

Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Connection & Communication: A Home Program for Autistic Children

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If your child seems happiest in their own world, does not always respond to their name, or communicates in ways others do not expect, you may feel unsure how to reach them. Please know your child is already communicating — this program helps you meet them where they are and gently build more moments of connection, one shared smile at a time.

These are warm, play-based ideas you can weave into everyday life. This program supports your child and your bond, but it does not replace a proper developmental assessment or therapy. If autism is suspected, please seek an assessment too — early, play-based, parent-led support works best alongside professional care.

♥ Who this program is for

- ✓ Children who are autistic, or being assessed for autism, of any communication level.
- ✓ Children who make little eye contact or do not always respond to their name.
- ✓ Children who play alone and rarely share things or look with you.
- ✓ Parents who want gentle, respectful ways to build connection and interaction.
- ✓ Families waiting for, or already receiving, autism support who want home ideas.

⚡ Important — when to get professional help

This is a supportive home program, not a diagnosis or a substitute for an assessment. Please speak to a professional promptly if:

Your child loses skills they once had — words, gestures or eye contact (regression).

Your child has no safe awareness of danger near traffic, water or heights.

Your child shows severe or frequent distress, or is at risk of hurting themselves.

Your child has no reliable way to tell you their basic needs.

You have a worried gut feeling — always trust it and ask a professional for help.

☆ **Your step-by-step roadmap**

Move at your child's pace, not the calendar's — the “weeks” are a gentle order, not a race. Repeat any stage as long as it helps.

Week 1 – Follow your child's lead

Join what your child already loves.

Watch what your child chooses to do and simply join in beside them.

Do what they do — line up cars too, spin the wheel too.

Let your child stay in charge of the play; you are a happy guest.

⚡ **Try this:** Connection starts on your child's terms, not on yours.

Week 2 – Get face to face and playful

Become the most fun thing in the room.

Get down low, face to face, at your child's eye level.

Use lively, silly, sing-song sounds and big warm expressions.

Play people games — peek-a-boo, tickles, chase — that need you.

⚡ **Try this:** Be so fun that your child chooses to look at you all by themselves.

Week 3 – Build joint attention

Share a moment on the same thing together.

Notice what your child looks at and share it — “You see the bird!”

Point to things and follow where your child points or looks.

Pause with excitement during a favourite game so they look at you.

⚡ **Try this:** A shared look at the same thing is the seed of all communication.

Week 4 – Create reasons to communicate

Give your child gentle chances to reach out.

Offer a favourite toy or snack and wait, with a warm, expectant look.

Honour every attempt — a look, point, sound, sign, picture or word.

Give the reward straight away so reaching out always works.

⚡ **Try this:** A short, friendly pause is an invitation for your child to connect.

Week 5 – Weave it into every day

Make connection part of ordinary routines.

Turn dressing, meals and bath time into little back-and-forth games.

Keep predictable routines so your child feels safe enough to engage.

Respect their signals — sensory breaks and quiet are okay and helpful.

⚡ **Try this:** Tiny shared moments, many times a day, add up faster than long sessions.

- ✓ Follow your child's interests instead of redirecting them to yours.
- ✓ Value every kind of communication — sounds, signs, pictures and pointing all count.
- ✓ Respect sensory needs — breaks, calm and quiet help your child stay connected.
- ✓ Get face to face and low so sharing a look is easy.
- ✓ Wait and give time; do not rush in to fill every silence.
- ✓ Celebrate connection itself, not eye contact for its own sake.

How you'll know it's working

- Your child looks at you or shares moments a little more often.
- Your child comes to you to play, show or ask for things.
- You have more back-and-forth turns — sounds, gestures or words.
- Your child seems calmer, happier and more connected with you.



Is this based on real methods? Following your child's lead and building joint attention through play reflect naturalistic developmental behavioural approaches, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports early, play-based, parent-involved support for autistic children.