

Negotiating Birth-Control Options

Jane's story is shared here by a therapist who works in a healthcare clinic. Jane is not the woman's real name.

Jane is a 19 year old woman with a mild to moderate intellectual disability and spina bifida. She uses a wheelchair, speaks and is very chatty. However, she has significant comprehension problems that are often masked by her verbal and social skills. She also has a short attention span and memory problems.

During a meeting with her doctor, Jane's mother leaves the room to go to the washroom and Jane informs the doctor that she wants to speak to her alone. Jane's mother comes back into the room and the doctor asks for time to speak to Jane alone. Jane tells the doctor that she has a boyfriend and is sexually active and doesn't want to get pregnant. The doctor explains a few options, risks and benefits and then asks a few open-ended questions to see if Jane understands. Jane is nervous and answers 'yes' to all the questions that are open-ended and that alerts the doctor that she may not be really understanding everything.

The doctor arranges a follow-up meeting with Jane and arranges the following supports:

- A private appointment to find out if Jane has someone she trusts, other than her mother to attend future meetings with her or if she wants a social worker or a therapist to be present.
- Extra appointments and time to accommodate Jane's need to be giving information slowly and to give her opportunities to express her questions and concerns as well as to explore Jane's perspective, life experiences and relationships.
- Used the [communication support form](#) to understand Jane's communication needs.
- as well as her perspective, life experiences, and relationships.
- Facilitated Jane's comprehension by using everyday language; chunking information into manageable bits; pausing after sentences to allow for processing time; writing key words or showing pictures; using diagrams or dolls; repeating information; using a word chart to support comprehension, with phrases such as I don't understand, Please repeat that, Tell me more about that, what do you mean; asking questions in different ways to check understanding; Using a Talk Back technique such as "Tell me what I said"
- Giving written information in plain language and offering assistance with reading and understanding.
- Facilitating Jane's memory by using memory aids, such as note-taking, journals and calendars
- Use of [Talking Mats](#) to explore options and preferences.

More information: [Webinar 4](#)