

Early Years Team

Creating opportunities for communication

As adults we want the best for children, we want their wants and needs to be met. But if children have everything they want to hand, they do not have a reason to communicate with you. It is important to create situations which encourage communication.

For example:

Scenario 1:



A child wants a biscuit. The packet is kept on the table where he can reach it. In this case he has no need to communicate with anyone that he wants a biscuit because he can help himself.

Scenario 2:



The biscuits are kept in a clear container in sight but out of reach of the child. The child has to let the adult know he wants a biscuit in order to get one. This may be through pointing, vocalising, talking or using hand gestures. This stage of communication wouldn't be necessary if the biscuits were easily accessible.

Further examples

The following are suggestions which will help you set up situations to encourage children to communicate for a variety of reasons – to request, comment and make choices.

People Toys

People toys are toys that are difficult to operate. The child needs your help in order to make them work:

Bubbles



Children often love bubbles, but it is difficult for them to blow them themselves. They need your help to make them work. Open the bubbles and blow a few. As soon as the child starts to watch or pop the bubbles, close the pot or pause holding the bubble wand. Wait until the child requests, in any way, for you to blow them again.

Balloons



Blow up the balloon then let the air out. Hold the balloon to your mouth and wait for the child to request, in any way, that you blow it up again. As you're blowing it up, pause and wait for the child to request for it to be blown up some more.

Mechanical toys

Make the toy go. When it stops wait for the child to request, in some way to make it go again.

Place favourite things out of reach

Put the child's favourite food or toy high up on a shelf out of his/her reach. Wait for the child to request, in some way, that they want it. Put favourite toys or food in a clear container that is difficult to open. Wait for the child to ask you, in some way, to help open it.

Offer things bit by bit

If children have everything, they want all at once, there is no need for them to communicate that they want more. Give toys, food and drink bit by bit so that children have the opportunity to communicate that they would like some more. Put a little bit of drink in the child's cup so that they will finish it quickly and ask for more. Give the child a little bit of food so that the child communicates that they want more. This works best when it is food the child likes! Some foods work better than others, for example it is easy to use an orange which divides into segments. But this can be done with lots of foods, even toast can be cut into small pieces and given bit by bit.

Toys



Toys that have pieces and parts can be given bit by bit. Hold back: puzzle pieces, crayons, blocks, cars, train track, etc. (but where the child can see them). Give the child one and wait for the child to request, in some way, that they want another.

Do the unexpected!

Use routines that are predictable to create a surprise: Look through a book a few times and name the same pictures each time. Then the next time you look at the book, point to one of the pictures and say nothing. Wait for the child to communicate with you in some way, to tell you to name it or to attempt to name it themselves. Choose a song that the child likes. Each time you sing it: start the song in the same way, sing it through with the actions and end it in the same way. Once the child is familiar with it choose a point in the song to pause and wait. Wait for the child to communicate with you, in some way, that he/she wants the song to continue.

Daily Routines

This can even be built into typical daily routines, e.g. getting ready to go outside. Always do things in the same order then, once the child is familiar with the routine, miss part of it out and wait for your child to communicate with you about what they need next.

Creative Stupidity



Do something 'silly'! When dressing the child, 'accidentally' forget to put an item of clothing on them, or put something on wrong, e.g. only give them one boot or put their coat on backwards. Give everyone else something that the child needs apart from them, e.g. their plate at snack time. Wait for the child to notice and to communicate with you, in some way, that something isn't right. (The children will probably find this funny and will enjoy correcting you!)