

Activities to Support Increasing Your Child's Attention

Adapted from: *An early start for your child with Autism*. Rogers, S.J., Dawson, G., Vismara, L.A. (2012)

1. Identify What Is Motivating For Your Child

The first step is to find out what your child likes. Spend time observing your child during every day routines to gain an understanding of what they prefer. Activities to observe include: toy/books/object play, social play, outdoor activities, meals, bathing, changing, dressing and sleeping.

- ✓ What objects or activities does my child search for?
- ✓ What objects does my child like to watch, grasp, or hold?
- ✓ What activities does my child come to me or another family member for help with?
- ✓ What makes my child smile and laugh?
- ✓ What calms my child when upset or cheers them when cranky?

2. Step Onto The "Stage"

Find Positions That Put You Face to Face with your Child

- ✓ Seat yourself so you are leaning over and facing your child for social games, finger plays, and songs and routines.
- ✓ Seat your child on your lap, facing you, or on a small chair, bean bag while you sit on the floor so you and the child are eye to eye.

Use Mealtimes to "step onto the stage"

- ✓ Ask your child to give you a bite by leaning toward your child with an open mouth.
- ✓ Place your child's cup out of reach so they have to look to you or ask for the cup.
- ✓ As the meal is ending use this time to sing a song, recite a rhyme or fingerplay.

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3. Eliminate the Competition

Notice What Distracts Your Child and Try To Manage Them

- ✓ Turn off the TV unless someone is actively watching. Having the TV continuously on is sometimes a magnet for children.
- ✓ During play turn off the computer and TV
- ✓ Find a less distracting environment for social play. A big bed is often a great place for social play.
- ✓ Try to keep toys well organized.

4. Understand Your Child's Social Comfort Zone

Understand your Child's Signals about How Close is Comfortable

The distance your child seems comfortable looking at you establishes the right distance for learning. Your child may tell you that you are too close by looking or pushing away during social routines. Back up a bit and once you establish social routines that are enjoyable to your child try to come in a bit closer.

5. Join In Play By Following Your Child's Lead

- ✓ Use active listening to understand what your child is saying through their communications.
- ✓ Narrate your actions, your child's actions and the actions on objects.
- ✓ Offer help by offering your outstretched hand, to open a container or activated a toy or object.
- ✓ Imitate your child's actions on objects.
- ✓ Combine listening, narrating, helping and imitating.