



How to help your child interact and play with you – Part 2

The following are only **suggestions** and will not necessarily apply to all children. Determining **if** or **how** to apply these strategies should be based on the child's age, communication skills, cognitive skills, and ability to handle frustration and anxiety. Work closely with your ASD Case Manager and/or other professionals to determine which would be appropriate.

Use Books to Create a Shared Social Activity

1. Sit your child in your lap or at a small table and show them a few books with simple, interesting pictures (e.g. books with colors, shapes, or animals are often favorites). Notice where their eyes go and what images/contrasts/colors, etc. grab their attention.
2. Put a word or sound to the picture(s) your child likes to look at. Touch and point to the picture repeatedly. Many children will respond with a smile and/or eye contact when they realize that you see the same thing that they see.
3. Use your voice in playful ways to make the book “come alive” (e.g. make animal sounds, crashing sounds, etc.)
4. Talk **only about as much as your child talks at first**. Most adults feel uncomfortable with this. Resist the temptation to:
 - Just read the story while your child passively listens.
 - Constantly ask your child questions about the story
5. If your child likes when you read and is familiar with the book or story, pause frequently at “key moments” in the story to encourage more interaction:
 - *Pause* during exciting moments or favorite lines in the story (e.g. adult says “I’ll huff, and I’ll ____, and I’ll ____ your house down!”)
 - *Pause* just before turning the page
 - *Pause* after you’ve made a sound or read a word or line in the book that made your child smile (e.g. “CRASH!”; “BOOM!”). They may try to vocalize or make the sound with you, or let you know that they want you to do it again.

6. Remember: Use books as a tool to help your child ***interact with you*** (rather than passively looking at the book and listening). You want your child to pay at least as much attention to ***you*** as the book!

Additional Resources

- Koegel, Robert L., Koegel, Lynn K. (2006). Pivotal Response Treatments for Autism: Communication, Social & Academic Development. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing
- MacDonald, J., Stoika, P. (2007). Play to Talk: A Practical Guide to Help Your Late-Talking Child Join the Conversation. Madison, WI: Kiddo Publishing Co.
- Mahoney, G., MacDonald, J. (2007). The Responsive Teaching Curriculum for Parents and professionals. Austin, Texas: PRO-ED, Inc.
- Potter, C., Whittaker, C. (2001). Enabling Communication in Children with Autism. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Prizant, B. M., Wetherby, A. M., Rubin, E., Laurent, A. C., & Rydell, P. J. (2005). The SCERTS Model: A comprehensive educational approach for children with autism spectrum disorders. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Quill, K. (2000) Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social and Communication Intervention for Children with Autism. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Sussman, F. (1999). More than Words: Helping Parents Promote Communication and Social Skills in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Toronto, ON; The Hanen Centre. (Accompanying DVD also highly recommended). *Available at www.hanen.org*
- Wolfberg, P.J. (2003) Peer play and the autism spectrum: The art of guiding children's socialization and imagination. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

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