

Mandeville School Speech and Language Therapy Training

Attention Autism

Introduction

This is a therapeutic teaching approach that has been devised by Gina Davies, a Speech and Language Therapist and autism specialist, who developed the approach through teaching children with autism within a nursery setting.

This approach is designed to

- Find and use **motivating activities** to create a shared experience that is worth communicating about
- Help children to **understand and respond a structured, adult led activity**
- Give children an **irresistible invitation** to engage in an adult directed activity
- **Build attention and listening skills** at an appropriate developmental level
- Develop **social and functional communication skills** (e.g. taking turns, message sending and receiving) through meaningful engagement
- Build a **bank of positive experiences and good relationships** that underpin the building of knowledge and skills that they can use throughout their lives to develop a lifelong love of learning

The approach works because it draws on the child's strengths:

- **Stronger visual skills than auditory skills** so you can learn despite language receptive and expressive difficulties
- Remembering experiences with **emotional impact** (activities aim to be memorable and enjoyable)-**remembering by the emotions we experience in activities**
- Ability to follow **logic and structure** (e.g. following a predictable pattern, use of simple, repetitive language)

Stages of Attention Autism

Stage 1: Focus	Stage 2: Sustain	Stage 3: Shift	Stage 4: Transition
The Bucket	The Attention Builder	The Interactive Game	The table top activity
The aim is to build up to a single channeled attention level in a short adult-directed activity	The aim is to be able to shift and sustain attention and show emerging skills in anticipation	The aim is to be able to teach the child to shift their attention as they and others take turns	The aim is to teach the child how to shift and refocus their attention for an individual activity and then back to a group activity

Stage 1 Focus-The bucket/bag/box/bin time

Aim of therapy

1. To focus attention on an adult initiated task

- Draw 'First.....then' on a whiteboard or use visuals
- Introduce first item

e.g. 'I've got something in my bag, in my bag, in my bag, I've got something in my bag, I wonder what it is?'

or

What's in the box, what's in the box, knock, knock, knock, knock, what's in the box?'

- Take out a toy, replacing the lid/closing over the bag
- Play with the toy for 45 seconds, focusing on the toy, not the children

- Name item, say it is finished and put it back on the box
- Use animated facial expressions
- Use simple, slow paced key words but leave lots of gaps
- Carry on regardless of the children's behaviour-the supporting adults are there to help
- Initially aim for the children to stay seated for 1 minute using gesture to encourage returning to seat
- Avoid using any other reinforcers

2 Minutes in your class teams.....

Complete this phrase:

'When you have the attention of the children for..... minutes it is time to move onto Stage 2'

Answer:

'When you have the attention of the children for **3-5 minutes** it is time to move onto Stage 2'

Stage 2 Sustain-The Attention Builder

Aim of therapy

1. To shift attention to a new activity once 'the bucket' has finished
2. To maintain attention on an activity that has a sequence and build to a final, fantastic experience

Start with a short bucket time-no more than 5 minutes

- Draw 'First.....then' on a whiteboard or use visuals
- Choose an exciting and engaging activity that is visually appealing with high contrast-black on white contrast or one that is colorful/glittery
- Choose things that are interesting to the children but avoid obsessions-consider the children's scheme
- Allow the children to see the activity being set up and put away
- Keep control of the materials by keeping them close
- Use simple word and sounds to comment, an intrigued tone of voice and animated facial expressions

Rules

- Introduce the objects visually
- Start to name the items
- Increase eye contact
- Introduce action words

5 Minutes in your class teams.....

Question:

How long should the children be able to sit for before moving on to Stage 3?

Answer

*****When the children can sit for 10 minutes move on the Stage 3*****

Stage 3 Shift-The interactive game

Aim of therapy

1. Develop non-verbal communication
2. Children to shift their attention to their turn and then re-focus their attention on the group activity
3. Children to develop their waiting, anticipation and turn taking skills

Start with a short bucket time-no more than 5 minutes. Bucket time can start to link to the topic of the activity

- Similar to Stage 2-you can adapt a Stage 2 activity to include turn-taking
- Draw 'First.....then.....next' on a whiteboard or use visuals
- Offer **first turn to an adult** to model for the children
- Start by going from right to left around the semi-circle. As the children are able to wait you can start to dot the turn around the horseshoe for those who are ready
- Only offer a turn to a child who is ready-not all children will necessarily have a turn
- Incorporate a song to encourage language modeling, predictability and anticipation e.g. 'This is the way we.....' etc
- Allow anxious children to watch and only take if a turn if/when ready

Question: When children can sit for ??? minutes you can move them on to move on to Stage 4

Answer

- When children can sit for 20 minutes move on to Stage 4

Stage 4 Transitions-The table top activity

Aim of therapy- To make the transition from a group task, to an individual task and then back to the group

- Draw 'First.....then.....next...after' on a whiteboard or use visuals
- Adult to demonstrate an activity for the whole group
- An activity kit for each child: a box/tray containing a version of the task
- Supporting adult to be first to move to activity table to model for the children
- Count down to end of the activity
- Tidy up as a group and complete visual timetable

Top tips

- You must commit yourself to the activity 100%-if you are fascinated you will want to know what's happening and what will happen next
- Prepare resources ahead of time and make sure everything is ready and working before you seat the children-consider having a designated member of class team to monitor which resources have been used up/broken
- Sit everyone in a horseshoe so everyone can see
- Keep control of the toys in Stages 1 and 2
- Turn taking starts in Stage 3
- **Give plenty of time for thinking and gaps if the children want to comment**
- Everyone must be attending and involved-no background conversation
- **ONE VOICE**
- Try to avoid waiting for everyone to be ready-start when the majority are ready
- Appear confident (even if you don't feel it!) and take your time
- Use facial expression and encouraging sounds before simple language
- Carry on, regardless of the children's actions-do not let them dictate the start and finish of the activity
- **Supporting adults to gesture for the children to sit down again children and encourage them to watch without saying 'Sit down' /'Look'- we do**

not want them to be reliant on verbal prompts

- **Remember 'If it's fun and engaging, they will come'**

Core resources

- Shower curtain- to cover distractions/catch mess
- Plastic tubes/cardboard boxes and tubes
- Shaving foam/squirty cream
- Food colouring/paint/glue
- Glitter/rice/salt/pasta/lentils
- Flour/cornflour
- Bicarbonate of soda/vinegar/milk
- Paper cup/flower pots/containers with holes in them
- Black paper/card
- Stencils/straws/lollipop sticks
- Honey/treacle
- Cotton wool/pom poms/ribbons/feathers
- Sprays/ watering cans/cafetiere/syringe/squeezy bottles

Resources

- Gina Davies, Autism Centre, <http://ginadavies.co.uk>
- Mandeville W drive- SaLT Resources/Attention Autism/Attention Autism
- Facebook 'Gina Davies Autism Centre'
- You Tube:
Gina Davies attention autism stage 1, 2, 3, 4

Quick Quiz

1. There are Stages of Attention Autism
2. The first stage is often known as
3. You should move to Stage 2 when the child can attend independently for.....minutes
4. Turn-taking starts in Stage.....
5. You should move on to Stage 3 when the child can attend independently forminutes