

# ATTENTION AUTISM

## Top Tips

- ✓ **Prepare the environment:** Remove visual distractions and provide chairs/cushions for the children to sit on (in a semi-circle).
- ✓ **Prepare the bucket** – ensure all the toys are working. Change toys frequently and use toys the child does not otherwise get to play with (make use of the novelty factor!)
- ✓ If possible, you have **a supporting adult**.
- ✓ **The job of the supporting adult is to:**
  - Help with sitting / behaviour
  - Ensure the children do NOT touch the toys.
  - Show interest and model good attention behaviours, e.g. good looking, 'oo!', 'ah!'
  - Make comments *following the leading adult's model*.
- ✓ **The job of the leading adult is to:**
  - Turn paper/whiteboard towards child as you as you draw a line drawing of the activity (e.g. bucket).
  - Sing a song, e.g. 'I've got something in my bucket'.
  - Build a little anticipation.
  - Keep it short and snappy – 3-4 items presented for about 40-60 seconds each. (No need to repeat the song between items.)
  - Show the item first, then add (1 or 2) words. Give time for thinking and stay quiet!!
- ✓ **Bucket mistakes:**
  - Talking too much.
  - Asking questions
  - Giving the children the toys
  - Letting the child dictate the start/finish
  - Forcing not inviting
  - Restraining not supporting

## **Stage 1- Bucket Activities**

To start: Use small whiteboard (as visual timetable) or a piece of paper

Draw what will happen: eg: bucket

Write the name underneath (to help with word recognition)

Ensure children can see the board the whole time (keeps their attention)

Prepare the bucket – ensure all the toys are working. Change toys frequently and use toys the child does not otherwise get to play with (make use of the novelty factor!)

What to do:

- Start with your white board and draw the bucket
- Sing the song
- Pull out 1 toy
- Look excited
- Activate the toy for a few seconds (60 seconds max)
- Use minimal language (ie use 1-2 words to label or talk about toy eg 'spinner' 'lights' 'spinner flashing')
- Place toy back in the bucket
- Take out next toy and repeat as above (Show no more than 3 toys per bucket activity)
- Place lid back on bucket
- Say: "bucket is finished / Bag is finished". Cross off the bucket on the white board

## **Stage 2- Attention Builders**

To start: Use small whiteboard (as visual timetable)

Draw what will happen: eg: bag...flour game

Write the name underneath (to help with word recognition)

Ensure children can see the board the whole time (keeps their attention)

Between activities, say: X is finished, cross it off, point to the next picture and say: time for Y

Step 1: Do the bucket activities. (make sure you use the whiteboard!)

Step 2: Add an attention builder once children can sit for 5 minutes

Step 3: Add more bucket and attention builder activities until children can sit 10 mins

### **Leading adult:**

- Point to picture on timetable. Say: time for.....flour castles (etc)
- Use single words or short phrases.
- Be exciting
- At the end say: It's finished. Put things back in box

### **Supporting adult:**

- Sit next to the children
- Keep them seated without saying anything
- Act as model children: look at lead adult and the activities, copy language used or spontaneously comment with simple language.
- Look excited and have fun
- No talking to each other or to the children (children need to learn to attend without adult prompts)

### **Things to remember:**

- Always draw picture of activity on paper / white board. Cross out at end.
- Introduce each part of activity (even the tray), making it exciting. Use encouraging facial expression and noises (ooh!) even if you don't use words.
- In the beginning, don't use words and look at activity rather than child.
- After a few times, build in single words or phrases. Look at the child more.
- At the end of each activity, put all things into box and say "it's finished".
- The flour activity shows how language can be expanded. Use the same strategy for the other activities. You can do each activity a number of times, this will help your child get used to the language used.
- Adult with toy is most interesting thing in room
- No other talking / walking around / distracting items
- Activities are so motivating that children have to look
- SAY LESS. Simple words, short phrases
- Adults sit silently next to child, and bring children back to group without talking.
- Adults model good behaviour
- Children just watch. They only get a turn when specifically invited by the lead adult.
- Think: what does child see in activity?
- How is it interesting and motivating?
- Can child see the point of the activity? Why should he bother?
- Make it Joyful. Fun & exciting = children remember and learn.

## **Example of stage 2 activity**

‘Flour Shaker’

You need:

White shower curtain/bed sheet/ tray

Large black paper

Sieve

Flour in bowl

What to do	What to say
Sieve flour onto paper	say nothing
Draw face	
Tip flour back into bowl	
Sieve flour onto paper	“shake...shake..”
Draw face	“eye..eye...nose..mouth”
Tip flour back into bowl	
Sieve flour onto paper	“shake...shake..”
Draw face	“eye...eye...nose..”
Draw O mouth	“ooh!”
Tip flour back into bowl	“it’s finished”

Expansions:

Add glitter to flour

Shake over outlines: animals /dinosaurs name items as they appear /puzzle pieces

“it’s gone!”

Make line of white on black with salt

Sprinkle on ice-blocks

tips: shake from high , shake thinly onto paper, shake with a rhythm. Always start on black background, tip towards children so they can see at end