

IS THAT CLEAR?

1.6

What are you really asking?

As we've just seen, instructions and questions can all too often overwhelm your communication partner.

A good way to avoid unnecessary confusion is to ask the following question, *What are you really asking?*

Let's look at these examples and why they can be tricky.

Hi, how are you? (greeting)

Some autistic people may see this way of saying hello as a genuine enquiry after their health. This can leave the person wanting or needing to truthfully explain how they are – which isn't required or expected in this context but might be in another.

Can you sit down? (teacher to pupil)

Some autistic people may interpret this as *Are you able to sit down* and may just reply, 'yes' but not sit down.

How's it going? (manager to a new employee)

The manager is asking if the new employee has settled in. This kind of open question invites multiple responses leaving some autistic people unsure how to respond. The use of 'going' in this context simply isn't clear and to what does 'it' refer?

Tell me about your day. (parent to child)

The parent probably wants a brief outline of what the child did and if they had a good time. Again, the openness of this question might be too big to even process or answer at all. A literal interpretation could lead to the child feeling obliged to give a highly detailed account of their day, *Today was Monday, I woke up at 6.40am, got up, brushed my teeth etc.*

For some autistic people, misreading a situation, or the fear of doing so, may result in extreme anxiety. Recognise your part in the miscommunication and accept responsibility for not being clear.



ACTION ITEMS

- Be specific – what exactly do you want your communication partner to do or what information do you need?
- Be patient and understanding if your communication partner misunderstands you.