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SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PARENT HANDOUT

Attention Autism Stage 1 & 2 Attention Builder

What is Attention Autism?

Attention Autism is an approach to support young people with Autism. It was designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. Gina's primary objective is that the sessions are fun and "offer an irresistible invitation to learn"!

What are the aims of Attention Autism?

- To engage attention
- To improve joint attention
- To develop shared enjoyment in group activities
- To increase attention in adult-led activities
- To encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting
- To increase non-verbal and verbal communication
- To build a wealth and depth of vocabulary
- To have fun!

How many Stages are there?

The programme is divided into four stages, each with a specific focus:

Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention – Please see Stage 1 Handout

- A bucket filled with exciting, sensory-rich items (e.g., shiny or noisy toys) is introduced. The therapist or teacher reveals these items one at a time, engaging the child with visual and auditory stimulation. The goal is to capture attention without demanding anything from the child



Stage 2: The Attention Builder

- The focus shifts to building sustained attention. The adult demonstrates a simple, visually engaging activity (like pouring water, popping bubbles, or spinning tops) for the child to observe. The child watches without needing to participate, which helps develop focus.

Who is Stage 2 for?

A child may be ready for Stage 2 if staff can answer "yes" to most of these:

- ✓ Can the child stay with the group for the majority of Bucket Time?

(Stage 1)

- ✓ Do they consistently watch the bucket items being revealed?
- ✓ Do they show shared attention to the adult and activity?
- ✓ Can they cope without handling every item themselves?
- ✓ Are they beginning to wait and watch rather than immediately seeking their own stimulation?
- ✓ Can they attend to an adult demonstration for a short period?



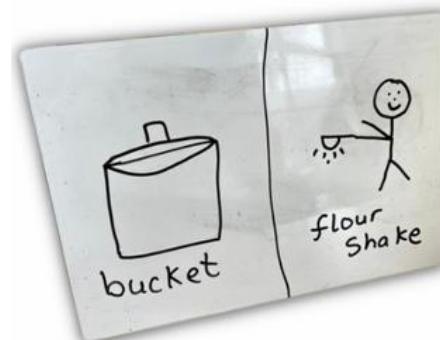
How to do Stage 2 Attention Builder:

Aim: This involves introducing a longer activity that stretches their attention span for up to 10 minutes. It has a clear beginning, middle and end and is fascinating to watch from start to finish.

Structure: You will still begin with Stage 1 Bucket time and then add an additional activity after completing Bucket Time.

What do you need:

- Bucket
- Bucket resources/toys
- Attention Builder activity e.g. flour shake
- Flour shake resources in a tray: A3 paper/tray; flour.
- Whiteboard and marker for visual schedule



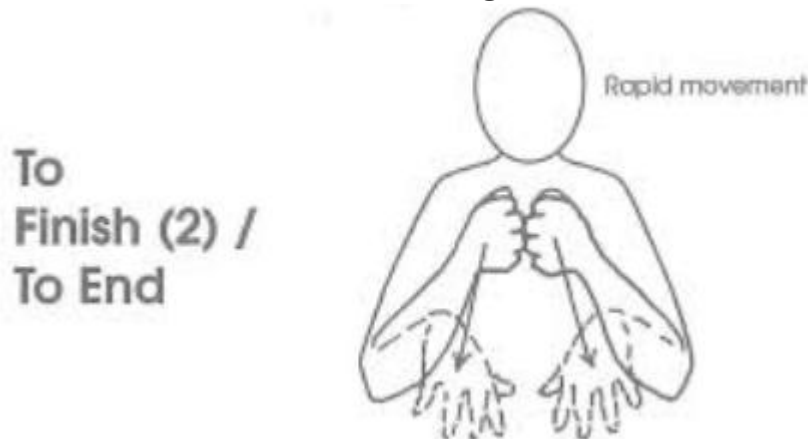
Routine:

Stage 1 – Bucket time:

1. Draw a 'first and then board' and say "first bucket, then flour shake!"
2. Sing the song: "I've got something in my bucket, in my bucket, in my bucket... I've got something in my bucket, I wonder what it will be..."
3. Pull one toy out and play with it for around 45 seconds
4. Tell the children what it is called, that it is finished, and put it back in the box: "light ball, light ball is finished"
5. Repeat this with 2-4 more toys
6. Finally show the child on the visual timetable that the "**bucket is finished**" and it is "**time for Flour shake**".



Remember to model Makaton signs for “finished”.



Stage 2 – Attention Builder. Flour Shake - Face

1. Using the visual schedule, say “It’s time for Flour Shake”.
2. Gain attention and say: **“Ready? Look!”**
3. Hold the flour up high and sprinkle it onto the paper, saying: **“Shake, shake, shake!”**
4. Continue sprinkling for a few seconds, repeating: **“Shake, shake, shake! Wow, look!”**
5. Use your finger to draw a face in the flour. As you draw, name each feature: **“Eyes... nose... mouth!”**
6. Show the finished face and say: **“Wow! A face!”**
7. Tell the child the activity is finished: **“Flour shake is finished.”**
8. Show the visual timetable and move to the next activity: **“Now it is time for (the ‘then’ activity).”**





The leading adult should:

- Name your equipment as you set the activity up e.g. say "black paper" when you get the black paper out
- Keep language simple - and repeat etc "shake, shake" etc
- Leave a gap for children to communicate/process
- Have a clear start, middle and end to the activity After each stage, draw a cross through the picture on your whiteboard and say "finished"
- Use simple repetitive language to make comments, rather than asking questions
- Use body language/ gesture/ voice It's okay when things go wrong, say things like "oh dear, try again"
- Do make a mess. At the end of each activity you tidy everything away

Here is Youtube tutorial of how to do it:

<https://youtu.be/1iTI2VcfcJo?si=1J3wkxfxDGpdN624>

How often should I do Attention autism stage 1 & 2?

Aim to carry out a session 4/5 times a week.

During stage 2 – Attention Builder, children benefit from staying in Stage 2 for a while to build their attention.

The adult should use a variety of different activities to increase the child's attention level. In appendices, there is a list of activities that use minimal resources to do in Stage 2.

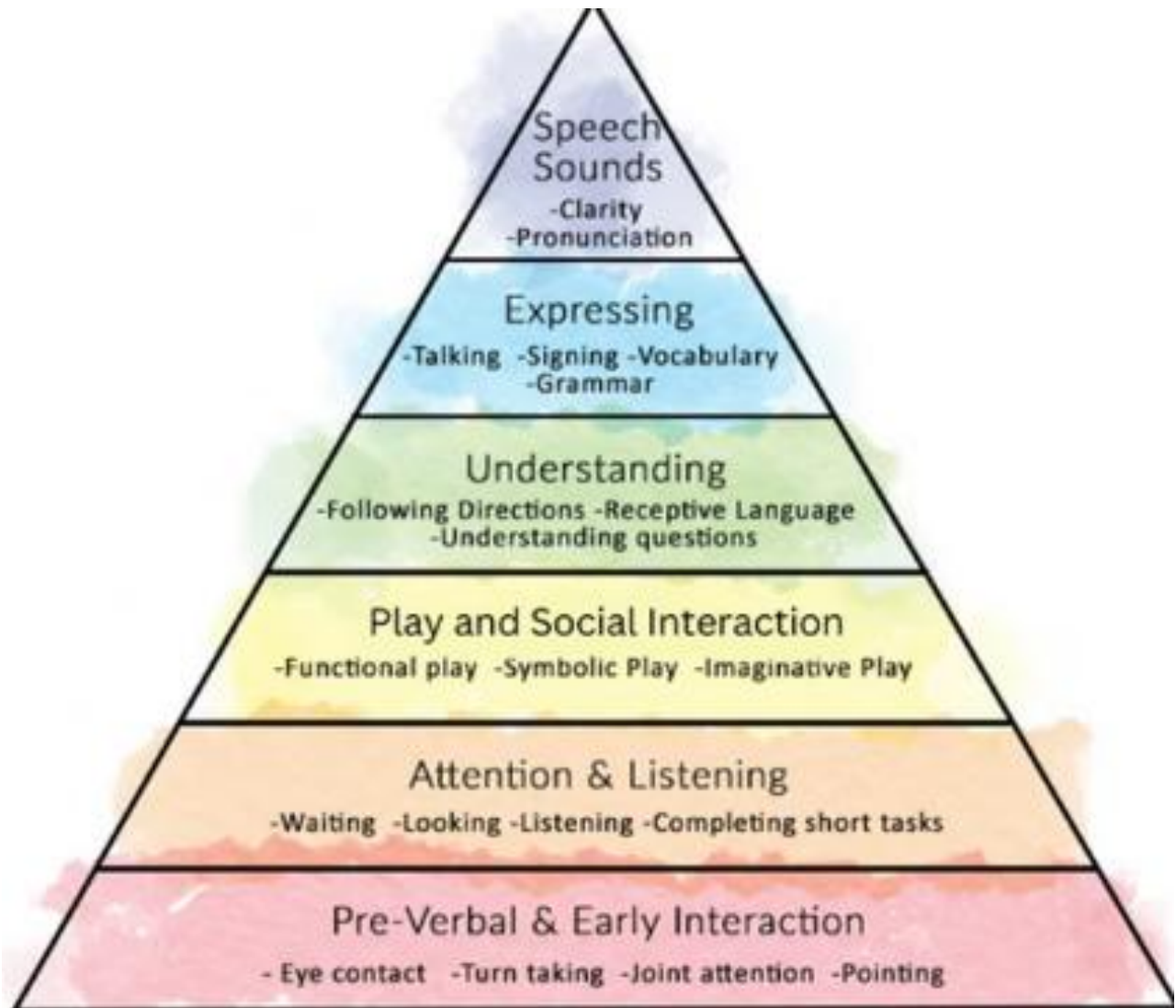
For example, using Flour, the adult can target:

- Body parts e.g. faces
- Animals
- Shapes
- Castles





Communication Pyramid:



Attention Autism Stage 1 & 2 consistently targets:

- Pre-Verbal & Early Interaction
- Attention & Listening
- Understanding of Language



Appendices

Stage 2: Attention Builder ideas

Flower Pots:



Equipment needed: 2 flower pots, paint & shaving foam/play foam (remember shaving foam may smell).

Method:

- Tape over the holes of one of the pots before the activity.
- Design your plant pots you can draw a face, stick a photo to it, or even keep it plain!
- Shake the foam and squirt some on top of the taped pot.
- Shake the paint and squirt some on top of the foam.
- Take the second pot and place it on top of the foam.
- Push down with the second pot. You can either do this fast or slow

Flour shake:



Equipment needed: Black paper/tuff tray, plain flour, sieve & cut-out shapes or objects

Method:

- Lay out black paper
- Lay your shapes/objects out onto the paper
- You can use objects related to special interests
- Pour plain flour into the sieve
- Shake the flour over the shapes/objects



- You can shake left to right, as you'd read a book or top to bottom as you'd follow a visual timetable

Bubble snake:



Equipment needed: Fairy liquid, mixing dish, a bottle, some water and a sock

Method:

- Cut the bottom third off your bottle and pull the sock over the open end of the bottle
- Squirt some fairy liquid onto your plate and add a small amount of water, then mix
- Add food colouring to change the colour if required
- Dip the sock into the mixture (as pictured above)
- Take the bottle lid off and blow to create your bubble snake

Balloon Popping:



Equipment needed: A funnel, some glitter (or another filling of your



choice), balloons and a pin.

Method:

- Pour glitter into your balloons
- Blow up and tie your balloons
- Use the pin to pop the balloons
- Enjoy!
- Warning You may want to pre warn the children that there will be a bang.

Other activity ideas:

- Shaving foam castles: In a tray or on the floor if outside use shaving foam to make a swirl of foam. Using a fly swat hit the foam 'castle' so it splatters. Can use 'Ready, steady go' to encourage anticipation.
- Vinegar Volcanoes: Using shot glasses pour normal distilled vinegar about 2cm from the top (to be done on a tray if inside), put a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in the cup and watch it erupt.
- Flour Drawing: Hold a sieve full of flour up high and sprinkle this onto black paper. Once you have covered the black paper in flour use your finger to draw a simple picture i.e. a smiley face/flower/shapes – can link this to the curriculum too.
- Water Drawing: using a watering can pour water onto a surface to create a picture or make part of a story.
- Squirty Butterfly: Mix two different colours of paint with water. Put one syringe in cup of paint, squirt a bit into air and name colour. Create outline of half butterfly. Repeat with the other colour but create pattern in same half. Fold paper/shower curtain in half to create butterfly then show children
- Fireworks in a glass: Half fill a large glass with warm water. In a separate bowl put some olive oil with a few drops of different food colourings. Pour the oil mixture in and use a fork to stir and create patterns in the glass



- **Paint Splat:** Put a number of cotton rounds on a piece of paper and put a blob of paint in the middle. Cover with another cotton round. Using a plastic/toy hammer hit the cotton round and this will make the paint splat out from underneath
- **Salt Melting:** Create a large chunk of ice and put this in the freezer the night before the session. Sprinkle a modest amount of salt onto the chunk to melt the ice. Wait a small while for the ice to begin to melt then using a pipette drop some liquid water colours onto the ice chunk and watch the colour travel through the tunnels melted in the ice.
- **Supersize Marble Painting:** Have a large shallow plastic tray and cover the bottom with paper. Put different colours of paint in all four corners of the tray. Throw in some marbles and roll them around the tray. Make sure the children can see and show them the paper after.
- **Paint Bombs:** Fill watered down paint into small water bombs. Have a large sheet of paper on the floor. Stand on a chair and throw the paint bombs at it, causing them to explode and create patterns on the paper.
- **Fish in the sea:** Add blue colouring to water and pour into tray Sprinkle on glitter and say 'look it's the sea'. Count out 10 fish together In turn drop each fish from a height above the sea, cheer the fish on together ('come on fish, come on fish') Cheer when the fish lands in the sea or, if it misses, say 'get in the sea' and put the fish in the sea.
- **Water Gloves:** Put some food colouring into the bottles of water Pour the water into the glove Holding the glove high over the shower curtain, prick holes with the pin