

The Parent's Guide to Manding:

Fostering Emotional Intelligence in Your Child

Unlocking Your Child's Communication Potential

As a parent of a child with autism, one of the most rewarding moments is when your child communicates a want or need. However, frustration often arises when they struggle to express themselves effectively.

Manding—the ability to request something desired—is a powerful skill that helps children gain independence, reduces meltdowns, and strengthens their confidence in communication. Whether your child is verbal or non-verbal, teaching mands can open doors to better self-expression and stronger parent-child connections.

This guide provides simple, practical steps to incorporate manding into your child's daily life. You'll learn how to recognize communication opportunities, encourage requests, and reinforce positive interactions using everyday activities. Let's make communication easier and more effective—one mand at a time!

Ready to get started?



1. Start Small – The Basics of Manding

- Begin with highly motivating items or activities (favorite snacks, toys, or a preferred game).
- Use simple, clear language that matches your child’s current ability. For example, if your child is just learning, use one-word requests like “ball” instead of “I want the ball.”
- If your child is non-verbal, introduce gestures, picture cards, or an AAC device to help them communicate.

Example Activity: Snack Time Requests

1. Hold a snack your child enjoys but don’t hand it over immediately.
2. Wait for them to reach for it, point, or look at it—this is their natural cue to make a mand.
3. Prompt them with a phrase like: “Say ‘cracker’” or “sign ‘cracker’.”
4. Immediately give them the cracker and praise them: “Great asking for a cracker!”

2. Observe and Respond to Communication Attempts

- Many children already attempt to communicate but may not do so verbally. Look for signs like reaching, pulling, or looking at an object.
- Shape these behaviors into verbal or non-verbal mands by prompting them to say or sign the request.

Example Activity: Toy Play Requests

1. When playing with a favorite toy (e.g., a car), hold it up and pause before giving it to your child.
2. Encourage them to say, sign, or point to request it.
3. Use clear prompts like:
 - "Car!"
 - If they don't respond, give a small piece of the request: "Caaa..." (let them fill in the rest).
4. Once they attempt the mand, reinforce it immediately by giving them the car.
5. Avoid asking 'yes' or 'no' questions when mand training for simple requests when possible.

3. Reinforce, Reinforce, Reinforce!

- Immediate reinforcement is key! Right after your child successfully mands, reward them with what they asked for.
- Pairing praise, smiles, or clapping with a fun item or activity can help encourage future requests.
- Avoid reinforcing incorrect or problematic behaviors (e.g., crying instead of requesting). Instead, guide them to a proper mand.

Example Phrases for Reinforcement:

1. Verbal child: "Great job asking for the ball!"
2. Non-verbal child: "I love how you pointed to 'drink' on your AAC board!"
3. Gesture-based mand: "You signed 'more'! Awesome asking!"

4. Create Everyday Opportunities for Manding

Manding should be natural and fun! The best way to encourage communication is to embed requests into daily activities.

Everyday Activities That Encourage Manding:

Mealtime

- Keep preferred foods just out of reach to encourage asking.
- Phrases to model: "I want milk." / "More apples." / "Juice, please."

Playtime

- Give only one piece of a toy (e.g., one block at a time) so they have to request more.
- Phrases to model: "More blocks." / "I want the red car."

Getting Ready

- Hold shoes, socks, or a jacket and wait for them to ask.
- Phrases to model: "Shoes, please." / "Help with zipper."

Outdoor Time & Errands

- Have them request to go outside or ask for things at the store.
- Phrases to model: "Go outside." / "I want a banana."

Social Interactions

- Encourage them to mand when interacting with siblings or peers (e.g., asking for a turn with a toy).
- Phrases to model: "My turn!" / "Let's play!"



5. Collaborate with Professionals + Adjust as Needed

- Work with your child's treatment team to align strategies at home.
- If your child isn't progressing, adjust your approach:
- Simplify your prompts.
- Use visual supports like PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).
- Be patient and celebrate small victories!

Teaching your child to express their needs and wants builds confidence and reduces frustration. Keep manding fun and engaging by making it part of daily activities.

Consistency is key! Small, repeated efforts lead to long-term communication growth. Every request your child makes—no matter how small—is a step toward greater independence and connection. Keep encouraging and celebrating their progress!

