



What is Social Communication and Why is it Important?

When we have a conversation there is a lot more to it than just saying words. We look each other in the eye, we take turns, we read facial expressions and body language, we pay attention to what our communication partner is paying attention to, and we stay on topic. We can read a lot from a person's tone of voice as well.

When a child is having trouble learning about social communication, it is harder to learn language, to join in conversations, and to play with other children. Your Language Express Speech-Language Pathologist can work with you to help develop your child's social communication skills.

Social communication difficulties can be associated with other developmental concerns. We recommend that you talk to your family doctor if your child loses social skills or language skills, or if your child does not:

- Smile at people when they smile at him
- Respond consistently when you say his name
- Pretend and play "make believe"
- Show an interest in other children
- Enjoy playing with you
- Make appropriate eye contact
- Show, give, share, and try to get your attention
- Ask for help when he needs it
- Greet familiar people



Helping Your Child Develop Social Communication Skills

Day to day interaction and play will develop children's social skills

naturally. It takes time to learn the rules of interaction, but there are activities parents and caregivers can do which will help children understand the rules.

Eye Contact

- Get down to your child's eye level.
- Encourage your child to be in the same room and to face you when talking to you.
- Stop what you are doing, look at your child, listen, and respond. Then WAIT for your child's response. Don't rush communication. Children need lots of time to understand what they hear, and to think about what they want to say.

Turn-Taking

- Respond to your baby's noises and gestures and he will soon learn to make another noise or gesture for you.
- Play lots of turn taking games. Say "John's turn, mom's turn..."
- Practice sharing by taking turns with a toy.

Games to help develop turn-taking skills

- Take turns putting the blocks on a tower until it collapses.
- Take turns blowing bubbles.
- Take turns choosing bedtime stories. Take turns turning the pages.
- Play board games with older children.
- Sing Nursery Rhymes. Leave out a word or two and wait for your child to fill it in.

Listening Skills

- Encourage your child to pause and listen, and then talk about the sounds you both hear.
- Turn off the television (iPad, phone, etc.) and talk and play with your child.
- Follow your child's lead and focus your attention on what interests her.

Shared Attention

- Follow your baby's gaze and focus on the same thing. Talk about what you both see. Eventually your baby will follow your gaze too.
- Go for a walk and point to, look at, and talk about the things you see, hear, touch, and smell.

Body Language and Gestures

- Use body language, facial expressions, and gestures when you speak to your child. Your child will learn to "read" body language and to use it herself.