

Special Time

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Improving your child's social communication whilst having fun and building a strong, nurturing relationship.

What is Special Time?

Special Time is 5–10 minutes a day where your child can do whatever they want (as long as it's not dangerous) and you give them your undivided attention. You don't interfere with their play, but you engage in it and comment on it so that they learn from you!

Step 1

Announce that it's time for Special Time! But call it by their name (e.g. "It's Kayah Time!")

Step 2

Ensure any siblings, partners or other needy people hanging around are being looked after by someone else or safely occupied.

Step 3

Set a timer for 10mins (or longer if you have the time!) and turn all electronics off and put them away. You are fully present for your child!

Step 4

Say "I'm all yours for the next 10mins" and set the ground rules. This time is for play! So no TV or reading or eating. And most important, it must be safe.

Step 5

Follow your child's lead with absolute all of your attention – no distractions and no interfering! Watch, comment and do what they want you to do.





Special Time Top Tips

Say what you see

Describe what they are doing out loud, without getting involved.

"You are using the blocks to make a tower!
Wow you're making it even taller... you're standing right up on your tippy toes to get that block up there!"

Don't teach!

Even if it is absolutely painful to watch - resist the urge to teach them what to do.

For example, if they're doing a puzzle and keep on trying to put 2 pieces together that absolutely will not go together - just notice it instead.

"You're trying to put those pieces together... hmm they're not fitting together properly. You're furrowing your forehead - it looks very tricky!"

Relax the rules

If your child wants to do something they're not normally allowed to do, consider whether there's a safe way of doing it instead. For example, if they want to jump off some high furniture - find a way they can do it safely by moving things around and being there to catch them.

If they want to pour out all the shaving foam - buy them their own cheap can.

If they want to go to Jamaica, get out your sun dresses, tropical shirts and put some reggae on!

When the buzzer goes off...

End the Special Timer when the timer goes off. If your child gets upset, has a meltdown, or throws a tantrum - handle it with compassion and empathy. Stay with them throughout their distress, and give your full attention, but don't extend the special time itself.

"It's so hard to stop. I loved our time together too. I'm sorry this is so hard. I am right here"

