

Learning Links' Tip Sheet



Encouraging eye contact through face to face communication

Playing face to face is important when interacting with any child, especially a child with difficulties in communication.

To play face to face you should move so that you and your child can clearly see each other's faces. It is a good idea to move so that you are at the same eye level as your child. You could be on your knees or your tummy, sitting with your child on your lap or your child could even be above you on a chair. By doing this your child should feel comfortable and are not overwhelmed by you being bigger than them.

When we play and interact face to face, children are more able to closely observe us. They can observe our different facial expressions and the movement of our mouth. They can watch our mouth to see how it moves to form words. We can also increase the amount of time that our children pay attention to us and focus on enjoying time together.

Being in close proximity encourages two-way communication and puts us in a better position to follow our child's lead. Most importantly, we can talk with children and not at them.

As much as possible link eye contact with happy or positive experiences. When your child is enjoying playing, use this time to encourage eye contact.

You can play games that require you to be looking at each other such as Row the Boat, Simon Says, Follow the Leader, blowing bubbles or mirror games to help practice eye contact skills.

If you play and interact face to face, you can observe what your child is interested in and how alert they are. You can also listen for sounds and copy mouth movements and sounds that your child makes.

The information in Learning Links' Tip Sheets is prepared by experienced early childhood professionals. Each child is unique and this material is not necessarily suitable for every child, parent or carer. We recommend you discuss this information with your child's therapist or education professional prior to using these tips.

