



Joint Attention: Fostering Social Communication Skills

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Define Joint Attention

Discuss Importance of
Joint Attention

OBJECTIVES

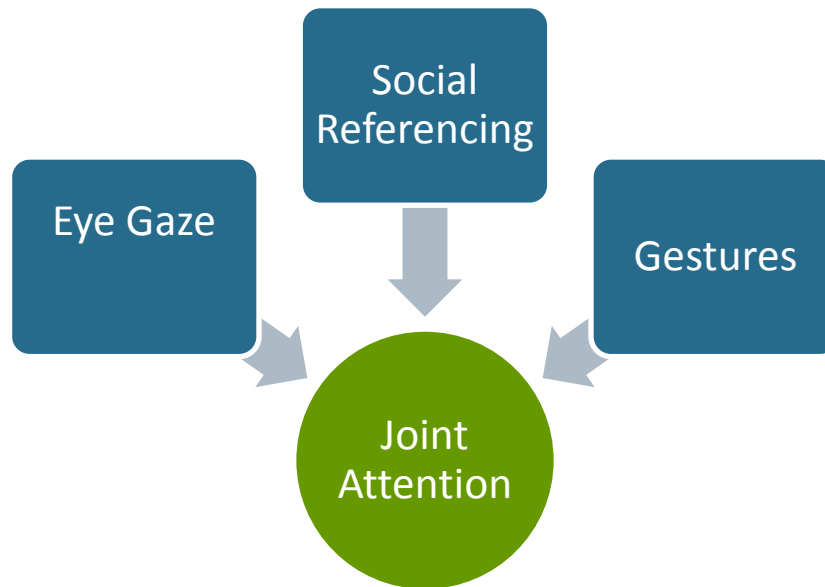
Identify Deficits of Joint
Attention in Children
With Autism

Share Strategies for
Increasing Joint
Attention



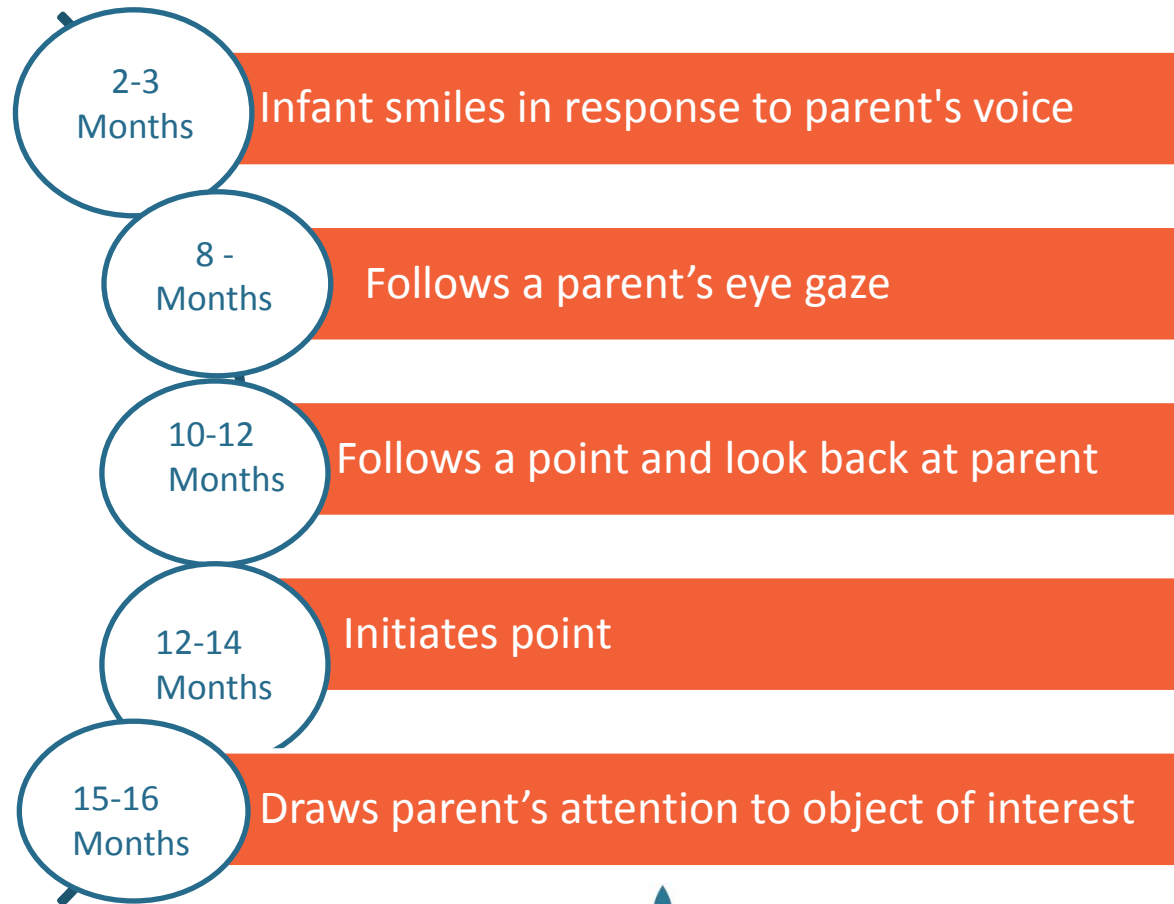
What is Joint Attention?

- Joint attention occurs when two people share interest in an object or event and there is understanding between the two people that they are both interested in the same object or event.





Typical Development of Joint Attention



Types of Eye Gaze

Dyadic Eye Gaze

- Taking turns exchanging facial expressions, sounds, or words

Triadic Eye Gaze

- Sharing eye gaze on an object, then looking at each other

Gaze Following

- Following direction of another person's eyes from one location to another



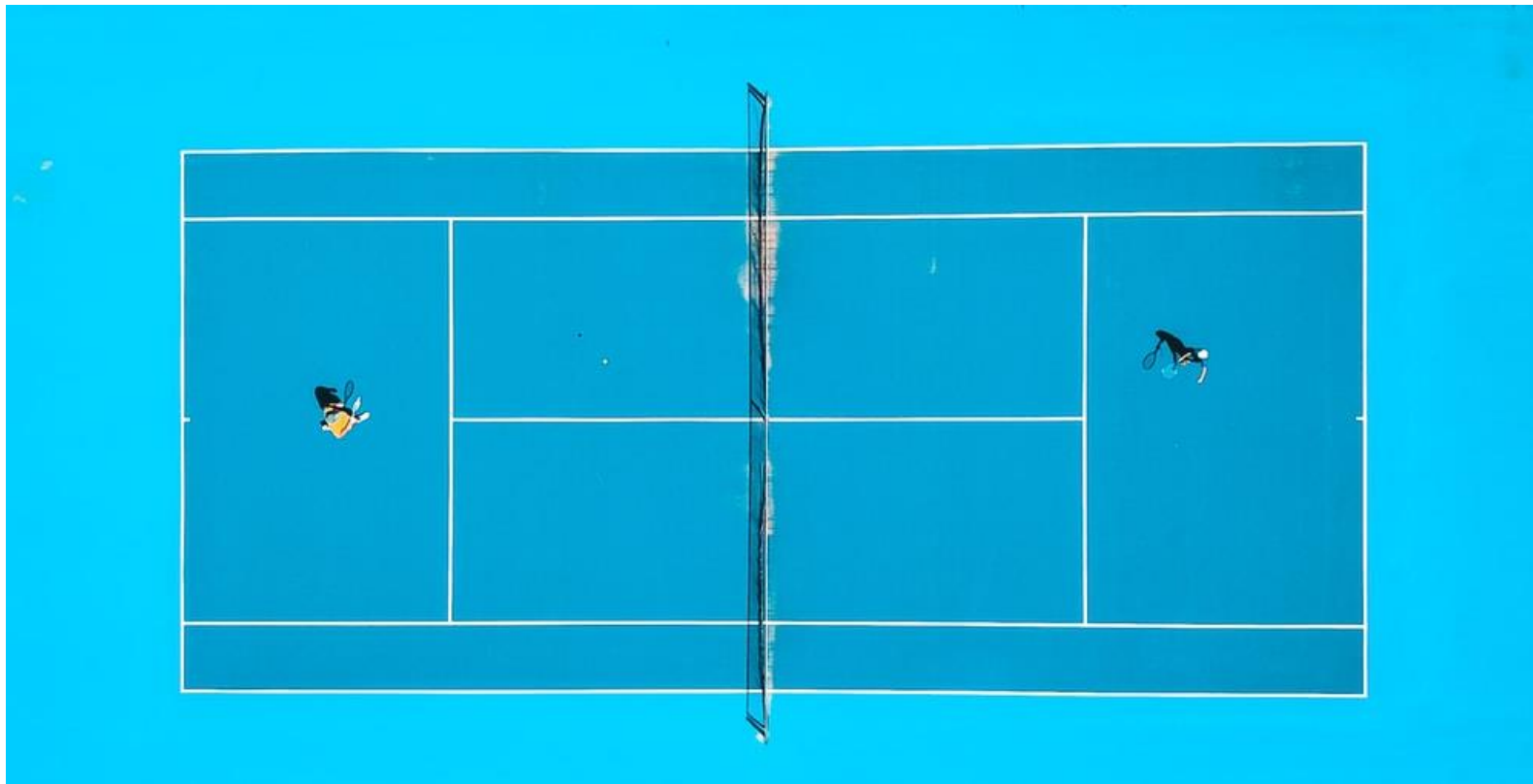
Dyadic Eye Gaze



Triadic Eye Gaze



Gaze Following



Social Referencing

- Social referencing is characterized by a child looking at the adult to see if the adult is watching them
- The child might look at the adult as if to say “Look at me...I’m doing something great!” or to check to see if what they are doing is OK or safe



Gestures

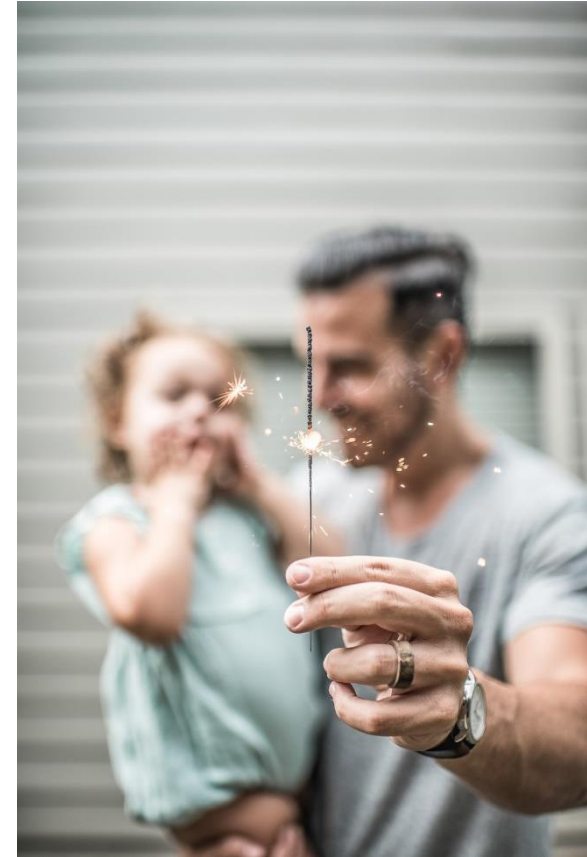
Gestures are actions produced with the intent to communicate.

- Gestures: Important early indicator of intentionality and window into early communication skill.
- Gesture hierarchy of development:
 - Reaching
 - Showing
 - Giving
 - Pointing.



Responding Joint Attention

- Responding Joint attention
 - Child independently responding to another person's bid for shared attention
 - Responding develops first
 - Responding is easier than initiating
- Example: Tracks movement of preferred item, responds to “look”



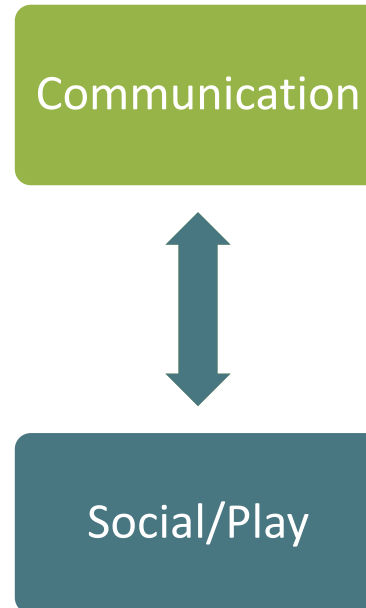
Initiating Joint Attention

- Initiating Joint attention
 - Child spontaneously initiating shared attention with another person
 - Shows that the child is socially motivated
- Engage purely to gain social attention from someone.
- Example: A child draws a picture and holds it up to show you how pretty it is.



Why Is Joint Attention Important?

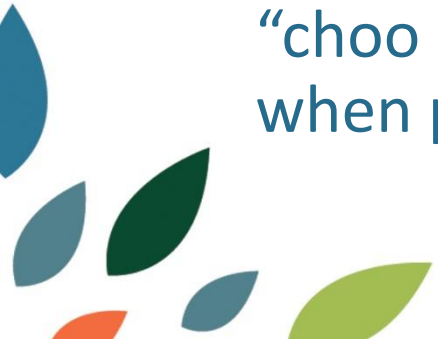
- Critical for development of Imitation Skills
- Ability to focus on people & objects at the same time
 - Shifting Attention
- Better joint attention skills are associated with better language development



Scenario-1

Chris

- Chris 1.5 years old and loves to play with trains.
- He will roll the train on a track, connect trains together, show his train to others and makes noises “choo choo” when playing.



Scenario-2

Ryan:

- Ryan is 1.5 years old. Ryan enjoys playing with a toy train will often have it near him.
- Ryan can be observed holding the train up to his face at eye level, he also loves to turn it over and spin the wheels.
- Ryan does not roll the train on the track or respond to others when they roll the train to him.



Train Play:

Ryan-

- Non-Functional Play
- Isolated Play
- No shared engagement

Chris-

Functional (purposeful) Play
Shared Engagement

What Makes the Play Look Different?

Chris:

- Does not respond to bids for attention
- Preoccupied with object of train
- Not able to shift attention to others during engagement

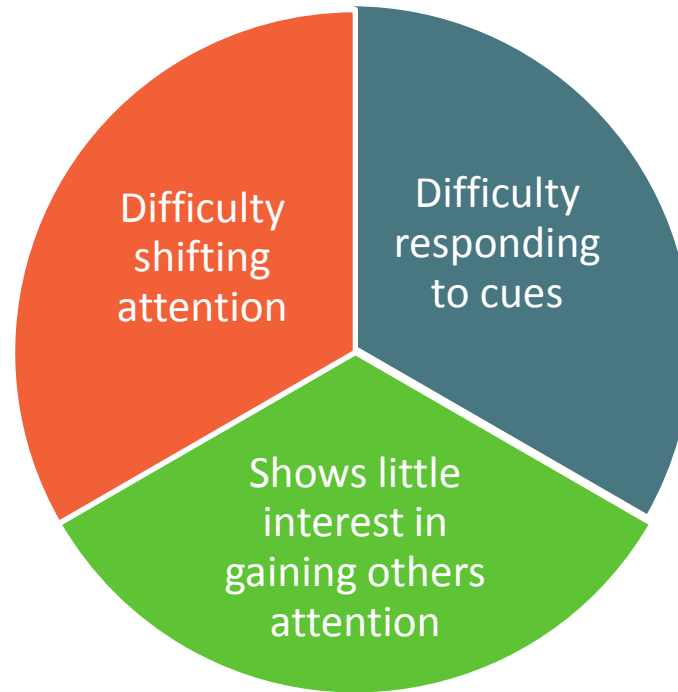
Ryan:

- Demonstrates Joint Attention
- Responds to bid of attention
- Initiates bid of attention; shows train to others



Joint Attention & Autism

- Often children with autism struggle to join (share) attention with others.



Joint Attention Deficits: What to Look For?

- Failure to respond to speech or social cues
- Failure to respond to gestures (point)
- Difficulty with demonstrating gestures
- Difficulty with shifting eye gaze
- No response or inconsistent response to name



Summary

- Joint Attention is a prerequisite skill to learning.
- Deficits in joint attention have been associated with delayed development of language and social skills.
- This makes it crucial to place a priority on early intervention for children with autism.
 - Directly targeting joint attention skills can increase the child's overall learning trajectory

Teaching Joint Attention

- Naturalistic Environmental Teaching (NET)
- Goal: Provide multiple opportunities to practice joint attention
 - Child led
 - Layer in learning opportunities into play and daily routines



Encourage Eye Gaze

- Practice eye tracking: hold favorite object, have the child watch it as you move it in different directions (side to side, up & down)



Joint Attention During Mealtime

- Gain child's attention and eye gaze by holding up food item, or asking if he or she wants to eat,
- Once the child is looking at the parent, parent shifts eye-gaze to food, maybe by pretending to fly it like an airplane.
- Once the parent sees the child look at food, parent smiles and nods while immediately giving the child the food.



How to Increase Joint Attention

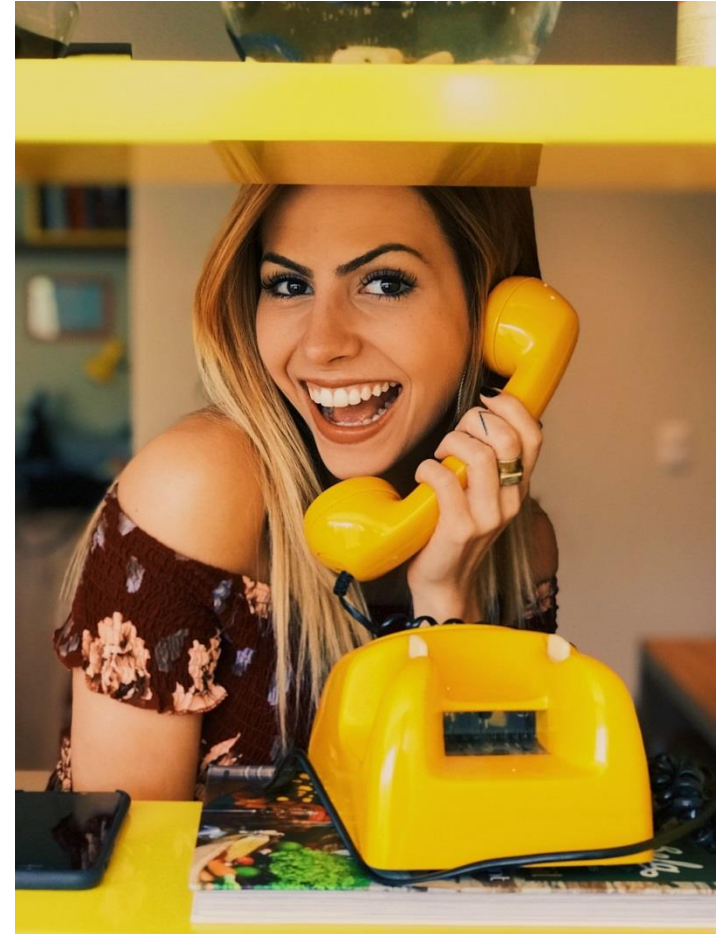
Initiations

- Engage child in play with preferred item. Once engaged, place item slightly out of reach in line of sight.
- Wait for child to look at you and back to item then immediately give it back and continue play.
- Once doing consistently, help child point to item before giving it back and continuing play.



General Tips for Increasing Joint

- Use attention-directing statements and actions in your daily play as a model:
 - Statements:
 - “Look” “Wow!” “Name”
“What’s that!” “Gasp”
 - Actions:
 - Point
 - Shift your gaze
 - Exaggerate facial expressions



Get Creative!

Create unusual or novel situations to elicit shared engagement

- Include use of preferred items- that relate to child's known interests

– Make it fun!



Joint Attention-Motor Play!

- Motor play-
 - Pick the child up. Once the child experiences what you are doing,
 - Pause and wait, as soon as child looks to you in anticipation
 - Resume the play



Joint Attention & Play

- Pretend Play, dress up, playing with action figures
 - Engage child in looking to you and to pretend play item, back and forth.
- Cause and Effect Play:
 - Filling and dumping, pushing/pulling toys
 - Engage child in play with item, pause play and wait for look to you before continuing for effect



Joint Attention: Games!

- Play Red Light/Green Light with red and green signs. The child has to start and stop to this visual cues.
- As child masters this have peer lead the game then move to head gestures for go (yes) and stop (no)



Increase Bids of Joint Attention

- Cooperative Play:
 - Engage in building blocks/Legos/etc. with child.
 - Withhold next piece
 - Wait for child to shift attention from structure to piece in your hand, or your face, and then provide piece.



Tips for Increasing Joint Attention & Social Interaction

- Pair praise and communication with non-verbal social cues as often as you can:
 - High Five
 - Thumbs Up
 - Fist Bump
 - Smile
 - Nod



Questions?



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References

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