



The EmPOWER Method- A practical manual

Empower, Prepare, Watch and join in, Engage and expand, Reward and reinforce

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Introduction

EmPOWER is an early intervention method for children with autism (autism spectrum disorders). It is designed to be used by parents or carers at home, with support from trained health practitioners, and, in collaboration with parents, by teachers in primary schools.

EmPOWER includes evidence-based interventions and combines the principles of applied behavioural analysis (ABA) with developmental, linguistic and motivational approaches. It is a practical approach that is suitable for use by parents in the natural environment of family homes.

EmPOWER aims to improve communication, socialising, behaviour and learning outcomes for children with autism. It provides parents and carers with a structure of stepwise activities according to the child's profile of abilities and needs. It helps parents acquire the knowledge and skills to undertake the activities in the day-to-day setting of their home. It takes parents through the stages of:

- **Empowering** parents and practitioners
- **Preparation** by helping them understand and learn
- **Organising** the environment to suit their child's needs
- Learning and practising ways of **Watching** and joining in with their child
- Learning and practising ways of **Engaging** and **Expanding** interactions to create learning opportunities
- **Relating** and **Rewarding** to reinforce learning.



There is evidence that parent-delivered interventions are effective in improving outcomes for children with autism. Children with autism learn best in natural settings of home and school, their learning rate is faster, and they are better at generalising their skills to other contexts. Parents also feel better when they can help their child

This manual is intended for parents of children with autism, and for practitioners who have suitable training and experience of supporting children with developmental concerns. Once parents have learnt the skills, they are guided to do suitable activities as a part of their day-to-day life, making every interaction a learning opportunity for the child.

For practitioners, supporting parents in helping their children is a challenging task, but it is a rewarding challenge, and it can be met. Parents can learn, children with autism can learn, and their outcomes can improve.

An outline of the modules

Module 1:

This module helps in understanding what autism is, the obstacles it creates in communicating, socialising and learning, and how parents can best help their child.

Module 2:

This module will help in reducing environmental stresses and obstacles for the child, making it easier for the child to participate in activities and learn. Completing a profile of the child's interests and sensory-motor behaviour, based on observations made by parents, will lead to an individual **Stress Reduction Plan** with recommendations for creating a suitable learning environment for the child.

Module 3:

Completing module 3 will help parents acquire the **7 Special Skills** they will need to help the child by doing some practical activities with the child. Practitioners must support and encourage parents at each step. Completing an outcome after each activity will guide parents to the right level for them.

Module 4:

The activities in this module will help in ensuring that the child has the required **Fundamental Skills** and is ready to learn the skills of communication and social interaction. Completing an outcome after each activity will guide to the next required level for the child.

The above two modules, 3 and 4, are the crucial foundation stones of this method. Trying to skip these modules would be like trying to build a tower without its foundations!

Module 5

This module is to **Help Your Child Communicate and Talk**. It takes the child through the developmental steps of communication development. Carefully follow the prerequisite skill requirements to ensure that the child is ready to do the activity. Completing an outcome after each activity will guide to the next required level for the child.

Module 6:

This module will **Help Your Child learn Social Skills** through a developmental sequence of activities. Carefully follow the prerequisite skill requirements to ensure that the child is ready to do the activity. Completing an outcome after each activity will guide to the next required level for the child.

Module 7

The focus in this module is on **Managing Unwanted Behaviour, Behavioural Crises and Self-Stimulatory Behaviour**. Completing the **Building Positive Behaviour** component of Module 3 is essential for achieving success in Module 7.

Module 8

This module will **Help Your Child Learn Daily Skills** that may be relevant for your child.

Module 1

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition: the brain of a person with autism develops and functions somewhat differently. As a result, a person with autism perceives the world, learns and responds differently.

Autism affects three main areas of development (often referred to as the triad) to a different degree in each child:

1. the way children socially communicate,
2. socially interact with others, and
3. the way they play, think and imagine, insist on routines or show repetitive behaviours.



Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) begins to affect children's brain during early development or even during pregnancy. It affects the way children develop their thinking and abilities and the way they experience the world. The core features or symptoms are present in early childhood, though some may not appear until a later age. These symptoms of autism manifest at a different level of severity in individuals, making each person unique. The term "spectrum" in autism describes the range of manifestation in the triad and its variable association with an interest in a narrow range of activities and repetitive patterns of behaviours.

"IF YOU HAVE MET ONE PERSON WITH AUTISM, YOU HAVE ONLY MET ONE PERSON WITH AUTISM."

Children with autism often have difficulty in understanding language and in using language to communicate. They are either late in learning to talk or use the language in a way that is different from the way other children do, for example, using more formal or 'learnt' or repetitive words or phrases. Some children with autism have the necessary skills of asking and responding to simple interactions, but they find it hard to interact with new people or in new situations. Some children with autism don't learn to talk, but they can still learn to use alternative ways of communicating.

Most children with autism don't like changes. They seem to want to have the same types of routines and become very stressed and anxious if these routines change.

Many children with autism have difficulty in being imaginative in their play or social activities, while some others can be very imaginative, but only in particular topics, for example having a great interest in a specific type of animal or trains, numbers, shapes or colours.

Some children with autism develop certain rituals - they tend to do some things in a certain way. For example, they may want to take the same route to go somewhere or wear only a particular type of clothes.

Many, but not all, children with autism show an unusual interest in some sensations such as staring at things from an angle, smelling or licking things or may have an aversion to some sensations, such as covering their ears for certain types of sounds. Some children also show repetitive movements of their fingers, hands or body.

Do people with autism have other difficulties as well?

About two-thirds of people with ASD may have some degree of intellectual or learning disability, which affects all aspects of their function and life – from learning to self-care and living independently.

Like other developmental disorders, people with autism often have other co-existing conditions, for example, ADHD (attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder), atypical patterns of movement and posture and difficulties of eating, drinking, sleeping, mood and behaviour.

The needs of a person with ASD depend on their profile of symptoms, coexisting conditions and the availability of a supportive environment.

What causes autism?

Autism is a genetic condition; parenting, diet or social circumstances do not cause autism, and it would be wrong to blame one or other parent for it. Genetic changes often appear de novo (for the first time) in the child. Several genes (estimates range from 200-1000) interacting with each other and with the environment create a disruption of growth and connectivity in the developing brain altering its structure and function. The resulting disruption alters the child's patterns of attention, perception and learning, and compromises their ability to learn from the environment. The emerging altered behaviour patterns further restrict their social learning opportunities creating longer-lasting impairments.

The learning obstacles faced by children with autism:

Knowing about these obstacles will help you understand your child's difficulties in learning and behaviour:



Typically developing children learn:	Learning is difficult for children with autism because:
✓ By paying attention to a range of objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their interest may be in a limited range of things, and their attention may be limited to some sensory aspects of objects
✓ By paying attention to what people say and watching how they behave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their attention to people is often limited
✓ By sharing their interest with others and sharing in others' interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have difficulty in sharing interests and thinking with others
✓ From others' responses to their communication attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor or weak communication attempts are not picked up or are misread, and poorly responded by others.
✓ By understanding that their actions have positive or negative consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor understanding of the effects of their actions and poor feedback from others reduces their motivation to interact
✓ Getting social feedback from others motivates them to keep practising and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of social feedback hinders learning and reduces motivation to try again
Other interfering behaviours that make it harder for children with autism to focus and learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong or unusual interests, such as in some toys • Sensory behaviours: for example, attraction or aversion to light, feel, sounds, smell or taste • Anxiety • Difficult behaviour 	

How can you help your child with autism?

There is no medicine or cure for autism, but....

Many children with autism can benefit from intensive and early help to improve their ability to communicate and socialise. Children with autism need intensive and early help to learn to communicate and socialise. They also need a supportive environment that promotes positive behaviour and learning. The best way to help your child is to use a structured programme based on methods that have been shown to be effective.

Given the right type of help, all children with autism can learn and change. The outcomes vary depending on the associated learning and other difficulties, but all children with autism can benefit from early intervention in some way.

You can learn and use the EmPOWER method and work in partnership with specialists to help your child.

How to use the EmPOWER method?

This manual is designed to work as an aid for practitioners working with children and supporting parents.

This manual is directly addressed to parents – *it is meant to enable parents to help their child.*

The purpose of the EmPOWER method is to motivate and help children learn developmentally appropriate skills in the natural setting of the home, as part of everyday household activities. The activities given in this manual are not meant to be used mechanically. An emotionally engaging, positive and child-centred approach is at the heart of this method.

For the EmPOWER method to work, a commitment from the whole family, not just from one parent, is required to:

- ❑ learn what to do and how to do the activities,
- ❑ adapt their way of relating to the child,
- ❑ frequently communicate with others about what to do and how to do it, and
- ❑ practise activities, numerous times a day, every day.

A step by step plan for using the EmPOWER method

Follow this plan to do the right mix of activities for your child:

First Step: Start	Understand autism and the obstacles it creates for your child's communicating and learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Learn how you can help your child with autism	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How to use the EmPOWER method	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 2	Go to Module 2 to create Your Child's Profile	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Prepare the Stress Reduction Plan for your child	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Create a Suitable Learning Environment for your child	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 3	Go to Module 3 and complete the first three of the seven special skills from the parent's toolbox:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sensitive responsiveness	
	Rewarding	
	Joining in	

Step 4	Go to Module 4 and do the activities to help your child learn the first two of the Four Foundation Skills:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Enabling attention	
	Imitating	

Step 5	Go to Module 3 and complete the last four of the seven special skills from the parent's toolbox:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Motivating the child to communicate and interact	
	Modelling	
	Prompting	
	Building Positive Behaviour	

Step 6	<p>Go to Module 4 and do the activities to help your child learn the last two of the Four Foundation Skills:</p> <p>Gestures and joint attention</p> <p>Symbolic and imaginative play</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Step 7	Start with the first activity from Module 5	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Simultaneously, do the first activity from Module 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the activities in the right sequence. Only move to the next activity when the previous activity is completed, and the skill is achieved.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Add activities from Modules 7 and 8 as required.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Make a Weekly Plan of Activities	Create a Suitable Learning Environment for your child	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Use the Stress Reduction Plan for your child	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Practice one new and one previously learnt the skill from Module 5, for 20 minutes, three to four times a day	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Practice one new and one previously learnt skill from Module 6, for 20 minutes, 3 to four times a day	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Add activities from Modules 7 and 8 as required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update the outcome as a skill is achieved, moving on to the new skill.		

Stay positive, work together with others in the family and the school. Share information from this manual and learn together. Keep each other informed about what to do and how to do it. Praise and reward everyone for the progress made.

Module 2

Your Child's profile

Read the questions and the guidance carefully and then watch and observe your child for a day or two before completing the profile. You can change or update the profile at any time.

Your child's name:

Date of birth:

Date/month/year

Date of update:

Age:

1. sensory My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- responds negatively to unexpected or loud noises, such as motorbike, sirens or dog barking or has trouble functioning if there is a lot of noise around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Obsessively looks at or shows discomfort at bright lights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- dislikes hands getting messy, wearing clothes or shoes or being touched or hugged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to The Stress Reduction Plan			

2. Movement and activity My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- dislikes movement activities, such as jumping, climbing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- is always on the go or is constantly moving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to The Stress Reduction Plan			

3. Fears and anxieties My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- is scared or fearful of animals (for example, dogs), or some toys or sounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- becomes very worried or anxious in some situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to The Stress Reduction Plan			

4. Change My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- becomes distressed whenever there is a change of activities or place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- becomes distressed when meeting new people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to The Stress Reduction Plan			

5. Behaviour My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- has frequent tantrums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- behaves aggressively and hurts others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- hurts himself/herself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to Building Positive Behaviour and then to the Behaviour Management section.			

6. Talking: Observe what your child can say <i>to others to communicate with them.</i> My child--		
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not say any clear words or only a few (less than 5) words	<input type="checkbox"/> Puts two words together, such as "want food", "go out", "daddy gone."	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses sentences of 3 or more words

7. Understanding: Observe how your child responds to what you say to him/her. My child--		
<input type="checkbox"/> Shows no or minimal response to being called by name or asked for	<input type="checkbox"/> Turns to look when called by name and can give something when asked	<input type="checkbox"/> Understands simple sentences such as "first give me the spoon and

something.	for it.	then give to cup to daddy”.
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8. Sleeping My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- falls asleep easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- has trouble falling asleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- wakes up frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to Helping your child's sleeping difficulties.			

9. Eating My child--	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often (or frequently)
- eats well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- has trouble chewing and swallowing food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- only eats certain types of food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If concerned, go to Helping your child's daily life skills section.			

10. Health: Please tell us of any issues or concerns that are affecting your child's health			
Problem or concern	Has it been checked?	Is your child receiving help for it?	Do you need further help with it?
Hearing	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Vision	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Epilepsy	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Other: -----	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Health problems can affect a child's learning and behaviour. If concerned, consult a children's doctor.			

Your child's interests



Interests and likings

Children enjoy doing what they like, and they want to get things that they like. These activities and items can be used to get their attention, to motivate them, to distract them when they are upset and to reward them. You can make a list of these things, share with the family and other carers and vary their use to stop it becoming repetitive and losing the charm. Thinking through the following broad categories can help you in making a list:

<p>Social attention Giving children attention is usually the best reward for them. Observe the type of attention your child enjoys.</p>	<p>Examples: praise, smiles, clapping, high 5's, hugs, patting My Child likes: -----</p>
<p>Activities (done by the child on their own or with others) Observe the activities that catch your child's attention. You can use them to motivate the child. You may have to make it very clear to the child, by using a visual timetable, that their preferred activity will follow a learning activity. Creating such a sequence, and repeating it frequently, will make it an enjoyable routine for the child.</p>	<p>Examples of activities done by children on their own: Listening to music, watching TV/video, computer game, playing with car/train, puzzles (formboards) My child likes:</p>
	<p>Examples of activities done by children with others: Swinging, tickling, bubble play, water play, nursery rhymes, being swung 'like an aeroplane', ball play My child likes:</p>

<p>Attractive things: stickers, gold stars, cards</p> <p>Children love such a reward, and most of these can be made easily at home. You could use a calendar to put a sticker star on the particular day when the child has shown good behaviours - that could become a way for the whole family to notice and offer praise for the child's good behaviour - whoever sees the calendar could say "Wow, your behaviour has been excellent today". It can also be used to motivate the child: "If you win seven stars, then you will get ----- as a reward".</p>	<p>My child likes:</p>
<p>Food and drinks</p> <p>Most children love getting their favourite food or drink as a reward. Although such rewards should not be used frequently, sometimes, it can be just what you need!</p>	<p>Drinks, fruit, sweets, snacks</p> <p>My child likes:</p>

The Stress Reduction Plan

Area of concern	Consider including the following in the daily routine of the child
Difficulty in communicating needs and feelings	
1. Can the child convey needs and anything upsetting him/her?	If not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise use of appropriate means of communication, such as using gestures/signs or pictures. - Help the child learn to use these means to express needs and feelings. - Teach the child a way of asking for help and make sure that all around the child understand that method -practise it.
2. Does the child understand what others say to him/her?	If not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use gestures and expressions to help the child understand. - Keep your language quite simple. - Use short sentences and divide an instruction in small chunks. - Use signs/gestures and/or pictures.
Sensory difficulties	
Does the child become upset or anxious due to noise, light, touch or crowd?	If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn off or cover fluorescent lights when possible - Minimise noise by speaking in a softer voice, turning down the volume for the radio or TV. - Avoid using loud noises, such as shouting, clapping or whistling, to get the child's attention. - If the noise cannot be reduced, consider using earmuffs or headphones to reduce the sound perceived by the child. - Give the child experience of handling and playing with different textures, for example, mixing dough, making sandcastles, counting beans or hand-painting to get used to multiple simultaneous sensations
Fears and anxieties	
Does the child become angry and upset by new things, situations, or people?	If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gradually supported exposure and preparation is the key to reducing the impact of the child's fears and anxieties, for example, in a safe environment, when the child is with the mother or a known carer, first using a picture of the fear generating situation and talking about it. - Introducing the child to the new place, one step at a time, for example, first showing the picture of the place, then just going to see the outside of the area and then going in briefly may help the child overcome the fear. - First showing the child the fear inducing things from a distance and then supporting the child by reassuring. - Using something to distract the child in such situations may help; the distractor must be something that the child likes, like a squeeze ball or a picture book or a toy that the child likes. - Giving child some time and space to get over the stress.
Making change tolerable by increasing predicatibility	
Does the child get upset or anxious by	If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare your child for any change in the situation by using pictures in a sequence to show the child what to expect

change of situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating routines so that the situations become predictable for the child - Explaining to the child what is going to happen next or after some time. Using activities such as counting to five or clapping hands to indicate change and practising these activities.
Attention and activity level	
Does the child find it hard to pay attention? Is the child overactive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do regular and varied fun physical activities with the child, such as running, jumping, moving stuff, lifting weight, and playing on swings. - For a child who dislikes physical activities, starting with a brief fun routine of a chasing or ball game, and gradually increasing the time, may help. - For a child who finds it difficult to sit still, start with doing an activity that the child likes initially for a brief period, such as looking at a picture book, keeping the general tone and environment calm. Gradually increase the time; reward and praise the child for every increase of a minute.
General calming measures	
General stress-reducing measure for all children with autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help the child learn to relax by practising calming routines, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Slowly counting to 10 o Taking five long breaths o Listening to music o Taking short breaks from activities o Lying down and relaxing the whole body - Reduce the impact of stress on the child by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Getting the child to do regular physical exercise for at least 30 minutes a day o Making a calming sleeping routine: avoiding exciting activities before bedtime, avoiding mobiles/TV before falling asleep, reading a book or listening to some calming music

Create a suitable learning environment

- ✓ **Emotionally engaging:** Children learn best when they are emotionally engaged. You must create and maintain a positive and happy relationship with the child. Building a relationship means spending time with the child, responding promptly and positively, appreciating the child's efforts and praising. You may have to change the 'culture' – the way you and the family relate with the child - to build an engaging relationship with the child. The EmPOWER manual will help you in doing it.

- ✓ **Non-stressful:** children with autism and developmental disorders are easily stressed by sensory or other aspects of environments such as noise and bright lights. Their learning and behaviour improves when such stress is reduced. Complete the child's profile for guidance on how to make a Stress Reduction Plan for your child.

- ✓ **Motivating:** Children learn best when they do what interests them and they are active partners in activities. There is no point in forcing children do activities that they don't like – there will not be any meaningful learning. Instead, you must make the activity suit the child's interest. The activities must be done in a playful manner to encourage the child's participation. Involving the whole family in learning and using the method will help to create multiple interesting and variable opportunities.

Module 3

Parents' toolbox: 7 special skills

Why do you need special skills?

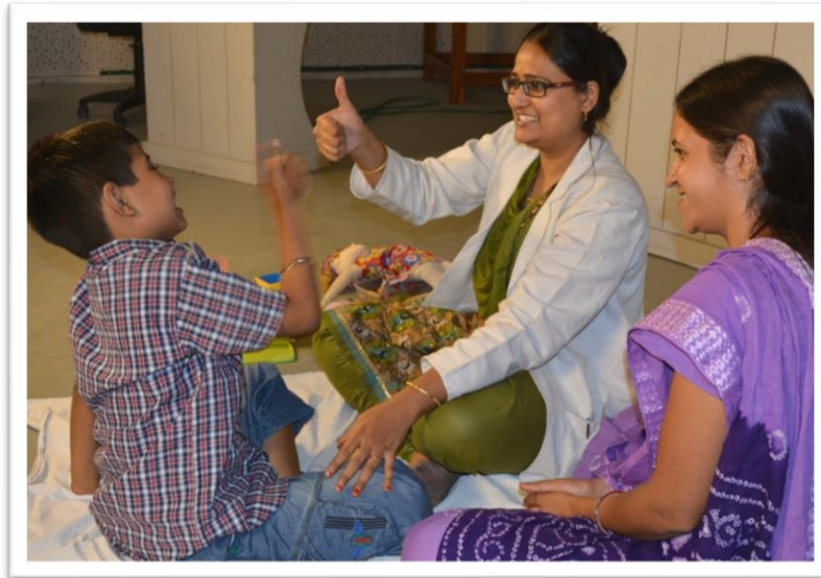
Children with autism miss crucial learning opportunities because they cannot interact with their environment as others do. As a result of such experiences, a different sort of connectivity is formed in their brains, creating further obstacles in their learning. Research has shown that parents and carers can learn the skills to change and enhance the social experience of children with autism to make it easier for them to learn. Such early intervention can change the way children with autism perceive and interact; it can change their developmental trajectory and remarkably improve their life outcomes.

Learn the skills to overcome the obstacles:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Rewarding and reinforcing
3. Joining-in
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling
6. Prompting and prompt fading
7. Building positive behaviours

Sensitive responsiveness

Paying attention to children's actions and emotions and responding to them in a timely, appropriate, and encouraging manner is called **Sensitive Responsiveness**. This way of responding motivates the child to pay attention, learn and relate positively with the other person. It is an essential skill to learn for those who want to help children with autism.



Step 1: Prepare: Know the obstacles and the way around

Being responsive to children is usually a relatively straightforward thing to do; however, for children with autism, first, certain obstacles must be overcome:

- the child may not be interested in looking at you or sharing any interest with you
- the child may be overly involved in some repetitive activities
- she/he may give poor or weak communication cues, which are difficult for parents and others to pick up
- You may be too keen to guide the child in a way that may be too directive or intrusive for a child with autism and, as a result, the child may switch off from communicating with you. To create an opportunity for the child to learn, first, you have to motivate the child to engage with you.

Step 2: Organise

Choose the right moments and routines for practice

Initially, you will need to choose some moments and routines from your day-to-day life when:

- a. your child shows interest in an activity or enjoys interactions with you,
- b. you have time to spend with your child, and you're not in a rush to move on to do something else, and
- c. you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Some examples of the type of routines you should look at are:

- 1) Playing with toys
- 2) Playing with you
- 3) Mealtime
- 4) Household activities like cleaning, washing
- 5) Outdoor activities like being in a play area

Carefully choosing suitable moments will help you get used to a way of working with your child. Once you and other adults in the family have practised this way of working, you'll be able to apply it to other situations to make every interaction a learning opportunity for the child.

Step 3: Learn and do

Observe:

Be close to your child and pay attention to:

- a) The child's focus of attention by noticing things that catch and retain the child's interest.
- b) The child's activity: what is she/he trying to do? For example, reaching out to get, touch, or explore?
- c) The child's communication signals and social behaviour: look for any changes in the child's expression, gestures or sounds to convey his/her feelings or needs. Such messages may or may not be directed towards you or another person.



Interpret:

Almost every action of the child has a reason or intention. You need to 'read' this meaning or purpose, what the child might be trying to say or do, from the child's behaviour. The table below gives some examples of actions and some possible meanings. See if you can add other purposes that may be more relevant for your child:

Child's activity	Possible intention or goal that you can use - it must relate to what the child appears to be interested in doing.
<input type="checkbox"/> Looks at or touches a toy/object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "You want that?" - "You like that ----?" - "That is a nice ---" -
<input type="checkbox"/> Looks at you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Do you want to play with me?" - "Do you want me to do it again?"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Do you want me to get it for you?" -
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes a sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Are you talking to me?" - "Yes, it is nice." - "You want me to -----?" -
<input type="checkbox"/> Touches you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yes, I will play with you." - "OK, let's do that together." -
<input type="checkbox"/> Changes expression on his/her face or makes a gesture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Do you like it/you don't like it?" - "You want more?" -

You will need to practise paying close attention to the child and 'reading' the child's signals or behaviours. Try interpreting, but not imposing your meaning on the child.

Respond:

- d) Promptly: you need to respond within a few seconds to help the child connect their action with your response
- e) Appropriately: make your response based on your reading of the child's intention (see the table above for examples). Just repeating "good boy/girl" may not be helpful at all.
- f) Speaking loudly (without shouting), clearly and in a simple language.
- g) With positive emotions: Increase the positive expressions in your face and voice to make it motivating for the child.

Note:

- Don't just provide stimulation to the child for the sake of it! First, observe, then interpret and understand what the child is trying to say or do, and then respond.
- Don't be directive: Let the child lead and don't introduce something that *you* want the child to do, for example, don't say "take this" or "do that" unless you have to.

Step 4: Practice:

Initially, practice this routine for 5 minutes at least 5 to 7 times a day for seven days. Once you are comfortable doing this activity, you will only have to do this for about 5 minutes at the start of any activity to ensure that the child is engaged with you.

Step 5: Outcome:

Complete the following to update your progress:

I can start an interaction by understanding my child's intention	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
My child acknowledges my presence by looking at me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet

My child smiles and looks happy in interactions with me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
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Congratulations! You have successfully learnt the skill of sensitive responsiveness. You have taken the first step in helping your child learn. Once you have done the practice and are relaxed and comfortable doing it, it will become your way of interacting with your child.

Rewarding

Rewarding is perhaps the most crucial step in helping children learn. It motivates them, helps them retain what they have learnt and makes them keen to learn more. Most children are motivated to learn by praise, encouragement or tangible rewards.



To use rewards effectively, you need to know:

- a. What are the effective rewards for your child
- b. How to make a reward more effective

Useful rewards for children

Praise and affection

For children, the most potent rewards are getting attention, being praised and receiving love. Think about how you appreciate your child and show your love: your voice, your expressions and your behaviour must make it very obvious that you are showing appreciation and love. Your 'show' of affection must be genuine - there is not much point saying "good boy" or "good girl" repeatedly or routinely - children soon get bored of meaningless expressions.

Appreciation

Appreciating children's effort to do something, whatever the result, is a very potent and motivating reward for them. However, you must appreciate the child's efforts, not just successes and failures, and offer your appreciation promptly - soon after the child makes an effort - for it to be effective.

Things children like

You had earlier learnt how to make a list of your child's interests and likings. You can use items or activities from that list as a reward.



Adding value to a social gesture

There is an interesting process called classical conditioning, through which a neutral action or object that is repeatedly combined with one of the rewards mentioned above acquires a reward value of its own. An interesting example of this process is that if a person hears a bell ringing (a neutral act) every time some tasty food is given, the person will start salivating if the bell rings even when there is no food!

All you have to do is to repeatedly combine a social gesture, for example, saying “wow” or clapping, with some tangible reward of your child’s liking. After some such repetitions, you may have created a new reward! Now, you need only say “wow” or clap, and it will work as a reward for a child. If in time, it starts to lose its charm, all you have to do is to repeat the pairing to regain the reward value.



How to give a reward?

There are two ways of giving motivational rewards:

1. Offering a reward immediately after the child does something or even makes an effort to do what is expected. It is a potent way of reinforcing learning and encouraging the child to do more of the same. To make it effective, you need to keep the following in mind:
 - a. A reward must be **given immediately** after the child has made an effort to do what was expected. Remember you are not judging the child, you are appreciating the effort and encouraging the child to do more.
 - b. Give attention to the following **when giving praise and affection**:

- i. Use the child's name when praising him or her. For example, "Raju, you were playing *really* well/ good asking / well done for giving / you ate your food really well".
 - ii. Tell the child that you liked what he did
 - iii. While praising, be in front of the child and give your full attention
 - iv. Share the praise with others when the child is around
 - v. Include the whole family in this process to increase opportunities for increasing good behaviour
 - c. The reward must be **something that the child is interested in**, wants to get and would be happy to get.
 - d. The reward should be **part of the child's natural environment**, for example letting the child do what the child wants to do is a good reward; attention, praise, appreciation and affection are always great rewards. Try not to introduce rewards such as sweets or toys that you have to purchase - these are difficult to sustain, difficult to give immediately and are from outside the natural environment of the child.
 - e. Show a lot of positive emotions when rewarding. It increases the value of the reward and adds a reward value to your positive emotions.
 - f. At least initially, such a reward needs to be given every time the behaviour happens for a child to make the connection between the behaviour and the reward. In time, even intermittent rewarding can reinforce learnt behaviour.
2. Giving a reward in a planned way works well for maintaining participation or good behaviour, for example giving the child 1 point for every good behaviour and giving a reward when the child accumulates 10 points. This approach can be used once the child is 3 to 4 years of age or older. It motivates the child and helps the child learn to wait for the reward.

It is worth paying attention to the following when giving rewards in a planned way:

- a. Make one such scheme or plan at any one time. Explain it well to the child, if required, use pictures and symbols to explain.
- b. The expected behaviours should be something that the child can do.
- c. The reward should be something that the child likes.
- d. Give the reward as planned and combine it with praise.
- e. Only reward the child once the expected behaviour has happened or an effort has been made to do it; don't give the reward first and expect the response to occur after it.

Outcome

Complete the following to update your progress

I can use praise and affection to reward my child's efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
I can use different ways of rewarding my child.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Not yet

Joining in

Joining in is a way of starting an activity with the child that encourages the child to be with you and engage with you.

It is a crucial skill to learn. Once you have learnt and practised this skill, it should become your way of starting any activity with your child.



Prerequisite

You will need to have practised the 'Sensitive Responsiveness' skill before learning the method of joining-in.

Activity: Joining in

Step 1: Prepare: Know the obstacles and the way around

Children with autism often lack interest in others and ignore them, which makes it hard to engage them in any activity.

Step 2: Organise

Choose the right moments and routines for practice

Initially, you will need to choose some moments and routines from your day-to-day life when:

- a. your child shows interest in an activity or enjoys interactions with you
- b. you have time to spend with your child, and you are not in a rush to move on to do something else, and
- c. you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Some examples of the type of routines you should look at are:

- Playing with toys

- Playing with people
- Mealtime
- Household activities like cleaning, washing
- Outdoor activities like being in a play area

Carefully choosing suitable moments will help you get used to a way of working with your child. Once you have practised this way of working, you will be able to apply it to other situations to make every interaction a learning opportunity for the child. All adults and carers in the family can learn this too, greatly increasing the learning opportunities for the child!



Step 3: Join in

1. Be near the child and at the same level as the child, facing him/her.
2. Don't get too close if that is not comfortable for your child – back off if needed.
3. Take an interest in the child's activities. Express your interest with facial expressions (smile at the child), gestures and some sounds (don't start talking yet!). Give time to 'warm-up'.
4. Copy (imitate) the child's actions, sounds and expressions, with an extra dose of happy facial expressions. It will be easier to imitate, without taking anything away from the child, if you have two sets of some objects and toys, for example, two toy cars, spoons, cups or balls.
5. Help the child in what she/he is doing, but do not intrude or direct
6. Let the child lead; follow whatever the child does. At this stage do not worry about teaching the child
7. Try to balance the turns, give a little pause after your action, and wait for the child to act before imitating the action again.

Step 4: Reward

Use your learning about rewarding children. Always reward the child with smile/touch/hug whenever the child acknowledges you or looks at you.

Remember:

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Step 5: Practice:

Initially, practice this routine for 15 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. Once you are comfortable doing this activity, you would only have to do this for about 5 minutes at the start of any activity to ensure that the child is engaged with you.

Remember, when you join-in, you imitate the child's movements, actions and sounds; you share the child's fun, express your fun, comment on what the child is doing and help the child. You don't direct or interfere. You must wait until the child is well engaged with you before starting the next step.

Step 6: Outcome: complete the following to update your progress:

I can join in activities with my child	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
My child acknowledges my presence by looking at me.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
My child smiles and looks happy in interactions with me.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Congratulations! You have successfully joined in with your child. You have taken an important step in helping your child learn. Practice this activity 3 to 4 times a day until you are relaxed and comfortable, and it has become your way of starting an activity with the child. You will be using this method to begin almost any other activity with your child.

Motivating the child to communicate and interact

Children communicate and interact best when they are motivated to get what they want or do what they like. You can create such situations that enhance your child's motivation to connect with you.

Step 1: Organise

You can organise the child's environment - the way you keep things related to your child in the house - in a way that encourages the child to connect with you. Of course, the way you do this would vary depending on the child, but the following ideas can help you think in the right direction:

- f. Keep things that your child likes, within sight but out of reach. Children are most motivated when they want something, and now your child will have to ask someone to get what she/he wants. That will be a chance for you to connect with your child: getting his/her eye-contact, getting him/her to point, using a word to label the thing as you share your child's point, giving her/him a choice, and a lot more depending on the situation and the child.
- g. Plan and use containers to bring out interesting toys and things when you need them to create variety and interest. For example, some things that your child likes, such as puzzles, action figures, cars can be brought out, one part at a time to encourage the child to ask for them. You could also use these things as a reward after a reasonable effort for another task.
- h. Making visual-timetables is an excellent way of organising the day as well as motivating the child. Mix learning activities with the child's favourite activities and use a timetable to show the start and finish of activities.

Step 2: Learn and do the activity

Activity: Encouraging to ask



Parents often anticipate or guess what the child needs, more so if the child has difficulty in communicating. They are caring, but they are also removing a key motivation for the child to communicate. Try the following activities to encourage your child to connect with you to ask for things:

1. Give your child a choice, for example, by holding water in one hand and milk in the other holding your arms slightly apart; you can create a situation that, to ask, the child would have to look at you and what he/she wants to choose. You would also get a chance to name the things as you show and give. If your child can not verbalise the need, think of helping by providing a suitable way of communicating, for example, by using symbols, pictures or by physically assisting the child (prompting) to point.
2. Give something in parts rather than the whole amount at once to encourage the child to connect with you and ask. For example, a favourite drink or food can be given in a small amount at a time, or a favourite puzzle or a game can be provided in some pieces at a time. Make the most of the opportunity when the child needs more, encouraging the child to give you eye-contact or using gestures or words, praising the child for any effort.

Activity: Using time-delay



Giving a small pause of a few seconds, before you say or do what the child may expect you to say or do can be a great way of motivating the child to connect with you.

Try using pause or time-delay in the following activities:

- Pause in the middle of a fun activity such as a physical-sensory play (row, row, row the boat), and looking expectantly at the child. Restart the action as soon as the child makes an effort.
- Pause in the middle of a well-rehearsed nursery rhyme or song and look expectantly at the child. Restart as soon as the child makes an effort to connect with you.
- Pause before handing something over to the child. Give it to the child promptly as soon as the child makes an effort.

Activity: Doing something different or unexpected from what the child may be expecting to happen

Like time-delay, doing something unusual or different from what may be expected by your child has an effect of encouraging the child to look at you and initiate contact or communication. Some situations where you can do this are:

- dropping a toy when you are meant to carry it,
- giving the wrong thing instead of what is asked for or expected.

Every spontaneous connection established by the child is an excellent opportunity to engage and start an interaction.



Keeping the right balance of new and maintenance tasks:

Learning something new is not easy for anyone; it is harder for children with autism. You can help your child maintain his/her motivation by mixing new and previously learnt activities or tasks. When planning activities, mix what the child has learnt already with the latest activities or tasks in a way that motivates the child and does not cause frustration. Even when you start a new task, you can slip back to a previously learnt task, if it seems that the child is struggling or becoming frustrated. That way, you can always end the routine on a triumphant note and keep the child motivated.

Step 3: Practice

Practice these skills as many times a day as you can until you are proficient in creating and maintaining motivation. Choose the right moments and routines for practice. Initially, you want to choose some moments and routines from your child's and your day-to-day life when:

- your child shows interest in an activity or play or enjoys interactions with you (you may have to watch your child for a few days to make a list of all these moments), AND
- you have time to spend with your child, you're not in a rush to move on to do something else, AND
- you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Carefully choosing these moments that are suitable for you and your child to participate in activities will help you get used to the way of working that is most helpful for your child's learning. Once you have practised this way of working, you'll be able to make every interaction a learning opportunity for the child. And the same applies to other adults and carers in the family too, by learning and practising they can also join in helping the child - that would exponentially increase the learning opportunities!

Once you have learnt these skills, you can use them whenever you need to increase and maintain your child's motivation.

Step 4: Outcome

Complete the following to update to your progress:

I can motivate my child to connect with me.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
I can balance new and maintenance tasks to maintain my child's motivation.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Congratulations! You have successfully learnt the skills of motivating your child. You have taken another step in helping your child learn.

Modelling

We all learn from watching others. Children learn to communicate by listening to others and watching them. You can model gestures and words to help your child's communication.

Prerequisite skills

Before you use modelling, you should make sure that you have worked with your child to ensure that she/he can:

- pay attention to you
- shift attention from an object to you and back to the object
- imitate actions and sounds

Step 1: Organise

You can do this activity as part of any of the daily routines when:

- You can spend 15 to 20 minutes undisturbed with your child
- There is no other distraction, like TV or any other source of noise nearby

Step 2: Join in

- First, sit facing the child and **join-in** as you have learnt earlier

Step 3: Learn and do the activity

The best time to model any action is when the child expects something from you -that is the time you have the child's attention to your action.

There are two such situations that you can use:

- 1) Engage the child in an activity with you to create a situation when the child expects you to give him/her something

- 2) Use an opportunity when the child asks for something from you

There are two types of actions that you can model:

- (1) Model for saying a word or words
- (2) Model for gestures or an activity (doing something)

Activity: Modelling for words:



1. Get the child's attention on the object of interest by holding it in front of the child at a little distance, or use time-delay or pause to get the child's attention
2. Say the word, for example, "ball."
3. Pause and look expectantly at the child, encouraging with your facial expressions
4. If the child says or tries to say "ball", give the ball and a lot of praise
5. If the child does not say anything, repeat steps 1 to 3 above
6. If the child does not respond after two tries, give the ball and repeat the word "ball" as you give it to the child and give positive expressions; come back later to model this again.
7. Practice in a variety of situations

Activity: Modelling gestures and movements



You can do this activity in two situations:

- A. Use an opportunity when the child asks for something from you
- OR
- B. When the child should wave bye-bye while leaving or when a toy is 'leaving' during a game.

Do the following:

1. Get the child's attention and point to what the child needs, encourage the child to point by asking "what do you want?"
 2. Or, for situation B encourage the child to bye-bye and model waving
 3. if the child points or waves, give the object and praise
 4. If the child does not follow, repeat the model
 5. If the child still does not point or wave Prompt and give the object.
 6. Practice in different situations
- Try not persisting beyond two tries to prevent the child from getting frustrated.
 - ✓ Always end on a positive note, with a reward!

Step 4: Practice

Practice this skill as many times a day as you can until feel proficient. Choose the right moments and routines for practice. Initially, you want to choose some moments and routines from your child's and your day-to-day life when:

1. your child shows interest in some activity or play or enjoys interactions with you (you may have to watch your child for a few days to make a list of all these moments), AND
2. you have time to spend with your child, you're not in a rush to move on to do something else, AND
3. you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Step 5: Outcome: complete the following to update your progress:

I can model words, getting my child's attention to them	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
I can model gestures, getting my child's attention to them	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Prompting

Prompting means helping the child learn to make the required response. The response can be something the child has to do in a certain situation- like giving, showing or using a gesture or saying something, for which the child is rewarded. In time, with practice, the child learns to make the response, and the prompt is gradually reduced and eventually withdrawn.

Prerequisite skills:

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling

Your child should have learnt the following skills:

1. paying attention to you
2. shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object
3. imitating actions and sounds

Step 1: Organise

You can do this activity as part of any of the daily routines when:

- You can spend 15 to 20 minutes undisturbed with your child.
- There is no other distraction, like TV or any other source of noise nearby.

Step 2: Join in

- First, sit facing the child and **join-in** as you have learnt earlier.

Step 3: Learn and do the activity



Activity: Prompting the child to make a gesture or other activities



Example: helping your child to learn to point with his/her finger to ask for things

Step 1: Model: every time your child wants something, you get the child's attention and first point to it before giving it to the child. Repeat it in different situations.

Step 2: Prompt: when the child wants something, say "you want ----?", and at the same time shape his hand to a point and direct the point towards the child's interest.

Step 3: Reward: as soon as the child (prompted) points, give the thing to him/her with a lot of positive praise. Repeat it in different situations.

Step 4: Fading the prompt: with practice, gradually reduce the prompt. For example, instead of fully shaping the point, only move the child's hand or the elbow or touch the arm. Gradually reduce the prompt to a cue, like a gesture or a word, before stopping it. Remember, promptly giving the child what is wanted is the reward that will help the child learn to make the gesture. Eventually, the child will start doing the required action without needing a prompt; some ongoing reinforcement and reward should be enough to maintain it.

Activity: Prompting the child to say something



Example: helping your child to learn to say “water” to ask for some water.

Step 1: Model: every time your child wants water, bring the child’s attention to it and say “water before you give it. Repeat it in different situations.

Step 2: Prompt: when the child wants water, say “say -----” and look expectantly at the child, moving your face as if pronouncing “water”. Repeat. If the child says “water” or makes any sound, give water and a lot of praise. If the child does not say anything, still give the water to the child.

✗ Do not repeat more than twice in any one attempt; repeat at the next opportunity.

Other ways to prompt a verbal response:

You can use prompting as you give a choice, for example, between milk and water.

- ✓ Use a symbol, for example, a drawing of a glass of water, with water written below the drawing (to help to familiarise the child with the written words). Initially, as you say the word “water”, show the drawing to the child and point to it.
- ✓ Use simple storybooks, with large drawings and large print, initially just a single or a few words below each drawing on the page - make such a book cutting out pictures of objects that your child uses and writing words in large handwriting. Use the book every day to prompt your child to say these familiar words.
- ✓ Reward with attention, praise or giving the child something that is relevant for the moment and is of interest to the child.

Step 4: Practice

To practice prompt, you have to:

1. Think of a situation or an activity that you would do in the same way each time
2. Think of the response that you would want from the child
3. Think of how you would prompt the child to make that response
4. Think of the rewards that you would give your child for making the right response

Practice this skill as many times a day as you can until you are proficient in mirroring and mapping. Choose the right moments and routines for practice. Initially, you want to choose some moments and routines from your child's and your day-to-day life when:

1. your child shows interest in some activity or play or enjoys interactions with you (you may have to watch your child for a few days to make a list of all these moments), AND
2. you have time to spend with your child, you're not in a rush to move on to do something else, AND
3. you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Step 5: Outcome: complete the following to update your progress:

I can prompt gestures, getting my child's attention to it	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
I can prompt for words, getting my child's attention to it	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Building positive behaviour

Children with autism often have behavioural difficulties, which hinder their learning and interactions. Reducing these difficulties makes it easier for parents, teachers and others to look after and help the child. Children learn to behave well in a positive emotional environment and when parents and carers consistently model and reward good behaviour.

While the behaviour difficulties may differ from child to child and require an individualised approach, all parents can take the following steps to improve children's behaviour:

1. Creating a positive relationship with the child
2. Increasing the child's "good" or "right" behaviours
3. Teaching new "good" or "right" behaviours to the child
4. Getting children to follow instructions

Creating a positive relationship with the child



Parents and children have a mutual bond of love. But, taking an interest in what the child does and creating a positive relationship requires some effort. Children are happier and learn better in an environment where such positive relationships exist.

Prerequisite:

You should have learnt and practised the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing

Step 1: Organise

You can do this activity as part of any of the daily routines when:

- You can spend 15 to 20 minutes undisturbed with your child
- There is no other distraction, like TV or any other source of noise nearby
- The activity is something the child likes, for example playing with toys, being outdoors or any other fun activity.

Step 2: Learn and do the activity

To create a positive relationship, parents need to **regularly join and engage in activities** with the child. You have already learnt this skill earlier. Here is a recap of it in the behavioural context:

- Let the child take the lead in choosing an activity based on his or her interests. Do not direct the child, do not impose your wishes on the child and do not ask questions. Quite often, children like repeating the same activity again and again, and they also learn from such repetitions. You need to show patience; engage with what the child is doing and try not to redirect the child to do something else.
- Sit close to the child, give your full attention, listen to what the child says and try to imitate what the child does.
- Describe, in easy language, what the child does, for example, “You have made a tower”, “ the doll likes the food”.
- Don't find any flaws, only give praise, for example, “Raju, this is very nice!”. Show enthusiasm in your speech and expressions.
- Praise the child's play, drawing, activity or behaviour in front of others.

Step 3: Practice

- In the beginning, choose a time for effective engagement with the child when you're not in a rush or distracted. Once you have practised these activities, It will become your second nature, and you will be able to do them as part of your day to day work and activities.

Engaging the child in this way will improve his self-confidence. He will pay better attention to what you say. His language and social interaction will improve, and he will take more interest in others.

Step 4: Outcome: complete the following to update your progress:

I regularly engage in positive relationship-building activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet
My child seems happy when engaging in fun activities with me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet

Increasing the child's “good” or “right” behaviours

It might go unnoticed, but every child, even the one who frequently misbehaves, does something right in a day. These occasional moments of “goodness” can be increased by giving the child some attention and praise, and that makes it an effective way of improving the child's overall behaviour. That will help the child learn better and experience positive social interaction with others.

Prerequisite:



You should have learnt and practised the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing

Step 1: Prepare and organise

Watch your child carefully, think about his behaviour and make a list:

List 1: My child's good behaviours:

Such behaviours often go unnoticed. Pay attention to the list of little behaviours mentioned below and think about whether your child shows some of them at some time during the day.

1. Playing or doing some activity by himself
2. Sitting beside you
3. Playing with you
4. Looking at the pictures in a book
5. Listening to a story
6. Asking for something from you using language or gestures
7. Giving something to others spontaneously or when asked
8. Saying hello or greeting others
9. Showing affection towards others
10. Eating food properly
11. Following instructions

Step 2: Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence:

a. Bring the list of the child's good behaviours, that you have gathered, to the attention of the whole family and other carers. Always keep your eyes open for the child's good behaviours.

+

b. whenever anyone notices any of the good behaviours:

- Give praise and affection to the child. This will increase the child's self-confidence and social skills as well.
- Pay attention to the following when giving praise and affection:
 - Use the child's name when praising him or her. For example, "Raju, you were playing *really* well/ Good asking / Well done for giving / you ate your food really well".
 - Tell the child that you liked what he did
 - While praising, be in front of the child and give your full attention
 - Share the praise with others when the child is around
 - Include the whole family in this process to increase opportunities for increasing good behaviour

Step 3: Rewarding

- You can use rewards from the list about My child's Interests.
- You can also give rewards in a planned way, as you have learnt in Rewarding and Reinforcing

Step 4: Practice:

This activity must become the way the whole family relates to the child. The good behaviour noticed by anyone in the family should be talked about in front of the child. From time to time, you may have to review the way of rewarding the child for it to remain effective.

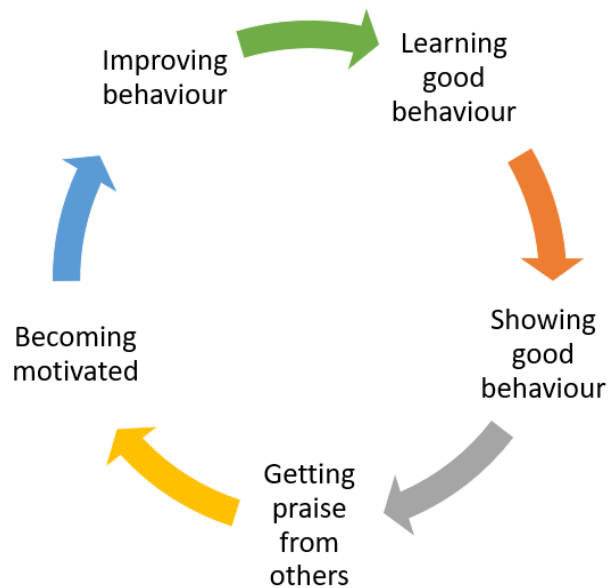
Step 5: Outcome: complete the following to update your progress:

I notice my child's good behaviour and effectively reward him/her.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
The family has become aware of this way of relating to the child.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Teaching children new “good” or “right” behaviours

Children, who know how to behave well, can potentially behave in that way instead of resorting to unwanted behaviours. Many right actions, which the child ought to do in certain situations, can be taught to children. And the more the child uses the right behaviours, the more praise and encouragement she/he will get. That is the way of setting up a virtuous cycle of behavioural improvement.

The virtuous cycle of good behaviour



Prerequisite skills:

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact

5. Modelling
6. Prompting and prompt fading

Your child should have learnt the following skills:

1. paying attention to you
2. shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object
3. imitating actions and sounds

Step 1: Organise

- a. Finding time: initially, you will have to practice how to teach a behaviour. For that reason, it'll be easier if you choose two or three times during the day when you have few or no distractions. Once you have practised and learnt the method, you'll be able to use it easily anytime during your daily routines.
- b. Work on reducing the conditions or situations which trigger or worsen unwanted behaviours to make it easier for the child to learn.
- c. Choose the behaviour that you want to teach your child, for example, showing the child how to tidy up the toys after a play session.
- d. Choose an activity that includes the behaviour that you have chosen. It is much better to work on the whole activity than only on one isolated task.

Step 2: Learn and do the activity

Activity: Model the expected behaviour

1. Choose a time when the child is calm
2. Get your child's attention and model the activity to be learnt (for example, greeting others)
3. Wait for 5 seconds and repeat your modelling
4. Physically prompt the child to make a gesture to greet
5. Praise the child as soon as he attempts to copy the behaviour or does it on prompting. Do not point out any flaws,
6. Practice it repeatedly, and each time try to give a little bit less prompting and support
7. Continue to praise the child for making an effort.

Activity: Teaching expected behaviour as part of an activity

1. Example: Using the activity 'playing with toys' as an example:
2. Plan this activity in 4 parts:
 - a. Taking out toys from a bag or a box
 - b. Playing with the toys
 - c. Tidying up the toys
 - d. Moving on to another task or activity (it will help if the next task or activity is also something that the child is interested in.)
3. Use a visual timetable with symbols or pictures to explain the sequence of the above four parts to the child.
4. Keep the situation in your control; only have things related to the activity in front of you and keep the rest away in a bag or a box.
5. Be engaged with the child in the play. When the playtime is finished, use words or gestures to say "playtime finished, tidy up time"; use a visual timetable to communicate this if required.

6. Model: Get the child's attention and model by putting one or two toys in the box or the bag. Wait for 5 seconds and look at the child expectantly and encouragingly.
7. If the child does not follow, repeat your modelling. Wait for 5 seconds.
8. If still no positive response from the child, Prompt the child by holding the child's hand and encouraging at the same time.
9. Wait for 5 seconds and look at the child expectantly and encouragingly.
10. Whenever the child does the expected behaviour offer praise by naming the child and the behaviour, for example, "Raju, you tidied up the toys *really* well."
11. Use the visual timetable to help the child to move on to the next task.
12. Use every opportunity to praise the child in front of others "Today Raju tidied up *really* well."

Step 3: Practice

Inform and include the rest of the family and others working with the child to practice the expected behaviour. Try to work on one behaviour at a time. Once a behaviour is established, you can add new behaviour and use the previously learnt behaviour as a maintenance activity.

Step 4: Outcome: complete the following to update to your progress:

I can model and help the child learn some expected behaviour	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
I can plan activities to include some expected behaviour to help my child learn	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet

Getting your child to follow instructions

No child follows every instruction given by their parents, that is normal! However, autism makes it harder for children to do as they're told.

Prerequisite skills:

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling
6. Prompting and prompt fading

Your child should have learnt the following skills:

1. paying attention to you

2. shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object
3. imitating actions and sounds

Step1: consider any obstacles

First, think whether your child may not be understanding the instructions well. If yes: Make your language simple and give instructions in small parts. If required, use signs, symbols or pictures. First, get your child's attention towards you and then speak in a simple and clear language

Step 2: Improve your way of giving instructions

Do the following to make your instructions more effective:

1. Don't give too many instructions; think (do I really need to give this instruction) and only give the instruction that is needed.
2. If, for some reason, the child is unlikely to follow the instruction, then don't give it. Initially, try giving instructions for activities that the child is more likely to do.
3. Try using a positive tone (now you do ----) instead of making your instructions negative (don't do this, don't do that).
4. If there is a reason for giving the instruction, then say that reason first (We are going out, and it is time to tidy up your toys)
5. If the child is doing something, give a little time for the child to shift to do the other task (You can do ----for five more minutes and then do -----)
6. Sometimes it is worth giving a little time for the child to process and follow your instruction
7. Don't sound angry.
8. Once you have given the instruction, then try to stick to it; changing rules and instructions, for your convenience, does not lead to good behaviour.
9. If you have promised a reward to motivate the child to follow your instruction, then you must give the reward once the instruction is followed.

Step 3: Practice

1. Initially, give instructions about tasks that the child would want to do. The child will develop a habit of following instructions.
2. Praise the child as soon as the s/he follows the instruction. Praise the child's good behaviour in front of others. Do not talk about instances when the child did not follow your instructions.

Step 4: Outcome: complete the following update to check your progress:

I have improved my way of giving instructions to my child	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
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Module 4

Four foundation skills for children's learning

Children's knowledge and skills are built incrementally through learning from experiences. The foundation skills, described below, are necessary for this learning to happen, as they enable children to pay attention, communicate, share ideas and interests. Learning is much harder and unstable when these foundations are weak; trying to teach your child more advanced skills without first working on the foundation skills is like trying to cross the sea without a boat!

In this section, you will learn the activities to help your child learn the following foundation skills:

1. Enabling attention
2. Imitation of sounds and gestures
3. Gestures and joint attention
4. Symbolic and imaginative play

- ✓ You should start at the beginning and work your way through, in that order.
- ✓ Only move to the next skill when the one above has been achieved.
- ✓ Once the child learns a skill, you should still practice it from time to time.
- ✓ When the child has learnt a few of these skills, you can practice more than one skill in any one session.
- ✓ Remember, PRACTICE is the key.

Enabling Attention



Introduction

- By learning the skill of 'joining in,' you have taken the first step towards helping your child learn the foundation skills.
- Now, you can start working on the foundation skills. You should start at the top and work your way through, in that order.
- Work on an activity for as long as it takes for the child to learn the skill.
- Only move to the next skill when the one above has been achieved.
- You should still practice these activities from time to time, even after the child has learnt the skill.
- When the child has learnt a few of these skills, you can practice more than one skill in any one session.
- Remember, PRACTICE is the key.

Activity: Enjoying interactions, paying attention to your face, voice, and actions



Observe your child:

Notice what does your child do whenever she/he needs something and when you say something to her/him. Does your child look towards you or into your eyes either to ask for something or to respond to an interaction that you have started with him/her?

My child looks towards me or into my eyes either to ask for something or to respond to an interaction.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, often does that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

Prerequisite skills:

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing

Step 1: Prepare

Choose a routine from your list when your child shows interest in what is happening, you have time to be with the child, and the situation is relatively free from distractions.

For example, two routines, which occur regularly, and when the child is generally quite interested, are playing with toys and mealtime. We're going to use these routines as examples, but you could apply the same method to any other routine that you may prefer to choose.

Step 2: Organise

Arrange the situation in such a way that you remain in control of it. Try to pre-arrange the food (for mealtime), toys (for play) and other things that you may need beforehand so that you won't need to break the interaction once it starts.

Step 3: Watch and join in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have learnt earlier. Let the child lead by choosing what the child wants to do.

Remember, when you join in you imitate the child's movements, actions and sounds; you share the child's fun, express your fun, comment on what the child is doing and help the child. You don't direct or interfere. You must wait until the child is well engaged with you before starting the next step.

Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Step 4: Engage and expand

In this step, you will use the skill of **Time-Delay** to increase your child's motivation and responsiveness using the routine of mealtime as an example.

- a. First, try to generate your child's interest in small portions of food;

OR

Start a playful activity that frequently recurs, for example, with a pop-up toy or some physical-sensory activity like getting the child to swing on your knees.

- b. Once the child becomes interested and expects another small portion of food or another activity then pause to create a **Time-Delay** for up to 5 to 10 seconds - you may hold the food in front of the child during this time.
- c. As soon as the child looks towards you or makes an effort, to get the food or restart the play activity, give the child the food or restart the play activity along with lots of positive encouragement with facial expressions and sounds or words.
- d. Repeat 1-3
- e. Do not lose heart if the child does not respond the first time. Try the same steps in other routines.

Step 5: Reward

Reward the child with smile/touch/hug whenever the child acknowledges you or looks at you.

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Step 6: Practice:

Initially, practice this routine for 5 minutes at least 3-4 times a day for seven days. After that, you may combine it with other activities as a maintenance activity to keep the child motivated.

Outcome:

My child looks towards me or into my eyes either to ask for something or to respond to an interaction.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Shifting attention from objects to people and back, and turn-taking

How does your child shift attention towards what you show to him/her and take turns while playing with you?

Observe your child:

Does your child look at something that you point at or some action that you do? Does your child take turns during enjoyable interactions?

I can get my child to look at something that I point at. My child takes turns during enjoyable interactions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, often does that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

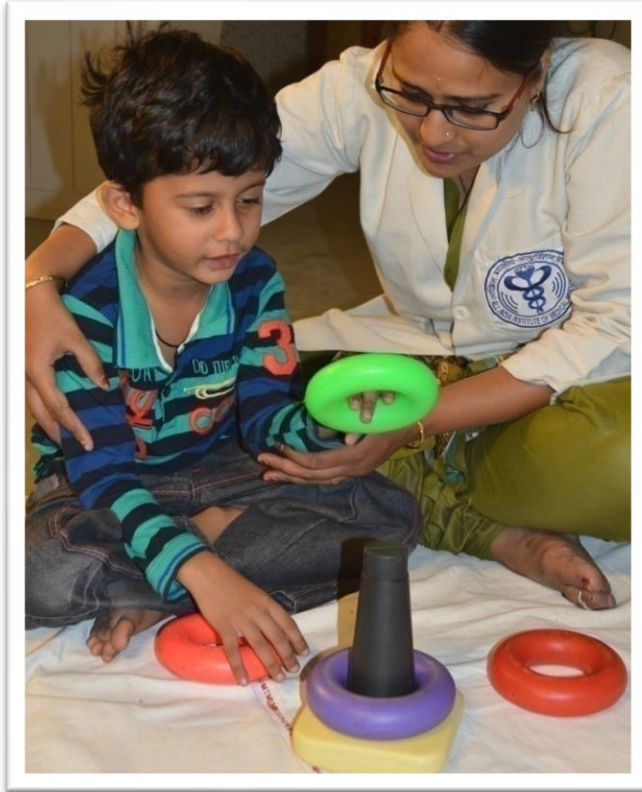
Prerequisite skills:

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing

Step 1: Prepare

Choose a routine from your list when your child shows interest in what is happening, you have time to be with the child, and the situation is relatively free from distractions.



We are going to use the example of one of the routines, which occurs regularly and when the child is generally quite interested - playing with toys - but you could apply the same method to any other routine that you may prefer.

Step 2: Organise

Have some simple toys like blocks, bucket/jar for putting in/taking out, shape-sorter, musical toy, balls and a bucket to throw in/out and toys with many pieces. Arrange the situation in such a way that you remain in control of it. Keep some toys in a box, though within reach of the child to avoid clutter.

✗ AVOID: TOYS THAT THE CHILD LOVES USING IN A REPETITIVE MANNER, AND ELECTRONIC ITEMS: PHONES, IPAD/TABLET, VIDEOS GAMES

Step 3: Watch and join-in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have learnt earlier. Remember, let the child choose the toy. Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Step 4: Engage and Expand

In this step, you will use the skill of **Expanding** and **Prompting** to increase your child's motivation and responsiveness.



1. Copy (imitate) the child's actions, sounds and expressions; add an extra dose of happy facial expressions; it will be easier to imitate without taking anything away from the child if you have two sets of some common objects and toys, for example, two toy cars, spoons, cups, balls etc.
2. Help the child in what she/he is doing, but don't intrude or direct
3. Let the child lead; follow whatever the child does. At this stage don't worry about teaching the child;
4. Try to balance the turns, give a little pause after your action and wait for the child to act before imitating the action again; this way, you help the child learn turn-taking.
5. Next, you can add a small step (**Expand**) from your side while you copy the child's actions. For example, if the child is playing with a car:
 - a. you first copy the child's actions
 - b. when you get the child's attention, then make the car go down a ramp or hit a box, showing a lot of excitement when that happens.
 - c. Don't worry whether or not the child picks up your addition instantly; at this stage, what matters most is that the child pays attention to you and your actions.
 - d. Repeat the activity at least twice, then give a pause and wait, looking expectantly at the child (time-delay). If the child copies the extended activity.
 - e. If the child does the extended activity, give a lot of praise to reward the child.
 - f. If the child does not follow the extended activity then use the Prompting described below.

Prompting means giving extra help. If the child is engaged but not picking up your Expanding even after practising, use **Prompting**. The following is an example of **Prompting** for the activity of moving a toy car to-and-fro or making the car go down the ramp/hit a wall:

- a. Show the activity at least twice, making sure that you have the child's attention first. Pause after each activity and look expectantly towards the child
- b. **Prompt** the child by putting the car in the child's hand and moving it to-and-fro or making the car go down the ramp/hit a wall
- c. As soon as the child (with your help) does the activity, give a lot of enthusiastic praise
- d. Repeat the activity a few times but don't force the child; if the child loses interest then shift to following the child's lead - don't rush it - come back to it when the child is engaged again.

- e. With practice, gradually reduce the prompt, for example, instead of putting the car in the child's hand, guide the child's hand to touch the car and later even to touch the child's elbow may be enough to prompt the child.
- f. As soon as the child does the activity or makes an effort to do it give plenty of rewards (see below), and follow by taking your turn and then giving a pause and looking expectantly towards the child. You may need to repeat a) to e) a few times and in different activities and routines before a good turn-taking routine is established.

Step 5: Reward

Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort of doing it.

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about rewarding.

Step 6: Practice:

Initially, practice this routine for 5 minutes at least three times a day for three days. After that, you may have to do this for about 2 minutes at the start of any activity to ensure that the child is engaged with you.

Outcome:

I can get my child to look at something that I point at. My child takes turns during enjoyable interactions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Imitating movements, sounds and gestures



Introduction:

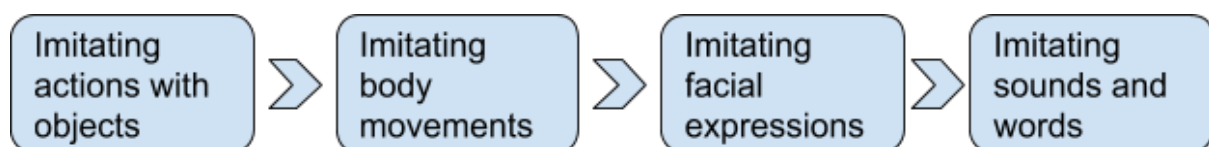
- Imitation makes it easier for children to learn from others.
- Children with autism find it hard to pay attention to others and imitate.

There are three types of imitation

- 1) imitating actions with objects
- 2) imitating movements, and
- 3) imitating sounds and words

How do children learn imitation?

Learning imitation is a two-way process between you and your child. Sometimes, you copy some sound or action of the child, often adding a new action or sound to it, and at other times, you encourage the child to copy something that you have done. Like with any other skill, children refine imitation skills in steps:



Prerequisite skills:

To help the child learn imitation, you should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling

The child should have learnt the following skills:

1. paying attention to you
2. shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object

Imitating actions with objects

Imitating actions with objects is the beginning of learning to imitate. For example, an adult, having obtained the child's attention, can bang a toy, shake a rattle or throw a ball and expect the child to do the same. Sometimes the child may need some encouragement to do so, but as long as the activity is interesting for them, they should copy the adult's actions. Once the child starts imitating, it opens up opportunities for adding actions, sounds and words and becomes the basis for turn-taking.

Observe your child:

Once you have joined in and obtained the child's attention, do some actions on objects to see whether your child imitates these actions, then answer the questions below:

My child can imitate different types of actions on objects, for example, banging a toy, shaking a rattle or throwing a ball in different situations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Step 1: Prepare and Organise

- Choose a routine from your list when your child shows interest in what is happening, you have time to be with the child, and the situation is relatively free from distractions.
- Have some simple toys like blocks, bucket/jar for putting in/taking out, shape-sorter, musical toys, balls and a bucket to throw in/out and toys with many pieces.
- It is useful to have two sets of some toys, such as 2 cups, two spoons, two balls, two toy cars etc, so that you can use one to imitate actions without having to take one away from the child.
- Arrange the situation in such a way that you remain in control of it. Keep some toys in a box, though within reach of the child to avoid clutter.

✗ AVOID: TOYS THAT THE CHILD LOVES USING IN A REPETITIVE MANNER, AND ELECTRONIC ITEMS: PHONES, IPAD/TABLET, VIDEOS GAMES

We are going to use the example of one of the routines, which occurs regularly and when children are generally quite interested - playing with toys - but you could apply the same method to any other routine that you may prefer to choose.

Step 2: Watch and join-in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have done earlier. Let the child choose the toy. Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Remember, when you join-in you imitate the child's movements, actions and sounds; you share the child's fun, express your fun, comment on what the child is doing and help the child. You don't direct or interfere. You must wait until the child is well engaged with you before starting the next step.

Step 3: Engage and Expand

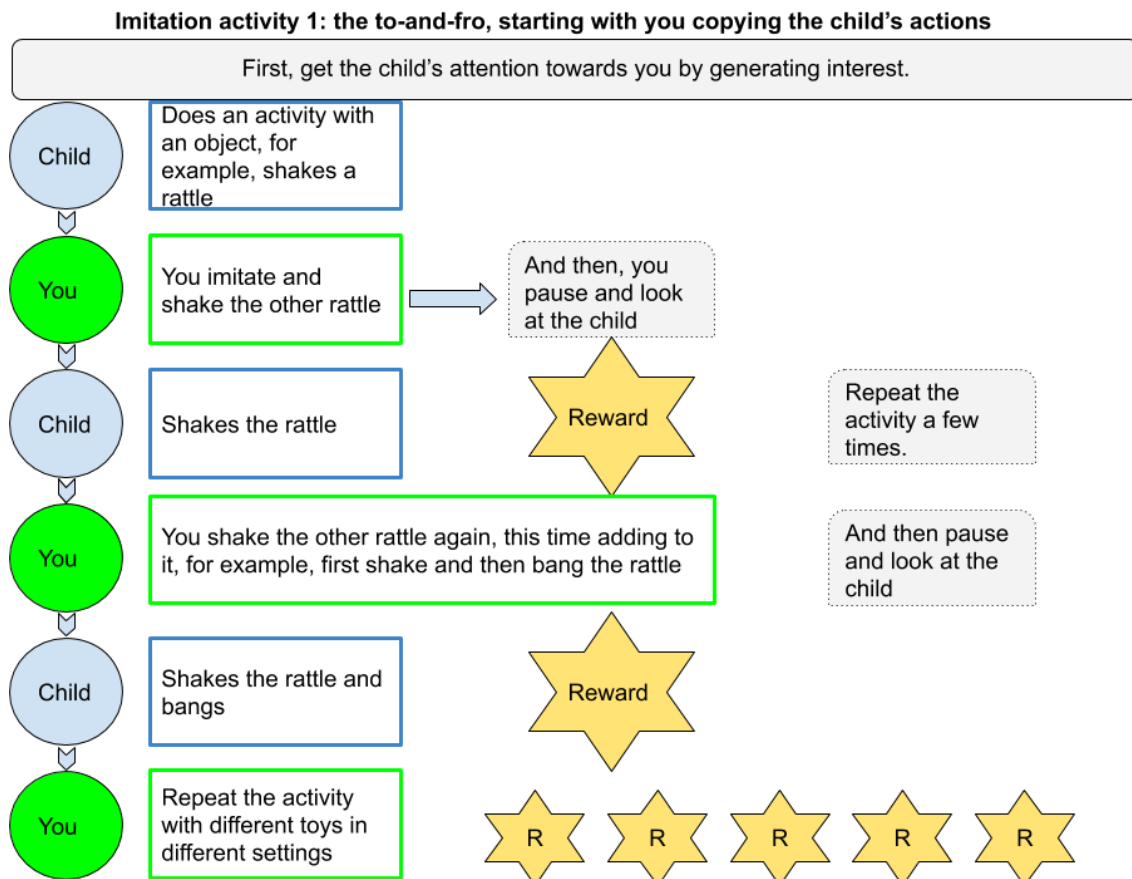
In this set of activities you will use the skills of **Modelling** (showing how something is done) and **Prompting** (helping your child, physically or by other means) to help your child learn the skill of imitating.

Learn and do the activity

There are two ways of doing this activity:

- Starting with copying what the child is doing
- Starting with a new action and encouraging the child to copy

You can do both these steps in the same session with your child, sometimes starting with imitating the child, and sometimes you start a new action.



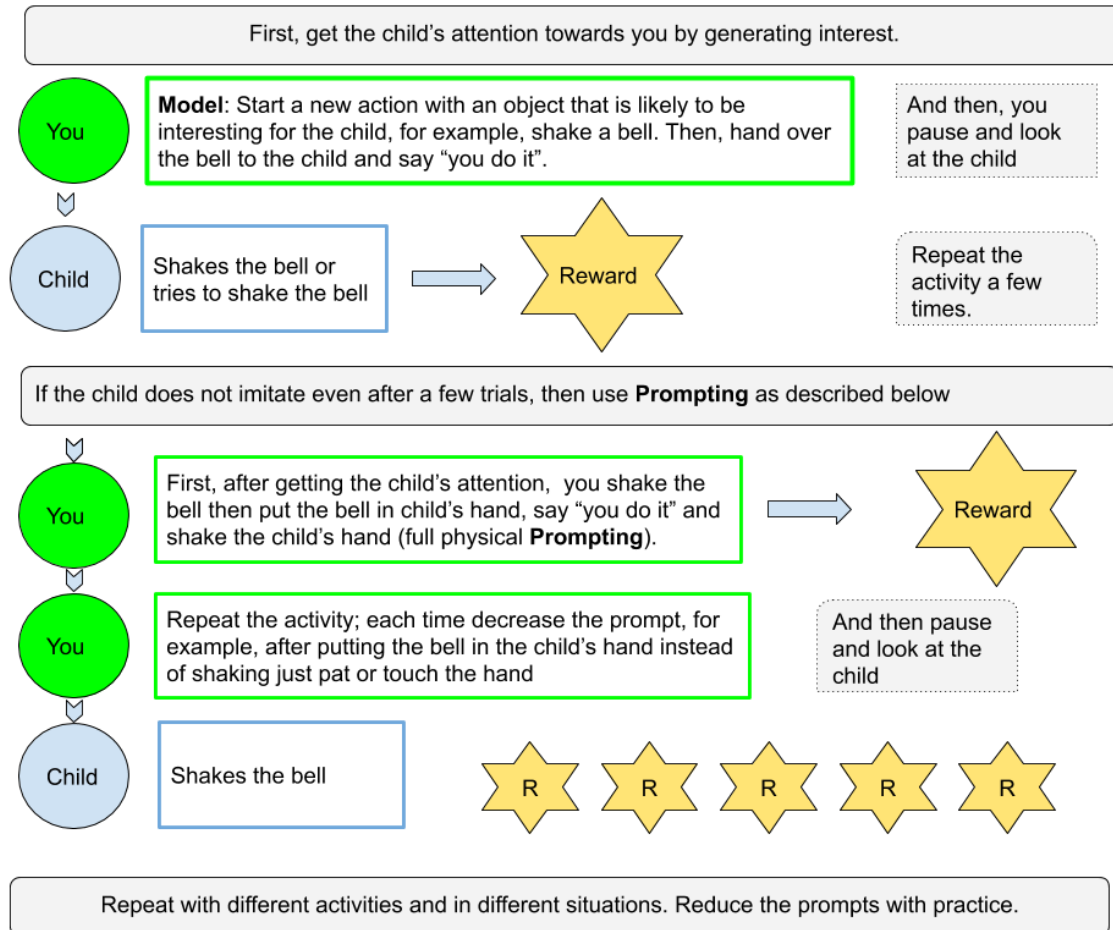
Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

- Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
- Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about ways of rewarding your child.

Now do the Imitation activity 2

Imitation activity 2: the to-and-fro, starting with you doing a new action and encouraging the child to copy



Practice:

To begin with, choose situations from your list of routines when you have time to spend with the child, the routine is interesting for the child, and you can be free from distractions. Later, with practice, you will be able to do this as part of any day-to-day routine.

Initially, practice these two activities for 10 minutes each at least three times a day for seven days. After that, you should be able to do this as part of your day to day activities.

Reward

Reward the child with a lot of excited sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

3. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
4. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Outcome:

My child can imitate different types of actions on objects, for example, banging a toy, shaking a rattle or throwing a ball in different situations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Imitating gestures



Information:

Typically developing children can intuitively copy the movements of others, such as facial expressions and hand gestures, but such imitation is hard for children with autism. Imitation helps children learn to communicate and interact, and it is, of course, essential for learning a sign language.

Observe your child:

Get your child's attention, do some movements, such as jumping, clapping hands, waving bye-bye, blowing a kiss and sticking your tongue out to see whether your child imitates these actions, then answer the questions below:

My child can imitate different types of body movements, for example, jumping, clapping hands, waving bye-bye, blowing a kiss and sticking tongue out.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

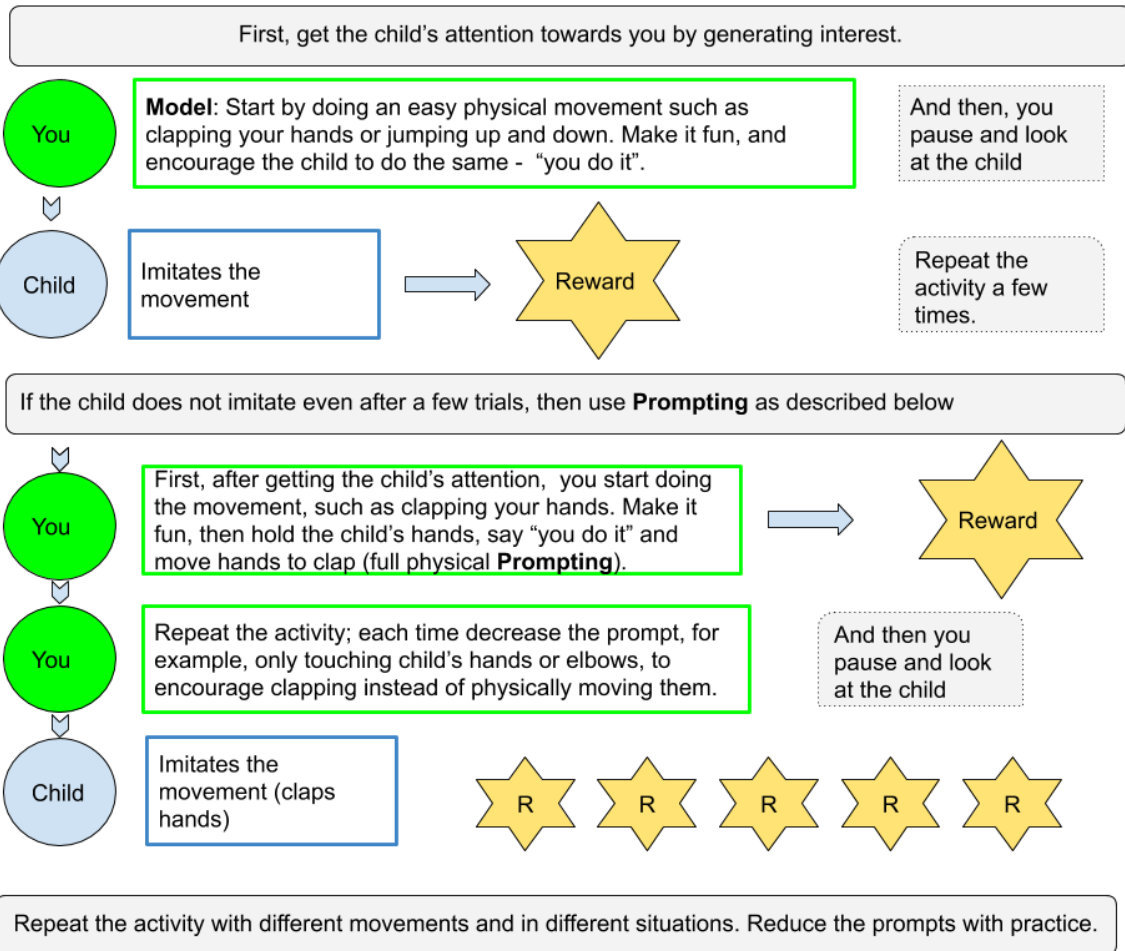
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn and do the activity
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Prepare and Organise:

To begin with, choose situations from your list of routines when you have time to spend with the child, the routine is interesting for the child, and you can be free from distractions. Later, with practice, you will be able to do this as part of any day-to-day routine.

Learn and do the activity

Imitation activity 3: gestures



Practice:

Aim to do this activity 5 to 10 times in a session about three times a day. After that, you may be able to do this as part of your day to day activities.

Reward

Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about ways of rewarding your child.

Outcome:

My child can imitate different types of body movements, for example, jumping, clapping hands, waving bye-bye, blowing a kiss and sticking tongue out.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity

<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.
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Imitating sounds and words



Information: Learning to imitate sounds is the beginning of learning to talk. Children with autism find it hard to pay attention and to imitate sounds. However, some children with autism repeat words and even sentences, either immediately or after some time. Such imitation in autism indicates a way of learning and is a useful strategy for communicating with others.

Observe your child:

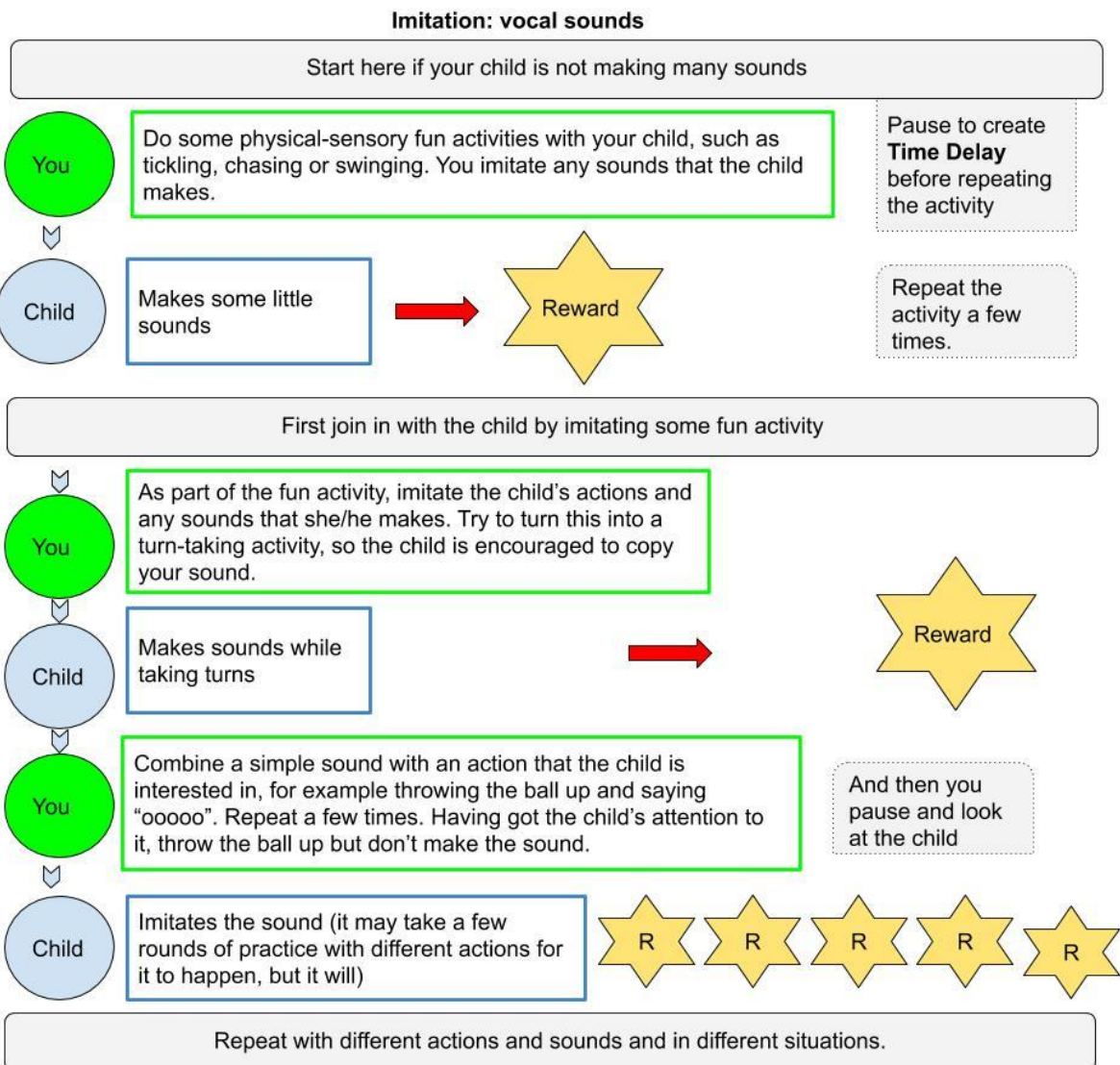
Once you have obtained the child's attention, make some sounds, such as the ones listed below and observe the child's imitation:

- Blowing air through lips
- Animal sounds, such as cat's meowing, dog's barking, cow's mooing;
- Repeated simple sounds, such as mm mm mm, pp pp pp, nn nn nn,
- Word-like sounds, such as ka for car or cat, mi for milk, ba for ball
- Words, for example, milk, water), nose, eyes, shoe, bottle, car, ball, cat, dog, oh-oh, bye-bye and hi

<input type="checkbox"/> My child does not make any sounds at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the activity - Imitating vocal sounds
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<input type="checkbox"/> My child does not copy any of the sounds that I make	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the activity - Imitating vocal sounds
<input type="checkbox"/> My child copies some sounds but not any word-like sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the activity - Imitating word-like sounds
<input type="checkbox"/> My child only sometimes copies some word-like sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the activity - Imitating word-like sounds

Activity: Imitating vocal sounds



Reward

Reward the child with a lot of excited sounds/smiles/touch/hugs whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it. Also, think about the list of the things you made of what your child likes.

Remember:

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

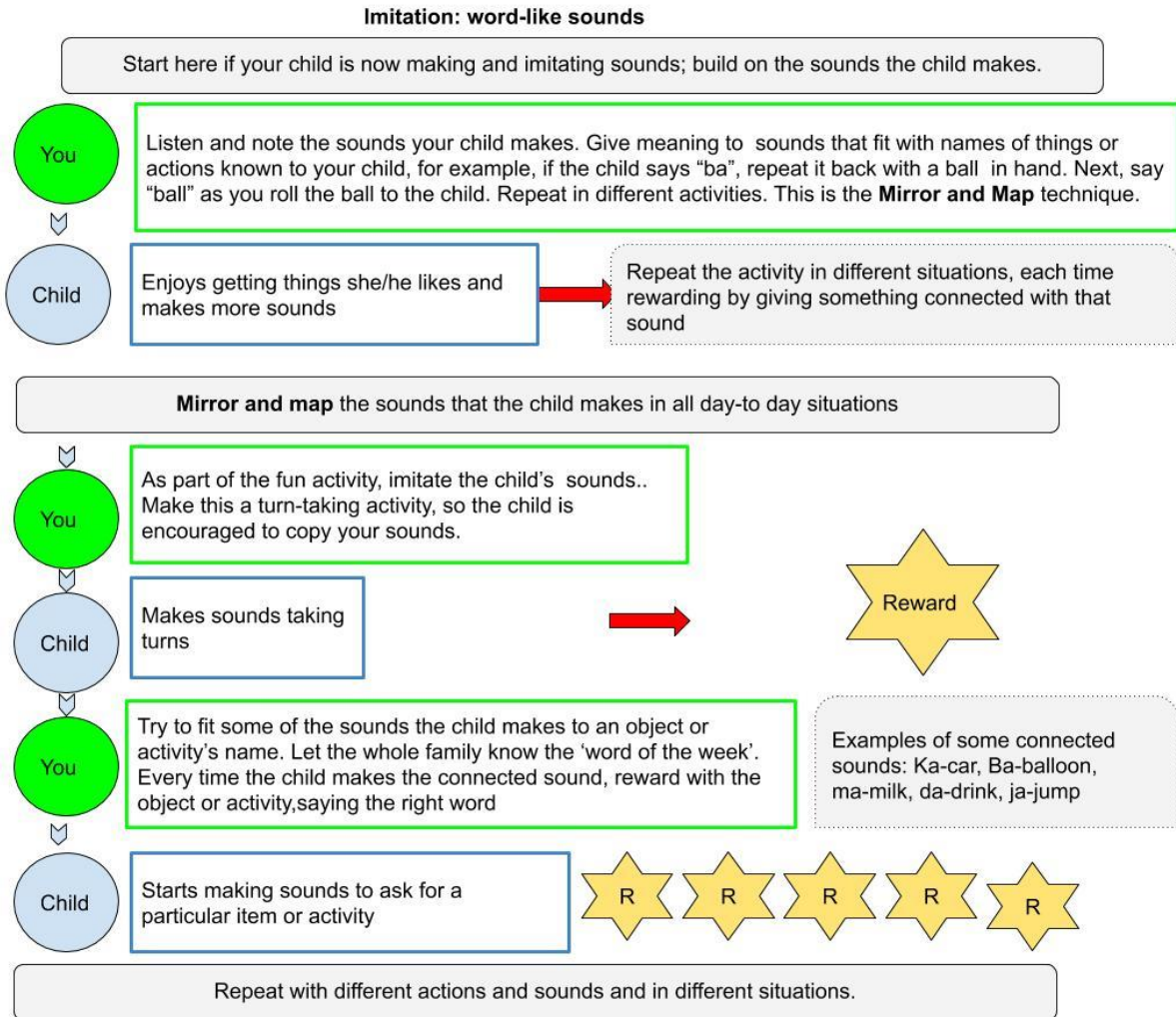
Initially, practice this routine with different sounds in different situations for 10 minutes at least three times a day for seven days. After that, you may be able to do this as part of your day to day activities and routines.

Involve the whole family in doing this activity, let them know the sounds and words you are working on, and how to engage and do the activity. The learning opportunities will increase, and the child will make better progress.

Outcome:

My child can imitate different sounds that I make.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Imitating word-like sounds



To begin with, choose situations from your list of routines when you have time to spend with the child, the routine is interesting to the child, and you can be free from distractions. Later, with practice, you will be able to do this as part of any day-to-day routine. Aim to do this activity 5 to 10 times in a session about three times a day for at least a week before completing the checklist below.

Do not expect the child to repeat the word correctly; an approximate word-like sound is good at this stage and needs rewarding!

Reward

Reward the child with a lot of excited sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it. Also, think about the list of the things you made of what your child likes.

Remember:

3. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
4. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this routine with different sounds in different situations for 10 minutes at least three times a day for seven days. After that, you may be able to do this as part of your day to day activities.

Involve the whole family in doing this activity, let them know the sounds and words you are working on, and how to engage and do the activity. The learning opportunities will increase, and the child will make better progress.

Outcome:

My child can imitate many word-like sounds.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep practising this activity intermittently, and learn and do the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gestures and Joint attention



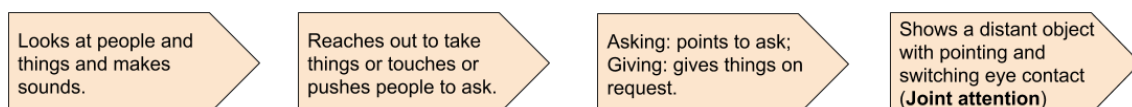
Introduction

From a very young age, children use gestures to communicate their desires, feelings or reasons. They point to ask or to show something, wave bye-bye or blow a kiss, and use hands and body gestures to describe. Children start using gestures before they learn to talk and continue to combine gestures with sounds or words to add meaning to them. Parents encourage children's communication by responding to their gestures.

Encouraging the use of gestures does not delay your child's learning to talk: it helps them learn to talk.

Organise and Prepare

The developmental sequence of using gestures and joint attention in typically developing children



Parents' natural reaction is to guess children's needs even before they have asked for it. However, by doing so, they miss out on opportunities to encourage the child to communicate. Children are most motivated to communicate when they need something. For example, your child will have to connect with you to ask for something if they cannot get it themselves, or if they only get a small part or amount of what they like and they have to ask for another portion or other parts. An opportunity to expand the communication is created once the child connects with you. You can, with planning, create similar opportunities for your child to connect with you, and use those moments to make it a learning opportunity for the child.

Prerequisite skills

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness

2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling
6. Prompting and prompt fading

Your child should have learnt the following skills:

1. Paying attention to you
2. Shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object
3. Imitating sounds and gestures

Learn and do the activity



Gesture activity 1: Asking by looking and making sounds directed towards you, reaching towards you or touching you.

This activity is different from the activity of 'Imitation as the emphasis here is on encouraging the child to make the first move to connect with you to ask for something.

Observe:

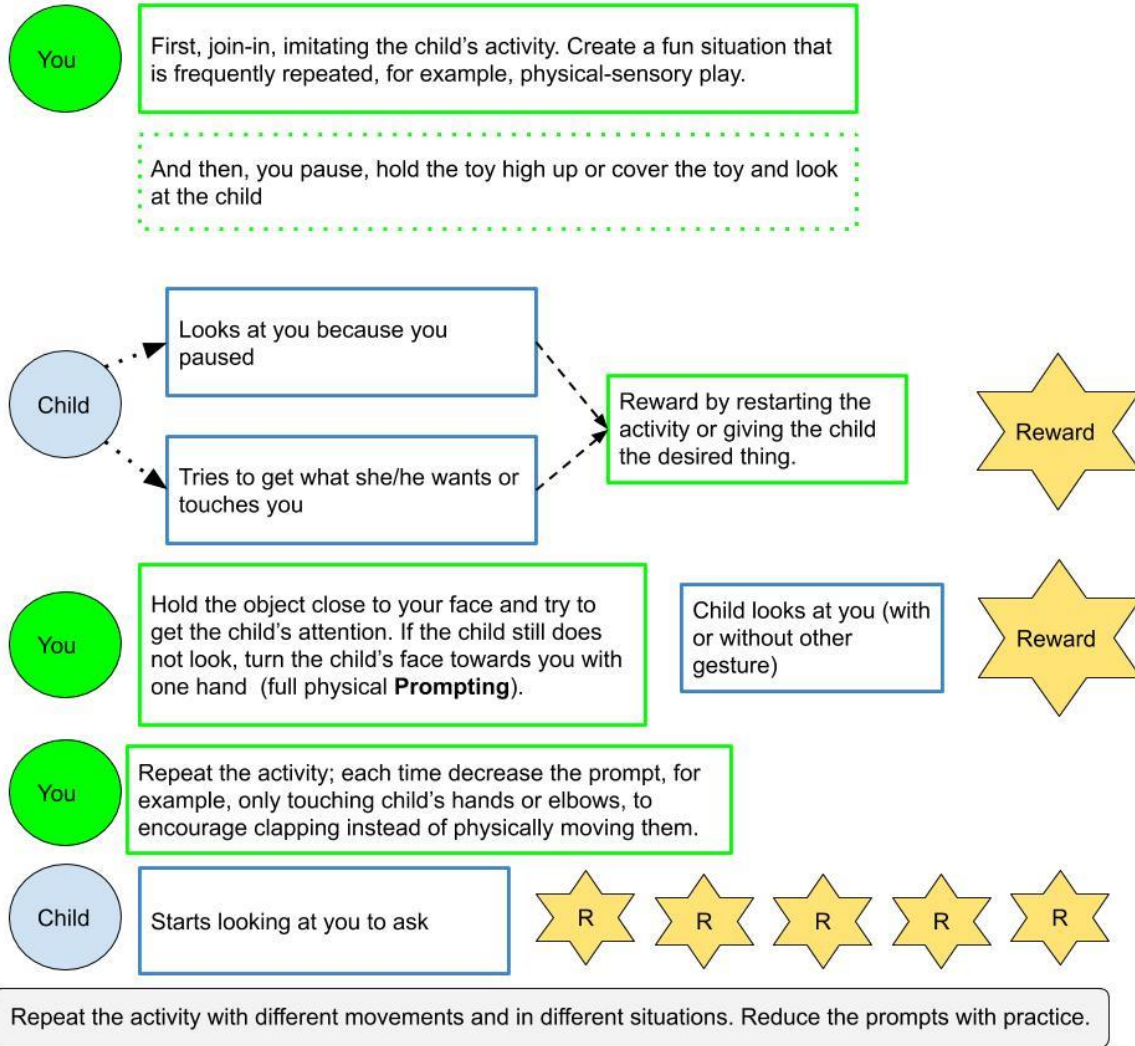
Observe whether your child asks for something specific by pointing at it or by making a sound or saying a word. The child should be able to ask about something particular, not merely cry and make you guess.

Does the child looks at you, touches you or makes sounds towards you?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

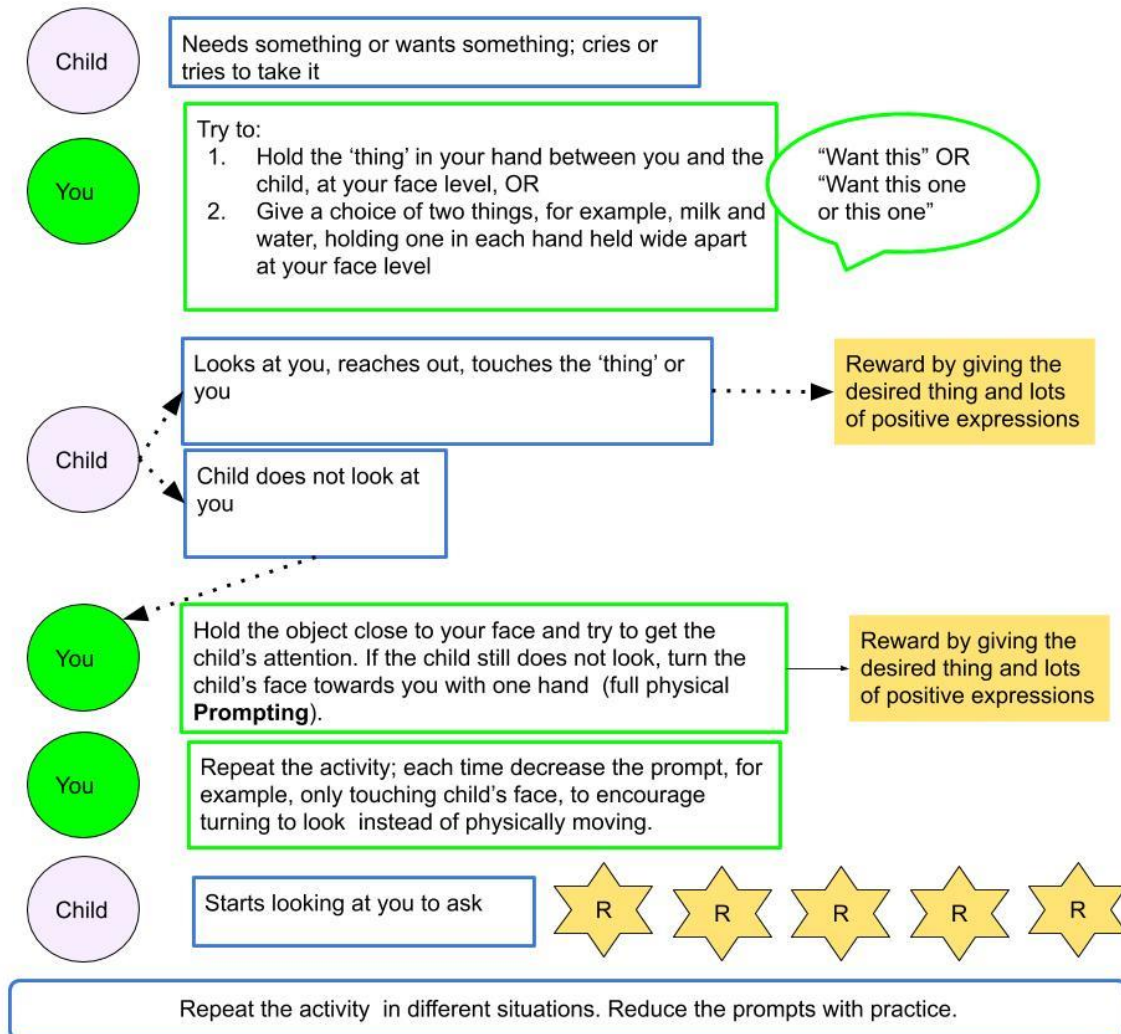
You can do this activity in two different situations:

- 1) By joining-in in some play activity with the child
- 2) Whenever your child needs or wants something

Gesture activity 1: Getting the child to look and make sounds directed towards you, reach towards you or touch you: **Situation 1:** During a play activity



Gesture activity 1: Getting the child to look and make sounds directed towards you, reach towards you or touch you: **Situation 2:** whenever you get a chance, for example, when your child needs or wants something



Reward

Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about rewarding.

Practice:

Initially, practice these routines for 15 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. After that, you can do these during any playtime or whenever the child asks for something. It needs to become the way you interact with your child. You can always do this as a maintenance activity even when you have moved forward to other activities.

Outcome:

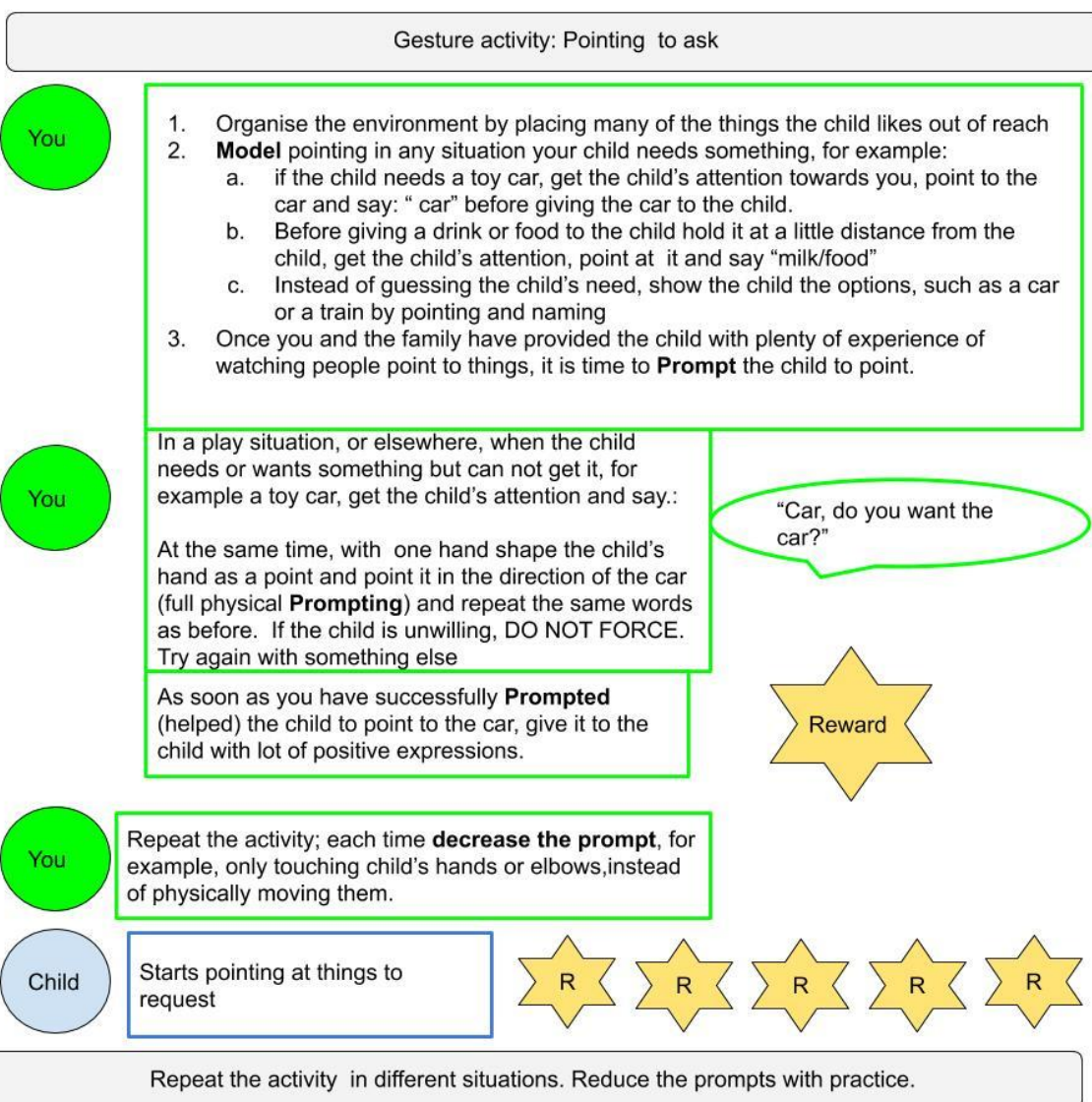
The child looks at me, touches me or makes some sounds towards me.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to 'Pointing to ask' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to 'Pointing to ask' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gesture activity 2: Asking: Pointing to Ask**Observe:**

Put somethings that your likes, such as his favourite toy, out of reach but still visible to your child. Observe whether your child points with his finger towards it to ask for it.

My child can point with his finger to ask for what she/he wants:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity





Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of excited sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice: Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for seven days. It needs to become the way you interact with your child.

Outcome:

My child can point with his finger to ask for what she/he wants:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Giving things on request' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Giving things on request' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gesture activity 3: Giving things on request

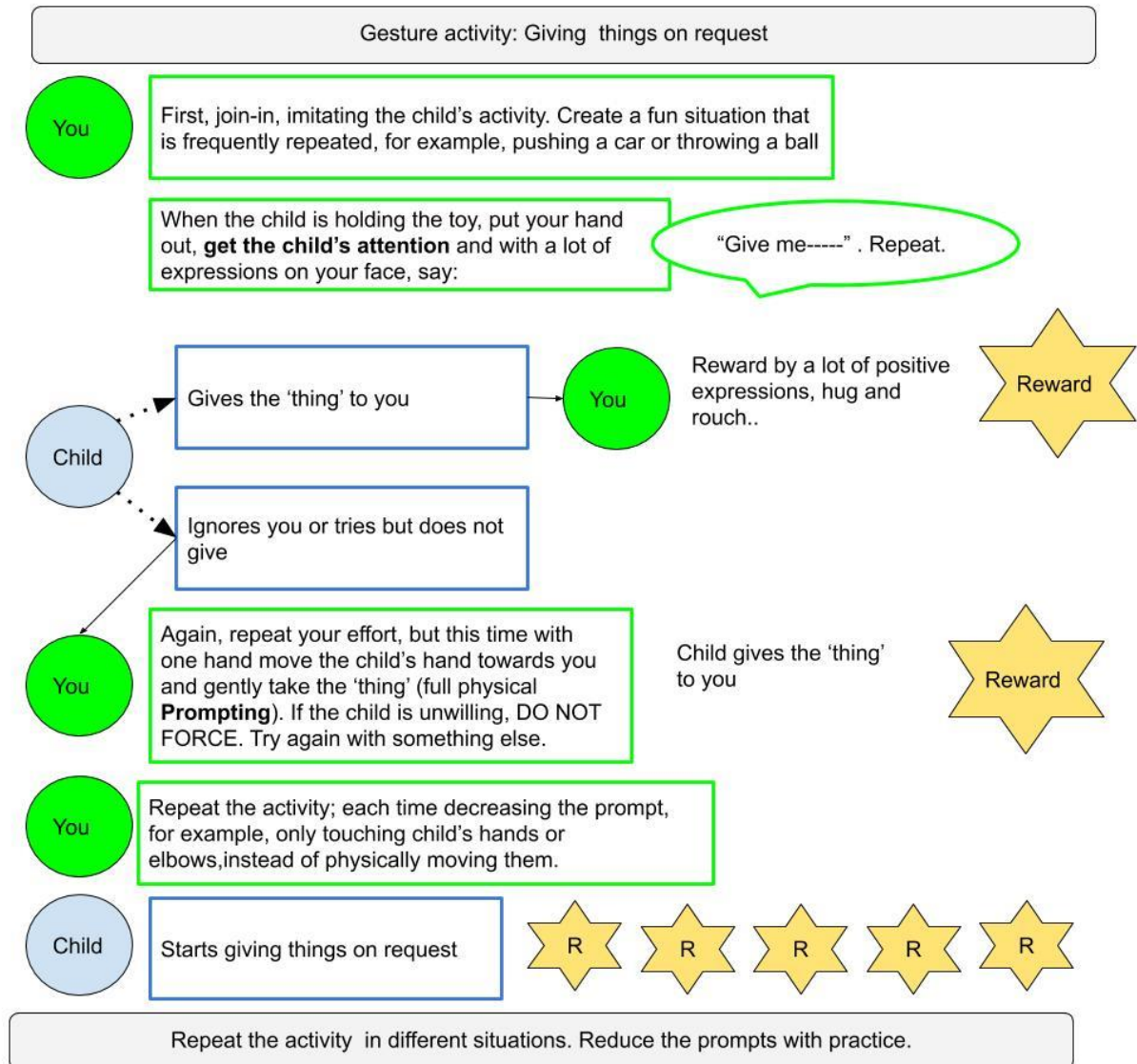
Observe:

Wait for situations when your child has something that you want, like some item of food or a book or a toy, and then ask for it, by putting your hand out open in front of the child and saying “give --(name of the item)-- to me” or “give me the -----”.

My child can give things to me when asked.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

As for the previous activity, you can also do this activity in two different situations:

- 1) By joining-in in some play activity with the child
- 2) Whenever your child needs or wants something



Reward

Reward the child with a lot of excited sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

3. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.

4. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about rewarding.

Practice:

Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for seven days. It needs to become the way you interact with your child. Afterwards, you can always do this as a maintenance activity even when you have moved forward to do other activities.

Outcome:

My child can give things to me when asked.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Holding things in hand to show' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Holding things in hand to show' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gesture activity 4: Showing

Children show things to others to share their interest. By showing, they initiate communication and socially connect with others. Showing is a part of Joint Attention - a sharing of interest or curiosity in an object or event with another person. It is a more complex skill to teach than asking, but once you have done the activity for 'giving', you can expand it to teach your child how to show.

The skill of showing can be taught in three steps:

- A. Holding things in hand to show
- B. Pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show
- C. Pointing to an object or activity at a distance to show

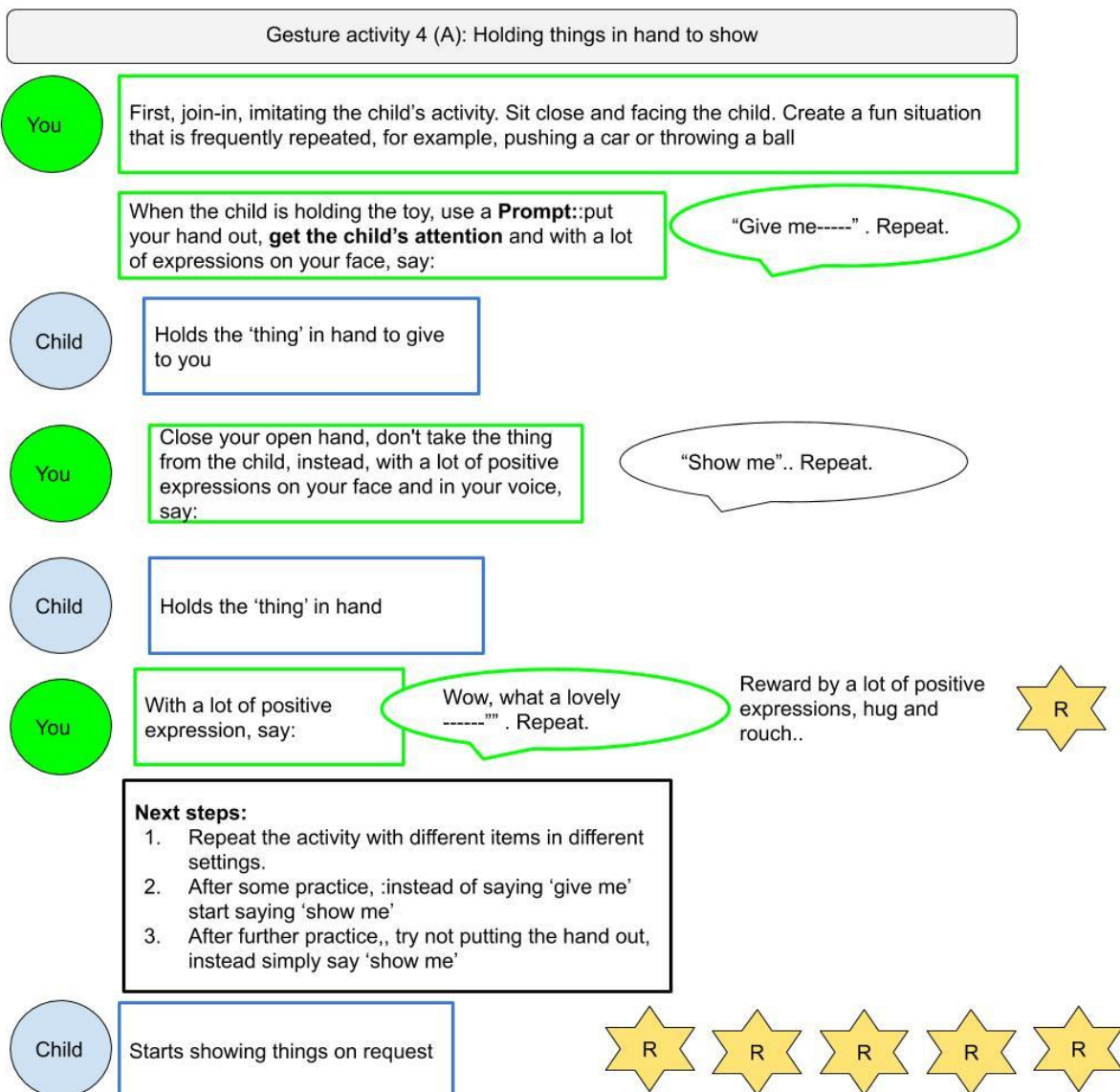
Gesture Activity 4 (A): Holding things in hand to show

Prerequisite: You can do this activity once your child has learnt 'Giving things on request'.

Observe:

Watch the child during play and in other situations, and note whether, on being asked by you or spontaneously, the child shows something to you while holding it his/her hand.

My child can show things held in his hand to me.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for seven days, whenever you are engaged with the child in an activity. It needs to become the way you interact with your child.

Outcome:

My child can hold things in hand to show to me:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show activity**Gesture Activity 4 (B1): Pointing to a near object to show****Observe:**

Watch in different play and other situations whether your child, spontaneously or on being asked by you, would show you something that is near him, such as a toy or a picture in a book or a family member in a photo, by pointing.

My child can show me things that are near him/her by pointing:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity



Gesture activity 4 (B): Pointing to a near object to show

You

First, join-in, imitating the child's activity. Sit close and facing the child. Create a fun situation of looking at pictures in a book or large toys with small visible parts, for example, a doll with eyes and nose or a toy with lights, wheels etc.

1. Get the child's attention and **Model** pointing (exaggerating the gesture) at pictures, parts of pictures or parts of toys, saying: "Look-----". (if the child starts to look then just say the name of the object).
2. Once you have modelled pointing to show about 5 times, say the name of the object without pointing and look at the child with curiosity and say "where is the ----?"
3. If the child points, reward with positive expressions saying "Yes, there is the dog"
4. If the child does not point, It is time to Prompt. After asking "Where is the dog?", shape the child's hand to point to the picture and follow with the reward with positive expressions saying "Wow, there is the dog"

"Look, a dog"

"Where is the dog?"

"Wow, there is the dog".

R

Reward with a lot of positive expressions, hug and touch..

Next steps:

1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings. For example, use a doll to show nose and eyes, before asking, as in the step 2 above, "show me the nose"
2. Model and prompt to set the routine. Practice.
3. After some practice, try to reduce the prompt to just touching the child's hand, elbow or shoulder to encourage the response.

Child

Starts pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show

R

R

R

R

R

Gesture Activity 4 (B2): Pointing to show a picture or an object - another method:



This is a slightly different way of encouraging the pointing to show near objects, and some children may respond to this better. This activity starts in the same way with Modelling but uses the Prompt and the Time-delay methods after the first step.

Gesture activity 4 (B.2): Pointing to a near object to show. Variation 1

You

First, join-in, imitating the child's activity. Sit close and facing the child. Create a fun situation of looking at pictures in a book or large toys with small visible parts, for example, a doll with eyes and nose or a toy with lights, wheels etc.

1. Get the child's attention and **Model** pointing (exaggerating the gesture) at pictures, parts of pictures or parts of toys, saying: "Look-----". (if the child starts to look then just say the name of the object).
2. Once you have modelled pointing to show for about 5 times, encourage the child to point to pictures. **Prompt** by shaping the child's hand to point to pictures.
3. As the child points (with prompting), you name the pictures with a lot of positive expressions.
4. Gradually reduce the physical prompt to let the child point independently as you keep naming the pictures.
5. After a few tries, next time when the child points you create a **Time-delay** by pausing and not naming immediately. As soon as the child looks at you to check what is the matter, you name the picture and reward the child for looking at you as well as pointing.

"Look, a dog"

"Wow, a dog".

Pause

"Yes, a dog".

R

Next steps:

1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings. For example, use a doll to show nose and eyes, before asking, as in the step 2 above, "show me the nose"
2. Model and prompt to set the routine. Practice.
3. After some practice, try to reduce the prompt to just touching the child's hand, elbow or shoulder to encourage the response.

Child

Starts pointing to a near object, such as a picture in a book, to show

R

R

R

R

R

Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for seven days, whenever you are engaged with the child in an activity. This is a crucial activity, and you should make it part of your way of working with the child.

Outcome:

My child can point with his finger to show me things that are near him/her:

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Responding to joint attention' activity.'
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Responding to joint attention' activity.'
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gesture Activity 5: Joint attention: Pointing to show things at a distance

Introduction

When children notice something interesting, such as an aeroplane, a balloon or a bird, they want to share their interest and excitement with another person. They often do so with sounds and gestures, by pointing at it and drawing others' attention to it. This way of sharing an interest is known as joint attention. Parents also do the same, they point and say "look" to draw the child's attention to something interesting, wait for the child to respond and look and share their interest through expressions and words.

During such joint attention, the child is highly motivated, the adult is interested, and some gestures, expressions, words or sounds are used. In effect, high-quality communication takes place. Experiencing such communication is the most productive exposure for the child to learn to talk.

Children's ability to initiate joint attention predicts their ability to talk. Children with autism have particular difficulty in responding and initiating joint attention. It is not an easy skill to teach, but with motivation and perseverance, it can be done. The rewards of learning joint-attention will be tremendous for the child.

Gesture activity 5 (A): Responding to joint attention variation 1

Observe

While playing with the child, and in and other interactions, watch whether you can draw your child's attention to something at a distance to show it to him/her. If you are not sure, get your child's attention and then point with your finger at something that is at a distance and is interesting to the child, for example, a balloon or a toy. Watch whether your child looks at the thing you are pointing at.

I can show things at a distance to my child by pointing towards them:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity



When children notice something interesting, such as an aeroplane, a balloon or a bird, they want to share their interest and excitement with another person. They often do so with sounds and gestures, by pointing at it and drawing others' attention to it. This way of sharing an interest is known as joint attention. Parents also do the same, they point and say "look" to draw the child's attention to something interesting, wait for the child to respond and look and share their interest through expressions and words.

During such joint attention, the child is highly motivated, the adult is interested, and some gestures, expressions, words or sounds are used. In effect, high-quality communication takes place. Experiencing such communication is the most productive exposure for the child to learn to talk.

Children's ability to initiate joint attention predicts their ability to talk. Children with autism have particular difficulty in responding and initiating joint attention. It is not an easy skill to teach, but with motivation and perseverance, it can be done. The rewards of learning joint-attention will be tremendous for the child.

Gesture activity: Responding to joint attention Variation 1

You

First, join in with the child and engage in play with toys, keeping one or two toys that the child likes hidden, to be used for this activity.

1. Sit facing the child, get the child's attention and show the hidden toy saying: "Look-----" .
2. If the child does not turn to look at the toy, **Prompt** by turning child's face towards the item.
3. As the child looks at the item, you name the item with a lot of positive expressions.
4. Now, move the toy a bit further away by stretching your arm.
5. Repeat steps 1 to 3.
6. Once the child looks at the toy, Prompt the child to look at you and giving a lot of positive expressions and repeating the name. Reward by giving the item
7. Gradually increase the distance of the toy and reduce the physical prompts.
8. Continue rewarding the child with positive expressions, sounds or letting the child have the item.

"Look, a car"

"Wow, a car".

"Here is the car".

R

Next steps:

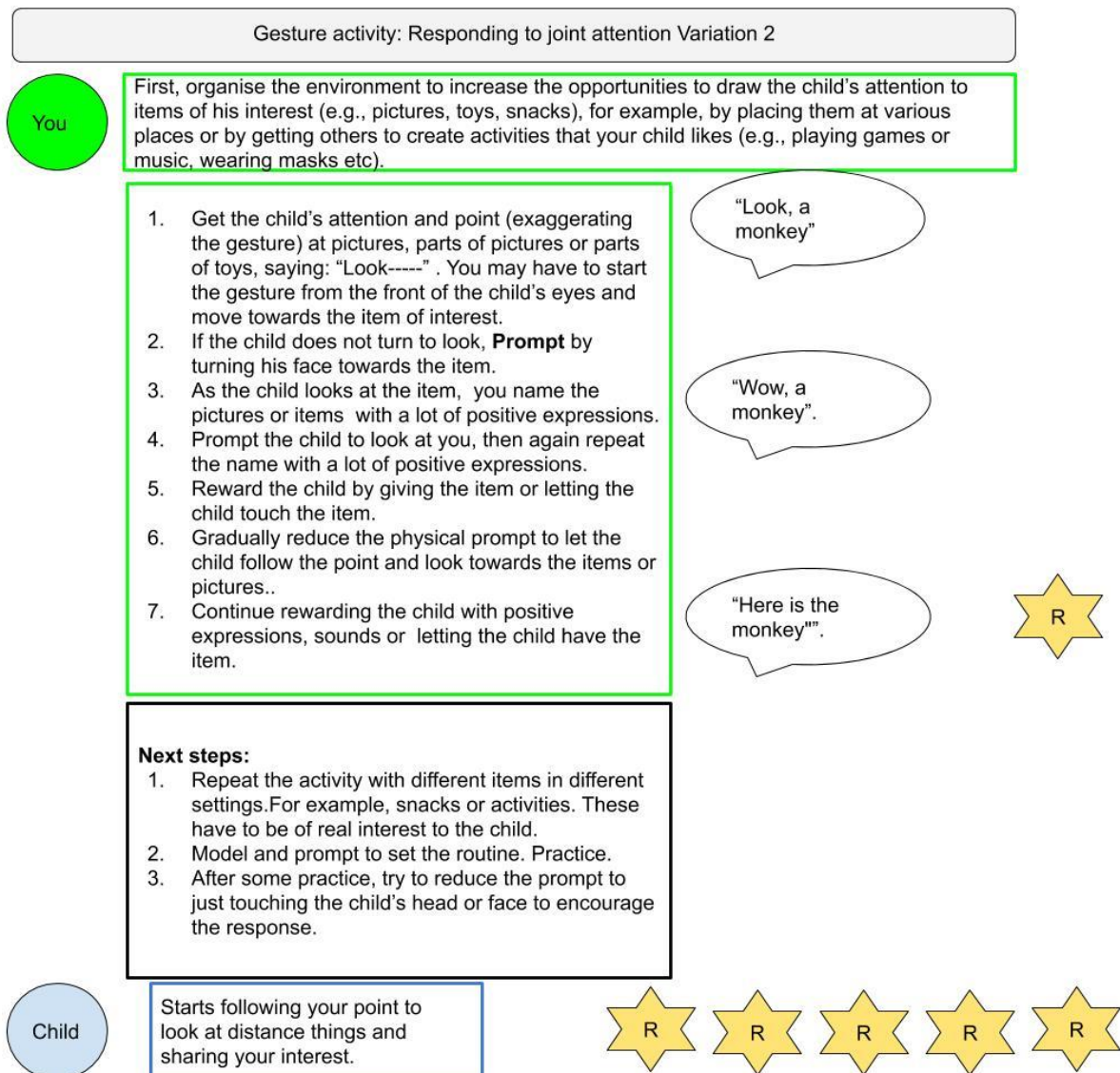
1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings. For example, snacks or activities. These have to be of real interest to the child.
2. Model and prompt to set the routine. Practice.
3. After some practice, try to reduce the prompt to just touching the child's head or face to encourage the response.

Child

Starts following your point to look at distance things and sharing your interest.



Gesture activity 5 (B): Responding to joint attention variation 2



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
 - ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for seven days, whenever you are engaged with the child in an activity. This is a crucial activity, and you should make it part of your way of working with the child, drawing the child's interest to anything that may be interesting to him/her.

Outcome:

I can get my child to look at something interesting at a distance by pointing to it and drawing my child's attention to it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Initiating joint attention' activity.'
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Initiating joint attention' activity.'
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Gesture activity 6 (A): Initiating joint attention variation 1

Observe

Watch during the day-to-day interactions and during play situations whether your child points at something at a little distance, for example, a dog or a car, to show it to you.

My child can show things at a distance to me by pointing towards them:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity



Gesture activity: Initiating joint attention Variation 1

You

First, organise the environment to increase the opportunities to draw the child's attention to items of his interest (e.g., pictures, toys, snacks), for example, by placing them at various places or by getting others to create activities that your child likes (e.g., playing games or music, wearing masks etc).

1. Get the child's attention and **Model** pointing (exaggerating the gesture) at pictures, parts of pictures or parts of toys, saying: "Look-----". You may have to start the gesture from the front of the child's eyes and move towards the item of interest.
2. Next, **Prompt** the child by shaping his hand to a point and point to the items + immediately name the item with a lot of positive expressions..Repeat many times. Make it a Point and Name game.
3. Once the child becomes used to the Point and Name game, use **Time Delay** - when the child points wait and pause before naming. The child would look at you at this change of behaviour. As the child looks at you, name the item with a lot of positive expressions.
4. You may need to Prompt the child to look at you, then again repeat the name with a lot of positive expressions.
5. Reward the child by giving the item or letting the child touch the item.
6. Gradually reduce the physical prompt to let the child follow the point and look towards you.
7. Continue rewarding the child with positive expressions, sounds or letting the child have the item.

"Look, a monkey"

"Wow, a monkey".

"Here is the monkey"".



Next steps:

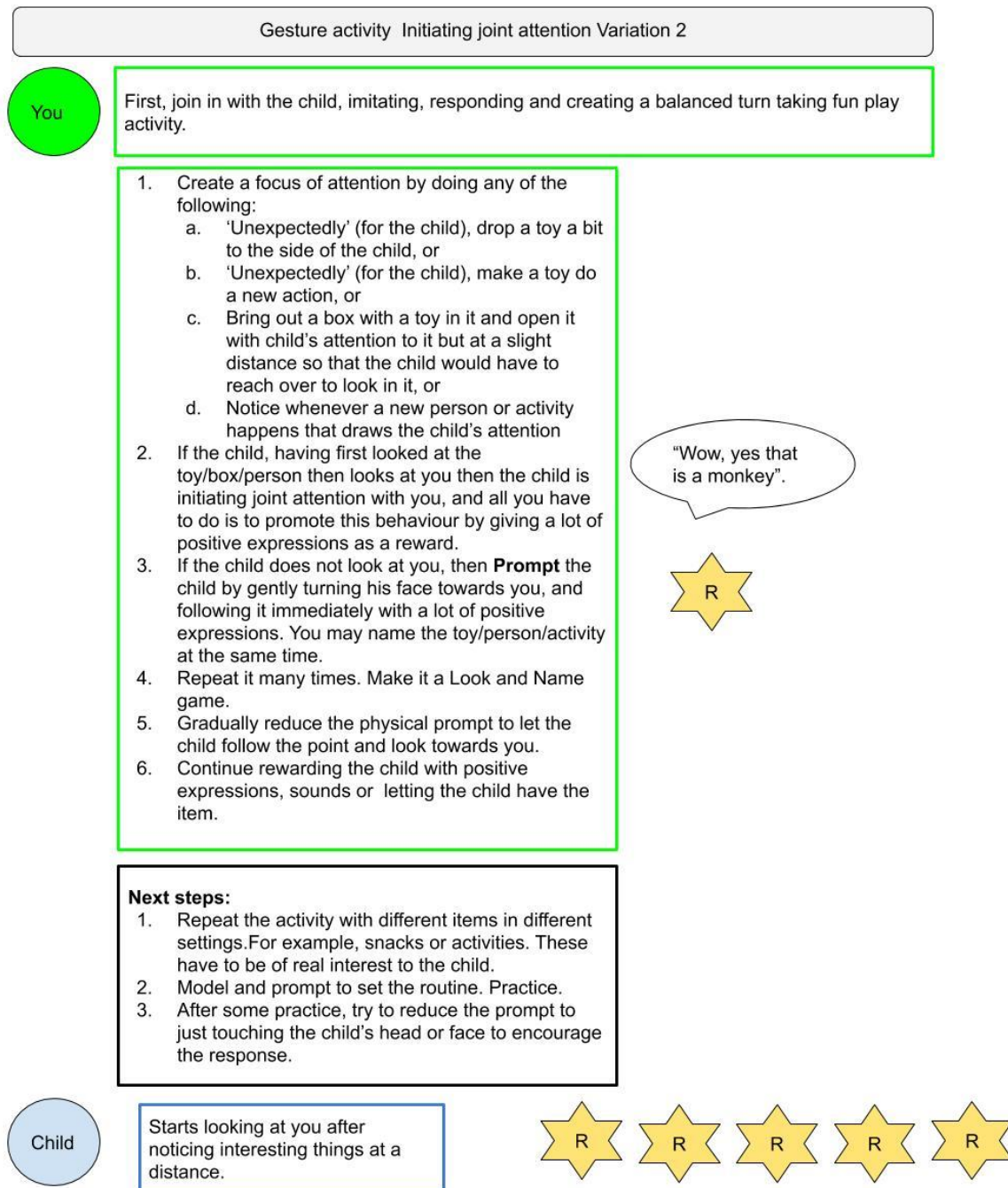
1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings. For example, snacks or activities. These have to be of real interest to the child.
2. Model and prompt to set the routine. Practice.
3. After some practice, try to reduce the prompt to just touching the child's head or face to encourage the response.

Child

Starts following your point to look at distant things and sharing your interest.



Gesture activity 6(B): Initiating joint attention variation 2



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice

Initially, practice this routine 6-8 times a day for 14 days, whenever you are engaged with the child in an activity. This is a crucial activity, and you should make it part of your way of working with the child, drawing the child's interest to anything that may be interesting to him/her.

Outcome:

I can get my child to look at something interesting at a distance by pointing to it and drawing my child's attention to it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Symbolic and imaginative play' activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Symbolic and imaginative play' activities
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Symbolic and imaginative play



Introduction

You have so far played with your child using toys and objects, helped your child to pay attention to you, used gestures to share fun and encouraged your child to take turns. You have set the foundation to move to the next level. Now, you need to help your child pretend and use their imagination in play. Such play is also known as symbolic play or imaginative play.



Children with autism are often not interested in pretend play. However, they can be helped to learn and enjoy such play. Symbolic play helps the development of children's language skills, cognition and social abilities.

In typical children, imaginative play develops in a sequence of increasing complexity. It is best to use a similar sequence to support the development of play for children with autism:

- Symbolic play Level 1: Using toys and gestures to imitate day to day activities.
- Level 2: Using substitutes (such as a block for a car or a crayon as a bottle) to represent other objects, and toys to represent people (such as a stick as a man).
- Level 3: Using toys to make a story and making play sequences longer.
- Level 4: Social imaginative play - doing roleplay with other children or adults, for example, pretending to become a shopkeeper, a fruit seller, a teacher, police or a doctor.
- Level 5: Social rule-based play, such as team games.

Prerequisite skills

You should have learnt the following skills:

1. Sensitive responsiveness
2. Joining-in
3. Rewarding and reinforcing
4. Motivating the child to communicate and interact
5. Modelling
6. Prompting and prompt fading

Your child should have learnt the following skills:

1. paying attention to you
2. shifting attention from an object to you and back to the object
3. Imitating sounds and gestures

Prepare

To help your child play, you need to:

1. Have some uninterrupted time when you are free to have fun with your child - play is a high priority activity!
2. Create an interesting and happy environment to play.
3. Become your child's partner in play, not a teacher.
4. Reward the child for his or her effort and participation.

Symbolic play Level 1: Using toys and gestures to imitate day to day activities

Observe

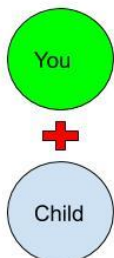
Watch the child's use of day to day objects such as cup, spoon, phone, etc during free-play situations. Note how does the child use these objects for their intended purpose e.g. drinking from an empty cup, relates these objects together and uses these objects to start an interaction.

My child can use day to day objects such as cup, spoon, phone, etc for their intended purpose to imitate day to day activities in his play	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity



Symbolic play Level 1: Using toys and objects to imitate day to day activities

1. First, organise:
 - a. Have toys that reflect the child's surroundings and what she/he might be experiencing day to day, such as feeding, cooking and other day to day activities, for example, a doll, a feeding bottle, pretend food (make coloured cardboard bread, biscuit, plates) , a blanket, a spoon, a cup, clothes, shoes, glasses etc. You can use day to day objects mixed with toys as well.
 - b. Have such toys around the house in a way that the child will naturally come across them, rather than you having to bring the child to such toys.
 - c. Put away the puzzles, playdough, cause-and-effect toys or any special interest toys. You can bring them out to maintain variety, but they are not great for symbolic play,
2. Wait for a natural opportunity, when your child shows interest in some toys, objects or activities. Any interest from the child can be built into a useful learning opportunity.
 - a. First, be with the child, let the child explore the toys.
 - b. Join in with the child, imitating, responding and using sounds, words and gestures to make it a fun play activity. Relate with the toys like children do: "I am going shopping in the car" "wroom-wroom", "Oh no, where is my money?".
 - c. Act out like a toy: jumping like a monkey or barking like a dog.
 - d. Use pretend food to feed toy animals, people,
 - e. Let the child lead, don't redirect the child.
 - f. Add expressions, gestures and sounds to the child's actions, and show enjoyment in the child's actions.
 - g. Don't try to teach, don't direct the child, don't make your language too complicated



Imitating the child's actions, letting the child lead, creating a sense of fun and keeping emotions positive is the key to opening up the child's mind for learning.

Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- × Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this activity for 15-20 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. After that, you can do it during any playtime or whenever the child is showing interest in a toy or an object. You can always do this as a maintenance activity even when you have moved forward to do other activities.

Outcome:

My child can play with toys and objects, for their intended purpose, while imitating a day-to-day activity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Using substitutes to represent other objects and toys to represent people' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Using substitutes to represent other objects and toys to represent people' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Symbolic play Level 2: Using substitutes to represent other objects and toys to represent people



Symbolic play Level 2: Using substitutes in play

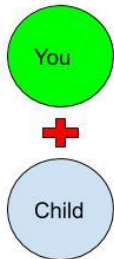
Using substitutes such as a block for a car or a crayon as a bottle to represent other objects, and toys to represent people (such as a stick as a man).

Observe

Watch the child's use of day to day objects such as cup, spoon, phone, etc during free-play situations. Note how the child uses these objects to represent another object or a story character or a person, relates these objects together and uses these objects to start an interaction.

My child can use substitutes such as a block for a car or a crayon as a bottle to represent other objects, and toys to represent people (such as a stick as a man) in his play.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Symbolic play Level 2: Using substitutes to represent other objects and toys to represent people



1. First, organise:
 - a. Have toys that reflect the child's surroundings and what she/he might be experiencing day to day, such as feeding, cooking and other day to activities, for example, a doll, a feeding bottle, pretend food (make coloured cardboard bread, biscuit, plates) , a blanket, a spoon, a cup, clothes, shoes, glasses etc. Have some little objects that you can use as props, for example, little wooden sticks can be used as a key or a person, small blocks as a cake or a car and small bits of cloth as a blanket or a dress.
 - b. Have such toys around the house in a way that the child will naturally come across them, rather than you having to bring the child to such toys.
 - c. Put away the puzzles, playdough, cause-and-effect toys or any special interest toys. You can bring them out to maintain variety, but they are not great for symbolic play,
2. Wait for a natural opportunity, when your child shows interest in some toys, objects or activities. Any interest from the child can be built into a useful learning opportunity.
 - a. First, be with the child, let the child explore the toys.
 - b. Join in with the child, imitating, responding and using sounds, words and gestures to make it a fun play activity. Relate with the toys like children do: "I am going shopping in the car" "wroom-wroom", "Oh no, where is my money?".
 - c. Introduce the prop: "here is the car key" or "here is some money" or "here is the blanket"
 - d. You don't have to use the word "pretend" - just do it!
 - e. First model it, repeat, and then help (Prompt) the child to do it. When the child uses a substitute, add expressions, gestures and sounds to the child's actions, and show enjoyment in the child's actions.
 - f. Make a toy represent a family member, calling it by that name and using different voices to make the child respond. Encourage the child to respond to the 'person' (toy).
 - g. Don't try to teach, don't direct the child, don't make your language too complicated

Imitating the child's actions, letting the child lead, creating a sense of fun and keeping emotions positive is the key to opening up the child's mind for learning.

Next steps:

1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings.
2. Gradually, reduce your support for using props, let the child do it; you provide the 'sound and light effect' and the praise!



Starts using substitutes and representing.



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this activity for 15-20 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. After that, you can do it during any playtime or whenever the child is showing interest in a toy

or an object. You can always do this as a maintenance activity even when you have moved forward to do other activities.

Outcome:

My child can play using substitutes to represent other objects and toys to represent people:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Using toys to make a story and making play sequences longer' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to 'Using toys to make a story and making play sequences longer' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Imaginative play level 3: Using toys to make a story and making longer play sequences

Now, children start making stories using toys and day to day objects. Initially the stories are short, such as feeding a doll and then putting the doll to bed, but gradually they become longer with elaborate use of imagination.

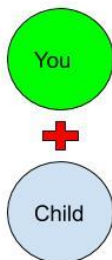
Observe

Encourage the child to make stories with toys and observe.

My child can make stories with toys and objects in his play.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Symbolic play Level 3: Using toys to make a story and making play sequences longer

1. You can extend any level of symbolic play to:
 - a. create variety and maintain interest
 - b. make it less routinised
 - c. help the child move from short play actions to making and acting out stories, initially small and later long and complex stories.



2. Start with playing at the child's level and following the child's lead and interest.
 - a. First, be with the child, let the child explore the toys.
 - b. Join in with the child, imitating, responding and using sounds, words and gestures to make it a fun play activity. Relate with the toys like children do: "I am going shopping in the car" "wroom-wroom", "Oh no, where is my money?".
 - c. Introduce the prop and model: "here is the car key" or "here is some money" or "here is the blanket".
 - d. When the child uses a substitute, add expressions, gestures and sounds to the child's actions, and show enjoyment in the child's actions.
 - e. Make a toy represent a family member, calling it by that name and using different voices to make the child respond. Encourage the child to respond to the 'person' (toy).
3. Now, elaborate and extend:
 - a. If a toy has fallen, take the toy to the 'hospital' or 'mummy'
 - b. If a car has crashed, call a mechanic to fix it
4. Involve the child in making a story:
 - a. Give a choice: "What should we do now, make the baby play or go to mummy?" , "make this man a baddy or a goody?" , "Should we make him happy or sad?".
 - b. Give a structure like the beginning, middle and the end, asking the child what she/he would like to happen at each stage.
 - c. Use the child's experience to make the story a social story, for example, representing the child's experience of playing with other children.

Imitating the child's actions, letting the child lead, creating a sense of fun and keeping emotions positive is the key to opening up the child's mind for learning.

Next steps:

1. Repeat the activity with different items in different settings.
2. Gradually, reduce your support for using props, let the child do it; you provide the 'sound and light effect' and the praise!



Starts making little stories for his/her verbal level.



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this activity for 15-20 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. After that, you can do it during any playtime or whenever the child is showing interest in toys

or is engaged in a play routine. You should continue doing this activity alongside other types of play.

Outcome:

My child can play using toys to make a story and longer play sequences	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to the 'Roleplay' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to the 'Roleplay' activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Imaginative play level 4: Becoming someone else – doing role play

In this phase, children love pretending to be someone else, such as a superhero, mummy, daddy, policeman, a nurse, or a doctor. Sometimes, they even dress up or use make up to do so.

Observe

Encourage the child to role-play and pretend to be someone else.

My child can pretend to be someone else in his play.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Symbolic play Level 4: Becoming someone else - doing role play

1. Becoming someone else - doing role play

- To begin with, choose situations and roles that your child has seen frequently and shown some interest, such as becoming a mummy or baby, going shopping, liking a doctor or a teacher or becoming a superhero or a cartoon character that your child likes.
- Have some props handy that go with the roles, such as a pram, a baby cot and a doll, a shopping bag or a blackboard and some chalk.
- For now, put away the puzzles, playdough, cause-and-effect toys or any special interest toys, you can bring them out later, after this activity.



2. Wait for a natural opportunity and choose the role depending on the situation, it is best to extend some normal situation into a role play rather than run a 'class' on role play, for example:

- once the child has put on some clothes and shoes on, say "oh, let's go shopping";
- when your child is climbing on some furniture, pretend that the furniture is a mountain and the child is a superhero;
- when a doll or another toy falls, become a doctor or mummy and look after the toy
- Make a toy represent a family member, calling it by that name and using different voices to make the child respond. Encourage the child to respond to the 'person' (toy).
- Take on different voices and act, putting on the voice of a teacher one moment and the voice of a child the other moment.
- When the child seems to have become interested, prompt him/her to take an action, and respond to it with enthusiasm.
- Put in as much emotions, gestures, expressions and drama as you can. You are making it interesting and you are modelling.

You don't have to use the word "pretend" - just do it!

Don't try to teach, don't direct the child, don't make your language too complicated

Creating a sense of fun and keeping emotions positive, going with the flow and letting the child lead is the key to opening up the child's mind for learning.

Next steps:

- Repeat the activity with different roles in different settings.
- Gradually, reduce your support for using props, let the child do it; you provide the 'sound and light effect' and the praise!



Starts taking part in role play.



Reward

- ✓ Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ✓ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
- × Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice:

Initially, practice this activity for 15-20 minutes at least 3 to 4 times a day for seven days. After that, you can do it during any playtime or whenever the child is showing interest in toys or is engaged in a play routine. You should continue doing this activity alongside other types of play.

Outcome:

My child participates in role-play, acting out as other people or characters.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

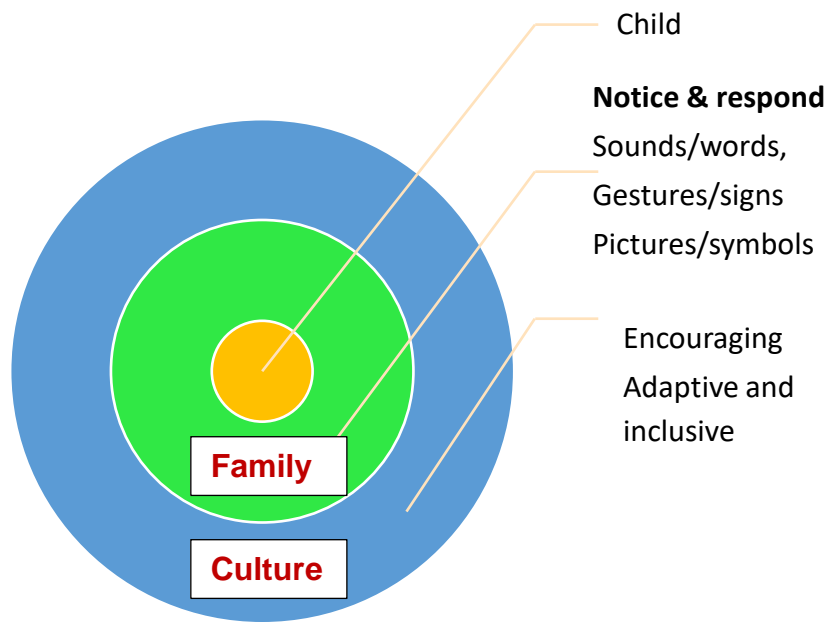
Module 5

Helping your child communicate and talk

Create a language learning environment



Children learn to talk and communicate in a cultural environment that supports the learning of language. The child lives in the environment, which adapts to the changing needs of the child as the child learns and progresses. The first step in helping a child learn to talk is to enrich this environment to make the child motivated to communicate and to provide lots of learning opportunities.



Tips for creating a language rich environment:

- Make sure you have learnt the Seven Essential Skills for parents.
- Notice and Respond:
 - notice actions of the child, listen to the sounds, 'read' the meaning, and then respond – promptly and appropriately. Use gestures, facial expressions, sounds or words to respond.
 - Encourage the child to respond back.
 - Be patient and give time and encouragement.
 - Enjoy the interactions.
 - Expand the interaction as much as the child can be happy with.
 - Do not correct or instruct, just interact!
- Increase opportunities for the child to listen to language and communicate: (see activities below)
 - Increase opportunities to hear communicative sounds
 - Increase opportunities to listen and understand words
 - 'mirror and map'
 - Use words for describing actions
 - Use words to request actions
 - Use words to name pictures

- ♥ Do not do this just on your own, include the whole family in this. The level of involvement and intensity that your child needs can only be achieved with the involvement of everyone in the family.

Activities to Increase opportunities for the child to listen to language and communicate

Prepare

Make sure you have learnt the seven essential skills for parents.

- Don't try to do this on your own, include the whole family in this. The level of involvement and intensity that your child needs can only be achieved with the involvement of everyone in the family.
- Make sure others in the family have learnt the joining-in skill.

Make sure the child has the required foundation skills

The following three are essential foundation skills for learning to communicate and talk:			
<input type="checkbox"/> My child can pay attention to my face, voice, and actions during interactions.	Yes: you can now work on the language activities	Sometimes: You can start the language activities but keep working on the foundation skills as well.	Not yet: you need to keep working on these foundation skills before starting the language activities
<input type="checkbox"/> My child can imitate sounds and gestures			
<input type="checkbox"/> My child can share attention with me; for example, I can get my child to look at the same thing that I am looking at.			

Learn and do the activities:

Activity: using communicative sounds

- Engage the child in interactions, using the joining-in skill you have learnt earlier.
- Get the child's attention.
- Use sounds with gestures and expressions to communicate with the child.
- Either imitate the sounds the child makes or make similar simple sounds.
- Where possible, add meaning to the sounds made by the child, for example, if the child says "da" when daddy is around then you say "yes, daddy" and point to daddy, or if a dog or a door is visible to the child then say "Yes, dog" or "yes, door, go out".
- Reward the child for making any sounds during these interactions. Try rewarding with what the child might want to get, for example, give a drink or a car if the child says "mum mum" or "ca" respectively.

- Remember, in the early stages, you are simply increasing the child's exposure to language and rewarding the child for paying attention to your sounds and words, not only for producing sounds or words.

Activity: using words to name objects

Mirroring and mapping



This skill is useful for helping children who are making no or few communicating efforts. Imitation and mirroring help children with autism by providing them with a shared focus with another person. A shared focus helps to share interest and to learn language related to this interest, which may be an object or an activity.

'Mirroring' is copying an action exactly the way done by the child. Imitation is doing activities similar to the child, but mirroring refers to an exact copy.

'Mapping' refers to using a word or some words to name what has been copied.

You first mirror and then map.

Remember, in the early stages, you are simply increasing the child's exposure to language and rewarding the child for paying attention to your words, not only for producing sounds or words.

Step 1: Organise

You can do this activity as part of any of the daily routines when:

- You can spend 15 to 20 minutes undisturbed with your child
- There is no other distraction, like TV or any other source of noise nearby

Step 2: Join in

- First, sit facing the child and **join-in** as you have learnt earlier

Step 3: Learn and do the activity

- **Mirror** any action that the child may be interested in, for example, if the child throws a ball or crashes a toy car or eats some food you also throw the ball or crash a car or eat some food in exactly the same way.
- **Map:** As soon as you have completed mirroring the action, use a word or some words to describe or express joy, for example, “throw the ball” or “red ball” or “big ball” or “crash” or “car crashed” or “nice” or “nice food”.
- Only use words after doing the action – first, mirror, then map.
- If the child repeats the action, you also repeat mirroring and mapping
- Give lots of positive emotional feedback with your expressions and gestures- remember positive emotions are helpful in keeping the child interested and motivated.

Do not copy or mirror any unacceptable behaviour, such as throwing things or hitting.

Step 4: Practice

Practice this skill as many times a day as you can until you are proficient in mirroring and mapping. Choose the right moments and routines for practice. Initially, you want to choose some moments and routines from your child's and your day-to-day life when:

1. your child shows interest in some activity or play or enjoys interactions with you (you may have to watch your child for a few days to make a list of all these moments), AND
2. you have time to spend with your child, you're not in a rush to move on to do something else, AND
3. you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.

Outcome:

My child responds to mirroring and mapping by looking at me and paying attention to my words.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: using words to name frequently repeated actions

- Every time the child does something, or you do something, you or any family member needs to name that action in a clear single word, for example:

- when the child changes position, sits, stands or walks say “sit”, “stand”, “walk”;
- when you give the child some food or toy/object, use a word to name that food item or toy, for example, “bread”, “biscuit”;
- encourage simple imitative games with the child, such as clapping hands, jumping, and use a word to name the action as it happens, for example, “jump” or “clap”.
- Don't forget first getting the child's attention as you say anything to him/her.
- 🕒 Remember, in the early stages, you are simply increasing the child's exposure to language and rewarding the child for paying attention to your words, not only for producing words.

Outcome:

My child responds to naming his actions by looking at me and paying attention to my words.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: using words or phrases for instructions for everyday activities

Prepare

Children often understand instructions that are given repeatedly and in similar situations. You can use these to help the child learn some words or phrases by being consistent with their use across different situations and different family members.

Make a list of the words or phrases (simple 2-3 word combinations) used to give common instructions in the family, such as to ask the child to come to you, sit, stand, eat food, change clothes etc.

Do the following :

- Every time the child has to do a particular action, use the word or phrase; say the word or phrase even if the child is already doing it, for example, say “come here” even if the child is already coming to you.
- Initially, if the child is not responding to instructions, say the word or phrase even as you help the child do the action (**prompting**). For example, say “come here” even as you got closer to the child or “stand up” as you physically help the child stand.
- Share the list and the way of using it with the whole family.
- Expand the list to include new situations or actions, although these must frequently occur in the same way for this to work.
- 🕒 Don't forget first getting the child's attention as you say anything to him/her.
- 🕒 Remember, in the early stages, you are simply increasing the child's exposure to language and rewarding the child for paying attention to your words, not only for producing words.

Outcome:

My family and I use words or phrases from a list that we share, to name actions with the child. My child responds by paying attention to us.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.



Activity: Using books and pictures to name objects and actions



Prepare

Use books with large pictures of common objects or actions that you are using for the activities above. It is best if the objects in the pictures are ones that the child comes across frequently. You can make drawings or take pictures of such objects and assemble them to use for this purpose.

Do the following:

- Engage with the child
- Introduce the book with a sense of fun, don't try to become a teacher!
- Let the child take the lead and show interest.
- Watch and notice the child's interest, share the interest and use a word for what the child is interested in (Mirror and Map).

- 🕒 Don't forget first getting the child's attention as you say anything to him/her.
- 🕒 Remember, in the early stages, you are simply increasing the child's exposure to language and rewarding the child for paying attention to your words, not only for producing words.

Practice

Everyone in the family, having learnt about joining-in, needs to first practice these activities in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed and may need to support each other

but, in time, it should become the whole family's way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

- ✓ The whole family should share the list of words, phrases, objects and actions and uses them to connect similar objects and actions in different situations.
- ✓ Maintain a sense of fun while practising.

Engaging the child in this way should improve his preparedness to learn to talk and communicate. He/she will pay better attention to what you say. His language and social interaction should improve, and he will take more interest in others.

Outcome:

My family and I use words or phrases from a list that we share, as instructions for common activities with the child. My child responds by paying attention to us.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! You have set the foundation for your child to learn communication and social skills.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Helping your child communicate using words and gestures

Activity: the child using a word or a sign to ask for something

Observe

Does your child point or say a word to ask for something?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

Prepare:

- Make sure you have learnt the **7 essential skills for parents**.
- Check that your child has the essential foundation skills.
- Include the whole family in this activity; don't just do it on your own. The level of involvement and intensity that your child needs can only be achieved with the involvement of everyone in the family.

Organise

- Choose five words you want to work on: Use the following to choose

- The things your child asks for most frequently (for example, milk, food, a toy)
- Things that you can easily give to the child. Remember getting that thing is the reward that motivates the child!
- Things that you can make a simple sign for. The sign works best when it resembles the thing being asked for, for example, the sign of taking food to mouth resembles eating, first holding hands then opening hands together resembles a book, making a circular movement with hands resembles a ball.
- Don't use signs that look very similar, for example, don't use eating and drinking together. Make another sign for a drink, for example like holding a glass.
- Choose some words that can be easily extended from the sounds the child already makes, for example, choose ball if the child makes a "ba" sound.
- Make a list of the first five words:

First five words	Is there a sign that goes with the word?
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No

- Make sure everyone in the family know the list of words you are working on.

Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence:

- Create an opportunity: Wait for the child to ask for something, OR encourage the child to ask for something by keeping it in sight but out of reach
- Get the child's attention to you
- Ask: "what do you want?"
- Show the thing by pointing or holding
- **Model** its name + make the sign that goes with it
- Wait for 3 seconds
- Repeat, model its name again+ make the sign that goes with it
- Wait for another 3 seconds
- Respond:
 - If the child tries to say the name or make the sign: give the thing + Reward: Praise + physical touch, tickle, or hug; OR
 - If the child does nothing, model the sound and prompt child to make the sign
- Respond: As soon as the child makes the sign or the sound give the thing + Reward: Praise + physical touch, tickle, or hug

Reward

- ☐ The main reward for the child is to get something that he/she wants. By adding social rewards, such as making exciting sounds, giving smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort of doing it, you add value to the reward.

- ☐ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or tries to do so.
- ☒ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice

- Decrease 'prompts' and 'modelling' with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family's way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome:

My child can use a sign or word to ask for five or more things	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Understanding object names and simple instruction

Activity: giving (or touching) when an object is named



Observe

Does the child understand names of objects or toys that he/she uses every day and gives or touches when one of these objects is asked for?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has:

- started using 5 or more words or signs to ask for things, and
- can imitate a few other words in response.

Prepare

Use the same list of words you have made for the “use a word or a sign to name things” activity.

Learn and do the activity

- Engage with the child and join-in
- Get the child’s attention

- Hold two objects (one in each hand), one from the list of words from the “use a word or a sign to name things” activity and one other random very different object (for example, a car and a spoon) in front of the child
OR
- Place two objects in front of the child, one from the list of words from the “use a word or a sign to name things” activity and one other random very different object (for example, a car and a spoon)
- Say “Touch car” OR “give the car.”
- Wait for 3 seconds. Repeat.
- Prompt: Say “Touch car” OR “give the car” and do a full physical prompt by using the child’s hand to touch or give
- Reward by saying “yes, car!” or “right, car!”+ smiles, tickle, hug + give the car. The giving of the object is not needed every time.
- Gradually, with practice, reduce the prompts. You can use pictures instead of objects once the child can touch 5 to 10 real objects. Getting the child to touch or give different types (shapes/colours) of the same objects and in different settings (home/neighbour/playgroup/school) will help learning and generalisation.

Practice

- Decrease ‘prompts’ with practice.

Initially, the child may only learn to give or name some things in some situations. Practising in different situations would help generalise the understanding of words.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family’s way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can now identify five or more things by touching or giving	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Helping your child use a word or a sign to name things



Observe

Does the child use a word or sign to name objects or toys that he/she uses every day for sharing of interest or to describe or in response to a question such as "What is this?"	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has:

1. started using 5 or more words or signs to ask for things, and
2. can imitate a few other words in response.

Prepare

- Choose five noun words - names of objects or toys - you want to work on:
 - It is best to start with some words that the child has learnt to use in the previous activity, to ask for things.
 - Choose things that your child sees or uses most frequently and are important and relevant in his/her daily life (for example, cup, bottle, shoes, car, dog, cat).
 - Things that you can easily show to the child, either by holding in your hand or pointing to them.
 - For children who are only using signs to ask, you should choose things that you can make a simple sign for. The sign works best when it resembles the thing being asked for, for example, the sign of first holding and then opening hands together resembles a book or making a circular movement with hands resembles a ball or making a gesture of turning a steering wheel for a car.
 - Words with sounds that are easy to say for the child, for example, avoid 'r', 'sh' or 'l' sounds.
 - Avoid words for things that the child does not like.
 - Choose some words that can be easily extended from the sounds the child already makes, for example, choose ball if the child makes a "ba" sound.
 - Make a list of the first five (or ten) words:

First five words	Is there a sign that goes with the word?
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No
	Yes No

- Make sure everyone in the family know the list of words you are working on.

Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence:

- Engage with the child and join in
- Get the child's attention
- Show the object by holding or pointing.
- Say "what is that?"
- Wait for 3 seconds. Repeat.
- Model, say "what is that?", followed by "car" + the gesture
- Wait for 3 seconds. Repeat.
- Prompt: first by saying the word partially "ca" + gesture
- Wait for 3 seconds
- Prompt: say "car" + gesture

- Reward by saying “yes, car!” or “right, car!” + smiles, tickle, hug + give the car. The giving of the object is not needed every time.
- Gradually, with practice, first, reduce the prompts and then modelling. You can use pictures instead of objects once the child can name 5 to 10 real objects. Getting the child to name different types (shapes/colours) of the same objects and in different settings (home/neighbourhood/playgroup/school) would help learning and generalisation.

Reward

- ❑ The main rewards for the activity of naming are social rewards, such as making exciting sounds, giving smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.
- ❑ Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
- ✗ Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice

- ❑ Decrease ‘prompts’ and ‘modelling’ with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family’s way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can now use a sign or word to name five or more things.	
❑ Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
❑ Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
❑ No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Helping your child identify (give or touch) an object by its function or characteristic

Having learnt some words or names of things, the child needs to expand the communicative ability. The next step for your child is to learn to identify things by what they are meant for or used for, what they look like or what category of things they may belong to.

Observe

Does the child show or give an object when asked for by its function or a characteristic?	
❑ Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity

<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has started using **50** or more words or signs to ask or to name things.

Prepare

- Choose five noun words - names of objects or toys - you want to work on:
 - It is best to start with some words that the child has learnt to use in the previous activity to ask for things.
 - Choose things that your child sees or uses most frequently and are important and relevant in his/her daily life (for example, cup, bottle, shoes, car, dog, cat).
 - Things with a different function, for example, for eating, sitting on, an animal, shape (round),
- Write down their function or characteristic, for example:

First five words	Their function or characteristic
Ball	The one you throw or the round one
Cat	The one that goes "Meow."
Dog	"Woof-woof" or animal
Any food item	The one we eat
Any furniture	The one we sit on
Cup	We drink from
To start with, you choose the item that your child is most familiar with; the above list is only an example.	

Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence:

- Join in with the child and get the child engaged with you
- Start with only two items, choose the easiest ones to start with - the ones the child has the most chance of being successful with - and place the items, or their large and clear pictures, in front of the child.
- Get the child's attention to you
- Say:

Use any of the following ways of asking/instructing		
"Give me ----"; OR		"the one you eat."

"Show me ----" OR	Combine it with any of the ways of describing the feature or function	"the one you sleep/sit on."
"Touch ----"		"the round/big one."

- Wait for 3 seconds.
- Repeat.
- Model by touching, pointing or giving it to yourself (depending on the instruction).
- Wait for 3 seconds.
- Repeat.
- Prompt by holding the child's hand and touching, shaping to a point or giving.
- Reward, even for making an effort.

Reward

The main reward for the activity of naming is social rewards, such as making exciting sounds, giving smiles/touch/hug whenever the child does the activity or even makes an effort to do it.

5. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or make an effort to do so.
6. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Practice

- Share the list of words with the family, share notes frequently with each other about how you all do the activity and how it can be done better.
- Decrease 'prompts' and 'modelling' with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family's way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can show, touch or give five or more things by their function or a characteristic.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Helping your child say words in response



Observe

Does the child say some words in response to a question or when asked to complete a sentence (for example, the last word of a nursery rhyme) that the child has learnt?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	• Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	• Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	• Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has started using **50** or more words or signs to ask or to name things.

Prepare

- Choose five noun words - names of objects or toys - you want to work on:
 - It is best to start with some words that the child has learnt in the previous activity to:
 - Imitate, or
 - to ask for
 - Choose 5 names of things that your child asks for most frequently and which could be easily given in parts, for example, biscuit, sweet, cracker, water, juice

Try some easy nursery rhymes and choose one or two that your child enjoys you to sing to him/her.

- Practice the nursery rhymes frequently, having fun with your child and using expressions and gestures, particularly for the last word.

Learn and do the activity

You can do this activity in two types of sequences:

1. Asking: follow the sequence below (using the example of 'biscuit'):
 - Wait for your child to ask for one of the things from the list
 - Give only part of it, for example, a small bit of the biscuit
 - Get the child's attention
 - Say: "You want ---?" or "you eat a ----?" (don't say the last word)
 - Look expectantly at the child - Expectant pause
 - If the child does not say anything, prompt by showing the biscuit and repeat your question
 - If the child still does not say biscuit, show the biscuit and get the child to imitate by saying: "say biscuit."
 - When the child says biscuit or sounds close to it, give the biscuit with praise
 - With practice, stop asking the child to imitate and then stop showing the biscuit. You want the child to say a word in response to your words only, without the need to show the thing.
2. Getting the child to fill in a word in a sentence of a rhyme
 - Join-in and engage the child
 - Get the child's attention
 - Start the nursery rhyme you have been practising
 - Say the line that you have practised, leaving out the last word, for example, "wheels on the bus go round and ----"
 - Give an expectant pause, looking towards the child
 - If the child says the word or makes a sound for the word, reward.
 - If the child does not say the word, repeat the rhyme, and when you come to the last word give a prompt by making the gesture/sign that you have practised and look expectantly towards the child.
 - Reward if the child says the word or makes a sound for the word.
 - If the child does not say, repeat the rhyme and for the last word say "say round" and get the child to imitate
 - Praise for imitation of the word
 - With practice, first, stop asking the child to imitate and then stop showing the gestures/sign. You want the child to say a word in response to your words only, without the need to prompt.

Practice

- Share the list of words and the nursery rhyme with the family, share notes frequently with each other about how you all do the activity and how it can be done better.
- Decrease 'prompts' and 'modelling' with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family's way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can say some words in response to a question or to fill in the blank in a nursery rhyme.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<input type="checkbox"/> Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and <input type="checkbox"/> Start the next activity

<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! Continue practising this activity Add another five words Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Building language, adding verbs



Now that your child can say words to name and to ask for things, it is time to help your child learn some verbs or action words.

Observe

Does the child say verbs to describe actions, after the action is demonstrated or a picture of that action is shown, such as “running”, “eating”?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has started using **50** or more words or signs to name or to ask for things.

Prepare

Make a list of ten action words for activities that your child likes, does or observes frequently. The first 10 verbs need to be such that you can demonstrate easily. You can also use some pictures of these activities to help the child generalise his/her learning.

The following is an example of such words; you can choose some of these words and some others that are more relevant for your child:

Action word (verb)	I can demonstrate	I have a picture showing this action
Eating	•	•
Drinking	•	•
Jumping	•	•
Running	•	•
Sitting	•	•
Standing	•	•
Throwing	•	•
Catching	•	•
Playing	•	•
Cleaning/tidying	•	•

Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence (using the example of the action word jumping):

- Part 1:
 - Engage and join in with the child
 - Model: Demonstrate the action yourself or using a toy, say “I am jumping” or “the dolly is jumping”. Repeat a few times.
 - Prompt the child to copy your action, name the child’s action by saying “You are jumping”. Repeat a few times.
 - Ask the child to jump or make the doll jump
 - Reward with praise as soon as the child does the action.

- Repeat the actions, reducing the prompt and modelling with practice.
- Part 2:
 - Engage and join in with the child
 - Demonstrate the action yourself or using a toy, ask “What am I doing?” or “What is dolly doing?”
 - If the child does not say the word, you model – say the word - and encourage the child to imitate it.
 - As soon as the child says the word or makes the sign or gesture for the action, reward.
 - Reduce the prompt with practice.
- Part 3:
 - Engage and join-in with the child
 - Show the child a picture of a person jumping, ask “What is he/she doing?”
 - If the child does not say the word, model - say the word - and encourage the child to imitate it.
 - As soon as the child says the word or makes the sign or gesture for the action, reward.
 - Reduce the prompt with practice.

Practice

- Share the list of words with the family, share notes frequently with each other about how you all do the activity and how it can be done better.
- Decrease ‘prompts’ and ‘modelling’ with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family’s way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can say some action words after the action is demonstrated or a picture of that action is shown.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Building language - adding words for colours and size



Observe

Does the child say some words to describe colour and size?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has started using **50** or more words or signs to ask or to name things.

Prepare

Start with teaching four colours and then expand to more. Gather toys and objects of different colours and sizes, for example, balls, cars, blocks, spoons or anything else that the child is familiar with.

Give your child the experience of listening to the colour names.

- Let everyone in the family start pointing to the colours you have chosen, without placing any demand on the child for naming the colour.
- To make it easy, choose the colour of the week. If that colour is red, they can start with getting the child's attention and pointing and naming the colour, for example, say "look, red ball", "red car", "red light", and "big/little ball", "big/little car", "big/little pencil" etc.

Learn and do the activity

To begin with, use only the toy or object that is known to the child. For the following example, we would use two balls of 2 colours but the same size, red/green or red/yellow, and two balls of the same colour but different sizes. You could instead use two spoons or cups or any other object known to the child

Use the following sequence:

- Part 1:
 - Join-in and engage with the child
 - Start playing with the balls (of the same size but different colour)
 - Ask and give balls, naming "ball."
 - Ask "what is this?", the child should be able to say "ball."
 - Ask "what colour?"
 - Say "red (or green)"
 - Help the child imitate "red (or green)"
 - Prompt by saying the initial syllable "r"
 - Reward as soon as the child says the right colour or attempts to do so
 - You can hold one ball in each hand and do the same steps
- Part 2: For this part, use two objects of the same colour but different size:
 - Join-in and engage with the child
 - Start playing with the balls, big and little (of the same colour)
 - Ask and give balls, naming "ball."
 - Ask "what is this?", the child should be able to say "ball."
 - Put both the balls in front of the child
 - Point to the big ball and say "big" and to the little ball and say "little."
 - Ask "give the big ball."
 - Prompt by helping the child
 - Reward as soon as the child chooses the right one
- Part 3:
 - Join-in and engage with the child.
 - Start playing with the balls, big and little (of the same colour but different size).
 - Ask and give balls, naming "ball."
 - Hold one ball in each hand, slightly out of reach of the child,
 - Ask: "which one do you want big or little."
 - If the child only points, say "big" or "little" and encourage the child to imitate
 - Give the ball, with praise, as a reward as soon as the child says the right word or sounds similar to the word.

Practice

- Share the list of words with the family, share notes frequently with each other about how you all do the activity and how it can be done better.
- Decrease 'prompts' and 'modelling' with practice.

Everyone in the family needs to first practice this in a comfortable setting where they will not be disturbed but, in time, it should become the whole family's way of interacting with your child, creating multiple such interactions every day.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can say some colour and size words.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: using personal pronouns

Observe

Does the child say some personal pronouns, such as "I", "me", "you", "yours", "he/she", "his/her"?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Requirement

Before doing this activity, make sure the child has started using **50** or more words or signs to ask or to name things.

Prepare

Give your child the experience of listening to personal pronouns

- Let everyone in the family start using "your---(name of whatever they are giving to the child)" and "my --- (name of whatever they are taking for themselves).

Learn and do the activity

Use the following sequence:

- Part 1:
 - Join in and engage
 - Create a game of sorting things for you and the child in two boxes, one for you and one for the child

- Encourage the child to put items alternatingly in each box
- As the child puts the item, model: “my ----” and “your -----”
- Prompt the child to imitate “my” or “yours” as appropriate
- Reward as the child says it correctly
- Reduce prompts with practice
- Part 2:
 - Use an opportunity when you are giving the child something that firmly belongs to the child, like a favourite toy, an item of clothing, a cup or a teddy.
 - Hold the item in your hand and say “whose --- (name of the item)?”
 - Prompt to say “my.”
 - When the child says “my” give it to the child saying “yes” and reward with touch and hug
 - Do NOT reinforce by saying “yes, your ----” otherwise the child may be confused about the right response.
- Part 3:
 - Give some things to the child to give out to others, one at a time,
 - As the child gives, prompt the child to say “your --- (name of the item being given)”
 - Ask others to say “thanks” and reward the child
- Part 4:
 - Expand the activity about asking for things by adding “I want----”
 - Encourage the child to ask
 - Prompt the child to say “I want----”
 - Reward

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can say some personal pronouns, such as “I”, “me”, “you”, “yours”, “he/she”, “his/her”.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Add another five words ▪ Start the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Asking 'what', 'where' and 'who' questions



Observe

Does the child ask questions, such as "what", "where" and "why"?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Prepare

Learning to ask questions, such as "what", "where" and "why" helps in initiating and building interactions and in obtaining knowledge about the world. Teaching children with autism to ask these questions is difficult as, initially, they tend to answer the question rather than learn to ask.

Requirement

You will need to use your skills of creating a learning opportunity, modelling and reinforcing and rewarding, and the child will need the skills of paying attention, imitating, asking and expressing with a combination of words or signs.

Organise

Initially, you will need some protected time when you can work with the child undisturbed. You will need a toy or two to play with the child and another toy that the child likes in an opaque bag or container.

Learn and do the activity

Step 1: Watch and join in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have learnt earlier. Remember, let the child choose the toy. Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Step 2

Follow the sequences below:

A: “what” questions

- Get the child’s attention and hold the opaque bag in front of the child
- Model: Say “what is in the bag?” and point to the bag
- Hold the bag at a distance if the child names a toy or tries to take the bag
- Get the child to imitate “What is in the bag?” or a shorter version of the question such as “What” + pointing, “What is in there” + pointing
- Repeat and help by prompting to imitate
- As soon as the child imitates your words, get the toy out and give to the child with praise
- Reduce prompts and modelling with practice.

Once the child starts using “what” question in a supported setting with minimal or no prompt, you could encourage the child to use it in the day-to-day situation, for example, “what is in your hand/bag/box?”.

B: “where” questions

- Start off playing with the toys in front of the child.
- Hide one of the toys, out of the child’s view, in the opaque bag/container
- Model: say “where is ----(naming the toy)?”
- Repeat and help by prompting to imitate
- As soon as the child imitates your words, get the toy out and give to the child with praise
- Reduce prompts and modelling with practice.

Once the child starts using “where” question in a supported setting with minimal or no prompt, you could encourage the child to use it in the day-to-day situation, for example, “where is my ----?”.

C: “who” questions

- Use pictures (family photos) or books or real-life situations
- Model: point and say “who is that?”; if the child repeats the question, then answer and give praise.
- If the child names the person but does not repeat the question, then say:” I don’t know, let’s ask mum” (or someone else nearby). Take the child to that person and prompt the child: “say who is that?” and encourage the child to imitate.
- If the child repeats the question, then get the person to answer and give praise.
- Reduce prompts and modelling with practice.

Once the child starts using “who” question in a supported setting with minimal or no prompt, you could encourage the child to use it in the day-to-day situation, for example, point to people and ask “who is that?” and encourage the child to imitate the question.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can ask questions such as “what”, “where” and “why”?.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well done! Repeat this activity with another five words, and ■ Start the next module
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well done! Continue practising this activity ■ Start the next module

<input data-bbox="260 203 296 241" type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="730 203 1353 329">■ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.
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Module 6

Helping your child learn social skills

Basic social skills

To learn to socialise, your child must learn and practice some necessary social skills:

1. Playing together/Shared fun/interests,
2. Reciprocity,
3. Sharing,
4. Showing affection and warmth, and
5. Initiating interactions.

To help your child learn and practice these skills you need to do two things:

1. First, practice these skills with your child at home, and then,
2. Support your child in peer-group social and play activities.

Requirement

Social skills are built on some foundational and communication skills. Make sure you have already helped your child learn the following:

1. The foundation skills
 - a. Paying attention
 - b. Joint attention
 - c. Turn-taking
2. Communication skills of asking and giving.

To help your child learn the skills, you will need to use the 7 essential skills you have learnt earlier.

Social learning activities to do at home

Organise: Choose the right moments and routines for practice

- Choose some play activities:
 - your child must be interested in that play activity - the activity could be with toys or just some physical fun play
 - you have time to spend with your child, and you're not in a rush to move on to do something else
 - you can minimise distractions and interruptions, such as letting the family know not to disturb you during these moments.
- You can encourage your child to engage in play by taking out the toys or other play material that your child likes. You don't tell your child to play with this or that; you provide opportunities to play and let the child lead.
- Avoid toys that generate repetitive play.

Activity: Playing together with shared fun and reciprocity



Observe

Does the child appear to have fun and take turn in joint play with others?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Step 1: Watch and join in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have learnt earlier. Remember, let the child choose the toy. Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Step 2: Engage and Expand

In this step, you will use the skill of **Modelling** and **Prompting** to increase your child's motivation and responsiveness.

1. Copy (imitate) your child's actions, sounds and expressions; add an extra dose of happy facial expressions; it will be easier to imitate without taking anything away from the child if you have two sets of some common objects and toys, for example, two toy cars, spoons, cups, balls etc.
2. Help your child in what she/he is doing, but don't intrude or direct
3. Let your child lead; follow whatever your child does. At this stage don't worry about teaching your child;
4. Try to balance the turns, say "my turn" before doing your action. Give a little pause after your action and say "your turn" to prompt your child's action and wait for the child to act before imitating the action again; this way you help your child learn turn-taking.
 1. If your child does not respond, repeat and pause again
 2. If your child shifts his/her interest to a new toy, don't direct but follow your child's interest in the new toy and try to do the same again

5. Add a commentary to your child's actions, for example, "you put the ball in"
6. Every time your child does something, express your enthusiasm by smiling and clapping
7. Try to get your child to pay attention to your happiness and enthusiasm and encourage the child to join in by pausing and looking expectantly.
8. Model the expression of happiness by making happy sounds and clapping hands.
9. Again, pause to encourage your child to do the same.
10. You may need to **Prompt** the child for clapping hands with you, by asking verbally or by showing how to clap or by holding your child's hands and clapping, while you provide the happy sounds. Repeat the activity a few times but don't force your child; if your child loses interest then shift to following the child's lead - don't rush it - come back to it when the child is engaged again
 1. With practice, gradually reduce and fade the prompt
 2. As soon as your child does the activity or makes an effort to do it give plenty of rewards (see below),

Step 3: Reward

Reward your child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child shares your happiness and responds to your sharing of feelings.

1. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when your child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.
2. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about rewarding.

Step 4: Practice:

Practice this routine for 5 minutes at least three times a day in different situations. Let all the family members use this way of encouraging the child to have fun with them.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

I can get my child to have fun in activities with me and take turns during enjoyable interactions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! ▪ Start the next activity.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Start the next activity.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Activity: Sharing

Step 1: Prepare

Sharing is a positive behaviour that also helps in promoting social interactions. Children with autism can often share when requested to give something; however, spontaneous sharing is difficult for them. You can help your child learn and practice this, first with the family and then with peers.

Observe

Does the child share things with others with minimal or no prompts?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and do the activity

Step 2: Organise

Think of things that a few people in the family may need to share at the same time, for example, cards for playing a simple game, marbles for playing roll-the-marble or small biscuits or sweets from a container at tea time.

Step 3: Learn and do the activity

- Inform everyone in the family about praising the child when she/he shares something from him/her,
- Wait for the right moment, when the child is expecting an activity such as mealtime or play activity to start. Using a routine with a visual timetable will help in creating such anticipation.
- Start by giving the first of the things to share to the child "This is yours",
- Model by giving the next to another person, saying "This is yours", let the person thank you and praise you, in front of the child, for sharing.
- Give the rest of the things to the child and prompt, first verbally and then physically, to share with another person "share with sister---"
- As soon as the child shares, or attempts to share reward the child with praise.

Step 4: Reward

Reward the child with a lot of exciting sounds, smiles/touch/hug whenever the child shares your happiness and responds to your sharing of feelings.

3. Give the reward immediately, without any delay, when the child shows an expected response or makes an effort to do so.

4. Do not reward a wrong or unwanted behaviour - you are rewarding to teach the right response, not the wrong one.

Remind yourself about rewarding.

Step 5: Practice:

Practice this routine at least three times a day. Reduce prompts with practice. Let everyone in the family use this way of encouraging the child to share.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can share things with others with minimal or no prompts.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! ▪ Start the next activity.
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well done! Continue practising this activity ▪ Start the next activity.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

My child can share things with others with minimal or no prompts.	• Yes	• Sometimes	• Not yet
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Activity: Initiating interactions: showing



Prepare

For children with autism, this is one of the hardest skills to learn. Start with practising these skills at home, before working with a group of children to help in the generalisation.

Observe

Does the show object/toys/things at a distance to others?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	• Go to the next activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	• Learn and do the activity
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	• Learn and do the activity

Requirement

You will use the essential skills that you been using so far, namely:

- Creating opportunities for interaction
- Modelling
- Encouraging
- Prompting and reducing prompts
- Reinforcing and rewarding

Your child should be able to:

- Pay attention to you
- Imitate you

- Use a combination of signs or words

Organise

Involve other family members and carers in this activity. Inform them about rewarding your child by doing what the child asks them to do rather than repeating “good boy/girl” or giving any other tangible reward; the rationale for this is that getting what they want will be the most motivating reward for your child.

Learn and do the activity

Step 1: Watch and join in

Start with watching your child and joining in, as you have learnt earlier. Remember, let the child choose the toy. Once you have started some interaction with the child and the child begins to respond positively to your presence and imitation (this may take a few minutes) then move to the next step.

Step 2: try all these different ways of doing this activity depending on the opportunity

a) Showing objects/toys

- Encourage:
 - Use natural opportunities for pointing and showing by creating a game of “I spy with my little eye.”
 - Use simple words such as “I show you a ---” to get your child’s attention towards it and give it to the child as soon as the child notices it and wants it.
- Model:
 - Sit facing the child. Hold something that your child likes in the closed palms of your hand, a small cloth bag or a box/container
 - Get your child’s attention, hold your closed palms or the bag/box in front of the child and say “what is there?” with a questioning gesture, expression in your voice and on your face
 - Say “I show you” and take the toy or object out and lift it in front of the child and say “look, it is a ---”
 - Give the toy/object to the child when the child looks at it
 - Getting the toy/object should be the reward for the child
- Prompt: Once you have modelled the above steps a few times, you are ready to get your child to show it to you
 - This time, get your child to put the toy object/toy in a box/bag or cover it with a cloth
 - Point to the bag/box/cover and ask “what is there? Show me”
 - Wait for a few seconds looking expectantly at your child.
 - Repeat: Point to the bag/box/cover and ask “what is there? Show me”
 - Prompt: help your child physically in getting the toy out and holding in front of you
- Reward: As soon as your child shows the object, give praise and positive expressions
- Practice: Encourage other carers/family members to encourage, model and reward showing behaviour. Reduce prompts with practice.

b) Showing pictures in a book or a drawing

- Engage: read/show a book or a drawing that is of interest to the child, with a shared sense of fun.
- Model: start showing interesting features of pictures by first getting the child's attention and then saying "I can show you a ----"
- Prompt: "where is -----, show me ----", wait for a few seconds and repeat
- Give a physical prompt by shaping a point to show you the picture or the drawing.
- Reward

c) Showing distant things to others



- First, model by drawing others' attention to things your child has done by "look, --- made this". Encourage others to praise the item and the child.
- Then prompt your child to show to others by drawing their attention or taking it to others
- Prompt: "show the -----" to -----(a family member/carer/peer)
- Initially, you may have to prompt physically to show to another person.
- Encourage others to reinforce and reward by praising the item as well as the child's effort "good showing, thank you."
- Practise this frequently, increasing your child's confidence in initiating interactions. Decrease prompts with practice.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child can show things to others with minimal or no prompts.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<input type="checkbox"/> Well done! <input type="checkbox"/> Start the next activity.

<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well done! Continue practising this activity Start the next activity.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Using peer interactions for learning social skills

Introduction

For children, interacting with their peers is like oxygen for their wellbeing and learning. Exposure to interactions with typically developing children helps develop and generalise social skills. Play is the ideal context for children to interact socially and communicate. Children with autism tend to play alone with items or activities of their interest.

Playtime is meant to be a fun time for the child when she/he is relatively independent and free from external constraints. The challenge for you, as a parent, is to support your child's play without being directive or intrusive, because the moment you do that, it is not 'play' anymore!

Prepare

Answering the following questions would give you an insight into your child's level and style of play and help you prepare for supporting his/her play. You may need some time to observe your child before answering some of the questions.

- ☐ Does he/she enjoy running/chasing type of activities with other children?
- ☐ Does he/she play with toys besides other children?
- ☐ Does he/she share the focus of play with other children and join in playing with them?
- ☐ Does he/she talk/sign to others while playing with them?

Providing opportunities and support

Organise

- Provide lots of opportunities for your child to interact with other children. Such interactions can happen during everyday activities, such as having friends over to play or spending the afternoon with brothers and sisters, or in the community, such as attending a playgroup or visiting a playground or park.
- Create activities that would be fun for your child and other children too. Try to organise one such opportunity every day.
- Try to vary activities, include some sensory play, for example with sound/light making toys, some exploratory play with hide-and-seek type of activities, some constructive play with blocks or puzzles and some sociodramatic play, for example running a shop or acting as police or doctors.

- Prepare the other child/children: From the age of about four years, typically developing children can be informed and sensitised to improve their interactions with children with autism or other developmental difficulties.
 - Inform, for example, “---is different and it is hard for him/her to talk/play/interact”, “he/she may say/do ---- to mean -----”
 - Support, for example, “I will be there to help if you don’t understand what he/she is doing or what to do.”
 - Encourage, for example, “You are great at playing; let’s see if you can help ---- to play with you.”
 - Provide structure, along the lines of stay, play and talk for example,
 - “You need to stay close to ----, show-- things, ask --- to play with you,”
 - “join in activities and play with ----”,
 - Call ---- by his/her name ----” and “talk to ----- about what you are doing”.
- Reward, for example, “you are *really* good at helping --- to play”. A tangible reward, such as a sticker could also be given.

Learn and do the activity

Observe:

Use the list below to make observations. With practice, you will notice these features easily.

Your child (towards other children)		Other children (towards your child)
	Notices their actions	
	Tries to get their attention (saying their name, showing, asking a question, commenting, touching, or waving)	
	Tries to interact with them (sharing, talking/signing, joining-in, inviting, agreeing or disagreeing, turn-taking, leading or following)	
	Responds to their communications	

Support:

- Ensure that the toys and the other material are such that will interest your child and the other children.
- Remove or decrease any sensory aspects of the environment (e.g., noise) that may be upsetting for your child.
- To start with, stay close and ‘fill-in’ by making comments on what your child is doing (e.g., Oh, you are building a tower!) and interpreting what he/she may be trying to say (e.g., “you want the other toy? here it is”).

- Expand and give meaning to what your child says or tries to say, for example, turning a sound to a word or a word to a short sentence. Do not try to get your child say the word or words, keep supporting and having fun.
- Offer choices and help the children choose what they may want.
- Create opportunities for communication and interactions by placing toys in a way that your child will need to ask for help in getting them or using toys that will require another person to help in winding/opening/holding.
- Praise your child and other children for doing or making any attempts to do any of the actions you have been observing, interacting with each other. For example, as you notice a child giving, sharing, or following another child look at them, smile, nod, give thumbs-up.

Model:

- Expand the play by doing something different, in a manner of enjoying your actions, not teaching the child – remember, don't put them off their play!
- Show a toy/object to your child or another child.
- Notice and comment on action by your child or another child.
- Follow the lead of another child, encouraging your child to join in.

Prompt (using cues):

- To ask, for example, “say, I want the car?” or “say, come play with me/us”)
- To share, for example, “give one ball to ---”
- To show, for example, “show it to ----” or “say, look at my -----”
- To follow, for example, “let's do the same”
- To take turns, for example, “say, your turn.”
- To comment, for example, “say, wow, that was fun” or “that is a big/nice -----”
- To repeat an action “do it again” or “say it again”.

Outcome

Complete the following update to check your progress:

My child tries to join-in and interact with other children and responds to their communication.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, can easily do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well done! ■ Start the next module
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, with encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well done! Continue practising this activity ■ Start the next module.
<input type="checkbox"/> No, not doing this yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check whether you are doing the activity in the right way. Learn the activity again and practice. Increase the practice opportunities by involving others in the family too.

Module 7

Managing your child's behaviour difficulties

Why do some children have behaviour difficulties?

All behaviour, good or difficult, has a reason. Some of the reasons why the behaviour may be difficult are:

- All children want attention and their demands to be met promptly. If for some reason, this does not happen to their satisfaction, they tend to display difficult behaviour to achieve what they want. This happens, not because children love being nasty, but mainly due to immature psychological development.
- Children tend to repeat the wrong behaviour if others give them attention in the wrong way (laughing at their behaviour, shouting at them, getting angry with them or hitting them) or if others react to their behaviour in a wrong way (giving in to their demands).
- If children do not fully understand others' feelings, thinking or situation, that increases the chances of their behaviour not being right for the situation.
- Children's control of their emotions and behaviour may be underdeveloped. That is why their responses are often angry and disproportionate.

Why do children with autism have more marked behaviour difficulties?

Common behaviour difficulties in autism include socially inappropriate behaviour, non-compliance, disrupting the environment, physical or verbal aggression and self-injurious behaviour.

Several reasons can cause or exacerbate behaviour difficulties in children with autism:

- Their understanding of the other person's intention, desire and situation is limited. The lack of understanding makes it hard for them to respond appropriately, creates anxiety and adversely affects their behaviour.
- Their difficulty in communicating needs, desires and feelings to others is an ongoing source of frustration. Often their behaviour is a way of conveying:
 - "I'm scared/anxious" or "I want to get out of here" or "I don't want to do this anymore."
 - "I'm bored" or "I don't know what to do next."
 - "I hate that noise ... turn it off."
 - "I'm very hungry/thirsty."
 - "I have a terrible headache/tummy ache."
 - "Please don't move my things, I need them to be where they always have been. It upsets me."
 - I feel anxious, and my behaviour makes me feel better.
- Hypersensitivity to some aspects of the environment (to a crowded space, physical contact, light or sounds) creates anxiety and stress and makes their behaviour worse.
- They have difficulty in regulating their emotions - the 'thermostat' that controls how far one goes with an emotional reaction, is poorly developed; even a minor issue can trigger an extreme reaction.

- They find it difficult to understand social boundaries, personal space and appropriate social behaviour.
- It is difficult for them to shift from one idea or activity to another idea, a new activity or plan, even though it may be more suitable or appropriate. Defiance is often an expression of their rigidity.
- Anxiety, which is common in autism, makes many situations seem more stressful or scary than they may be in reality; that causes stress and makes the child more likely to be volatile.

Six essential steps for improving behaviour of children with autism:

1. Reducing the conditions or situations which trigger, maintain, or worsen unwanted behaviours: making a Stress Reduction Plan:
 - a. Helping the child communicate needs and worries
 - b. Adapting the sensory environment to suit the child
 - c. Managing anxiety and fear
 - d. Helping the child navigating change by making the environment predictable
 - e. Improving attention
 - f. Helping the child learn to relax and calm down
2. Creating a loving and positive relationship with **your** child
3. Increasing **your** child's "good" or "right" behaviours
4. Teaching **your** child new "good" or "right" behaviours
5. Getting **your** child to follow instructions
6. Reducing the wrong or unwanted behaviour
 - a. Finding out the likely cause for the behaviour
 - b. Responding to the wrong or unwanted behaviour

You will have to start with the first step and work your way through, rather than diving in to start managing the unwanted behaviours. Over-focusing on the wrong or unwanted behaviour may reduce such behaviour for a short time, but it increases the possibility of such behaviour re-emerging or a new wrong or unwanted behaviour starting.

It is best to practise each of these steps separately, but, after some practice, when it becomes your way of working with the child, you can work on all steps in all day-to-day situations. That will prevent unwanted behaviours, and you will only need to use the sixth step whenever a particularly difficult behaviour appears.

Reducing the conditions or situations which trigger, maintain, or worsen unwanted behaviours: making a Stress Reduction Plan

The Stress Reduction Plan



Area of concern	Consider including the following in the daily routine of the child
Difficulty in communicating needs and feelings	
1. Can the child convey needs and anything upsetting him/her?	If not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise use of appropriate means of communication, such as using gestures/signs or pictures. - Help the child learn to use these means to express needs and feelings. - Teach the child a way of asking for help and make sure that all around the child understand that method -practise it.
2. Does the child understand what others say to him/her?	If not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use gestures and expressions to help the child understand. - Keep your language quite simple. - Use short sentences and divide an instruction in small chunks. - Use signs/gestures and/or pictures.

Sensory difficulties	
Does the child become upset or anxious due to noise, light, or crowd?	<p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn off or cover fluorescent lights when possible - Minimise noise by speaking in a softer voice, turning down the volume for the radio or TV. - Avoid using loud noises, such as shouting, clapping or whistling, to get the child's attention. - If the noise cannot be reduced, consider using earmuffs or headphones to reduce the sound perceived by the child. - Give the child experience of handling and playing with different textures, for example, mixing dough, making sandcastles, counting beans or hand-painting to get used to multiple simultaneous sensations
Fears and anxieties	
Does the child become angry and upset by a change of situation, or people?	<p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gradually supported exposure and preparation is the key to reducing the impact of the child's fears and anxieties, for example, in a safe environment, when the child is with the mother or a known carer, first using a picture of the fear generating situation and talking about it. - Introducing the child to the new place, one step at a time, for example, first showing the picture of the place, then just going to see the outside of the area and then going in briefly may help the child overcome the fear. - First showing the child the fear inducing things from a distance and then supporting the child by reassuring. - Using something to distract the child in such situations may help; the distractor must be something that the child likes, like a squeeze ball or a picture book or a toy that the child likes. - Giving child some time and space to get over the stress.
Making change tolerable by increasing predictability	
Does the child get upset or anxious by change of situation or starting a new activity?	<p>If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare your child for any change in the situation by using . Pictures in a sequence to show the child what to expect - Creating routines so that the situations become predictable for the child - Explaining to the child what is going to happen next or after some time. Using activities such as counting to five or clapping hands to indicate change and practising these activities.
Attention and activity level	
Does the child find it hard to pay attention? Is the child overactive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do regular and varied fun physical activities with the child, such as running, jumping, moving stuff, lifting weight, and playing on swings. - For a child who dislikes physical activities, starting with a brief fun routine of a chasing or ball game, and gradually increasing the time, may help. - For a child who finds it difficult to sit still, start with doing an activity that the child likes initially for a brief period, such as looking at a picture book, keeping the general tone and environment calm. Gradually increase the time; reward and praise the child for every increase of a minute.

General calming measures	
General stress-reducing measure for all children with autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help the child learn to relax by practising calming routines, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Slowly counting to 10 o Taking five long breaths o Listening to music o Taking short breaks from activities o Lying down and relaxing the whole body - Reduce the impact of stress on the child by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Getting the child to do regular physical exercise for at least 30 minutes a day o Making a calming sleeping routine: avoiding exciting activities before bedtime, avoiding mobiles/TV before falling asleep, reading a book or listening to some calming music

You have completed the next for steps earlier while doing the module of Building positive behaviour. You can repeat them at this stage if you need to, otherwise go to step 6.

2. Creating a positive relationship with the child
3. Increasing the child's "good" or "right" behaviours
4. Teaching new "good" or "right" behaviours to the child
5. Getting your child to follow instructions

6. Reducing the wrong or unwanted behaviour

Step 1: Focus on one behaviour at a time to find out the likely causes of the wrong or unwanted behaviour – the iceberg activity

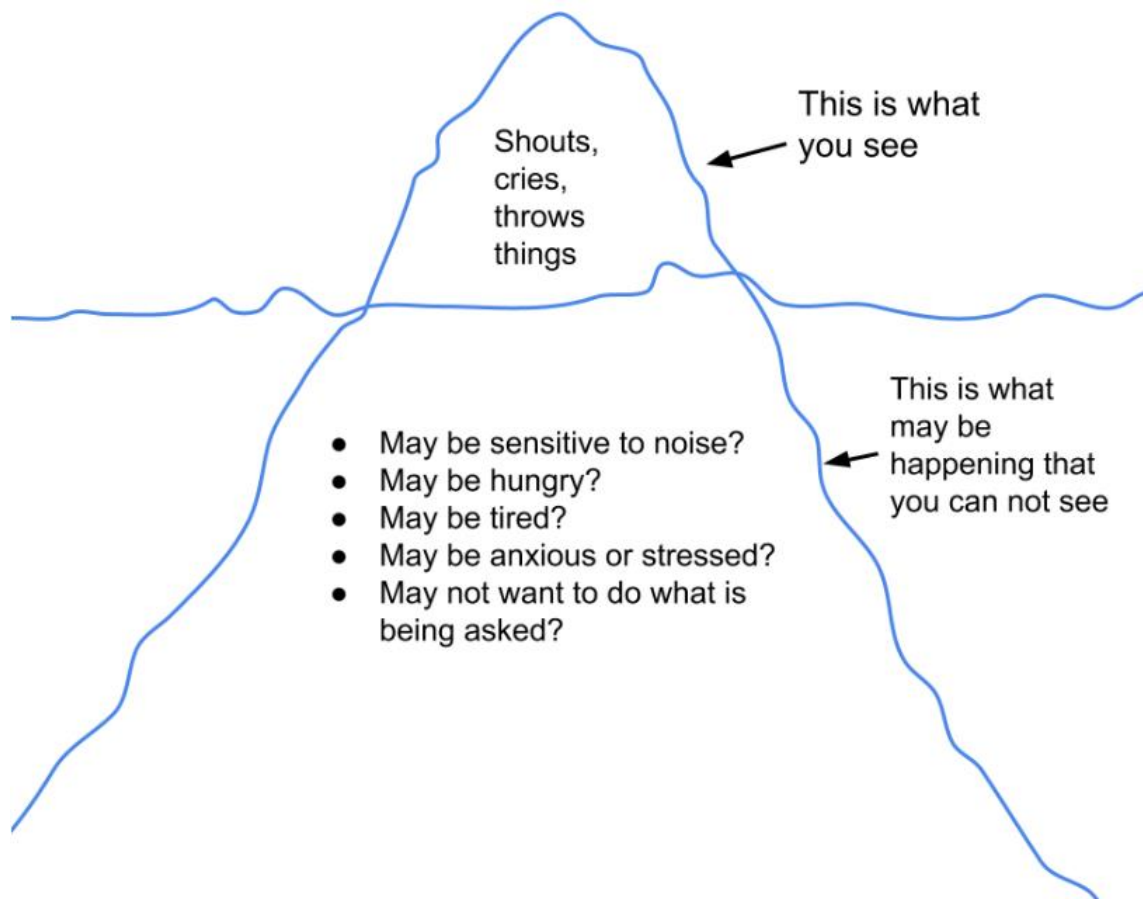
We see the wrong behaviour easily, but its cause – the reason behind it – is often hidden and are not obvious, like the hidden part of an iceberg. Such a reason is not an excuse for the wrong behaviour, but knowing it gives a way forward for helping the child to reduce such behaviour.

Use the chart below to carefully observe your child's behaviour to understand what factors may be starting, contributing, or maintaining the behaviour. These observations will help you and other professionals in understanding and reducing or changing the difficult behaviour:

Behaviour:
In what situation did the behaviour happen or what was the child doing when the behaviour started: playing, mealtime, bedtime, time of day, and what triggered the behaviour?
What was the behaviour: hitting, throwing, shouting, defiance, repetitive behaviour, being socially inappropriate, any other, and how long did it last?

What happened immediately after the behaviour. For example, the child got what he/she wanted, or the child was comforted or anything else you or someone did?
What the child may have gained from his behaviour, for example, attention from you or others in the family, his/her choice of thing or activity, becoming relaxed or avoiding what he/she doesn't want to do (being with others or doing an activity)?

Step 2: Now, look at the iceberg model and draw a similar one for the behaviour you are focusing on:



Now complete one 'iceberg' about your child:



Once you have carefully observed the behaviour for a few days, you should now be able to think about the following:

What makes your child's behaviour worse?

What makes your child's behaviour better?

Step 3:

- ❑ **Use the Stress reduction Plan**, you had prepared earlier, to address any of the reasons identified. Working on improving communication and attention, reducing anxiety, and altering the environment to suit the child will reduce or remove many unwanted behaviours.
- ❑ Keep working on **Building Positive Behaviour** you had learnt earlier.
- ❑ Also, consider **seeking help for any health related condition**, such as poor sleep, any ear or tooth pain, constipation or other tummy upset or any other cause of pain that may be causing the child to behave in a particular manner.



7. What to do when a child misbehaves?

First, do not react inappropriately:

If parents or carers show a wrong reaction (laughing, getting angry or saying something loudly or showing too many emotions/expressions) to some unwanted behaviour, give in to the child's demand or let the child get away from doing a task that the child is required to do, then the child learns and develops the habit of displaying unwanted behaviour.

Learn these golden rules of **what not to do**:

- Don't become angry or shout at your child - that will only increase the bad behaviour
- Don't laugh at your child's unwanted behaviour or make fun of your child
- Don't be harsh or force your child
- Don't argue with your child
- Don't give in to your child's demands just because of his/her difficult behaviour
- Don't be inconsistent: sometimes agreeing to your child demands and at other times refusing
- Don't try to bribe your child - by giving rewards before the child has shown the right behaviour – rewards only work when they follow the right behaviour
- Don't try to teach the right behaviour when your child is in the middle of showing bad behaviour
- Don't criticise your child in front of others
- Never hit or hurt your child

The right way of responding to unwanted behaviour

You will need to think and plan your actions. You will also need to include the whole family in this plan; otherwise, different responses from family members will only make the situation worse.

Step 1:

1. Choose one unwanted behaviour; you cannot work on all the wrong behaviours at the same time. Choose a behaviour that is harmful to the child or others, such as hitting or biting, or which bothers the child most.
2. Have you tried to do something about correcting or reducing the reasons for this behaviour?
3. Have you tried adapting the situation to suit the child or reducing the child's stress?
4. What would have been the right behaviour for your child to do in that situation? For example, instead of crying and getting angry, your child could have communicated needs or desire by using word, signs, or symbols, taken rest if tired or communicated about being stressed.
5. Have you tried teaching your child some of these right behaviours? Remember, you can only do that when the child is calm; practise them repeatedly so that the child can use them when needed.

Step 2: If you pick up early that your child is starting the unwanted behaviour: interrupt and redirect

1. Try interrupting by redirecting your child to an activity of his interest (for example, a sensory activity) or to the **desired action that you have been practising**. You can only do this if the child has practised doing the right behaviour earlier; you cannot teach the correct behaviour when the child is upset.
2. Keep ignoring the unwanted behaviour and help the child by giving prompts to show the desired behaviour
3. Give praise and rewards if the child tries to show the desired behaviour

Step 3: If the unwanted behaviour occurs: convey disapproval

1. Convey your disapproval, without showing any anger
 - a. Get the child's attention
 - b. Say "No, don't do that" or "stop" in a firm and calm voice and facial expressions of displeasure
2. Give about 10 seconds for the child to respond, stay calm
3. If the child persists with unwanted behaviour, repeat displeasure. If the child continues with the unwanted behaviour, go to the next step.

Step 4: if the unwanted behaviour continues

1. Remove your attention from the child (ignore the behaviour). You will need to ignore the child's crying and all the expressions that go with it, not because you don't love your child but because you want the behaviour to improve.
2. Make sure the child is safe.
3. While ignoring, you will need to involve yourself in doing some other activity
4. Do not argue with your child or criticise the child. You are trying to remove your attention from the child and give a message that she/he does not get attention by doing the wrong behaviour.
5. As soon as the child calms down, you will need to give your full attention to the child - **you need to ignore the behaviour, not the child**.
6. Do not criticise this behaviour afterwards. Praise every good behaviour.
7. Teach any right behaviour when the child is calm.

Step 5:

If the child becomes too upset:

- ☐ Try to calm the child without giving too much attention. Acknowledge the feelings without giving in to the child's behaviour "I know you are very upset but first calm down",
- ☐ minimise your emotional response; don't show much emotional expression
- ☐ don't give in to the child's demand
- ☐ don't bribe or negotiate at this point
remain aware of the child's and others' safety, and act promptly if anyone is at risk of getting hurt

On applying this method, children's behaviour can deteriorate for a few days before it starts improving. Be patient, hold your nerve and get help from others, but stick to the right methods, and you will have helped your child.

Three main types of behavioural crisis in children with autism:

1. Severe and prolonged tantrums

Tantrums occur either when the child's wish is denied. Typically developing children also do it, but in autism it is prolonged and severe. A tantrum is often a learnt behaviour - they watch others and try to get other's attention - and giving in to it is never a good idea as it only reinforces the tantrum behaviour. Sometimes, the situation gets out of the child's control because of their poor emotional regulation, and even they do not know how to turn off the tantrum!

Managing tantrums

- ☐ Stay calm. Your panic will only make the situation worse. Don't cry or yell and keep your voice firm and steady; children are reassured by firmness.
- ☐ Catch it early: read early signals and try distracting the child to something of the child's interest and which is calming for the child, for example, their choice of music or game.
- ☐ Show that you are aware that the child is upset by saying **in a calm voice**: "I know you are upset."
- ☐ Remove attention, unless doing so would put the child at risk
- ☐ DO NOT give in or bribe the child
- ☐ DO NOT reason or argue
- ☐ Do NOT try to teach good behaviour at this time.
- ☐ Remain aware of the child's and others' safety, act promptly if anyone is at risk of getting hurt.
- ☐ Praise the child when the tantrum settles and practise the right behaviour. Do not criticise the child.

2. Meltdown

Meltdowns happen when the build-up of anxiety and stress crosses the limit of what the child's system can put up with, and their pent-up stress boils over, causing prolonged crying and aggression. There is no particular purpose to this behaviour apart from releasing stress. Unlike a tantrum, the child does not show any awareness of others' reactions.

Managing a meltdown

- ❑ Stay calm. Your panic will only make the situation worse. Don't cry or yell and keep your voice firm and steady; children are reassured by firmness.
- ❑ Catch it early: read early signals and try distracting the child to something of the child's interest and which is calming for the child, for example, their choice of music or game.
- ❑ Show that you are aware that the child is upset by saying **in a calm voice**: "I know you are upset."
- ❑ Help the child by removing demands from the child and reducing any sensory overload such as noise, such as moving to a calmer place.
- ❑ Use some practised calming method, such as a sensory toy or listening to music.
- ❑ Use a soothing method that you know works on your child, for example, hugging, touching, holding or singing.
- ❑ Some children may need to be left alone, removing stimulation and demands, in a safe and calm place, to calm down, but do not create prolonged isolation for the child.
- ❑ DO NOT criticise the child. DO NOT reason or argue. Do NOT try to teach good behaviour at this time.
- ❑ Talk about the incident after the child has settled, and only about how the child calmed down and settled, what would be unacceptable (hitting others or breaking things) and what she/he could do better in the future. Build a reward programme (giving stickers) for the child showing good behaviour in future. Don't criticise the child.
- ❑ Remain aware of the child's and others' safety, act promptly if anyone is at risk of getting hurt

Taking the child to a hospital in such a situation may only make things worse; children with autism don't react well to hospital environments. Medicines have almost no role in managing such situations. Trying to medicate children with autism by giving sedatives often makes them irritable and aggressive. If you have tried the above plan, worked on the behavioural improvement plan and still have serious issues with your child's challenging behaviour, then take advice from a counsellor and a child psychiatrist.

Remember, **preventing** is the best way of dealing with both these behaviours. Work on:

- ❑ Improving communication using symbols if required
- ❑ Practising alternative behaviours or favourite activities that could be used as replacements of demands, such as a sensory toy, music, reducing noise with headphones. Using a predictable plan will help the child too.
- ❑ Reducing stressful situations such as noise or crowd and creating frequent breaks or relaxing times.
- ❑ Teaching, practising and rewarding positive behaviours, such as asking, giving, showing, sharing

You need to think through the above and individualise it to your child. Plan and share it with others and have it ready to use in the event of a crisis.

3. Shutdown (mental and physical inactivity)

Some children slowdown in all their activities, such as talking to others, speaking, doing daily chores, and even eating food. Their body movements also decrease, and they often appear relaxed. It may also happen that at one time it seems that the child is in shut down and at other times he feels fine. This situation may worsen if the help is not provided.

Helping the child during the shutdown phase

- ❑ Is there a reason in the environment that is causing mental stress to the child?
 - First, reduce such stress.
- ❑ Is the child under pressure due to any other reason, such as any change in school or expectations from him to work beyond his capacity?
 - Reduce these reasons by meeting with the school
- ❑ Is any other child or elder taunting or bullying the child?
 - Intervene to change this state.
- ❑ Is there a lack of regular schedule in the child's routine at home or at school?
 - Create a routine for the child with the help of visual timetables.
 - Help the child follow his routine.
- ❑ Is the child not getting enough mental encouragement?
 - Play games with the child or do things that he is interested in, he can easily complete and for which he gets praise on completion.
 - Do not allow the child to sit and watch TV or video throughout the day, encourage the child by making a routine of doing such tasks before and after more active work.
 - Start the child's routine with his or her favourite work.
 - Make a routine of walking or playing outdoors with the child every day.
 - Motivate the child to work, but at this stage reduce the decision-making burden on the child.
- ❑ Is the child able to get the support he needs?
 - In this stage, the child needs 1–1 help; The child should have a good and sensitive relationship with such helpers.
- ❑ Is the child taking any medicine?
 - Shutdown-like conditions often occur due to the ill effects of some medicines. Check the medicine by taking the help of a doctor, and if necessary, stop or change the medicine.
- ❑ Does the child know how to relax and reduce stress?
 - Help the child to learn a plan to relax and reduce mental stress.

4. Self-injurious (hitting/biting self) behaviour

Such behaviour is extremely distressing for parents and makes it very hard to look after the child. Unfortunately, parents and teacher often react wrongly to such behaviour, which makes the situation worse.

Managing self-injurious behaviour

1. Does the child often choose such behaviour when frustrated or distressed?
 - If yes,
 - a. Modifying the environment to make it less stressful for the child
2. Does your child have difficulty in communicating, understanding others, or expressing?
 - If yes,

- a. Improve the child's communication. This is the most common reason underlying such behaviour - make it a priority for you and the child.
- 3. Does your child seem to be using such behaviour to get what they want or to reduce their boredom or to escape from a task that they don't want to do?
 - If yes,
 - a. Teach the child ways to convey their needs and desires
 - b. Practise these ways when the child is calm,
 - c. Encourage by rewarding whenever the child uses the right way of conveying needs or desires
- 4. Does your child seem to do the self-injurious behaviours to generate certain sensations?
 - If yes,
 - a. Consider giving the child other sensation generating toys and activities such as for chewing, touching, stroking and sound/music.
 - b. Create opportunities for the child to play with such material - the child may need help and encouragement in using sensory material.
- 5. Does your child seem to do such behaviour for seeking attention from others?
 - If yes,
 - a. Stop giving attention to such behaviour
 - b. Instead, give the child a lot of attention and praise for any other alternative behaviour such as playing with a toy or a sensory activity.

Finally, increasing children's existing good behaviours and teaching **them alternative behaviour**, through rewards and reinforcement, should decrease opportunities for indulging in self-injurious behaviours.

Self-stimulatory behaviour (stimming)

Some children with autism show repetitive behaviours such as flapping their hands, moving their hands or fingers, covering their ears, rocking their body, pacing up and down, biting or chewing objects or toys and sometimes even their fingers or hands and at times pinching their skin or pulling their hair. These behaviours are known as self-stimulatory behaviours or stimming.

What causes these behaviours?

There are several reasons for such behaviours to appear, and one or more of them could apply to your child:

1. becoming either over-excited and using these behaviours to calm down or feeling bored and trying to create some excitement
2. feeling anxious, angry, upset or distressed because of sensory or emotional overload, and expressing these emotions through these behaviours or using these behaviours to soothe themselves
3. being in pain because of some physical problem such as a toothache or ear infection
4. and finally, the behaviour may have started for any of the above reasons but then became a habit for the child even though the original reason no longer exists.

How can you reduce these behaviours?

Such behaviours cannot be removed entirely. However, they change with time, and using the tips below, you can make them less disruptive and more acceptable for the child and others.

First, consider whether there may be a physical cause that needs to be treated.

Next, make observations, as you have learnt to do earlier and reduce the conditions or situations that may trigger, maintain, or worsen your child's behaviour.

Practical tips worth trying:

- ☐ Regular daily vigorous exercises often reduce such behaviours
- ☐ Do not let these behaviours put you off from doing joint fun activities with your child, rather do more of them if possible, without worrying about trying to stop stimming.
- ☐ Instead of showing negative emotions towards stimming, show positive and engaging emotions towards your child and keep building your relationship with the child.
- ☐ Whenever your child does such repetitive behaviour, start an activity of your child's choice, which has been practised earlier. Praise and reward your child on starting that activity.
- ☐ For stimming, which may be socially inappropriate use pictures or words (depending on the child's understanding) to convey to your child that he/she can do stimming in his/her room or later. That will improve your child's self-control.
- ☐ Regularly praise and reward your child for not stimming. Do not shout at the child or use physical punishment for doing these behaviours.

Module 8

Daily activities and life skills

Helping the child with eating difficulties

Eating food is difficult for many children. For a variety of reasons, several types of eating difficulties occur in autism, each child presenting differently and needing a different approach to help.



Many children with autism are very selective about what they eat. Their choice may depend on the smell, look, texture or even the brand of food, and their shortlist may be limited to only two or three food items. To make matters worse, they may also want to eat only in certain places, and only if the food is served in a certain way.

Some children with autism do not seem to have much interest in eating food and eat small amounts.

Some parents remove some types of food from the child's diet, for example, giving the child a gluten-free and casein-free diet, for a therapeutic effect on autism. There is no evidence of its effectiveness, and it can be harmful to the child.

Some children, with feeding difficulties, can become significantly undernourished, putting their health and development at risk.

Why do children with autism have eating difficulties?

There is no single reason. For most children, there is a combination of some or all of the following:

- a. Increased sensitivity- a strong like or dislike to colour, shape, smell and texture.
- b. Some children may have an overly sensitive oral mucosa (lining of the mouth). They dislike the sensation of food in their mouth; holding and chewing food is not a pleasant experience for them.
- c. A strong need for maintaining the routine to create a sense of order, for example, where the food is served and how. Even a minor deviation from the routine can result in a refusal to eat.
- d. Some children may have a strong desire to do what they want to do, and anything else, even eating food, is an unacceptable distraction for them.

- e. Many children with autism may not feel comfortable with the social side of eating. A lot of eating is done in a social setting, with the family or peers, and that may put them off their food.

Consulting a doctor for medical treatment

Consult a doctor if the child starts losing weight or becomes ill. Mostly, children do not need any medicine to increase their appetite, and some medicines can be harmful to the child.

Concerns and helpful tips and tools

It is not an easy difficulty to set right. A prolonged period of sustained effort is needed to make a difference. In the meantime, remember, the child is not putting it on but having a difficult time, and needs your help and understanding. It is neither the child's nor your fault that this problem exists, so, try to avoid a blame culture.

Here are some tips gathered from parents and professionals that may be of help. You do not have to use them in any order; you can combine more than one method and adjust the example given to suit your child and the family. You do have to give sufficient time for a method or tip to work, and you must persevere - that will make a difference.

Concerns	Tips and tools
Lacks interest in eating and only eats small amount of food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Make a food diary (see below for how to make one). Check the child's weight and monitor by weighing every three months. Consult a clinician to check the intake. ❑ Use tips and tools number: 1 - 4
At mealtime, gets upset, cries, or tries to run away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Use Building positive behaviour ❑ Use tips and tools number: 1 - 4
Only eats certain type of food, such as white food or dry food or food of certain brand or smell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Try to provide enough nutrition from within the child's choice. ❑ If the intake or variety is limited, add multivitamin and iron; also consider protein drinks. ❑ Use tips and tools number: 1 - 4
Does not like food in his mouth and spits food out, or has difficulty in chewing or swallowing food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Give small amounts of blended food at a time. ❑ At mealtime, distract the child with sensory experience that he may like. ❑ Use tips and tools number: 1 - 4
Has stopped eating food or is in a shutdown phase and has become very lethargic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Make a food diary (see below for how to make one). Check the child's weight and monitor by weighing every three months. Consult a clinician to check the intake. ❑ Use tips and tools number: 5

Make a food diary

Sometimes, it helps to be sure how much your child is eating. Making a food diary, for three consecutive days, can help in clarifying the situation. It could reassure you that the child is eating enough, and it might give you the information to convince a sceptical professional about the need to provide monitoring and support.

Here is an easy template for the food diary (make three copies, one for each day):

Time (write)	Type of food	Amount (use number/volume/weight)	Behaviour/comments
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Dinner			
Snack			
Snack			
Snack			
Snack			

Learn and do: Tips and tools

1. Create a routine/structure

- Use a visual timetable to highlight the daily routine for mealtime and other daily activities. Use drawings/photos to indicate what will happen at mealtime.
- Make sure a rewarding activity follows the mealtime - something the child gets to do only if the child eats the meal.
- Once you make a routine for mealtime, try to stick to it, be supportive but firm.
- Avoid excessive liquid intake.
- Reward the child's attempts, ignore the misses. Do not talk about the failures; look ahead.

2. Motivate

- Use a timer to reward the child for the time spent eating; give a point for every 1 or 2 minutes. Make a points counter (a simple drawing with markings or a table or a chart in colour will do) and let the child see the points going up.
- Use a menu card for the child to see what is planned for each meal. At the bottom of the card, leave a space labelled NEW. At every meal, write here the one extra item that you want the child to eat. Knowing this beforehand gives the child a sense of control.
- Use the "Grandma's law" or the 'first-and-then' method: getting the child to eat a non-preferred item to get something preferred, for example, "After you eat your carrots, you can have your pudding".
- Watching a video of other children, even self, can be motivating for the child with autism. Keep the video running while the child eats.

- Keep mealtimes fun, don't put pressure on the child

3. Reduce the sensory burden

- Give the child experience of handling and playing with different textures, for example, mixing dough, making sandcastles, counting beans or hand-painting to get used to multiple simultaneous sensations.
- Keep different types of food separated on the plate and avoid a mishmash
- Some children may prefer the food to be mashed or blended to avoid certain textures.
- If the child is bothered by the colour of the food, then get the child to wear sunglasses at mealtime. That sometimes works!
- For some children, for whom eating food may feel like a punishment due to their heightened sensitivity or their mindset, creating a distraction, like playing their favourite video or music or toy or finger-puppets at the mealtime, may work by taking their mind off the food. You can gradually reduce such distractions as eating behaviour improves.

4. Gradual shaping of behaviour to encourage the eating of a new type of food

- Start gently; it may be good enough to start with the child just keeping the new food on the plate alongside their preferred food.
- Next, get the child to smell the new food, later to lick it, and then to eat a tiny amount before moving to normal portions.
- At each stage, use a rewarding method, for example, praise + points.

5. Create an encouraging social environment

- Have the rest of the family eat and appreciate the food, without putting any pressure on the child.
- Try including some peers at mealtime to model good eating behaviour or make a video of other children eating food and show it to your child at mealtime.

6. Helping children in a shutdown phase (or mild catatonia) to eat

- Encourage and help the child to increase general physical activity
- Provide mental stimulation through singing, music and chatting
- Help the child to eat little bit at a time, even if you have to feed the child
- At times, you may have to prompt the child to open mouth by touching the spoon with his lips.
- Bland the food if needed.
- The child may prefer to have a calm eating environment

For most children, such eating difficulties are a phase that passes with time. Hold your nerves, seek support and keep helping the child.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What supplements should be given to the child with eating difficulties and when?

A: Children who eat a sufficient amount of home-cooked varied food do not need supplements. If the diet, for some reason, is limited, then consider giving: Vitamins A, B, C, D, E and K, Iron, Calcium and Zinc. Only give these supplements in the recommended dosage. You can start giving these supplements as early as there is a concern about the dietary intake and take advice from professionals.

Q: Should children be given protein supplements?

A: Normally, protein requirements are met through a wide range of food, such as beans, cereals, nuts, banana, milk, yoghurt, cheese, eggs and meat. However, children with restricted diets may need additional protein supplements, which are available as granules and drinks. Overdoing any supplement can be harmful to the child, so take professional advice and do not exceed the recommended amount.

Q: Should I put my child on Gluten-free and Casein-free (GFCF) diet or Omega-3 supplements?

A: Some parents vouch that putting their child with autism on the GFCF diet or Omega-3 supplements have improved the child's communication, behaviour, or other symptoms. However, a lot of research has been done to investigate this and has shown no effect of such a diet on autism. Putting children on GFCF diet can be difficult, may further restrict their food intake and may cause harm by reducing their consumption.

Sleeping

Children with autism suffer from sleep problems at a higher rate than typically developing children; about 40-80% have poor sleep or insomnia. Children with ASD often have difficulty in falling asleep and frequently wake during the night.

What causes sleep problems?

Poor sleep in ASD is a result of interaction between biological, psychological, family and social factors. Poor child-rearing practices often make sleeping patterns worse.

Disturbed circadian rhythm and inadequate production of melatonin (the sleep hormone) may be contributing to the problem.

Coexisting attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, anxiety and behavioural difficulties, and sometimes some medicines also contribute to poor sleep.

How does reduced sleep impact on a child with ASD?

Poor sleep worsens social function and repetitive behaviours of children with autism.

How to help children with sleeping difficulties?

- ❑ Prepare the child: this is the most important step for helping the child to have a good sleep.
 - Improving sleep hygiene – the bedtime routine - select appropriate bedtime.
 - Minimise watching TV or playing computer video games an hour before bedtime
 - Reduce emotional/behavioural stimulation before going to bed.
 - Promote relaxation before going to bed, for example, reading, listening to music Avoid environmental sounds/noises during bedtime.
 - Do not give tea, coffee, fizzy drinks 4 hours before going to bed.
 - Try not lying down in bed with your child when putting him/her to sleep.
- ❑ Reduce noise and light in the bedroom
- ❑ Promote daytime physical activity.
- ❑ Manage coexisting conditions, for example, iron deficiency, ADHD.
- ❑ If the sleep problems persist and are causing a significant impact on the Quality of Life of the child or the family, then make a sleep diary (a daily record of your child's sleeping pattern) for a week and ask your doctor to consider treating your child with Melatonin in a dose of 1 to 6 mg given 30 minutes before bedtime.

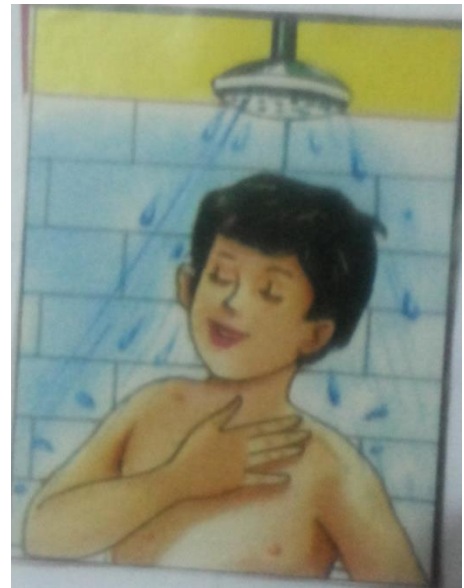
How to get your child to do daily living activities independently

To help a child learn daily living activities:

- ☐ Work out a set way of doing an activity
- ☐ Make activity part of the child's daily routine
- ☐ Use a visual timetable (place the timetable at a few places) to describe the steps of the activity and the daily routine
- ☐ Get the child to practise the activity
- ☐ Praise the child for even trying to do the activity

How to work out a set way of doing an activity?

- ☐ First, divide each routine into small parts and then teach one part at a time, for example:
 - Sitting at the right place to have food + eating food properly
 - Bringing the Toy Box or bag + Playing with the toys + tidying up the toys
 - Changing clothes for getting ready for going to bed + brushing teeth + lying in bed and listening to a story
 - Brushing teeth has four-step to it: 1) Washing the toothbrush 2) putting toothpaste on the toothbrush 3) brushing teeth 4) Rinsing the mouth with water
 - While teaching routines, it helps to make some ground rules (1, or maximum 2), for example, no hitting and no throwing of things. Write these rules on a paper or a poster, using some drawings or pictures and remind the child of these ground rules every time a routine is practised.



- ☐ Use symbols, drawings or pictures to make visual timetables for each part of the activity
- ☐ Use this visual timetable to explain each part, one at a time, to the child.
- ☐ Use modelling, prompting and encouragement to teach each part
- ☐ Praise and encourage the child for completing each part
- ☐ Once the child learns each part encourage the child to do the whole activity together
- ☐ Praise and encourage the child for doing the whole activity

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