

Play and Engagement Sessions

Developing the ability to attend to a person



Activity 1: Exploring food



Choose a food to explore jelly, rice pudding, beans or spaghetti.

Sit facing the child with the food between you and place your hands in it and squish, squeeze and rub the food with your hands. Encounter and participation is present without any obvious awareness of its progression.

Over dramatize and make happy sounds and smile so your child thinks you are really having lots of fun doing the activity. Watch to see if your child has noticed what you are doing and if they make any vocal sounds. Echo vocalisations back to them.

Look at your child and if they make active efforts to reach out or consistently join in with the interaction offer your hands for them to feel the food with them. If your child does this let them mirror your actions and rub the food onto your hands. If your child does become involved, let them see how happy you are.

Take it at a pace your child is comfortable with and if they really don't like the food you have chosen try the activity with a different food. Try this activity with different food and as the child becomes familiar and comfortable with the activity it may become an activity they chose to do - a child led activity.

Play and Engagement Sessions
Developing the ability to attend to a person



Activity 2: Hide and Seek



Use some fabric like cotton, a scarf or lace.

Gently throw the fabric in the air and watch as it floats down, vocalise happy sounds so the child can see and hear that you are having fun doing this. Watch the child to see if they show any interest or reaction to what you are doing, if they vocalise repeat back the sounds they make.

If the child moves near enough to you and looks comfortable enough let the fabric land on the child's head and pull it off after a few seconds, if they look happy repeat pulling it away fast and slowly. Copy back any facial expression back to them and mirror their sounds and actions back to them. Pulling the scarf off slowly, allowing a pause and leaving space for a response builds tension, anticipation and expectancy.

Put the material over your head and see if they pull it off, exaggerate sounds and facial expressions to them so they can see what a fun activity it is for you to share.

Play and Engagement Sessions

Developing the ability to attend to a person



Activity 3: Tipping and pouring activity



You will need a tray with a dry food such as rice or lentils, cup, tub and spoons

You can fill the cups, pour the food out back into the tray or into the tub. You can use the spoon to swirl the contents around. If the child doesn't seem very interested try putting their favourite toy in and while you are doing this make lots of happy noises and smiles and over-dramatized actions.

If your child does join in and makes active efforts to reach out or consistently join in with the interaction, you can gradually pour the rice/lentils over their hands let it fall between your fingers. Take it in turns to tip and pour the rice/lentils. When they want to play with it, copy their sound and actions.

This activity may be preferred to a wet food activity if your child is tactile defensive and does not like the feel of wet items or dirty hands. Your child may just play with this for a few minutes to begin with but just extend it each time at a pace they are comfortable with.

Play and Engagement Sessions
Developing the ability to attend to a person



Symbols you might need:

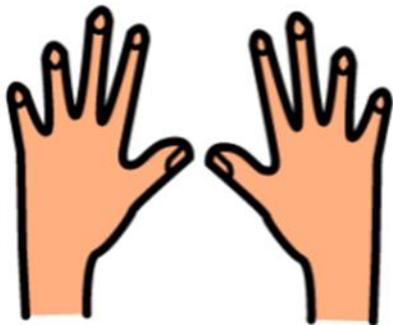
Lentils



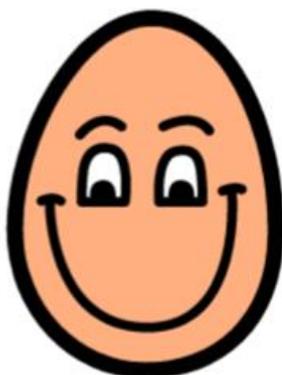
Scarf



hands



like



don't like

