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DAILY LIFE SKILLS

ANYONE CAN COOK!

WWW.21NEXTCOMMUNITIES

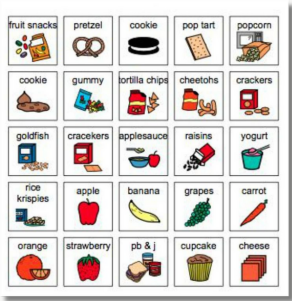
“No one is born a great cook, one learns by doing.”

JULIA CHILDS

Augmentative Alternative Communication

Adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD), with complex communication needs are more likely to have used augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) as a way to navigate a linguistic-based society. AAC means the variety of ways in which a person communicates. Augmentative means adding to or supplementing communication; alternative means other methods. We’ve all employed AAC at various points in our lives by using facial expressions to convey a feeling when words fail; writing notes or quick messages shortly after an oral procedure or when laryngitis robbed one of their ability to speak temporarily.

For others, like Dorian, reliance upon AAC is not short-term, but the primary mode of communication. Introduction to AAC as a communication tool is typically launched in preschool developmental programs as an early intervention service. Young children are introduced to picture communication symbols (PCS) or a picture exchange communication system (PCES). We employed various methods from AAC devices, PCES, and American Sign Language (ASL) to ensure Dorian had agency and a voice. With each successive leap forward in technological advances, the sophistication of the devices led to greater fluidity and integration of her voice with those in her orbit.



Life Skill Development

Life skill development becomes the goal after age 14 for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Meal kit systems are ideal for adults with IDD – offering them more choices, levels of independence, and an opportunity to have more autonomy over a daily life function those without disabilities routinely enjoy. Whether under the watchful eyes of a caregiver or flexing solo chops, meal kits provide:

- Greater meal choices
- Scaffolded skill development in meal preparation
- Easy-to-follow recipes
- Exposure to new cooking & eating experiences

So many aspects of a person with an IDD are managed or controlled by caregivers, paid personnel, or well-intentioned people. Remember, the primary purposes of meal kits are to:

- Teach one to cook
- Reduce food waste
- Increase meal options

Remy of Ratouille fame was encouraged to pursue his love of cooking by his ghostly mentor, Auguste Gusteau, and his signature cookbook, Anyone Can Cook. For a self-professed germophobe like myself, a rat running a kitchen let alone cooking in one was almost a bridge too far. But Gusteau and Julia Childs understood what we all must embrace for our loved ones who will have varying levels of independence in the homes and kitchens they occupy; to learn how to cook, one must learn by doing.

Anyone can cook, and meal kit delivery systems make it even more possible.



We used PCES to create visual schedules, chore lists, and reminders for Dorian and her siblings. Using PCES to teach our children to cook was the most inclusive method that met the learning needs of all of our kids. Who knew we were teaching her a skill that primed her for a food delivery service!

Food Meal Kit Services

In 2021, the food meal kit services industry generated \$6.9 billion in sales. This industry is on track to hit more than \$10 billion by 2024. I have zero evidence that HelloFresh, Home Chef, or Gobble built multi-million dollar meal kit delivery services around the needs of individuals who need AAC. However, PCES is used to parlay instructions on how to use the ingredients in these kits. Currently, there are more than 30 meal delivery services on the market serving up different options designed to meet a variety of dietary needs, budgets, and lifestyles.

