

Better Phone Communications in the age of COVID 19

by
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This Resource

COVID -19 has meant a huge increase in phone and video communications replacing face to face conversations.

Few have been trained for this kind of service provision.

This document tells how to get the best communication outcomes from phone conversations



The strategies described will make phone service provision better for most. They are especially important for certain groups who often have difficulties with phone conversations.

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Those likely to have more difficulties with communication by phone.

- Those listening to an unfamiliar language
- Older people
- People from disadvantaged minorities
- Those who experience anxiety
- Many who use counseling services
- Youth who have been involved with police,
- Children and adults with attention problems
- Children in care or that have had child protection reports made about them

Why these people have more difficulties is explained in other training.



Phone communication disrupts visual cues

- The social distancing involved in COVID 19 responses disrupts people who watch to help their listening.
 - Phone calls exclude it completely
 - Video calls restricts visual information
 - Face masks restrict face watching and lip reading, as well as muffle sound

Problems with phone conversations

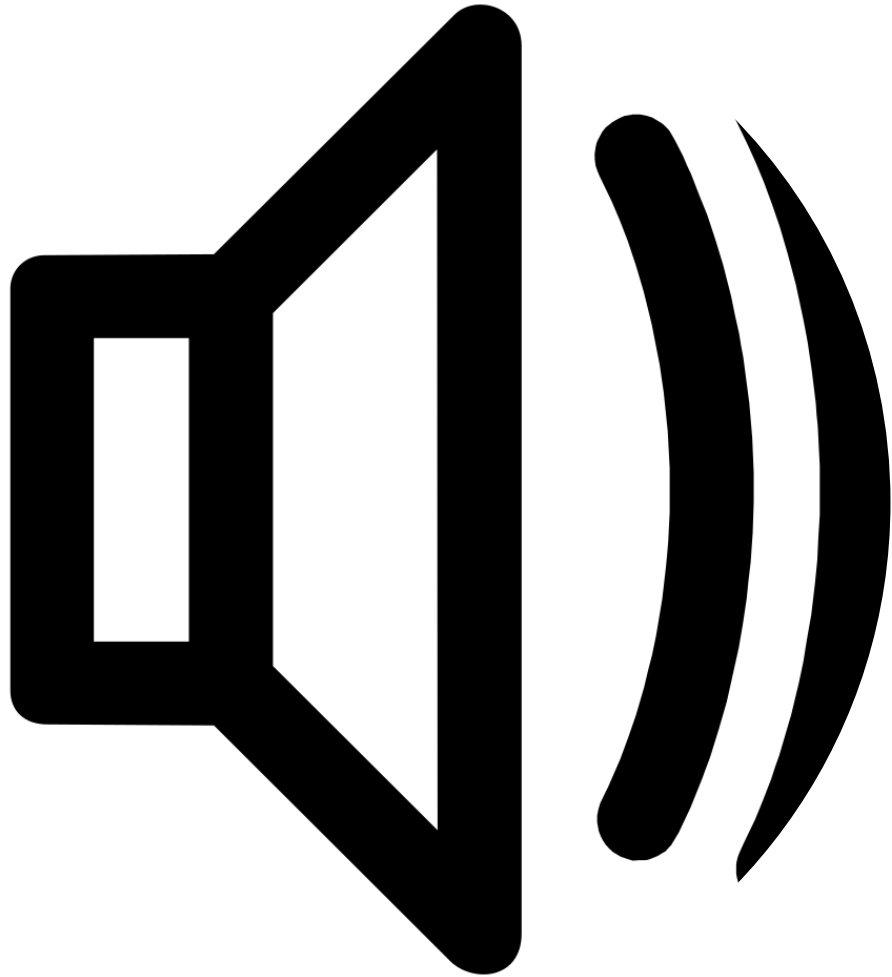
People rely on visual cues to differing degrees. These are face watching, lip reading and reading body language

Because these cues are absent in phone conversations people may be uncomfortable talking on phones, except with those they know well..

They may avoid or engage minimally and get little out of phone conversations



Without accompanying
visual cues words alone
need to convey more
meaning in phone
conversations



Ways to help spoken words
to be best understood

The Place

Ensure there is minimal background noise where you are

If there is background noise around the person you are calling – suggest they move somewhere quieter.

If confidential things are being discussed – tell them no one else can hear. If a video call show them the space around you, so they can see there is no one else who can hear the conversation.

Avoid shaming

- Don't ask 'do you understand'
- Do ask 'did I explain that right or should I say it again'
- People who have difficulties understanding what is said have usually had experiences of being regularly shamed



Speed can kill understanding

- Speak more slowly on the phone.



Tonal variation

- Use more tonal variation to give emphasis to certain important words or phrases.
- The underlying above highlights key words visually, giving tonal emphasis does the same with sound.
 - When you use tonal variation it adds a layer of meaning to what you say that helps understanding

The effect of rhythmical spoken words aloud is almost biological. It comforts and enlivens human beings.

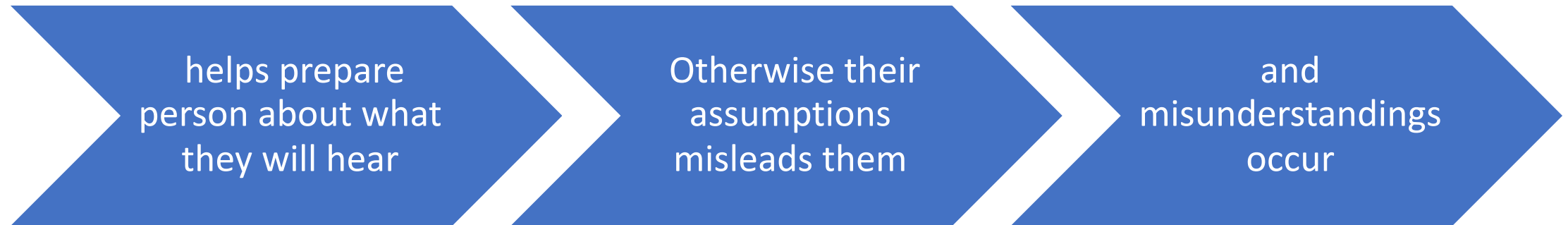
Robert Pinsky, 1997–2000 Poet Laureate of the United States

Be brief.

- Say only what is necessary –
unnecessary words create a ‘cognitive load’ that is an obstacle to good understanding

(Anne Carmody – Speech Therapist)

Indicate topic changes



Pause

- Within sentences,
- between sentences and
- between speakers, if more than one.



Pausing gives the brain time to process what was said

Priming

- Knowing what a conversation will be about helps to understand the conversation better when it occurs
- It prepares people for what will be said
- and they can prepare what they want to say

Note about what will be talked about
Photographed and texted or emailed to person
before phone call

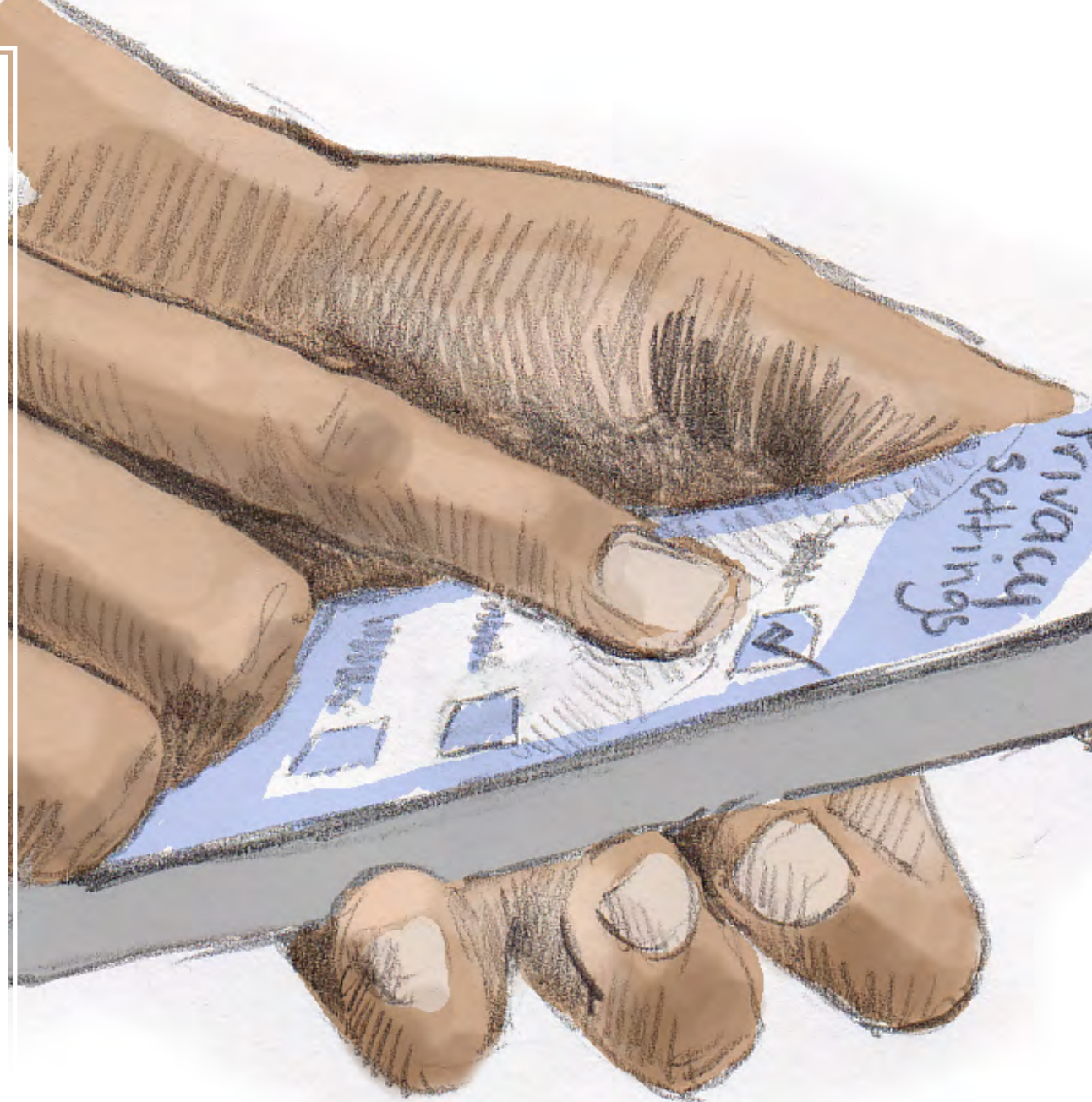
**I want to talk to you about
your payments.**

**They have been stopped
because we have not
heard from you .**

**I want to tell you how you
can get them back**

Add visual cues during phone calls

- Make a note of key things discussed on the phone.
- Take a photo and send as a text.



Post learning

- Post learning enables someone to clarify their understanding of what was said.
- It helps to confirm the person has an accurate understanding of what was said.
- This also gives evidence of a record of key points of what was said in case there are later disputes.



Send a text or email that Summarizes what was discussed In phone call



Example of message
photographed and texted after
Phone conversation

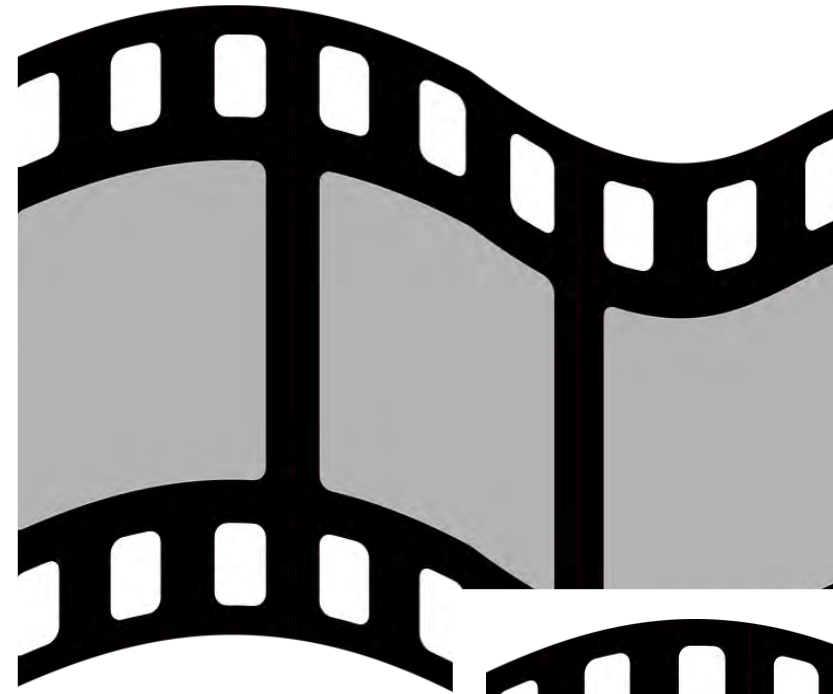
Video follow up

- Make a short video summarizing the key points of the conversations.
- The person can watch and listen again without shame of asking for repetition.
- They show the video and can ask help from others to help understand what was said.



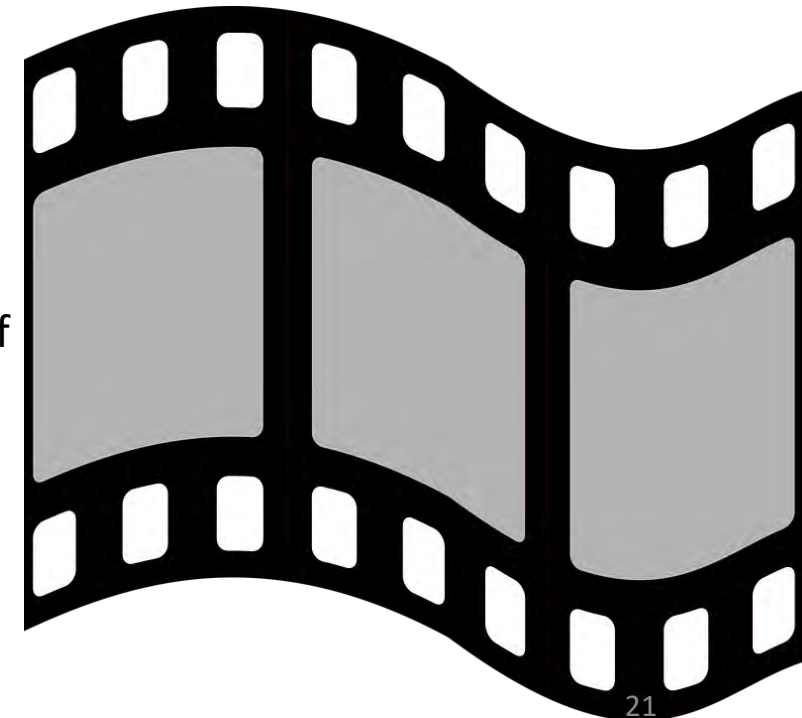
Utell.online – sharing information easily

- This is an online app I developed that enables you to upload and send two short videos.
 - For example,
 - 1) a video of you summarizing what was said in phone call
 - 2) an interpreter giving a translation of what you said
- This can be texted as a single URL
- Go to utell.online



You create short video

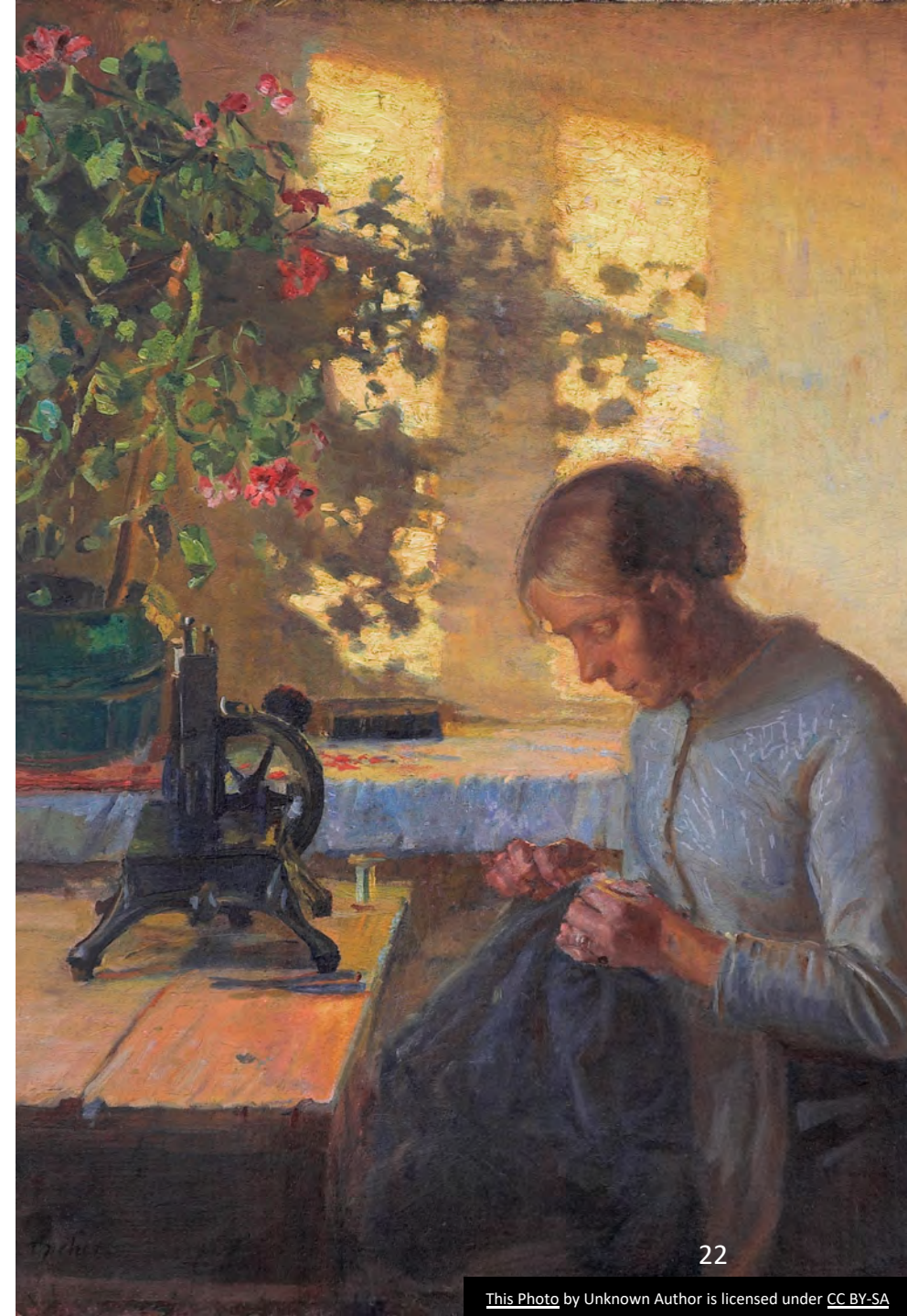
interpreter's
Video translation of
What you said



Your busy, why do more ?

- Because it gives a better communications outcomes
- Especially to those usually disadvantaged by phone communications
- It saves future time and trouble that can results from misunderstandings
- Multiple calls, non engagement or complaints can eventually take up more time and effort than earlier greater effort.

‘a stitch in time saves nine’ – repairing things earlier saves more work to fix it later.



There are many other issues around changes in communications as a result of as a result of COVID -19

- Such as effects of wearing a mask
- Making video calls more effective
- Making video meetings more effective



Email if you would like to get resource updates

For information on more detailed training contact
Damien@phoenixconsulting or go to
www.Phoenixtraining.online



Training developed by

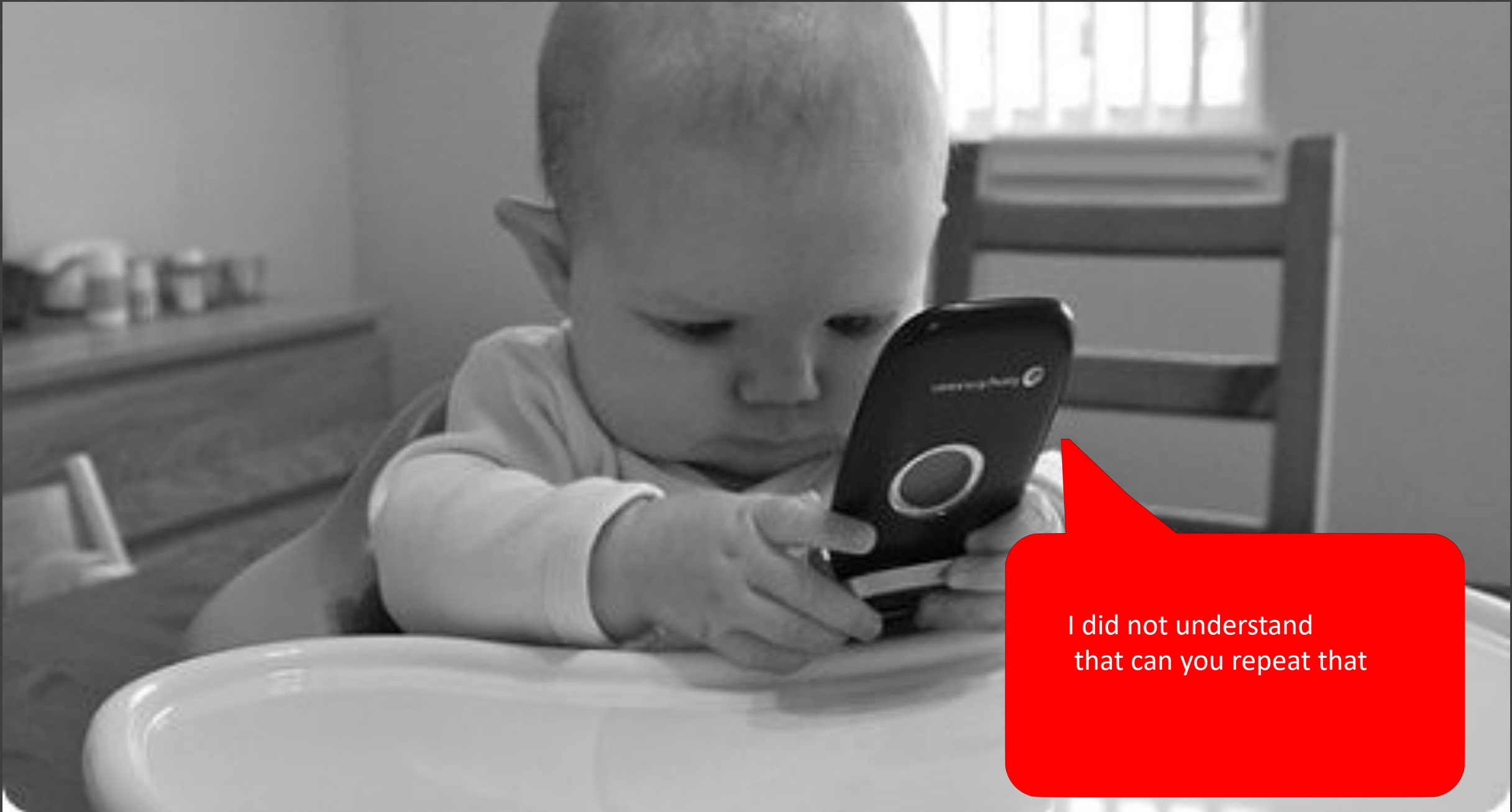
Dr Damien Howard is a psychologist who has specialised in communication issues for disadvantaged groups.



Ms Jody Barney is a Deaf Indigenous community consultant and visual communication expert



Ann Carmody is a speech therapist and expert in verbal communications.



I did not understand
that can you repeat that