

# Joint Attention

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What is joint attention? Joint attention is the sharing of an experience between a child and a partner. During the infant stage, this partner is the parent/caregiver. A shared experience is looking at or directing attention to an object or event. Joint attention is an essential skill needed for language, speech, and social skills.

The beginning of joint attention in an infant can often be noted during nursing or feeding, when there is face to face contact. Many times children with significant communication and social impairments have not developed joint attention.

## Here are activities to help develop this skill.

- Tell your child *"Look at me,"* then tap his/her face and then your face. After you have given this verbal cue, give your child time to respond.
- Point to a toy that your child likes and say, *"look."* Gently turn his/her head toward the toy. When he/she looks at it, play with the toy or give it to him/her.
- Hold up a toy or favorite item and say, *"look."* Your child should look at you and then the object. Reward by giving the toy to your child.
- Blow bubbles and say, *"look."* Point as your child tracks the bubbles. Blow more bubbles when he/she looks at you, repeat the word *"look,"* and point.
- Blow up a balloon, but don't tie it or let it go. Say, *"look"* and release it when your child looks.
- When your child becomes interested in books, point to a picture and say, *"look."* Help your child point to pictures. The goal is for your child to look at you and then the picture. By sharing awareness and interest in the same picture or book you are achieving joint attention.
- When another family member comes into the room, point and say, *"look."* Reward your child for looking with a physical activity, such as tickling or patting.

Your child may need more time to understand what turning his/her head means, so don't be discouraged if this skill is slow for him/her to learn.

