

Relationship-Based Intervention

by Rebecca Klaw

<http://www.rebeccaklaw.com/>

She has several DVDs on her website

- this information below is from her Relationship-Based Intervention DVD -

Basic Philosophy - reciprocal social interaction is the foundation of many areas of development, including play skills, language, peer play, and cognitive skills. It is the social connection that enables children to learn from others, to develop relationships, and to become participating members of a family and a community. Relationships are the key to learning. How does relating really drive growth and development? Through **AFFECT**. Our emotions tag experiences as important and worth paying attention to. When we teach children through affective interchange, the learning is quicker and more meaningfully retained.

Children with autism often process information in ways that are different from children who are developing typically, resulting in highly selective, repetitive, or unusual interests. These interests are considered a doorway to engagement, relatedness and communication. See stereotypies or idiosyncratic behaviors as soothing, comforting, the child's attempt to get the sensation he needs to stay focused and regulated. Also see these behaviors as a way a child keeps himself/herself isolated. Goal: make these behaviors interactive and expand the range of behaviors the child finds as soothing. As a child becomes more social, the need for perseverative behavior decreases.

Basic strategies

- sit near the child as he plays in his/her comfort zone
- find out/watch what interests the child
- follow the child's lead
- imitate sounds and actions (increases the child's attention to social interaction, promotes turn-taking). Studies have shown that children with autism exhibit increased amounts of social attention and responsiveness when they are imitated.
- join the play
- be persistent/gently insist on a response. Take "no" as communication, as acknowledgement that you are there, and not as a rejection
- treat what the child does as intentional. Join perseverative play, using it as a doorway to engagement
- expand all good exchanges – when something works, add to it
- when you have lost a child's attention, use sensory motor play and/or sensory activities to get a child engaged again
- use heightened affect (does not mean loud, however). Use interesting sound effects.

If a child cannot remain engaged for at least 10 minutes, developing social reciprocity and communicative behaviors will likely not happen.

Use of Routines

Why use routines?

- provide predictability
- create anticipation
- foster participation

Routines increase social awareness, social responsiveness, and social turn-taking. These form the basis for pragmatic communication.

Example of a routine:

- Sally lying on the floor, glances up at adult.
- Adult lies next to Sally, covers both of them with a blanket
- Sally moves under blanket
- Adult snores loudly
- Sally makes a sound
- Adult throws off blanket and says "Wake Up!" with a hug or tickle
- Sally laughs

~There should be mutual joy at the end of the routine – and the child will come to anticipate this joy.

~How to form something into a routine? Work backwards from the reinforcing moment.

~Always give a name to your routines and reinforce that name many, many times. You can pair that name with a picture so the child could choose it.

YOU NEED TO EXPAND THE CHILD'S WORLD EVERY TIME YOU PLAY

HOW?

✓ SET UP THE ROUTINE

(When you are swinging the child, for instance, say "Ready, Set, Go!" and swing him many, many times)

✓ BUILD ANTICIPATION

(While saying "Ready, Set, Go!", give dramatic and expectant pauses, looking for eye contact or other body language that expresses excitement)

✓ REPEATEDLY STOP AT A SINGLE STRATEGIC MOMENT SO THAT YOUR CHILD CAN INDICATE THAT HE/SHE WANTS YOU TO CONTINUE

(After saying "Ready, Set, Go!", wait for a movement, gesture, facial expression or vocalization that may indicate an eagerness to continue with the routine. Consider it a communication and reward it by continuing! Do this many times while modeling a more functional response - "Oh, you want me to go! Okay")

✓ BEGIN TO ADD TO THE ROUTINE WITHOUT ALTERING THE BASIC SEQUENCE

(Tickle the child's feet once, twice or three times before stopping the swing to repeat your Ready Set Go routine. Run around the child as he/she swings so that you go out of sight momentarily. Add bubbles or peek-a-boo with a blanket to the routine. Add a new silly noise to the routine. Make up a song that becomes part of the routine.)

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPANSION OF PLAY ARE ENDLESS...