Making Connections

Not all children find interacting with other people easy. There are lots of different reasons for this.

All children can build on their interaction skills with support – here are some ideas of how to help build connections

**Join in!**
The most helpful thing to try is joining in with what your child is interested in (whatever it is!).

Try not to imitate everything, like a mirror, but match your activities together, sharing your attention to the same things.

Don’t worry about eye contact if it is difficult at the moment.

**Being together** and sharing space can be so valuable, without a plan to teach anything. Skills will build gradually and naturally.

**“Burst pause” sequences** can help build anticipation of interaction, and engagement. These are when you do something that engages your child, then hold a pause for a prompt to do it again.

Good activities for this are hiding games, ready steady go, making interesting sounds, or trying pausing in between a line of a favourite song – join in with what they enjoy.

Accept any form of prompt – movement, sound, facial expression – and treat it as a request to do it again. If you don’t get a prompt at all, carry on, it’ll come!

**Repeat** activities over and over again – it may feel boring, but familiar activities really help children to learn skills. **Routines** can be very reassuring.

**Keep it fun!** If you show that you are enjoying an activity, this helps make the interaction more successful, keeps it going and demonstrates the skills you want to build.

**Things to try**

Great ideas for **people-games** are:

- Peek a boo
- Making funny faces
- Tickling
- Chasing
- Physical fun like bouncing and swinging
- Turn-taking games

**Action songs** are great for building interaction – repetition can become familiar and reassuring. Try pat-a-cake, row row your boat, if you’re happy and you know it.

Ideal **objects** are bubbles, balloons, balls, cause and effect toys (simple slides, lights and sounds), and first musical instruments.

Children’s Speech and Language Therapy Service
www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/cslt

© Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, September 2019