory, tactile; blind	a) 3 of 20 b) 0 of 10 c) 0 of 7
30. Vásquez (in press, JADD)	autistic	Picture and object identification, video description; blind	2 of 2
31. Gravelle and Konstantareas (presented at Int'l Autism Conference, 1993)	autistic/MR	Word, picture matching, naming; blind	1 of 6
32. Simpson and Myles (presented at Int'l Autism Conference, 1993)	autistic	Variety of common tasks; blind	0 of 18
33. Young and Williams (Priority Care Service, Reading, England)	autistic	Questions re stories just read, pictures just seen	0 of 1
34. Crews, Sanders et al. (submitted for pub., JADD)	MR, MR/CP	Visual, auditory, tactile; words, digits, objects; blind	0 of 6 (6 MR) 22 of 2 (2 MR/CP)
35. Green and Ebert (New England Ctr for Autism)	autistic	Various tasks, recent events; blind	0 of 1

### SUMMARY

TOTAL	F/C CONFIRMED*	F/C FAILED
STUDIES: 35	6	29
SUBJECTS: 285	11	274

\* In all cases, "confirmed" indicates minimal naming responses—usually one word only