

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Transforming Autism Project

ALL PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILDREN LEARN  
TO BE SOCIAL AND DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS  
THROUGH EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Including children with Autism!



# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENCE TO INTERACT AND COMMUNICATE





HELP YOUR  
CHILD  
CONNECT  
WITH YOU

Try spending 5 minutes in a day just sitting with your child as they play.

- **Observe** your child attentively
- **Wait for** your child to look at/ do or say something (make an “initiative”)
- **Follow** what your child looks at/ does by **naming** it or repeating what he/she says

HELP YOUR  
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- This helps you notice where your child is most concentrated and focused: *“Mommy/Daddy is listening to me- I’m not alone!”*
- This increases your child’s *motivation* to communicate with you: *“I WANT to communicate with Mommy/Daddy... I will keep trying even though it’s hard for me!”*

HELP YOUR  
CHILD  
COMMUNI-  
CATE MORE  
WITH YOU

When your child **initiates** communication or interaction...

- Give your child the message that their communication efforts/ attempts are powerful and important!
- **Recognize** and **respond quickly** to your child's spontaneous, positive communication attempts/ efforts
- **Imitate** you child's sounds and words as much as possible

REMEMBER!

## Children w/ autism:

- Often have difficulty connecting their **words** with what's happening “in the moment” (their actions, feelings or experiences)
- Can get stuck talking about their special interests and/or may repeat a memorized phrase that may not be connected to what's happening right NOW!

HELP YOUR  
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## *If your child is already using language...*

- “Match” their words/language by repeating back to them what they have just said, then pause & wait!
- Focus on help your child strengthen their back & forth interaction/communication with you rather than “pushing” for more language



FOCUS ON  
THE  
MESSAGE  
BEHIND THE  
WORDS

- Recognize the message **behind** your child's words!!
- Rather than taking their words “literally”, ask yourself...

“What is my child trying to tell me about how they might be feeling and what they might need right now?”

FOCUS ON  
THE  
MESSAGE  
BEHIND THE  
WORDS

- Give your child the words they're not yet able to come up with to name what they might be feeling or need
- “Ahhhh – I think you're really excited about your toy right now”
- “Oh, you're stressed and would like a hug”

## REMEMBER!

- The foundation of effective communication is not the amount of language a child has, but their back-and-forth interaction skills!
- Help your child strengthen their “Back-and-forth conversation muscles by meeting your child where they are!”
  - Have more conversations with facial expressions, actions/gestures and sounds