

# SABOTAGE!!

by Caroline Musselwhite

## Sabotage

### WHAT AND WHY?

Goossens', Crain, & Elder (1992) have developed excellent ideas for using sabotage as a strategy to promote initiation of AAC use, whether light or high tech. This tip shares their ideas, and adds some new tips. Sabotage refers to creatively managing the environment so that there is a NEED to communicate. It can be highly motivating and fun, and well as an effective way to support students in learning or practicing communicative functions.



### WHEN TO SABOTAGE?

Sabotage is especially appropriate for 'process activities' such as:

- cooking
- art
- science experiments

### HOW TO SABOTAGE?

1) **Make a Plan!** Think ahead, deciding what types of sabotage you will use, and who to sabotage. This is based on student needs and abilities, not on whims. For example:

- Alicia seems to notice when something goes wrong in a cooking or art activity, as she looks and laughs. Use this as an opportunity to help her comment on actions (OOPS / UH-OH!)
- Melodie likes to have a turn, but is having a hard time finding vocabulary on her communication device. Support her in learning to request recurrence (asking for MORE) at various stages in the cooking or art activity
- Marcus already knows how to comment and request recurrence so we want to move him forward. Today, we will support him in protesting (NO! NOT CUP) or requesting action (GET BOWL / PUT IN OVEN / OPEN IT)

2) **Set the Stage!** Think ahead to items you should place:

- out of reach
- out of sight
- in another room (to require going for help)

3) **Designate a 'Stooge'!**

- With younger students, consider using a 'helping doll.' This is a large doll who can assist you in getting materials, performing actions. She can either be a great model . . . or a fabulous mix-up. The doll can get wrong ingredients, etc.
- For older students, enlist a peer tutor or a paraprofessional to make mistakes.

# WHAT TYPES OF SABOTAGE?

## **INCORRECT ITEM:**

**Description:** Leader uses AAC device / overlay to request object (GET BOWL, or WE NEED BOWL). Helper gets incorrect item.

**Possible Language to Elicit:**

- comment on action (UH-OH!)
- protest / negate (NO! NOT CUP!)
- request action (GET BOWL; WE NEED BOWL)

"Get a bowl."



"Put on frosting."

## **MISSING ITEM:**

**Description:** Leader uses AAC device / overlay to request action (PUT ON FROSTING). However, item to complete action is missing (ex: no knife).

**Possible Language to Elicit:**

- comment on action (UH-OH!)
- protest / negate (NO KNIFE; DON'T HAVE KNIFE)
- request action (NEED KNIFE)
- request information (WHERE KNIFE?)

## **OMITTED STEP:**

**Description:** Leader uses AAC device / overlay to request action (PUT MIX IN BOWL).

However, a step is missing.

**Possible Language to Elicit:**

- comment on action (UH-OH! / OOPS!)
- protest / negate (NO BOX IN BOWL!)
- request action (OPEN IT)



"Put the mix in the bowl."



"Open the box."

## **INCOMPLETE STEP:**

**Description:** Leader uses AAC device / overlay to request action (OPEN BOX). However, the action is not completed (ex: open just a bit).

**Possible Language to Elicit:**

- comment on action (UH-OH! / OOPS!)
- request recurrence (OPEN MORE)