

Ten ideas to help engage all children:

For some kids interaction and focus are extremely challenging. These are a few suggestions that I've found helpful:

1. Be **enthusiastic** and **animated** to make what you want *visible* and *fun*. **Enjoy** time with the child.
2. Be **persistent**, yet *flexible*. Believe your child will take new steps when he/she is ready.
3. **Encourage** without pressure. Be **playful**.
4. **Celebrate** every little success. A look, a point, an attempt to say a word. Be the child's cheerleader! Be your own as well.
5. If your child has limited language skills, **comment more than question**. Then **pause** for some kind of response from your child.
6. **Tune-in** to non-verbal cues and sounds the child makes, and respond to these just as you would words. Make it *easier* for the child to communicate.
7. **Minimize Distractions** – set aside chunks of uninterrupted time in an area without a lot of visual and auditory distractions. Make it *easier* for the child to focus.
8. **Wait** for a response from your child, develop a back and forth rhythm. Pre-verbal precedes verbal, start here.
9. *Model* and *encourage* **the next small step** - a sound, a look at where you're pointing, etc. – celebrate any attempt your child makes.
10. **Repetition** and engaging in your child's interests builds *trust* and *a base to extend and challenge* your child in ways he/she can be successful.

A few books and sites I highly recommend:

1. Communicating Partners and Play to Talk, and Before Your Child Talks – James MacDonald www.jamesdmacdonald.org
2. What You Can Do Right Now to Help Your Child with Autism – Jonathan Levy www.tenthingsautism.com
3. Son-Rise and A Miracle To Believe In – Barry Neil Kaufman www.son-rise.org