

### 3: 5 Minutes Special Time - a daily task

#### Why should I use Special Time?

Research shows us that:

- The **quality** of the time spent together is important and not the quantity so stick to 5 minutes of Special Time.
- Special Time develops the parent/adult-child **relationship**, to help support interaction and communication.
- Special Time gives attention to the child that is **not** dependent on their difficulties with talking.
- Special Time provides you (the parent/adult) with a Special Time that is **not** dependent on the child's language difficulties.

#### How do I do Special Time?

- Spend 5 minutes each day playing with the child.
- The child chooses the toy/activity (not the computer, iPad or books).
- Use a separate room/corner of a room away from the rest of the family/peers.
- Keep the room as quiet as possible: turn off the TV and radio.
- Give the child your full attention; use times when older siblings are at school and younger ones are asleep.
- The **play** is the important thing, not the talking.
- Try **not** to ask questions.

#### Think about the following strategies during Special Time:

- **Sitting where they can easily see you:** try and be face to face with the child at all times when playing. This means they can see your face, see your mouth move, see your eyes and facial expressions. This will also make it easier for them and you to join together in play and share interest.
- **Let the child choose the toy:** wait and see what the child reaches for or chooses to focus on. By allowing them to do this, and with you joining in their choice of toy, it means they are more likely to engage in play with you and therefore listen to the word/signs you model to them about their interest. They are then more likely to link the word/signs you say with what they are playing with as you are both attending to the same thing. This is called **joint attention**.
- **Following what they want to do with the toys:** wait and see what the child does with the toys and follow this. Again if you join in what they want to do,

they are more likely to listen to the word/signs you are using. Don't worry if the child doesn't play with the toy in the way you would expect.

- **Waiting for them to start the 'talking' with sounds, gestures or looking at you:** don't jump in straight away and fill the silence. Watch to see what they are doing and wait for them to initiate an interaction. You may be surprised by waiting to see what they may do!
- **Giving them extra time to talk:** if the child says something, makes a sound or gesture, just wait a little longer to see what else they may 'say'. Often we jump in too quickly and don't give children the time they need to think and process what they want to communicate.
- **Showing them that I am listening, by repeating or answering them:** accept any ways the child attempts to communicate with you by pointing, gesture/sign, looking, making a sound or trying to say a word. You can give a verbal response and 'interpret' for them; for example, if the child grunts as they are pushing the car down the ramp, you can say 'go!'. If the child says "go!" add on a word/sign such as 'car go!'
- **Commenting on what they are doing:** talk about what the child is doing like a running commentary, using simple language e.g. 'down again', 'teddy's jumping', 'uh oh, fall down' 'sleepy'. By giving the child the words/signs alongside their play, you are mapping the vocabulary onto the objects/actions. As you are doing this with something the child is interested in, they are more likely to listen and start to try the words/signs for themselves.
- **Not asking questions:** this is a hard one! If we ask a child with no words a question e.g. 'What's that?', 'What's happening?', 'Who's this?', 'Shall we tidy away?' we are unlikely to get a response as they do not have the words to answer back. Instead, use the above strategy of commenting.
  - Instead of 'what's that?' comment e.g. '**ball**', '**car**', '**cake**'.
  - Instead of 'what's happening?' comment e.g. '**teddy's eating**', '**the car crashed**', '**dolly's sleeping, shhhh**'.
  - Instead of 'who's this?' comment e.g. '**teddy**', '**dolly ahhhh**', '**Superman!**'.
  - Instead of "shall we tidy up now?" comment e.g. '**tidy**', '**tidy up time**'.
- **Talking slowly enough for them to understand you:** children need the information/word to be said slowly and clearly, so they can take in the words and process them. Try pausing between words to slow down.

- **Talking in simple single words or short sentences:** using single words/signs and simple phrases will help the child focus on key vocabulary. Think about what you want the child to be doing, such as saying two words together and model this e.g. 'teddy's drinking'. They are then more likely to try and use these words/signs as they have heard them repetitively within context, and clearly without other words to distract them.
- **Praising them:** give specific praise to the child e.g. 'great driving', 'good listening'. This will help them know what they have done well specifically, it gives them the language around what they have been doing well and they will want to do more of it.

**Use the attached form on the next page. Set up your special time and afterwards reflect on how you did using the columns. Tick the box if you did the strategy Rarely, Sometimes, Always. The aim is to get all your ticks in the Always column. Choose a new strategy where you did not tick 'Always' and focus on that for the week. Then review and use the checklist again in a week's time to see how you have got on.**

## 3.1: Adult Self Rating Scale

### Parent / Carer Self Rating Scale

Please think about the following statements and rate yourself on the scale

	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Sitting where the child can easily see me, at the same level and face to face			
Letting the child choose the toy			
Following what the child wants to do with the toys			
Waiting for the child to start communicating e.g. with words/signs, sounds, gestures or looking at me			
Talking slowly enough with pauses to give my child time to understand, think and respond			
Responding to and reinforcing the child's attempts to communicate e.g. repeating or praising			
Commenting on what the child is doing or looking at rather than asking questions			
Talking simply using single words/signs or short phrases			