

ESTABLISHING ROUTINES

Goal: Establish routines that can be repeated again and again and again. You want to establish as many routines as you can with your child.

Why establish routines? Routines increase social awareness, social responsiveness, and social turn-taking. Routines form the foundation for communication.

In the very simplest of examples, when babies are born they do NOT know that when they cry, their parents will come pick them up. But they cry and their parents pick them up. They cry again later and get picked up. They cry again the next day and get picked up. And so on. Soon they learn the routine: when they cry, they get picked up. The parent has responded in the same way to the same behavior. The child learns he/she can affect others by crying. The child learns that his/her crying is communicative.

We want each routine you establish with your child to become familiar and be rewarding. Once they are rewarding, then we hope the child will be requesting to do the routine with you.

How to set up routines:

- 1) Watch your child to see what he/she is interested in. Wait for your child to do something – most likely in response to what you or someone else does. This might be:
 - a smile
 - a sideways glance
 - a change in expression
 - a sound
 - a look
 - a hesitation
 - a movement
- 2) Interpret your child's behavior as meaningful and communicative (even if you aren't sure that he/she meant to communicate anything to you).
- 3) Respond to that behavior.
- 4) Once your routine is established, give it a name. Choose one word, if possible, and do not choose either "more" or "please." Choose a name that describes the routine. Always use the same name with the same routine.

Example: You are holding your child in your lap. You start singing "Rock A Bye Baby" and you gently rock your child back and forth. Then you stop singing and stop rocking. Your child leans to show you he/she wants you to keep singing and rocking him/her. So you sing another line of the song and rock him/her again. Then you stop. Your child leans again so you sing another line of the song and rock him/her again. The routine is established! You then give your routine a name – maybe "rock." What you hope to shape over time is that your child will learn to say "rock" to get you to do this routine. We can help you help your child to learn to say "rock" – right now, work on establishing routines!

If it is hard to get your child to show interest in what you are doing, try to get an interaction going (that may end up as a routine) by imitating what your child is doing. After you imitate for a while, vary it a little to see if your child will imitate you. Once you get going, see if you can keep it up for at least five turns each.