DEVICE CUSTOMIZATION THROUGH MEMORY MINING

At Lingraphica, we know customizing a patient's AAC device is crucial for success. But the fact is, it isn't always easy.

Benefits of customization:

- Increases active participation in life activities
- Increases socialization, improving mental health
- Improves ownership of device with meaningful, salient topics
- Encourages storytelling, a key component of identity
- Increases ability to use speech/language
- Increases engagement with staff (if in LTC) and enhances the care received
- Enhances communication partner/staff enjoyment and engagement with patient

Common barriers to customizing an AAC device:

- Communication partners/staff anticipate needs/wants; don't see use for a device
- No one available to provide information or details from the person's life
- Patient isn't able to provide life details
- Learned non-use

One technique to use when these barriers arise is Memory Mining (Harris, 2020). This helps to create a personalized timeline from which the device can be personalized with important memories and anecdotes.

Here's how to get started:

Create a timeline:
- Start with the patient's birth year
- Determine the years during childhood (ages 6-12)
- Determine the years during adolescence (ages 13-18)
- Determine the years during early adulthood (ages 19-25)

Fill in the timeline with historic and personal events:
- What public/historical events occurred during each time? What does the patient remember about them?
- Where did the patient live during each time frame? Can they describe their house, town?
- What family, friends, and other people were important during each timeframe?
- How were holidays celebrated?
- What was popular music, television shows, and movies from the timeframe? Did the patient enjoy them?

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Example:

BIRTH YEAR	CHILDHOOD YEARS (6-12)	ADOLESCENT YEARS (13-18)	YOUNG ADULT YEARS (19-25)
1952	1958-1964	1965-1970	1971-1977
	Events: Kennedy Assassination, Berlin Wall erected, Civil Rights movement Popular Media: Elvis, Frank Sinatra, The Parent Trap	Events: Moon landing, Vietnam War, Woodstock, the first SuperBowl Popular Media: The Beatles, Otis Redding, The Doors, Star Trek, The Graduate, Midnight Cowboy	Events: Watergate, Environmental movement Popular Media: Jackson Browne, Bee Gees, ABBA, MASH, Happy Days

General tips for memory mining:

- Model sharing your own past experiences
- Use picture support to give choices (e.g., bring up a map when discussing where they lived; show pictures of historical events)
- Use open-ended statements and questions to encourage sharing; provide choices or systematic guesses when needed
- *The goal is sharing memories, not factual accuracy. It's okay to accept personal perspectives or information that can't be verified.*