One-on-One Time for Parents/Caregivers by Stages of Child Development

For parents with a child with disabilities, consider the tips in the section above.

Parents/Caregivers with Young Children (2-9 Years)

Parents/caregivers with young children are encouraged to use words to **Say What You See** in order to really show that they are paying attention to their children.

**Say What You See** means:

* **Describing what your child is doing.** We like to think of this as wrapping your child in language by describing what they are doing. This provides support for their children’s activity while also expanding both their thinking and verbal skills.
* **Describing exactly what parents/caregivers see their children doing.** It can be helpful to think of it as talking to someone on the telephone who cannot see what is happening.

How to Say What You See?

At first it can simply be describing what is happening in detail: the number, the colour, the temperature, the speed, and the behaviour are helpful starting points:

* "You are making a tower with yellow bricks, and here’s is a red one you are putting on top. Now you are putting the five animals into the cart and they are going on a journey."
* “I see you are working hard on your homework. I see you are trying hard to figure out this problem. Keep at it!”

This may feel awkward at first as many parents/caregivers are not used to talking to their children during playtime. However, with practice, it becomes easier – just like everything else!

Tips

Although parents/caregivers often say that describing what their child is doing makes them feel awkward, much to their surprise, their children do not usually notice their discomfort and respond very positively to this attention.

It is normal for parents/caregivers to start off by asking questions instead of “Saying What You See”. It is your role as a facilitator to help them learn how to simply describe what the child is doing instead of asking questions.

Another important building block or skill is **naming your child** when speaking to him or her. When parents/caregivers learn to say things like "You are putting the red block on the blue block, Adam," this shows that the parent is giving support and attention to his or her child.

Make only **positive comments** and avoid critical comments.

Remember, this is the child's game. There is no right and wrong in play and, within reason, what a child chooses to play is right for them. The parent’s job is to show an interest and say something nice.

Parents/Caregivers with Adolescents (10-18 Years)

Due to various demands that parents/caregivers and teenagers encounter daily, such as school and work, it can be challenging sometimes to find time to spend time together. A strong parent-child relationship is not possible without spending quality One-on-One Time together.

Spending time creates the space for the parent to be more available to their child and they can play a protective role in their lives. This helps parents/caregivers to be more involved in their adolescents’ lives, protecting them from risky sexual behaviours.

Letting Your Adolescent Lead

During One-on-One Time with adolescents, parents/caregivers can also allow their children to take the lead. The teens get to choose what the activity or conversation is about. It may even mean that the parents/caregivers and teens can spend One-on-One Time sitting next to each other doing parallel activities with occasional observations. It is important to encourage parents/caregivers to allow their teens to talk about the things that matter to them.

Spending Time on Hobbies

Another good way parents/caregivers can develop positive relationships during One-on-One Time with their children is to spend time with them when they are doing something that they enjoy. For example, seeing their children play a sports match, or demonstrating a new dance move.

Sharing of Personal Stressors or Concerns

As they spend more One-on-One Time together, the teens may also share personal things that give them stress or concern. It is much easier to share personal issues with a parent when they have developed a sense of trust and open communication.

Parents/caregivers may initially want to react in a negative way. Remind parents/caregivers to Take a Pause (or just a few breaths) so that they can respond to their children in a way that keeps them feeling secure.

Children with Disabilities

This section provides information on how to Let Your Child Lead for parents with a child with disabilities.

It is important that the activities are those that the child likes to do and is appropriate for their children.Here are some tips you can share with parents:

* When talking to a child with disabilities, remember that you are interacting with a child, and keep the same tone and language as you would with any child of a similar age. If the child cannot hear, it is important that you stay still, including your head, while talking with the child. Make sure you are looking at them when you speak, and make sure they are looking at you and can see your face and mouth.
* With a child with intellectual disabilities, always speak clearly, using short sentences. Use the child’s name so they know you are talking to them. It is very important to respond to the child’s attempts to communicate, so they understand the effectiveness and importance of communication. If a child points to an object of interest, you can point to it and clearly name it to indicate that you have understood and are listening.
* Children with disabilities who are not used to being asked their opinions or being listened to will need more time to build up confidence and trust. It may take time to explore the best ways of communicating with a particular child. Parents may need to be more patient with themselves and their children when spending One-on-One Time with their children.

The following practices can help children with disabilities feel more accepted, included and confident:

* Always ask children with disabilities how best to meet their needs: consider the child as the best expert about their disabilities.
* Always ask if and how a child wants or needs to be assisted. Respect the child’s wishes if your offer is not accepted.
* Allow children with disabilities to take the same risks as other children in order to help them to gain confidence. Over-protection denies them the chance to explore, discover what is possible and learn how to keep themselves safe.
* Only help children with disabilities when they need it. Too much support denies them the chance to become independent and can feel patronising.
* Be open and flexible to change to accommodate the children involved.
* Focus on reinforcing each child’s strengths and abilities rather than those things they cannot do, for example, a wheelchair user might have strong arms and hands, a deaf child might be great at drawing.
* Build on children’s strengths by praising children who say, “I don’t understand” or ask for help or thank them for asking and then offer help or an explanation.
* Give children plenty of time to both understand what is being talked about and to formulate their responses.
* Model good communication so that children learn from what they see and hear.