

Developing Reaching Skills

When developing reaching skills it is important to ensure that the child is well supported in sitting or lying. The child will not be able to focus on reaching for toys if they are struggling to maintain their position.

Activities

- The child will initially be more successful at reaching for toys when he does not have to work at sitting e.g. lying on tummy or back underneath a baby gym
 - If the child struggles to bring their arms forward, try positioning a small rolled up towel under their shoulders to encourage their arms to come up and forwards.
 - Use a variety (those of most interest to the child e.g. shiny or musical toys). Shake them in front of the child so that the toy can be seen. Then actively guide the child's hand to the toy by moving his/her arm from just below the shoulder.
 - The child may then open his/her hand to take the toy. Place the child in a variety of different positions to improve the child's upper limb awareness e.g. on tummy, propped on a rolled up towel or supported over an inflatable roll.
- Use feely toys such as a deflated helium balloon, smooth, rough, furry textures etc as well as rattles for the child to look at or feel. This should encourage opening and closing of the hands, or raking at the texture.
 - Encourage the child to reach out and grasp the spoon or bottle when being fed.

Developing Grasping Skills

Grasping is picking up and holding an object.

Activities

- Find toys that are easy to grasp such as rattles with handles, large toy balls or blocks, rings etc
- Encourage banging games such as banging a tray or table top, banging two bricks, spoons or rattles together. Encourage banging a drum with beater or banging on toys to make a noise.

Developing Accurate Release

Accurate release is the child's ability to purposefully and accurately let go of an object. This skill is required in order for the child to develop basic fine motor and is a pre-requisite to self-help skills.

Whilst carrying out these activities remember to praise the child when they achieve the task. This will motivate them to repeat the activity.

Activities

- Encourage the child to give you a toy. Initially get them to put the toy in your hand, even if they are unable to release it (guide with your hand if necessary). Position yourself so that the child has to make a deliberate action to hand you the toy. Use the same instruction every time e.g. "give to me", as the repetition will assist the learning process.
- Play games which involve dropping objects into a container in order to produce a noise or reaction e.g. dropping a toy into a saucepan or bowl of water to make a loud noise or splash.
- Encourage the child to stack toys, e.g. one small stacking cup on top of the largest stacking cup, large building blocks etc.
- Rolling or throwing a small ball can also help develop the release concept.

Strategies

- Grade how much help give the child. Initially you may need to use a hand over hand approach but try to reduce how much physical and verbal help you give the child so they become more independent.
- Praise and positively reward the child when they have achieved a part or all of the activity successfully.
- You can try many of these activities in a number of positions e.g. sitting on the floor, in a “4 point kneel” position, high kneeling or sitting at a table or standing.
- If the child struggles with attention and perseverance, try doing the activities following sensory activities e.g. sand play, messy play, as sensory input can help prepare a child to attend. You can also try making the activity part of the sensory experience to aid motivation e.g. stacking cups in water, placing a person in a boat during water play etc.

Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually not normally choose will support development.

Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

Improving our service

We continue to review our service to make sure that it meets the needs of those who are using it. We would appreciate any suggestions on how we may improve and also comments on what was good about the service.

If you have any compliments, suggestions or complaints, please write to or contact any member of staff in the first instance, or to the Occupational Therapy Service Lead if necessary.

Contact details: see part 1 of pack

BUSY HANDS EYE-HAND COORDINATION

Early Year Activity Sheet

PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY SERVICES