

“When you respond to the little things I do,

My little sounds or the way I play,

I feel alive. I feel I’m real.”

-Play To Talk

Responsive teaching (RT) is “a relationship-focused intervention” in which parents are the most important interventionists. Responsive teaching promotes parent responsiveness and in turn helps children develop positive changes in their behavior. The strategies used in responsive teaching can be used anywhere at anytime. It is important to recognize that there are opportunities to teach children throughout all daily routines. RT can work with any child at any developmental stage or level. Responsive teaching strategies are perfect for creating more attentive parents that can really impact their child’s behavior (Mahoney & MacDonald, 2005).

## What is responsive

## teaching?

Children learn the most through play;

By being free to create and manipulate and by finding out how things work.

We try to give our children toys that fit where they are,

Toys to learn cause and effect,

Toys to learn problem solving,

Toys, Toys, Toys!

Children can learn many things by playing with toys.

But if a child needs to learn to communicate,

If you want him to talk and be more of a people person

He does not need the kind of toys you can buy.

What does a child need to learn to communicate?

Cars, blocks, computers, books?

No! Learning to communicate calls for people

People are your child’s best toys.

Rather than giving him toys that him

Be the kind of person that fits and keeps him there.

A great many children know a lot about being with toys.

But very little about being with people.

We ordinarily judge children according to what they express, not what they know.

Mothers watching their children being tested often scream

My child can do that!

Communicating might be your child’s most important form of play.

When children do not play with people,

Those people may shortchange the, on what they know.

Often in matters less what a child knows,

Than how he communicated and engages with others.

So, how can you become your child’s favorite toy?

By being playful and making time and easy give and take,

By being more interesting that his distractions

So he stays with you to communicate,

By getting his attention and keeping him with you a little more than usual,

By acting in ways he can act and talking in ways he can talk,

And by teaching him he will get more from others as he gives more to them.

When your child begins wanting to be more with people than with toys,

Then you will know he’s coming closer to learning to communicate.

Begin by BEING A TOY your child can control, move, and enjoy.

Remember, people are the toys a child needs to learn to communicate.

Be Your Child’s Most Important Toy

Adapted from James D. MacDonald

Responsive

Teaching

Strategies

Responsive teaching for communication can be broken down into several different components:

* Joint Activity-This occurs when a parent and child engage in an activity together. It embeds great opportunity to promote language development.
* Joint Attention- This occurs when a child and adult share attention on an object, but also maintain an interaction with one another.
* Vocalization-Any sound a child makes, intentional or unintentional. Vocalizations may or may not have purpose, but all should be encouraged.
* Intentional Communication-Communicating with a purpose.
* Conversation-An interaction between parent and child where there is back and forth response to communication.

(Mahoney & MacDonald, 2005)

Intentional Communication

During diapering, feeding, dressing, or playtime you can label the things your child is doing. During diapering or dressing you can count fingers and toes or label body parts and clothing. During feeding you can label types of food or describe textures or ways to eat. During playtime you can label toys or activities your child is doing.

Conversation

When talking with your child, make sure you wait several seconds to give your child a chance to respond. Also try playing in new, silly ways with toys. For example take a block and instead of stacking it on a tower, place it on your head to create a new situation to talk about.

(Mahoney & MacDonald, 2005)

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Joint Activity

Try playing people games without toys. You could use nursery rhymes or songs such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” and add movements to incorporate play and communication.

Joint Attention

Get on the floor to play with your child at their level. Keep your focus on what your child is focused on. Respond to your child’s movements and sounds during routines such as diapering, dressing, and feeding.

Vocalization

Imitate your child’s noises, even if it sounds like babbling. Talk back and forth with your child in the same way they are able to say words or make sounds.

# Key Components of Responsive Teaching

Responsive teaching strategies are effective at home, in the community, or any daily routines.

Strategies To Try