



Autism & Early Development: Knowledge for Optimal Outcomes

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Children with autism have less brain reaction to faces....



**...and more brain activation
for toys and objects.**



Parents as Outcome Changers

- Parents know their child best
- Hundreds of hours spent in caregiving routines between therapy sessions
- Harness this time as natural therapy
- Better outcomes for child



Create Shared, Predictable Joint Routines



Predictable, Motivating Joint Routines

- People play
- Play with Props
- Toy play
- Books
- Caregiving activities
- Family Chores
- Transitions

Promote Active Engagement

- Offer your child an active role
- Talk about what your child is looking at
- Encourage initiation
- Balance your turns
- Model gestures & words
- Expect more as your child grows

The Power of the Pause



*Put the words in
your child's ear
you want to come
out of your child's
mouth*

Early Gestures & Language Development

- Give & shake head
- Reach
- Show & wave
- Open hand point & tap
- Point with index finger



Snacks & Mealtimes

- **Set up** – bring cup to table, choose a snack
- **Middle** – ask for more of favorite food, imitate fun sounds
- **Close up** – Put dishes in sink, help wipe the table



Bath Time

- **Set up – turn on water**
- **Undress and clothes in hamper**
- **Choose which bath toys to put in tub**
- **Middle - Rub washcloth on body parts**
- **Imitate pouring water**
- **Closing - Drain tub**
- **Dry self**
- **Dress self**

Chores - laundry

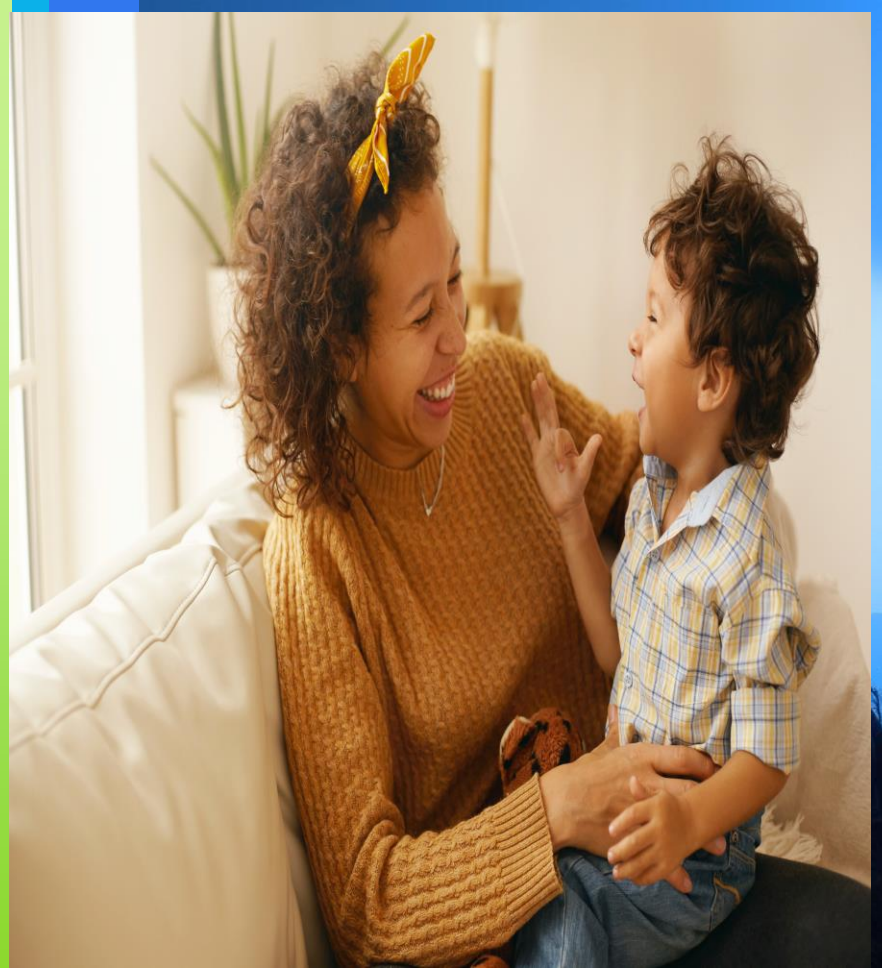
- Set up – get clothes out of hamper
- Put in washer
- Help turn on machine
- Put clothes in dryer
- Take clothes out of dryer
- Sort clothes
- Help fold and put away

People Play



Get in the spotlight of attention

- Minimize distractions
- Observe, Wait, Listen (OWL)
- What is your child interested in?
- Get face-to-face
- Join in, balance your turns
- Make it fun!



Toy Play

- Set up – choose a toy, help take out materials
- Middle – child can request pieces, imitate play idea, take turns
- Closing – help clean up, transition to new activity

Increasing Imitation

- Get in the spotlight
- Observe, wait and listen
- Use similar toy, imitate child
- Get a back forth game going
- Do something the child has done before
- Help child if needed
- Go back to imitating the child

Increasing babbling

-  Imitate your child's sounds, make it a back and forth game
-  Face your child and make a sound child can already make
-  Make the sound and wait expectantly
-  Add a consonant sound (ma, ma, ba)
-  Keep trying
-  Add fun sounds to your daily routine



Possible Barriers

“I am not
a
therapist!”

“He is just
a baby,
why make
him do all
this?”

“I don’t
have the
time!”

“The caterpillar must go through the developmental work to become the butterfly. If we tear open the cocoon to help lighten the work, we will never know the full beauty of the butterfly.”



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Thank you!

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