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SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PARENT HANDOUT

Attention Autism Stage 1 Bucket Time

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: Bucket Time to Focus Attention

- 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.



Who is Stage 1 for?

A child may be considered suitable for Stage 1 (Bucket Time) if they:

- Require support to develop shared attention skills.
- Benefit from highly motivating, visually engaging activities.
- Limited curiosity about activities presented by adults.
- Difficulty remaining engaged in structured play.
- Preference for repetitive or self-chosen activities.
- Challenges transitioning between activities
- Limited understanding of spoken language.
- Difficulty listening to or following adult instructions.
- Reduced shared attention (e.g., not readily looking where an adult points or directs attention).
- Fleeting attention span.
- Difficulty sustaining attention on activities.
- Easily distracted by sounds, movement, or objects in the environment.
- Limited ability to attend to a group activity.
- Frequently move from one activity to another without completing tasks.

Who is Stage 1 NOT for? When can the child progress to Stage 2?

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?
- ✓ 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 Bucket Time:

Aim: Children learn to focus their attention on an adult-led activity.

Bucket Time:

What do you need:

- Whiteboard and marker
- Bucket or any container
- 3 different items/toys to hide in a bucket or bag



What items/toys can I use?

Resource Ideas:

- Wind up toys
- Light wands
- Fans
- Bubbles
- Noisy hammer
- Balloon
- Spinning top
- Squishy toys
- Squeaky toys
- Spring/slinkie
- Rainbow ribbon
- Jack in a box
- Party popper/Party blower
- Yoyo
- Pop up toy
- Snow globe
- Whistle
- Instruments
- Walking animals e.g. walking frogs
- Puppets



You can also make resources **at home** yourself such as pop up puppets/toys, sock puppets, using a kitchen roll to make noisy shakers or decorate existing glasses, hats etc. Anything goes!



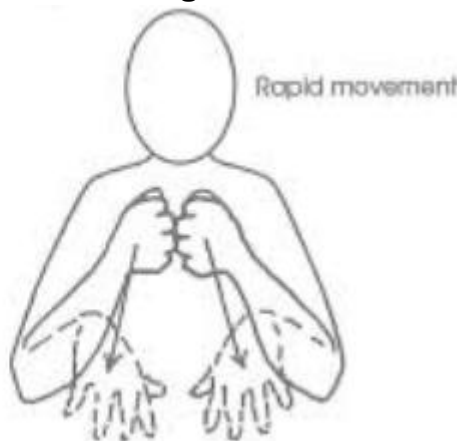
Routine:

1. Draw a 'first and then board' and say 'time for **bucket**'.
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 bucket: "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 cross off bucket on the whiteboard.



Remember to model Makaton signs for "finished".

To
Finish (2) /
To End



The leading adult should:

- Have control of the toys and keep them close
- Put the lid back on the bucket/box in between toys
- Focus on the toys and not on the children to draw their attention to the toy
- Be the most interesting thing in the room
- Use animated facial expressions
- Use key words and sounds, but also leave pauses and space for the children to comment
- Carry on with activities regardless of the children's behaviour (another adult or sibling can model attention).

Here is Youtube tutorial of how to do it:

<https://youtu.be/Ks9dB-9LRdU?si=mrGN3Cnm2RYFi8Jt>



How often should I do Bucket Time?

Aim to carry out a session 4/5 times a week, start at 1 minute and build up slowly.

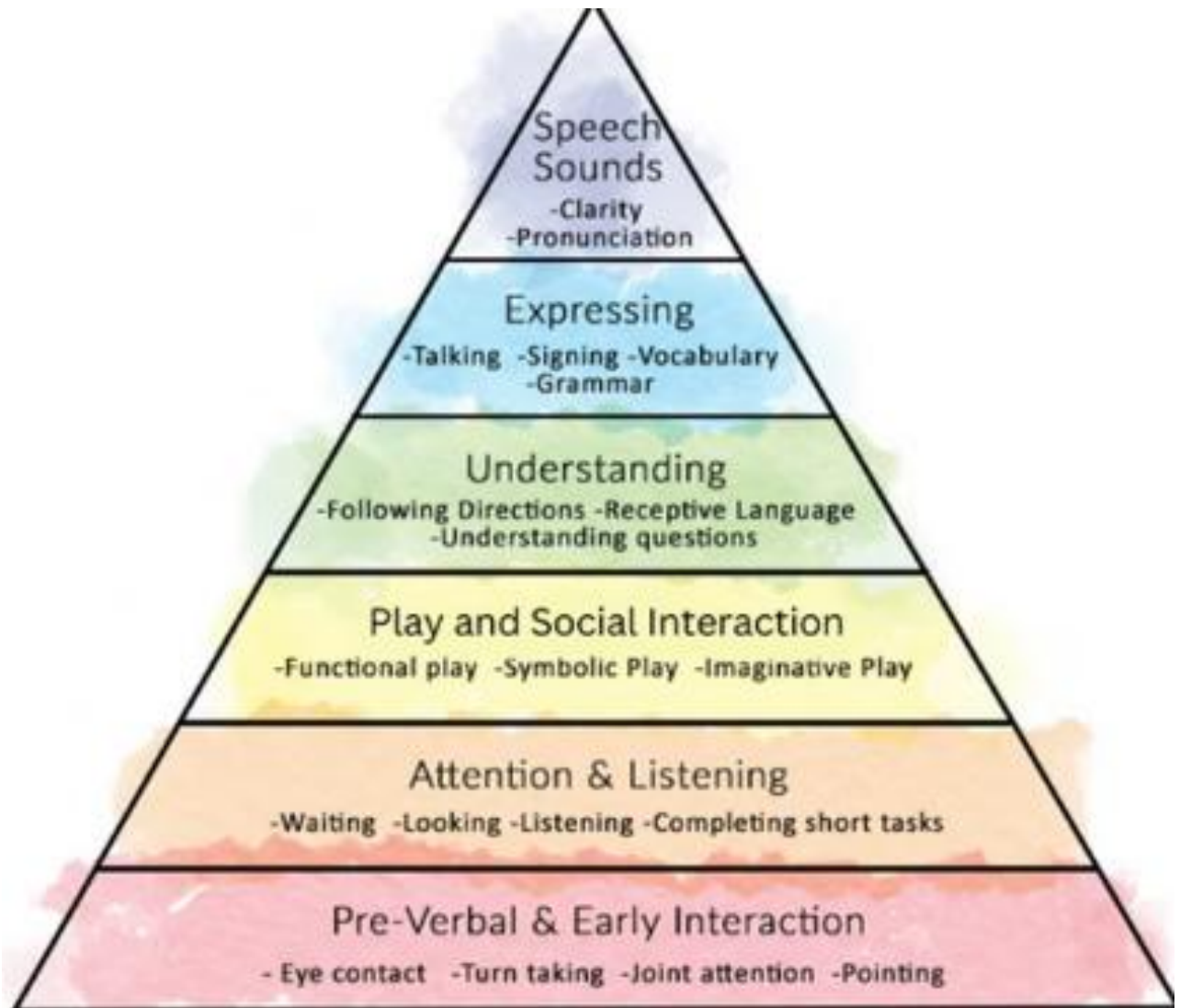
Think about what the children like, e.g. visual/auditory/tactile experiences and build these into activities, e.g. making things fall/ swirl/throw/sprinkle.

When your child can attend for 5 minutes, you're ready for the next stage (see Stage 2 handout) and remember ***“if it's fun, they'll come!”***





Communication Pyramid:



Attention Autism Stage 1 (Bucket time) consistently targets:

- Pre-Verbal & Early Interaction
- Attention & Listening