



Connecting Through Play

Below are strategies to promote communication skills, positive behaviors, connection between caregiver(s) and child, and to reduce problematic behaviors. Playtime is the perfect opportunity to practice these skills.

Promoting Positive Behavior

Using **Specific Praise** helps reinforce desired behaviors, increases self-esteem and warmth to caregiver-child relationship, and reduces frustration. **Action Descriptions** keep a child focused on task, which then increases attention and mindfulness, and can slow down hyperactivity while increasing a child's vocabulary.

Try this

Specific Praise

- "Thank you for cleaning up quickly."
- "I really like how you are using an inside voice."
- "Great job putting your shoes by the door."

Action Descriptions

- "I see you are playing with the Play-Doh."
- "I see you are sitting quietly in the chair."

Encouraging Exploration

Child-led Curiosity gives children opportunities to direct and control while minimizing the chance to become overly stimulated or agitated. It allows them to express themselves, which fosters confidence in independent decision making. **Mirroring** models appropriate behavior and makes a child feel important by providing approval of their choices. **Reflection** lets a child know you are listening and provides opportunity for the child to lead conversation without interruption, which calms anxious children because they do not feel pressure to respond.

Try this

Child-led Curiosity

- Follow along with play instead of asking questions.

Mirroring

- Copy the child's behavior without verbiage.
- "I am going to sit quietly just like you."

Reflection

- Child: "Look at the picture I drew."
- Caregiver: "You want me to look at the picture you drew."



Cultivating Connection

Using **Loving Phrases** lets children know you are there and not leaving, which gives them predictability of their world and lets them know you are safe and in control. Practicing **Warmth** demonstrates interest, which lets a child know you are enjoying shared experiences. **Expressing Enjoyment** strategies promote strength in caregiver-child relationship and provides increased opportunities for child to feel connected and respected.

Try this

Loving Phrases

- "I know this is tough; I will help you."
- "I know you feel sad; I am here for you."
- "I will always do my best to keep you safe."

Warmth

- Physical Touch (hand on back, holding hands).
- "I think you are a wonderful child."
- "I care for you so much."

Expressing Enjoyment

- "I am having so much fun with you!"
- Be genuine and show enthusiasm.
- Have fun.

