



Every Child a Talker

‘Wrap that toy up! : A fun game to teach sharing and swapping, and to generate lots of chat!

How many times have you heard children being told, “You’ve got to learn to share?” Sharing is not an easy thing for anyone to do, and especially when you are young and someone else wants your favourite toy. Children love wrapping paper, and here’s an activity that promotes language and sharing. This is a great activity to share with groups of parents and their children. This activity is suitable for children as young as 15 months.

What you need

- At least two rolls of wrapping paper, with different designs on.
- At least two rolls of masking tape.
- A collection of small soft toys (I use TV and film characters such as Bob the Builder, In the Night Garden, Thomas the Tank Engine etc)
- Music (I have an iPod with docking station and TV theme tunes downloaded from iTunes)
- Plenty of adults to support the children
- Some colourful rugs for us to sit on

What we do

We all take our shoes off and sit on the rugs (taking shoes off immediately calms children down!).

Tell everyone that you are going to give each child a toy, and if they are not happy with what they have been given then they can swap their toy with someone else. Show them how to swap, and model what language to use: “I don’t want Bob the Builder anymore, can I swap it for your Thomas the Tank Engine, please?”

This usually leads to lots of swapping and chat.

Some children will not want to part with the toy they have got. This is fine, and an important point to share with the group; “If you like what you have got, then you don’t need to swap, but say, “No thank you, I want to play with my toy.”

This activity can take quite a long time, especially if all the adults get involved and support the children. It also generates a lot of chat!

Now it is time for the wrapping paper. Tell the children that we are going to wrap the toys, and that we will play ‘pass the parcel’. Ask children which piece of paper they would like, and ask the adults to help the children to wrap their toys. (I usually tear the paper, rather than use scissors). Encourage the adults to talk with the children about ‘whether they have enough paper/Do they need more tape?/ Can we still see who is inside?’ Etc.

When everyone has wrapped at least one toy, play a big game of pass the parcel.

Be warned! This session can go on for a long time, and allow at least 30 minutes: and particularly if you are using TV and film-related toys, as children love to talk about these.

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