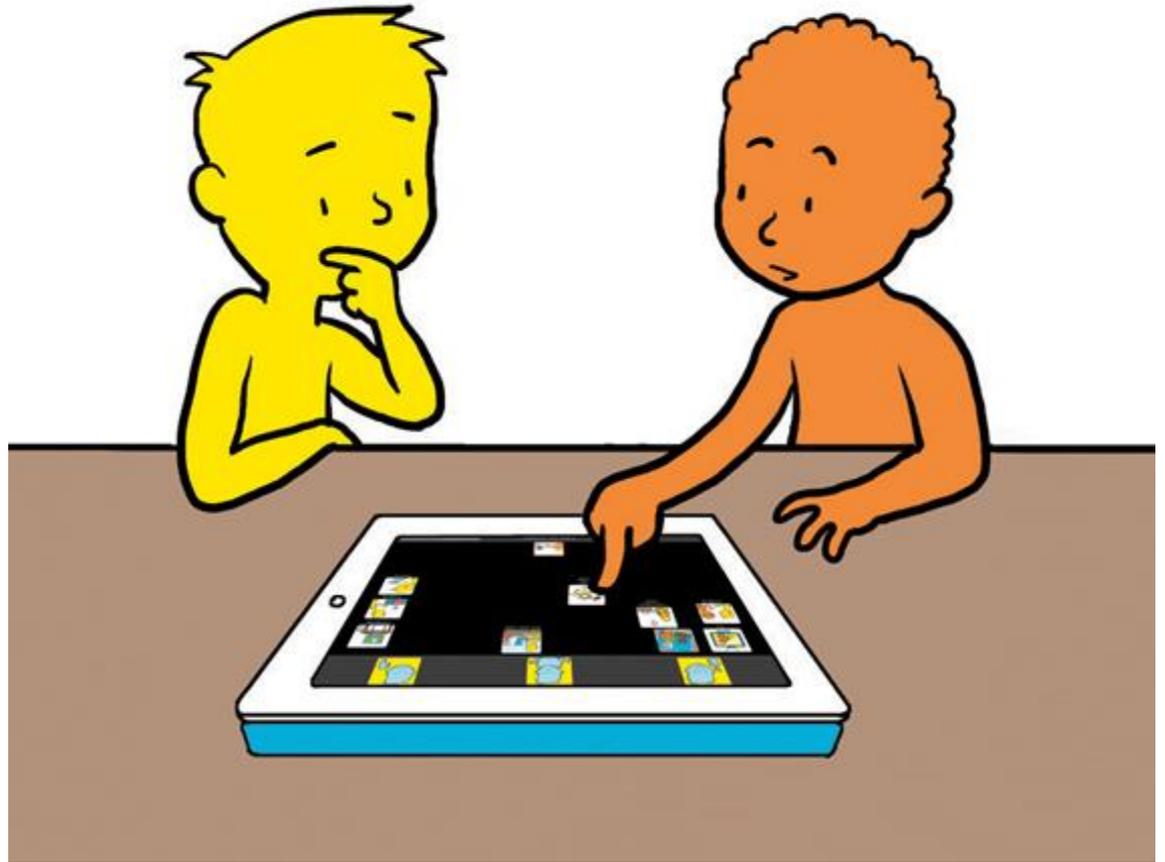


Talking Mats

*'A resource to
enhance
communication'*

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Session Aims

- ❖ Background to Talking Mats
- ❖ Try your own mat!
- ❖ How we at University of Stirling have/ are using Talking Mats
- ❖ How it fits with Career Theory
- ❖ How we plan to go forward with Talking Mats
- ❖ Summary & questions

What is Talking Mats?

1998

- Talking Mats grew out of a research project conducted by Speech & Language therapist Joan Murphy at Stirling University
- Researching people with cerebral palsy who were using hi-tech communication aids – but who had insufficient language skills to utilise the technology effectively
- Research looked at enabling this client group to have a voice – did this by drawing and cutting up symbols
- From there Talking Mats developed !

Talking Mats – History and Background

- Research has grown and the Team moved out of the University to become a Social Enterprise – a not for profit organisation
- Bank of UK trainers
- Has now gone global – Sweden, Finland, Australia, India, South Africa, Kenya – the list is growing...

Where is Talking Mats used

Health Services
Social work
Education
The prison service
Voluntary agencies
Housing associations
Family home
Residential/nursing homes
Advocacy

What is Talking Mats?

Talking Mats is a visual framework that uses picture symbols to help people communicate effectively”.

There are 2 versions of Talking Mats:

- ❖ A physical version which consists of a textured mat and a set of symbols (launched in 1998)
- ❖ A digital version which can be used with a tablet, smart board or computer (launched in 2013).

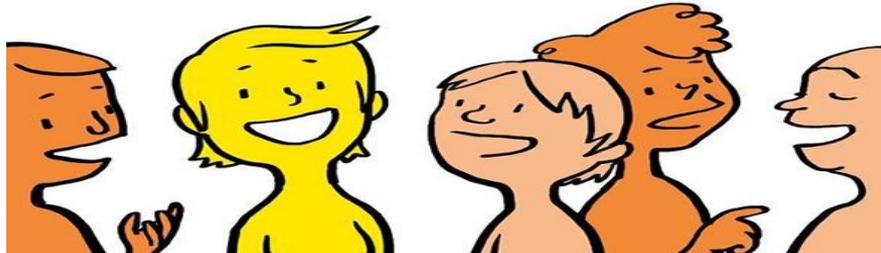


What is Talking Mats?

Interactive resource that uses 3 sets of picture symbols:

1. Topics
2. Options
3. Visual scale

Not a stand alone resource replacing existing methods of communication but a tool to augment communication for specific situations



A Talking Mat

Topic
Top Scale
Options



Why does TM work?

There are a number of reasons why Talking Mats is effective at helping people express their thoughts

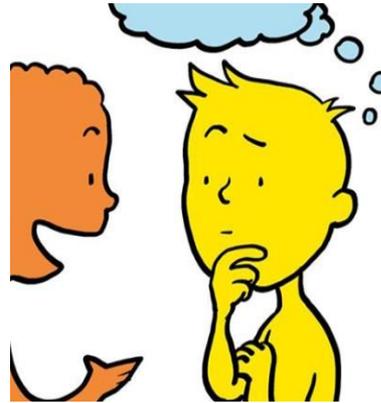
Supports comprehension by:

- ❖ Focusing on the essential words and omitting non-essential language
- ❖ Giving information in multiple channels – visual, auditory and tactile
- ❖ Helping people process concepts by breaking information down into small, manageable chunks
- ❖ Reducing memory demands
- ❖ Reducing distractibility
- ❖ Allowing the client time to process information and respond in their own time

Why does TM work?

Improves quality of information by:

- ❖ Giving control to the person being interviewed
- ❖ Providing a structured framework for open questions
- ❖ Avoiding direct confrontation
- ❖ Giving people time
- ❖ Helping people to say “no”



Links to Career Guidance Theory

“In a post modern world where notions of secure and linear career progression have been overturned, career counsellors need new ways of working with their clients. Many established theoretical models seem narrow, overly classified and at odds with the dynamic realities of real life in a rapidly changing world” Reid H.

Usefulness and Truthfulness

Links to Career Guidance Theory

- Narrative / Constructivist approaches to Careers Guidance (Peavey / Savickas) al?
- Life Design? – From Scientific facts to narrative realities
- Career Adaptability model? (Brimrose, Barnes, Brown& Hughes)

Current Range of uses within Careers & Employability at Stirling

- ❖ Guidance Interviews
- ❖ Group Setting (Modules, Division Work)
- ❖ Peer Review
- ❖ Evaluation Tool (Module Review)
- ❖ Menu Tool (Setting the agenda for the session)
- ❖ WBL Mid-semester Review (pilot)
- ❖ Lift-Off



Outcomes

- ❖ Clients found it useful
- ❖ Staff found it to be a powerful resource
- ❖ TM can fit into the guidance context
- ❖ Further 3 staff have been trained in the department to use TM
- ❖ Used properly it is not time consuming and enhances the guidance process
- ❖ Not for every student but can fit with most learning styles
- ❖ It was an enjoyable experience for both client and adviser alike!

Using Talking Mats in a CEIAG Setting

“By providing high quality careers information, education and guidance, the Career Development Centre at Stirling University endeavours to enable clients to make **informed career decisions** and develop the skills necessary to allow them to manage their careers throughout their lives.”

University of Stirling

Career and Employability Service

Statement of Service

TM in a CEIAG context

Changing nature of our role

“Careers advisers should be learning to value a more dynamic, imaginative and flexible approach to careers advising”

- ❖ Space
- ❖ Time
- ❖ Over reliance on verbal methods of enquiry?
- ❖ Can career guidance sessions be verbal, physical and visual?

Action Research Project

Can Talking Mats be used in the delivery of Careers Education to students in a Higher Education setting?

Research Project

- ❖ Purchased some mats!
- ❖ Purchased software
- ❖ Identified a relevant topic
- ❖ Created a set of symbols focussing on 'Interview Technique'
- ❖ Piloted the use of this activity with students



Research

- ❖ Worked with students on an individual basis
- ❖ 12+ students
- ❖ 4 staff members trained to administer TM



Research

- ❖ Filmed the sessions (with student permission!)
- ❖ Asked staff to complete an evaluation questionnaire
- ❖ Asked students involved to complete an evaluation questionnaire

Resources & Training

Training to use TM is essential

❖ Course consists of 2 half days with 4-6 week interval in between

Part 1 – provides background, information, practice & support to enable participants to prepare and create their own Talking Mat

Part 2 – uses video clips as focus for discussion, reflection & consideration of future applications

Or 1 full- day course

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Further information

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