

Remnant Books – How to Share a Message in a Tactile and Visual Way

For some people, sharing some news or information with someone else is tricky. It may be that the person does not have the language available to them, or that they are not able to access this language. Perhaps this person needs to touch and feel an object to help with understanding. For some people, initiating a conversation and getting someone's attention is difficult too. How can we support this?

What is a Remnant Book?



A remnant book (sometimes called a 'souvenir book' or 'scrap book') is a simple, practical tool to add to someone's AAC supports. The book is made up of scraps, objects, pictures or items that represent recent past events. Each page should have a written message which explains the meaning and context to the communication partner. Examples of remnants could be ticket stubs, food wrappers, receipts or even something with a nice smell (like a coffee sachet).



Remnant books come in all shapes and sizes. They can be made from photo albums, clear files, ring binders or a series of clear plastic wallets/ziplock bags. The shape and size will depend on that person's physical and sensory needs. Can the person turn the pages themselves? Can the person carry the book with them? Will it sit on a wheelchair tray or on someone's lap? It is useful to have some kind of clear plastic wallet or folder and a space for a written message.

Who is a Remnant Book for?

I have seen remnant books used with people of all ages successfully. For younger children, the idea of 'show and tell' makes sense in a school setting. Often students are asked to share their news, and this is a perfect opportunity to do this in an accessible way. Adults with physical, cognitive or word-finding difficulties will also benefit from this practical strategy.

How do I use the Remnant Book?

Remnant books are a great way of initiating a conversation. Create the opportunity for communication by asking the person what they have been up to. Read the message aloud and take a look at and touch the object. Allow the person to touch the object too. Have a chat! You can add to the remnant book too. Think about something you have done together during the day and find an object to represent the activity. It is always a good idea to talk this through with the person and write the message together. "Hey, let's tell Margaret about woodwork today." Slip the object and note into a pocket to be shared with someone else.

An extension to the remnant book could be adding some symbols which can be accessed through eye-pointing, scanning or direct pointing. This way, the person using the book may have a way to respond to your questions, gain your attention or ask you a question. As with any new symbols for communication, this would need to be modelled repeatedly so that they know how to use them.



References and further reading

As well as my own classroom experience, I gathered information, images and ideas from the following helpful links for this Tip of the Month:

<http://www.fullspectrumlearning.ca/communication.html>

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/strategies/classroom-organization-management>

<http://www.steppingstonesres.org/augmentandalt/009-remn.htm>