

Joint Attention and Joint Engagement

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Early Core
Challenges
of Autistic
Children

Social Communication

- Joint Attention Gestures
- Joint Engagement

Language

Social Communication as core difficulty

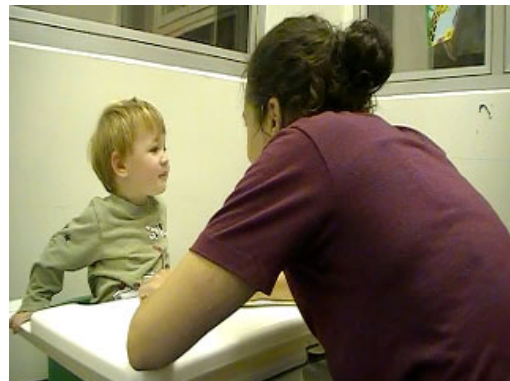
All children begin to gesture and vocalize before they actually start to say words

- These gestures are typically used with intentionality and for different functions

The function may be for requesting or sharing (joint attention) even when the form is the same (e.g., a point)

- Requesting easier than joint attention in autism
- Joint attention most important in predicting language outcomes in autism

Early Core Challenges in Social Communication





Important to teach social communication in early interventions

When children are young, and in the language learning phase of development, we can fill in gaps in development

Because these early intentional social communication gestures support development of spoken language, they are critical targets

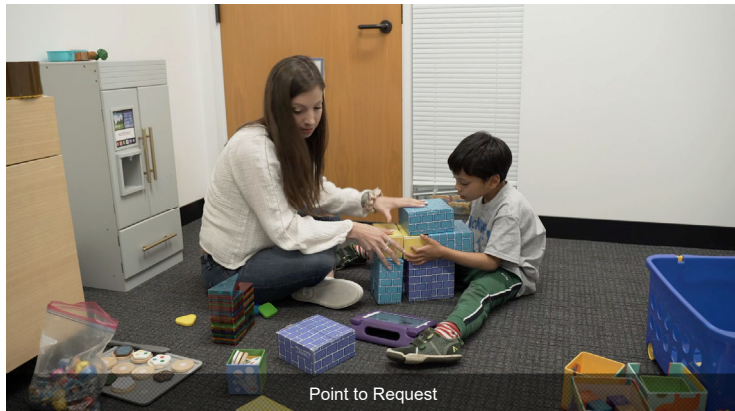
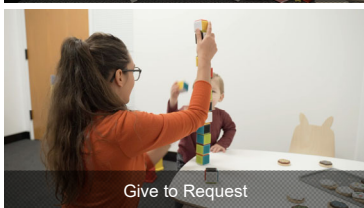
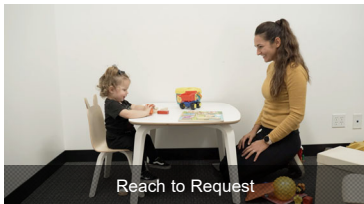
Children with autism speaking in phrases or sentences by Kindergarten have the best social outcomes



Definitions

Requesting gestures

requesting: to communicate a want or need; to direct the behavior of others; eye contact, reaching, pointing, giving.



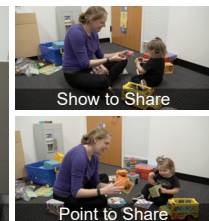
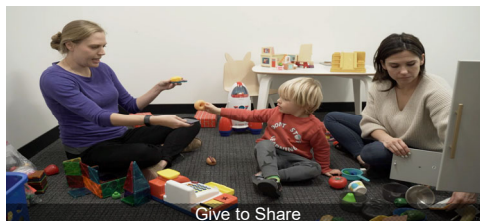
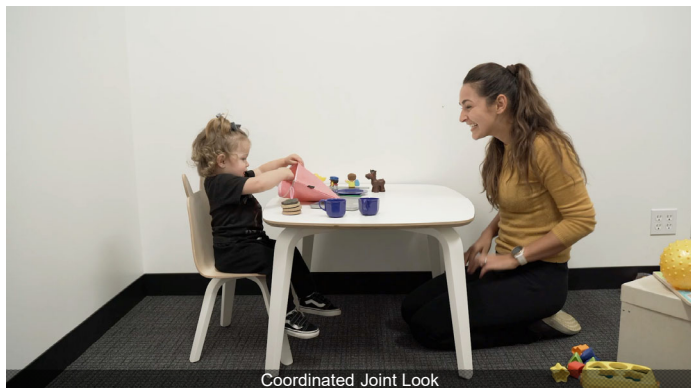
Examples
Requesting Gestures

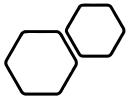
Joint Attention (JA)

joint attention: to share and/or maintain social interaction; pointing, giving, showing, coordinated joint look.



Examples Joint Attention Gestures





Early Core Challenges Joint Attention

- Children with ASD demonstrate less JA than other children
- JA important to language development



Requesting vs. Joint Attention

- Joint Attention $\neq$ Requesting
- Joint Attention is more difficult for children with autism and more difficult to teach.

How do you teach social communication gestures?

Think about the context for children to learn to gesture



Children are more likely to gesture if engaged around a 'topic of conversation'

Key here is that they are jointly engaged in an activity with props, objects AND people

Joint Engagement sets the stage for teaching gestures



- Joint Engagement is foundation for learning
- Different from joint attention

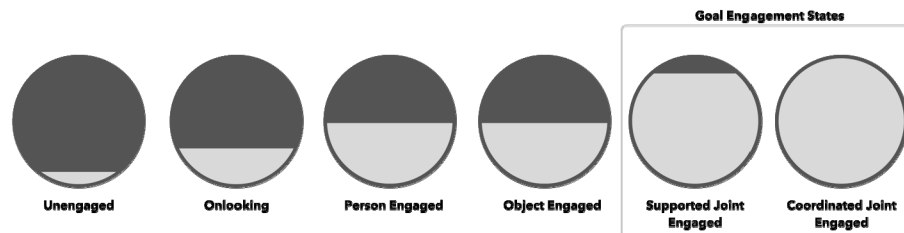
Early Core Challenges Unpacking engagement

- What is it?
 - A state of connecting to objects, people, or both (called Joint Engagement)
- Why is it important?
 - People learn as they are actively connected and attending to their environment
 - Supported joint engagement is connected to language learning (Adamson et al., 2004)
- What is it often confused with?
 - Compliance: Joint engagement requires active participation of the child
 - Joint Attention: Moments of joint attention (communication to share) are more likely to occur during a state of joint engagement

Examples of Engagement

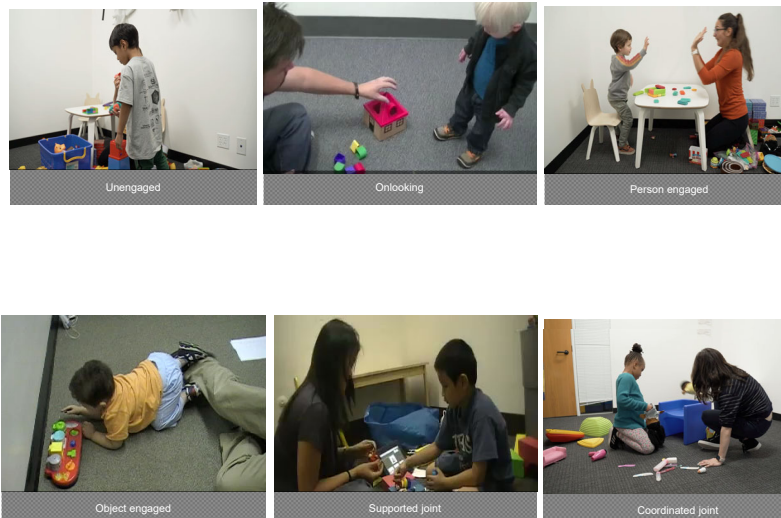
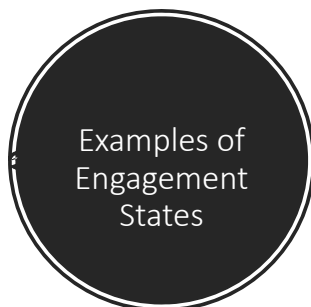


Engagement States



- Engagement states can change throughout and between sessions
- Coordinated Joint engagement is the most difficult state to maintain

Based on research by Adamson et al, 2004



Where to begin? Assessment



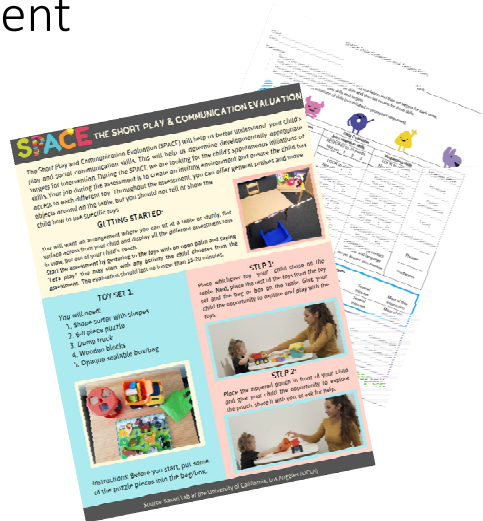
Short assessment to get a snapshot of a child's skills



Used to help set targets for intervention



Brief.....approximately 10-15 minutes



(Shire, Shih, Chang, & Kasari, 2018)

Assessment SPACE Goals

- **1. Understand mastered & emerging skills in**
- joint attention, requesting, & play
- **2. Set target goals** through brief structured
- play observation

Assessment SPACE Activities



Toy Set 1



Toy Set 2



Wind-up



Ball



Balloons OR Bubbles



Cartoon Pictures

Resources

SPACE THE SHORT PLAY & COMMUNICATION EVALUATION

The Short Play and Communication Evaluation (SPACE) will help us better understand your child's play and social communication skills. This will help us determine developmentally appropriate targets for intervention. During the SPACE we are looking for the child's spontaneous initiations of skills. Your job during the assessment is to create an inviting environment and ensure the child has access to each different toy. Throughout the assessment, you can offer general praises and move objects around on the table, but you should not tell or show the child how to use specific toys.

GETTING STARTED:

You will want an arrangement where you can sit at a table or sturdy, flat surface across from your child and display all the different assessment toys in view, but out of your child's reach.

Start the assessment by gesturing to the toys with an open palm and saying "Let's play!" You may start with any activity the child chooses from the assessment. The evaluation should last no longer than 15-20 minutes.

TOY SET 1:

You will need:

1. Shape sorter with shapes
2. 6-8 piece puzzle
3. Dump truck
4. Wooden blocks
5. Opaque sealable box/bag

STEP 1:

Place whichever toy your child chose on the table. Next, place the rest of the toys from the toy set and the bag or box on the table. Give your child the opportunity to explore and play with the toys.

STEP 2:

Place the zippered pouch in front of your child and give your child the opportunity to explore the pouch, share it with you, or ask for help.

Instructions: Before you start, put some of the puzzle pieces into the bag/box.

Source: Kasari Lab at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

SPACE Data Collection and Targets Form

Child: _____ Adult: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

- Record the overall quality of joint engagement and regulation and then set targets for each state.
- Tally and circle instances of communication skills and then set targets for these skills.
- Use page 2 to record the child's play skills and targets.
- Record only spontaneous initiations of skills (not initiated or prompted responses).

Joint engagement		Regulation		Data Collection		Requesting skills		Language Skills	
None		None		RESPOND to JA points Not yet: 1, 2, 3		LOOK to request Not yet: 1, 2, 3		No words	
Fleeting moments	Fleeting moments	LOOK to share Not yet: 1, 2+		REACH to request Not yet: 1, 2+		Partial/ approximations			
Sustained intervals	Sustained intervals	SHOW to share Not yet: 1, 2+		GIVE to request Not yet: 1, 2+		1 word			
1-2 minutes	1-2 minutes	POINT to share Not yet: 1, 2+		POINT to request Not yet: 1, 2+		2 word combinations			
Several minutes	Several minutes	GIVE to share Not yet: 1, 2+		LANGUAGE to request Not yet: Yes		Phrases			
Most of the interaction	Most of the interaction	LANGUAGE to share Not yet: Yes		COMBINE eye contact, gestures, and language Not yet: Request, Joint Attention		Sentences			

Joint Engagement and Regulation Targets

Joint engagement:	Fleeting moments	Sustained intervals	1-2 minutes	Several minutes	Most of the interaction
Regulation:	Fleeting moments	Sustained intervals	1-2 minutes	Several minutes	Most of the interaction

Communication Targets

Joint attention:	Respond*	Look*	Show	Point	Give	Coordinate skills
Requesting:		Look*	Reach	Give <td>Point <td>Coordinate skills</td> </td>	Point <td>Coordinate skills</td>	Coordinate skills
Language:	Diversity:		Complexity:			

*If chosen, also choose a gesture target (show, point, or give)

jaspet

What can the teacher do to teach joint attention and requesting gestures?



Teaching Joint Attention

- Teaching JA in context of a play routine
 - Model the skill
 - Set up opportunities
 - Respond



Summary

- Social communication is a core area of difficulty for children with autism---they express fewer gestures to communicate, and may be less engaged with others
- Teachers can be instrumental in teaching social communication skills, and engaging children in activities to promote communication and language
- Specific interventions are available that are targeted on social communication development, specifically joint attention and joint engagement and they have been tested in school and home settings



Thank you!

For more information about interventions highlighted, see above