

Speech and Language Therapy

Joint Attention

Lesson number 4 of 14 on Attention and Listening

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Joint Engagement

Joint engagement is when children learn to pay **attention** to an **object** and their **caregiver** at the same time.

The key features are that:

- You're **both focusing** on the same object/activity
- You're together

When exploring objects and experiences together in play the adult needs to:

- Use their Stop, Look and Listen strategies
- Use LOTS of enthusiasm and excitement in their voice and face.
- Use a few key words to label and comment on the experience or object.



Joint Engagement

One of the main ways children learn to understand and say new words is by hearing adults talk about the things that they are playing with or looking at.

Seeing or handling the object or doing an action while the adult talks about it helps the child match the words to what they mean.



Labels and Comments

Use **one or two** key words

Label:

Name the object

Name the action

Comment on:

Their response

Something about the activity

Repeat the same phrases each time the child explores the same object.

Learning to Look

To encourage the further development of attention, looking and eye contact are crucial.

We want to promote the child's ability to:

1. Look to another person
2. Follow another person's gaze to an object
3. Attract another person's attention to an object by looking



Golden Rules for working on Looking

- 1 - **Sit** in a communicative way - on the floor, in the child's eye line
- 2 - Call the child's **name** and **wait** (looking at you but this could be raising their head)
- 3 - Hold a favourite toy or object in their **line of gaze, near your face**
- 4 - When the child looks to the object, hold it near your face
- 5 - **Reward** and look to you with a smile and warmth
- 6 - Use objects to increase **fascination** with your eyes and face (e.g. oversize glasses)
- 7 - When the child looks to an object ALWAYS reinforce this by picking the object up and giving it to them. Carry out the action with the object if required - STOP, LOOK and LISTEN to the child's messages.



More Learning to Look

Following objects with their eyes will help the child to be able to eventually look towards objects (to direct adults).

When we work on following objects with our eyes we need to be mindful that this can be **very tiring** for children so repeat it only two or three times.

Object play could involve:

- Looking at objects as they move from left to right
- Looking at objects further away
- Looking at objects that move faster
- Looking at objects that move in different directions (i.e. up and down).
- Looking at objects when they have been dropped



Communicating Early Attention

There are two key messages we are likely to see during play that will show us the child is engaged.

These are detailed below with some descriptions of how a child might communicate these messages.

I like this, more please, I want that	I don't like this, no more please, I don't want that
Eyes - looking between you and the object or fixing their gaze on the object	Eyes - not focusing or looking away
Hands - reaching or touching	Hands - withdrawing or pushing the object away
Face - smiling or nodding	Face - frowning, turning head away
Mouth - making sounds or words	Mouth - making different sounds or words, clamping mouth closed
Body - moving arms and legs with excitement OR being very still because I'm thinking!	Body - keeping still, wriggling more, trying to move away
A combination of the above or something completely different (you know the child best!).	A combination of the above or something completely different!



Special Time Diary

Date:

We learnt about

When my adult

I...

Insert picture



Tips for working on Joint Engagement with children with Visual Impairment:

Use a variety of sensory inputs.

Encourage the child to feel your hand on the object and begin to develop awareness of both of you attending to the object.

Use auditory cues to draw the pupils attention to the object.

Comment on what is happening remembering to keep it simple but enthusiastic.

