

Let's Not
Wait,
Let's Get
Started



therapyfocus

HELPING CHILDREN GROW



***“Don’t stop while
you’re waiting!”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**

Foreword

Welcome to Therapy Focus.

We are a community service organisation that provides a range of multi-disciplinary services for children in their home, school and community.

Our therapists work with families and schools to help children walk, talk, and participate to get the most out of life.

Your journey with us has begun and it is as unique as your child's footprint or smile.

It can be a difficult time when you or others have concerns about your child's development. You may feel that your child is trying to keep up with their peers in the areas of movement, communication, learning, or looking after themselves.

This book will help you and your family get started by learning more about your child. The simple ideas and strategies will support your child's development until a place in our Early Intervention Service becomes available. Throughout the book you will find tips and words of wisdom that other parents wanted to share with you. We hope that you can relate to these comments and that your child will bring new beginnings and joys to be celebrated.

Please share this information with all the significant people in your child's life including family, child-care workers, kindy, and pre-school teachers. By working together, each brings knowledge and experiences from their role to share and ensure the best outcomes for your child.

The resource is divided into sections, so you can flick to any section when you need to decide which direction to take to best support your child.

JANE COOMBER
Project Officer



Acknowledgements

Jane Coomber, as Project Officer, was the principal writer for this resource.

The contribution of the following people to the development of this resource is also gratefully appreciated;

- Carolyn Havey, Research and Standards Unit Coordinator
- Camille Wakefield, Area Manager
- Kathy Jones, Public Relations Officer
- Anne Ingram, Clinical Standards Officer Physiotherapy
- Louella Vogel, Clinical Standards Officer Occupational Therapy
- Theresa Pastor, Senior Speech Pathologist
- Pia Turner, Occupational Therapist
- Nadine Nick, Occupational Therapist
- Leanne Brentnall, Therapy Assistant
- Parents receiving Therapy Focus services

Thanks also to Emily Perl Kingsley for permission to reprint her 'Welcome to Holland' poem.

This project was funded by the Disability Services Commission.



Welcome to Holland

by Emily Perl Kingsley

©1987 by Emily Perl Kingsley. All rights reserved.
Reprinted by permission of the author.

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel.

It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says,
"Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan.
They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease.
It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around ... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills ... and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy ... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away...
because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But ... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things...

... about Holland.


Contents

	Page
Foreword.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Welcome to Holland.....	5
Frequently Asked Questions.....	8
What is Early Intervention?.....	10
Do I have to pay?.....	11
When a place becomes available, what shall I expect?.....	11
What do Therapists do?.....	12
How can a Speech Pathologist help my child?.....	13
How can an Occupational Therapist help my child?.....	14
How can a Physiotherapist help my child?.....	15
How can a Clinical Psychologist help my child and my family?.....	16
Keys to Success.....	17
Helpful Hints for Supporting your Child.....	19
Supports to help your child learn a new skill.....	20
Physical Prompts.....	20
Visual Prompts.....	21
Verbal Prompts.....	21
Movement.....	22
Moving.....	24
Self Care.....	29
Toileting.....	31
Getting dressed.....	34
Hand Skills.....	37
Hand Skills.....	39
Speech and Language.....	43
Expression.....	45
Comprehension.....	49
Play and Community.....	51
Play.....	53
Playing with Others.....	56
Community.....	58
Play grounds.....	59

Supporting Good Behaviour.....	60
Looking after you	65
Some Success Stories.....	69
Resources.....	73
Therapy Focus Resources.....	75
Helpful websites.....	77
Helpful telephone numbers.....	78



• Frequently Asked Questions



***“Yes, my child is different
to some other children,
but that is because
everyone in the world is
different!”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**

What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention support families and children who have a disability or developmental delay aged 0-6 years and is provided within Therapy Focus's Children and Youth Services.

The overall aim of these services is to provide parents and families with the knowledge, skills and support to meet the needs of their child and to optimise the child's development and ability to participate in family and community life.

The value of early intervention therapy is becoming more widely recognised as providing foundations for future learning. Services are tailored to meet the individual family and needs of the child. They are focused on supporting children in their natural environments, in their everyday experiences and activities.

Do I have to pay?

No. The service is funded by the Disability Services Commission.

When a place becomes available, what shall I expect?

When a place in the service becomes available you will be contacted by a *Client Liaison Officer* who will arrange to meet with you and your family. They will start to get to know your child and your family and explain how the service will work.

You and your child will then be allocated to a therapy team. They will work with you to identify your family's priorities and what goals will improve your ability to function as a family.

The first few sessions with therapists will often involve working out with you which skills your child can do well, which skills need further development and then plan some activities that you can do at home to assist your child's development. You will probably meet a number of different therapists, such as a *Speech Pathologist; Occupational Therapist; Physiotherapists; or Clinical Psychologist*, depending on your child's needs.

Sometimes some simple changes in your child's environment can help your child cope better. Share these ideas with the key people in your child's life including family and friends.

The service provided is a flexible one and can be offered in a variety of settings relevant to your child and families needs. This may include your home, day-care, kindy or pre-primary school.

What do Therapists do?

Your child may receive services from a Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and/or Clinical Psychologist. As well as setting discipline specific goals to improve your child's individual skills, therapists may work together to improve your child's whole of life experience such as their interaction with the environment, level of participation, and the supports (people) around them.

Therapists work within all environments relevant to your child including with you and your child at home, within your child's child care or kindy, and within your community.

Your therapists may provide you and your family with the following;

- Supporting you through your child's diagnosis
- Assessing your child's skills. To provide an overall picture of your child, therapists may work together to assess your child's environment, their performance on activities, their strengths and any barriers to good function
- Providing therapy ideas to support your child's independence
- Collaborating with kindy educators and child-care providers to develop your child's skills within everyday routines
- Adapting the physical environment (e.g. home modifications) to improve your child's accessibility
- Supporting your child during key life transitions such as starting school
- Helping the community to understand the needs of your child
- Promoting the importance of cherishing all children for how unique and special they are



How can a Speech Pathologist help my child?

Speech Pathologists can help improve your child's participation at home, at school, and in the community by supporting your child with the following:

- Communicate using either words or pictures
- Understand others
- Speak clearly and use conversational skills
- Socialise with others
- Understand the relationship between sounds and letters
- Develop a range of skills to help reading and writing
- Safely chew a variety of different foods
- Safely swallow a variety of different foods and drinks



How can an Occupational Therapist help my child?

Occupational Therapists can help improve your child's participation at home, at school, and in the community by supporting your child with the following:

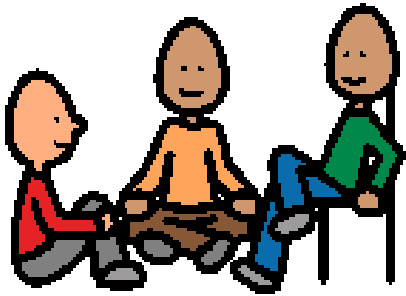
- Use hand and-eye coordination
- Improve their arm strength and coordination
- Improve precise movements of hands and fingers
- Improve their handwriting
- Develop play skills
- Improve their self-care skills such as dressing, toileting, and feeding
- Use equipment and modifications to access their environment and participate in life.



How can a Physiotherapist help my child?

Physiotherapists can help improve your child's participation at home, at school, and in the community by supporting your child with the following:

- Improve their movement skills
- Improve muscle strength
- Further develop flexibility
- Practice movement planning skills
- Develop their balance and coordination
- Improve their posture
- Improve their fitness and lung function
- Use equipment to access their environment
- Get involved in local sporting and community groups



How can a Clinical Psychologist help my child and my family?

Clinical Psychologists can help yourself, your child, and your family function better through the following:

- Assisting your child's behaviour
- Counselling during difficult or stressful periods and situations
- Marital, family and relationship problems
- Stress or pain
- Loss, grief or depression
- Sleeping difficulties
- Children's learning, behaviour and management problems
- Making good relationships better
- Becoming better parents and teachers
- Personal growth
- Offer support and advice to deal with challenges



• Keys to Success



***“I look out for my
quarterly edition of
Therapy Focus' FOCUS
Magazine”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**

Helpful Hints for Supporting your Child

Encouragement

Use lots of immediate praise like 'great job' 'well done' and 'excellent' when your child tries their best. This will help them feel good about what they can do and encourage them to keep trying. You can use rewards such as stickers, a fun activity or a cuddle.

Modelling

Show your child how to do the task, as they learn a lot by watching you.

Routine

Try and keep your routine the same as this will reduce confusion and increase your child's understanding of the routine, tasks and instructions.

Patience

Being calm and patient is important and can be difficult to achieve all the time!

You can decrease your stress levels by allowing enough time and making sure you don't expect too much of your child in a short time.

Time

Rather than setting up a separate time to practice a skill, the concept of 'Learning Everywhere' is encouraged. This means that you use every opportunity in your child's routine and environment to develop their skills. By using every opportunity, the child receives frequent practice and it actually saves you time.

Support Structure

Children need physical assistance initially, then visual and verbal prompts until they can complete tasks and skills on their own.

One step at a time

Children tend to develop skills step-by-step. Start with simple aspects of the task first. Once your child has achieved one step, they will be ready to try the next step.

Supports to help your child learn a new skill

Children with disabilities learn best when information is presented in a number of different ways to utilise different senses (e.g. sight, sound, touch).

Prompts are used to help your child to understand an instruction or help your child carry out an activity. Prompts can be used when teaching a new skill or activity but should be reduced as your child becomes more competent in the skill. The aim is to remove all prompts so that your child can independently apply the skill.

Physical Prompts

Physical prompts are used to help your child carry out an activity. They involve you guiding your child's body to show them how to reach a desired goal.

How to use 'physical prompts' to help your child's learning

- A slight touch to your child's elbow or head whilst sitting behind them will prompt them to attend to the task in front of them
- Placing your hand over your child's hand during drawing or cutting activities will help your child understand how to do a task with their hands
- Providing a slight touch to different parts of your child's body will help them remember the sequence of tasks; such as in dressing or undressing, or when bathing

Visual Prompts

Most children learn initially by seeing things. 'Visual prompts' can help improve your child's understanding.

Visual prompts can include using real objects, miniature objects, photos, pictures, and symbols. It can be helpful to use both spoken information with visual prompts.

How to use 'visual prompts' to help your child's learning

- Visual prompts can be used to help your child remember steps in common routines such as dressing
- Picture prompts can be faded over time, by using less pictures or making pictures smaller or subtle
- Information can be presented in an "eye catching" manner with the use of pictures and colour. This will help obtain and maintain your child's attention
- Having a picture timetable of what is planned for the day ahead for your child may help them cope better with a change in routine

Verbal Prompts

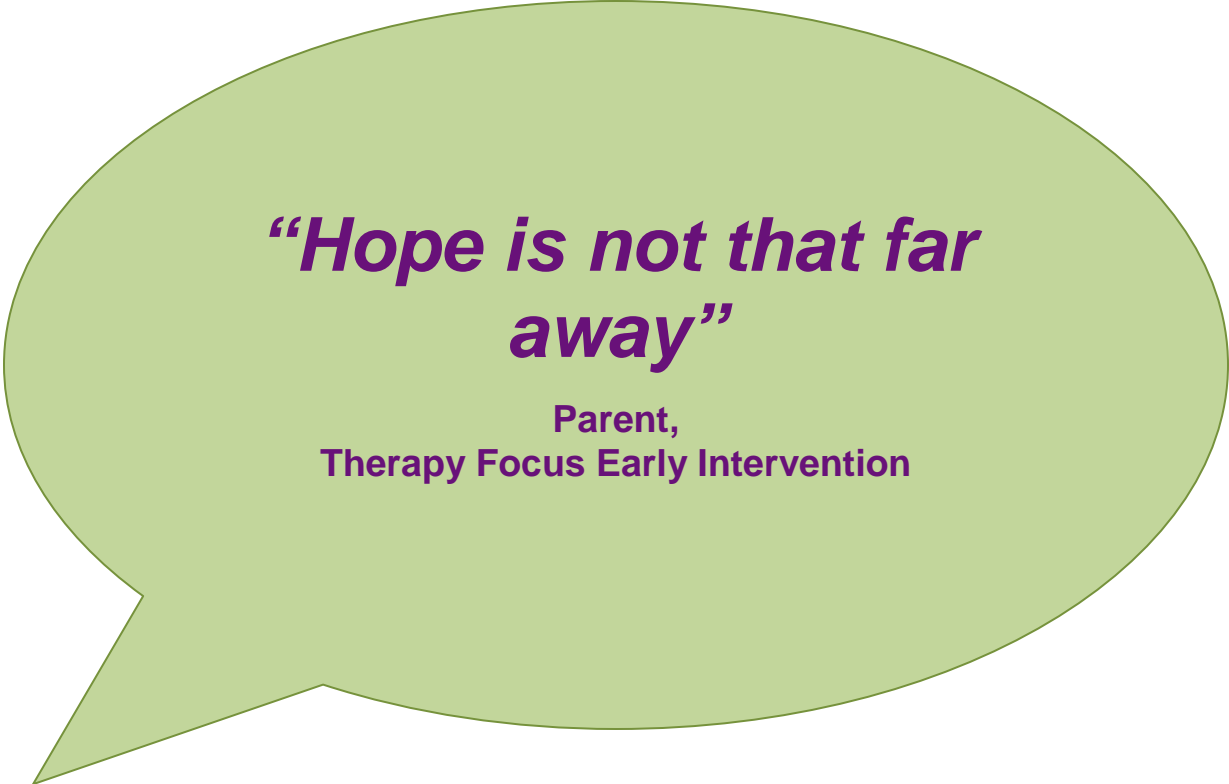
Verbal prompts can be helpful in teaching children independence as a skill. Verbal prompts are the easiest prompts to fade, ensuring your child is able to complete tasks on their own.

How to use 'verbal prompts' to help your child's learning

- Repeating the instruction or story in their own words will help them retain it
- When teaching new concepts, make use of repetition and concrete examples
- Start with simple words and phrases. Reduce multi step instruction to one step instructions
- Emphasize a word or phrase by putting it at the beginning or end of a sentence
- Help your child answer questions by giving them a verbal cue; "you want to play with the... t....tr....truck!"

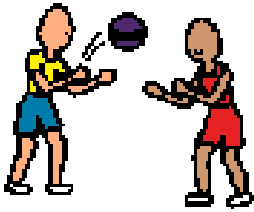


Movement



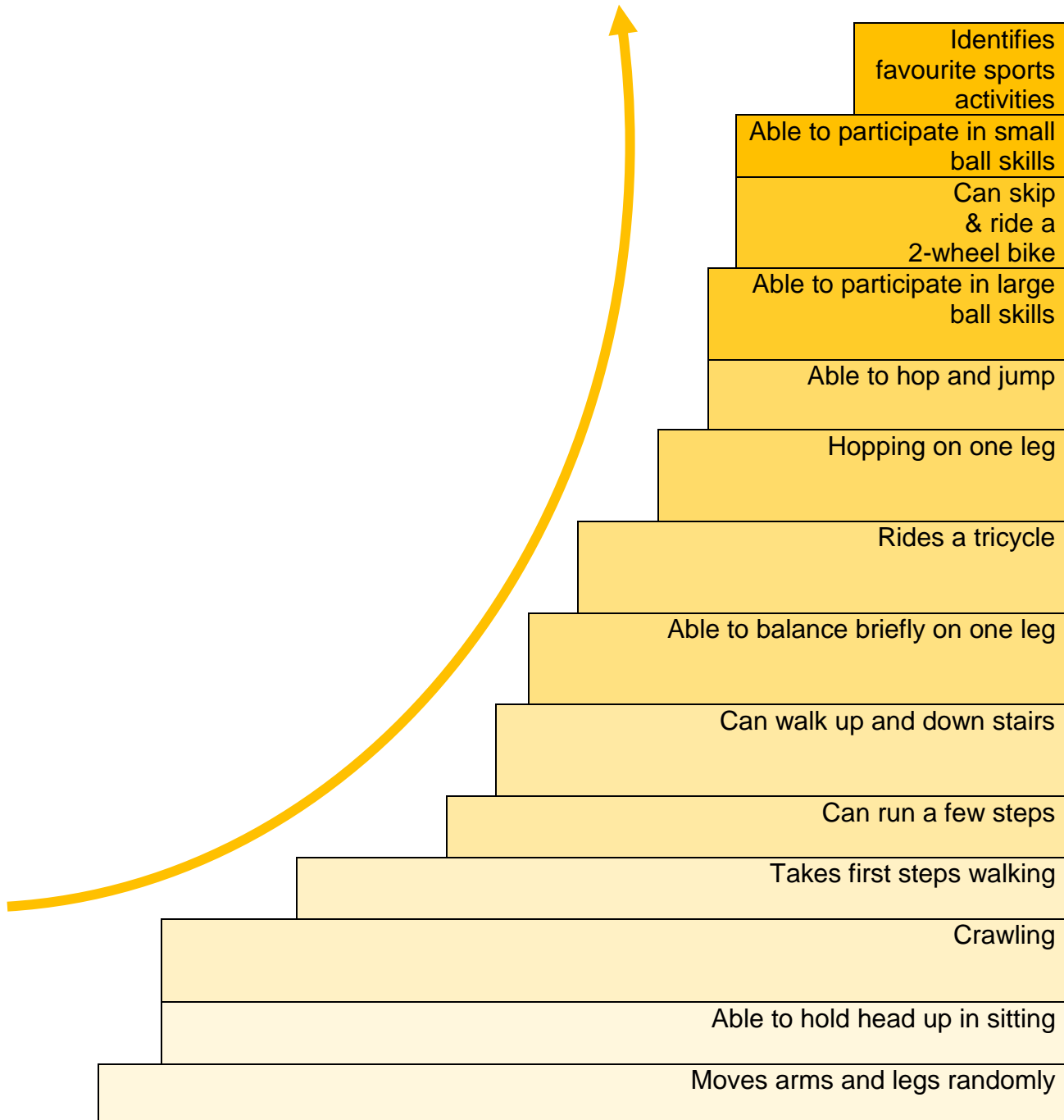
***“Hope is not that far
away”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Moving

How a child usually learns to move



How to help your child move around

- When your child is sitting, rolling and on all fours, provide toys at different distances away (e.g. initially just out of reach) and varying heights (e.g. on the sofa) to encourage them to move and explore
- Give your child lots of movement experiences like bouncing on your knee, swinging, rocking and spinning gently, see-saws, bouncy mats etc.
- Once your child is standing provide stable furniture to pull up on, and to hold while they cruise from place to place
- Hold your child's hands in front and support them while they are learning to walk
- Provide a push trolley, pram, stool or large box for your child to push along the floor when they get more adventurous

How to help your child run

- Start with "Ready, Steady, GO!" encouraging your child to get to the "finish" as fast as they can with a hurried walk or a run
- Push a large toy or box while walking like a trolley or pram, a chair or box
- Play Chasey! On a grassy area ask your child to chase you, then you chase your child, moving slow and fast, also changing direction
- Practice moving energetically to music, so you can also encourage your child to stop running when the music stops
- Run around avoiding obstacles in path

How to help your child jump

1. Start with jumping down from a small step to the ground holding your child's hands (he/she may just step off initially)
2. Next try jumping (with supervision) on a trampoline or a mattress
3. Show your child how to squat and stand up again
4. Then practice jumping a little way upwards with hands held and land on their feet
5. Singing a jumping song or pretending to be a frog, a bunny or a kangaroo could also be helpful
6. Later show your child how to swing their arms from behind them forwards
7. Now practise jumping with an arm swing
8. To increase the height of the jump, encourage a bigger arm swing
9. Next, practice jumping over a line, or into a hoop
10. From here jumping gets higher, further and stronger

How to help your child play ball games

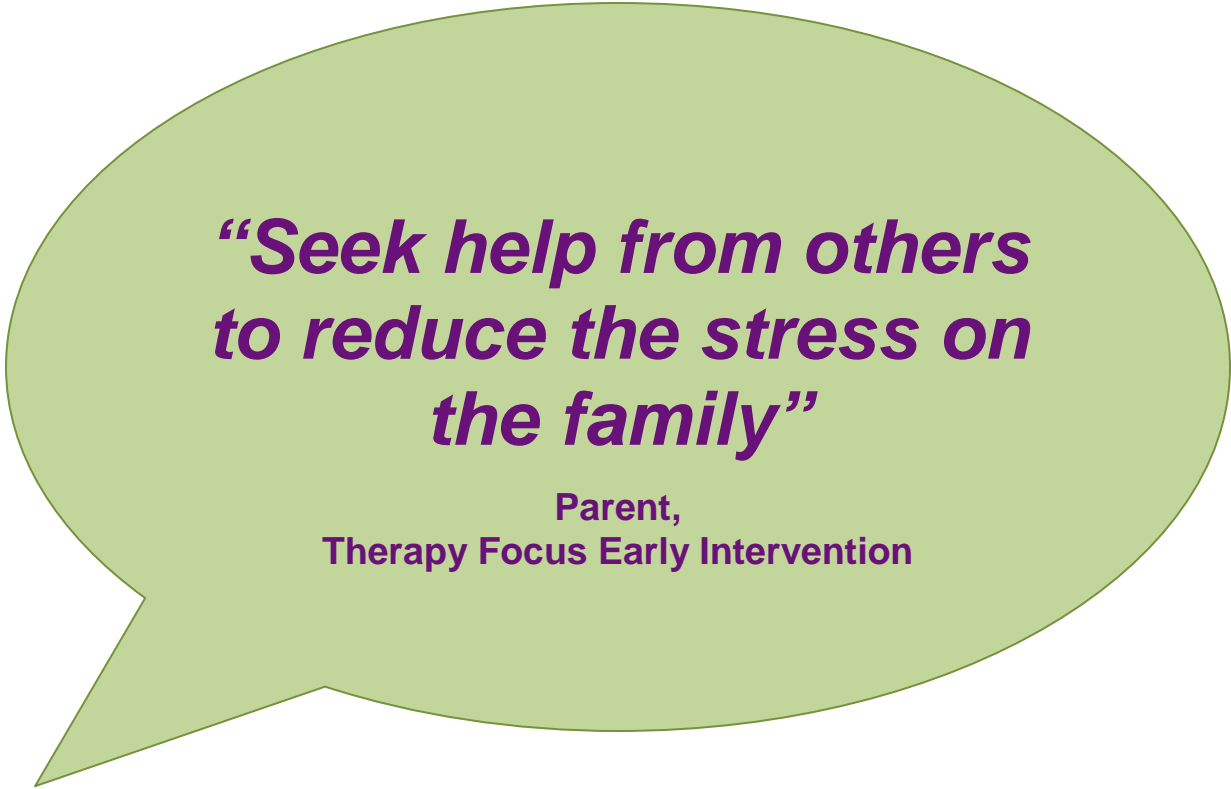
1. Throwing and catching a ball is a skill your child will use and refine as they grow.
2. Start this skill with your child sitting down on the floor rolling balls to each other
3. The next step is for your child to try 'throw and catch' while sitting (throwing is easier than catching)
4. Then progress to standing with their back in the corner of the wall for support
5. Finally they are ready to try standing alone to throw and catch (catching requires hand-eye coordination). Initially your child may throw the ball in random directions
6. Soft cloth balls are a good place to start and you can then move on to bean bags, a larger ball, beach ball, and smaller balls. When practicing, ask and show your child cues like 'hands out, look at the ball, and catch.'
7. When they are more skilled, children can practice ball skills on their own by bouncing and catching a ball, throwing a ball up into the air and catching it or throwing a ball against a wall
8. Later introduce bat and ball, racquet and ball etc.

How to help your child ride a tricycle

1. Ensure your child's safety by wearing helmets and safety pads
2. Show them how to position the bike with the front wheel facing straight forward and have the pedal in the 'up position' ready to start
3. Your child holds onto the handle bars and climbs onto the bike, feet on the pedals
4. Tell your child to push the top pedal down to begin riding. Ride straight forward
5. If a little extra help is necessary to begin with, hold the back of the seat and give a little push to start
6. Make sure your child is sitting in an upright position with head up looking ahead to where they are riding
7. When your child has accomplished straight lines try oval shapes inside the size of a basketball court
8. Now watch and smile as your child gains increasing skills and confidence in riding a tricycle



Self Care



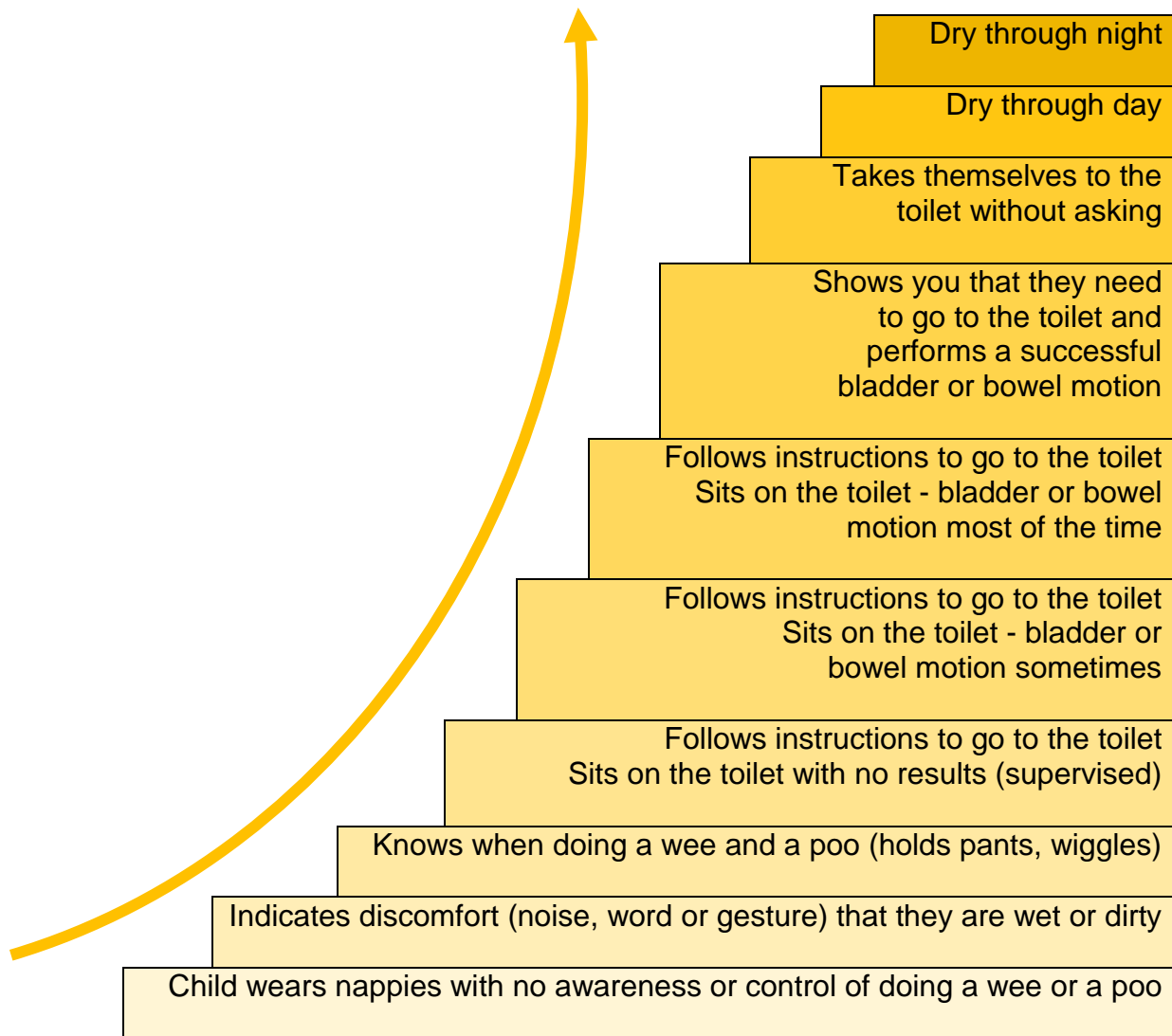
***“Seek help from others
to reduce the stress on
the family”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Toileting

How a child usually learns to use the toilet



How to help your child get started

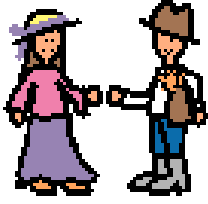
This process can take many years and can relate to your child's maturity and understanding. Stress or illness can set things back.

To learn to use the toilet, your child needs to be able to know when they want to 'go', show you that they want to 'go', be able to hold on until they get to the toilet.

- If your child is not yet aware of 'their wees', helping them to look at and touch their wet pants may help. Put poos from nappies into the toilet to show your child where it goes
- Check the nappy regularly to get an idea of what times during the day your child tends to 'go'. Using a chart to record this is a good idea. Then this can indicate when taking your child to the toilet will most likely result in success. Half an hour to an hour after meals is generally a good start
- Some children understand using the toilet better if they have a role model to show them how it works – such as a parent, brother, or sister. You could also try role play with dolls and explaining the process to your child with pictures
- Talk to the other people in your child's life – child-care staff, grandparents or babysitters, and explain to them how you are helping your child to learn about the toilet. This way they can use the same strategies when your child is with them
- If your child is having difficulty with regular toileting, feed him/her lots of high-fibre foods, such as wholemeal or wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables. A Dietician could offer you more assistance in this area
- Offer lots of water to make sure their stools are soft enough to avoid straining, but be careful when the water is given. If you give it just before bed, they are likely to wet the bed
- Teaching your child to wipe their bottom effectively and flushing the toilet is also important

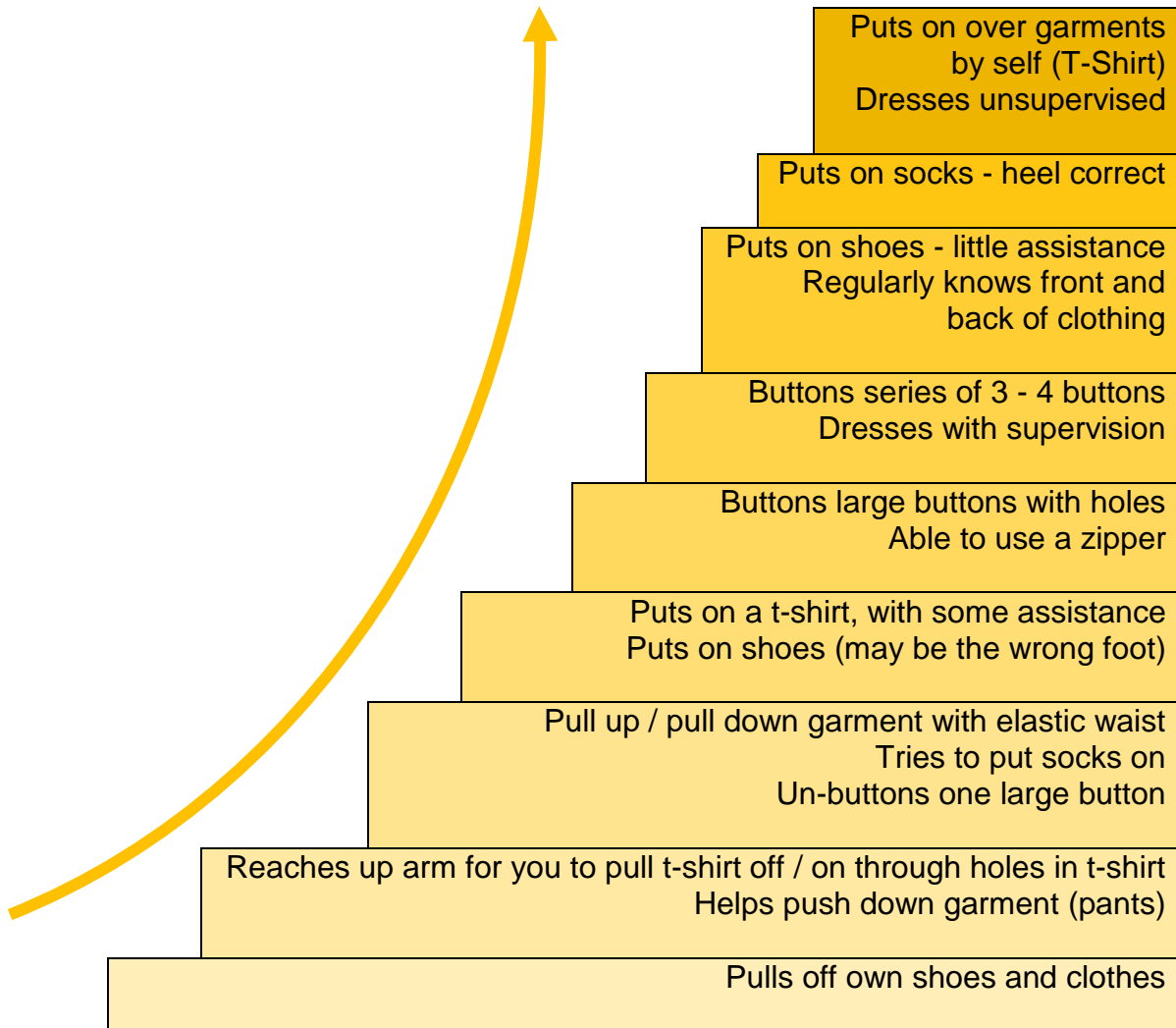
How to help your child when they are on the toilet

- Dress your child in loose clothes or trainer pants during summer to help with pulling down pants
- Show your child how to rest their hands on the lower tummy to help them feel stomach movements and become aware of the bladder
- Make sure your child is comfortable while sitting on either a potty or the toilet. Steps and a footrest can help your child feel more secure
- Talk about what you are doing e.g. "waiting for the wee wee" (a running tap may help). Wait for a few minutes, not too long to get bored (about 10 minutes at most)
- While waiting you can read a book together, look at pictures on the wall, sing, or play with a special toy
- When on the potty, blowing games and activities will naturally encourage actions needed to pass wee and poo. e.g. bubble blowing, blowing party whistles, blowing bubbles with a straw into a cup
- Give your child praise whether there is a result or not, and this will encourage them to 'try again.' Rewards for using the toilet could be a new book to read on the toilet, new pictures to pin up and look at, or a new toy to hold
- Wait until your child is off the toilet before flushing, as this can frighten some children. Some kids like to press the button themselves!



Getting dressed

How a child usually learns to get dressed.



How to help your child dress themselves

Dressing is a task that develops gradually. Children find it easier to undress than to get dressed, so start with undressing! There are also lots of opportunities to practice- at bath time, getting ready to go out somewhere special, or after swimming.

The following fun activities can help develop your child's dressing skills.


- Musical dress ups. Using large clothes for this game as big clothes are easier to put on than tight clothes!
- Play dress ups when there is free time
- Play with toys that use fastenings we see in clothes, e.g. zippers, button, Velcro, etc.
- Playing dress ups with dolls and teddy bears can help improve their understanding of body parts and the sequence of dressing (e.g. underwear first, then shorts, then t-shirt, and finally hat)

Other dressing strategies to try

- It can be helpful to teach your child to learn the last part of the task and work backwards from there. Give your child a lot of assistance and prompting throughout the task until the last step of the task when less assistance is given (i.e. the child only has to pull their t-shirt down)
- As they improve; encourage your child to do the last 2 steps of the task (i.e. Pull shirt down and put their left arm through). Eventually they will be able to complete the whole task
- This way of learning can be without errors and as a result can be a great motivator for self confidence and success
- To help your child's balance while dressing, try sitting on the floor or bed with some back or side support. Ask your child to hold onto a chair handle or rail when reaching down to put socks on
- When first learning dressing skills, use loose elastic waists on shorts or trousers; pull on t-shirts and clothes without a lot of fasteners, as these are easier to put on
- Consider the texture or feel of the material of the clothes, e.g. wool might be itchy or uncomfortable on the skin. Some children may be oversensitive to particular materials and not want to wear them as they are uncomfortable. Others may be hesitant to wear new or unfamiliar clothes as well, until they get used to the material
- Use a picture chart or photos of the clothes and the order in which they are to get dressed or undressed. This will help them remember what to put on next



Hand Skills



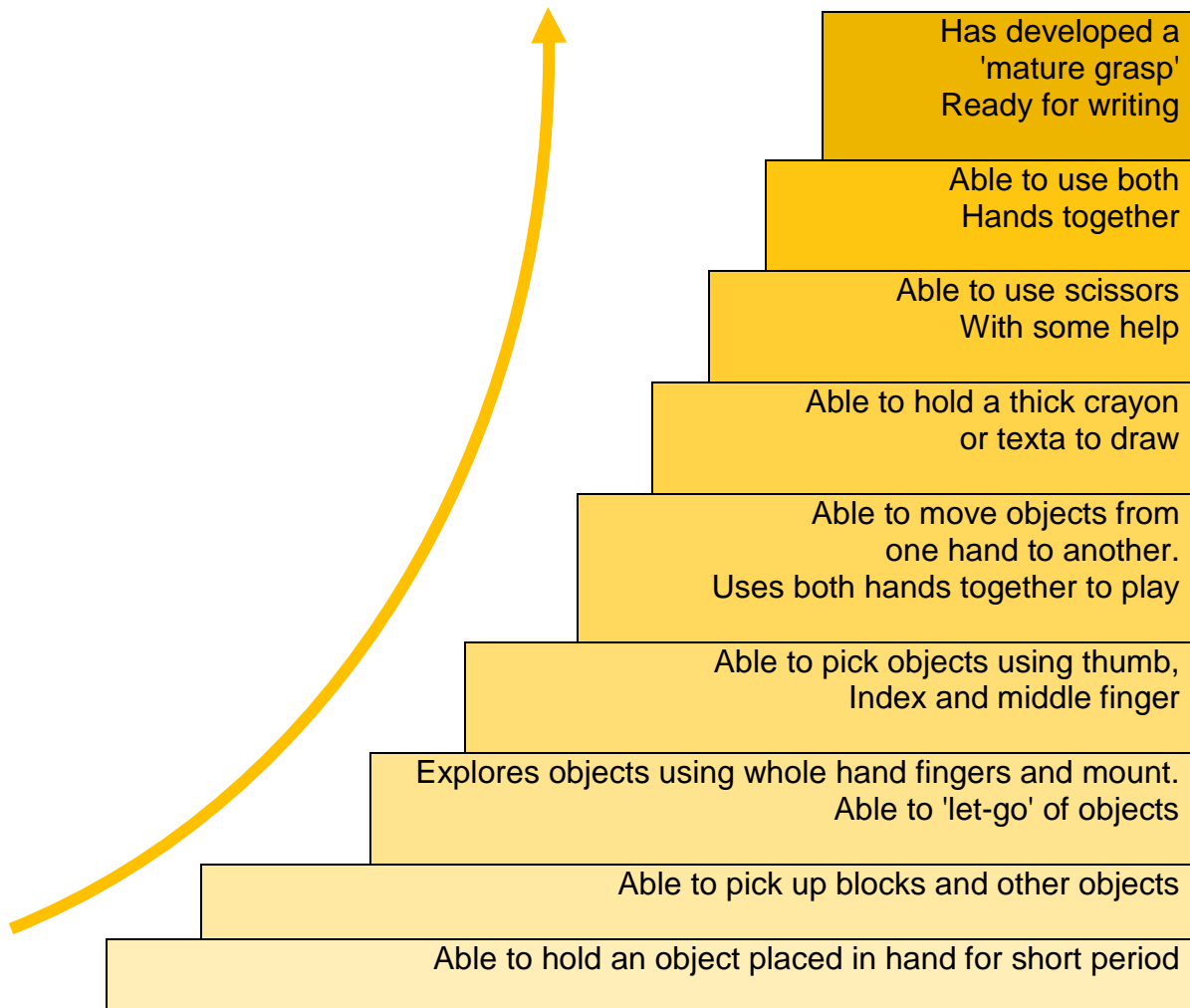
***“We're taking
small steps”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Hand Skills

How a child usually learns hand skills



How to help your child develop hand skills.

Hand skills are important for tasks like holding a crayon, pulling up pants and using a spoon. Your child is developing hand strength and hand-eye coordination.

You can build their ability to manipulate smaller objects such as doing up buttons. Other hand skills include using their hands together in a different way such as threading beads. These abilities can help your child to have more independence.

Some play ideas include;

- Threading; Making a necklace by threading macaroni, beads, life savers or cheezels onto a piece of string
- Wrapping an object with paper and sticky tape
- Playing with play dough to make objects
- Playing jigsaw puzzles
- Turning over a line of 20 cent pieces using the fingers and thumb
- Playing card games like snap or sorting cards
- Playing games that involve manipulating objects like pick up sticks
- Playing with dolls, dressing dolls and arranging doll furniture
- Building bricks, Duplo, Lego and wooden blocks
- Playing with finger puppets
- Singing songs that require hand actions e.g. Twinkle twinkle, Wheels of the bus, Incy Wincy Spider, Three little ducks
- Hanging clothes on a mini clothes line
- Exercising fingers where the child touches their thumb to each finger, start slowly and then speed up
- Playing with bubbles, ask your child to poke them with fingers, grabbing them

How to help your child's drawing and writing skills

The general steps involved are firstly tracing, then copying, and then freehand drawing or writing.

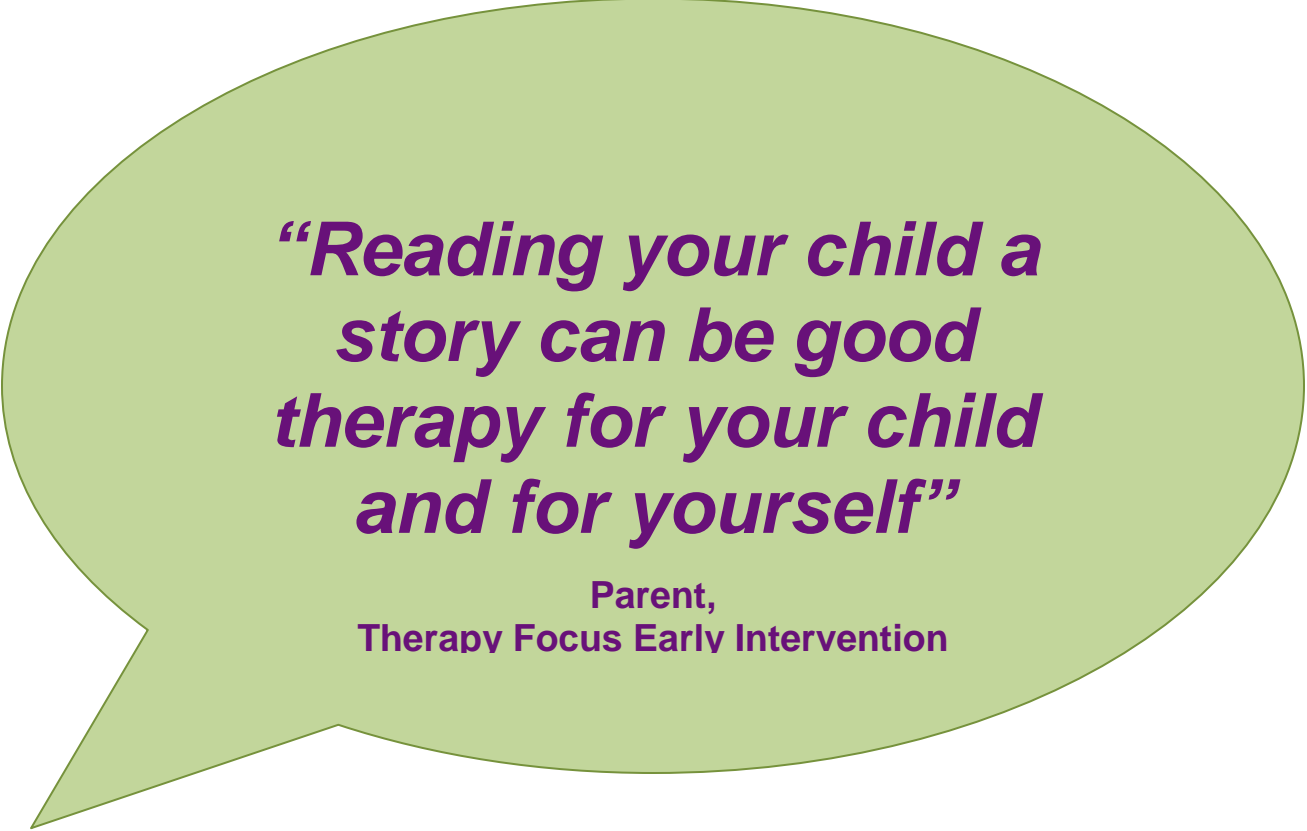
1. Ensure your child is sitting up straight
2. Start with your child gripping a thick crayon or texta
3. Assist your child to make some marks on the page with crayon
4. Next encourage your child to scribble
5. Allow your child to take their time to scribble spontaneously
6. Next, practice with your child drawing a line
7. Encourage your child to copy a line, a cross, a circle
8. Practice tracing around shapes, copying objects from a dotted line.
9. Next, practice colouring in a simple picture and encourage your child to stay within the lines
10. Then work on drawing a recognisable person
11. Practice copying simple letters, simple letters include V, H, I.
12. Now work on trying dot to dot pictures
13. Encourage your child to write most letters of their first name

How to teach your child to use scissors

1. There are a range of different types of scissors available from therapeutic and educational suppliers
2. Practice grasping and releasing objects such as tongs
3. Then practice opening and shutting the scissors using two hands
4. Next, encourage your child to place fingers in the correct finger holes
5. Then, ask your child to hold the paper with their other hand with the thumb on top
6. Practice making small snips or single cuts
7. Then encourage your child to cut in a continuous line or along the line
8. Next, try cutting along corners of squares
9. Finally practice cutting along curved lines

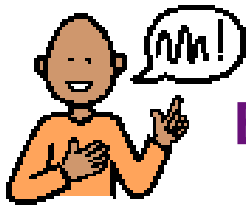


Speech and Language



***“Reading your child a
story can be good
therapy for your child
and for yourself”***

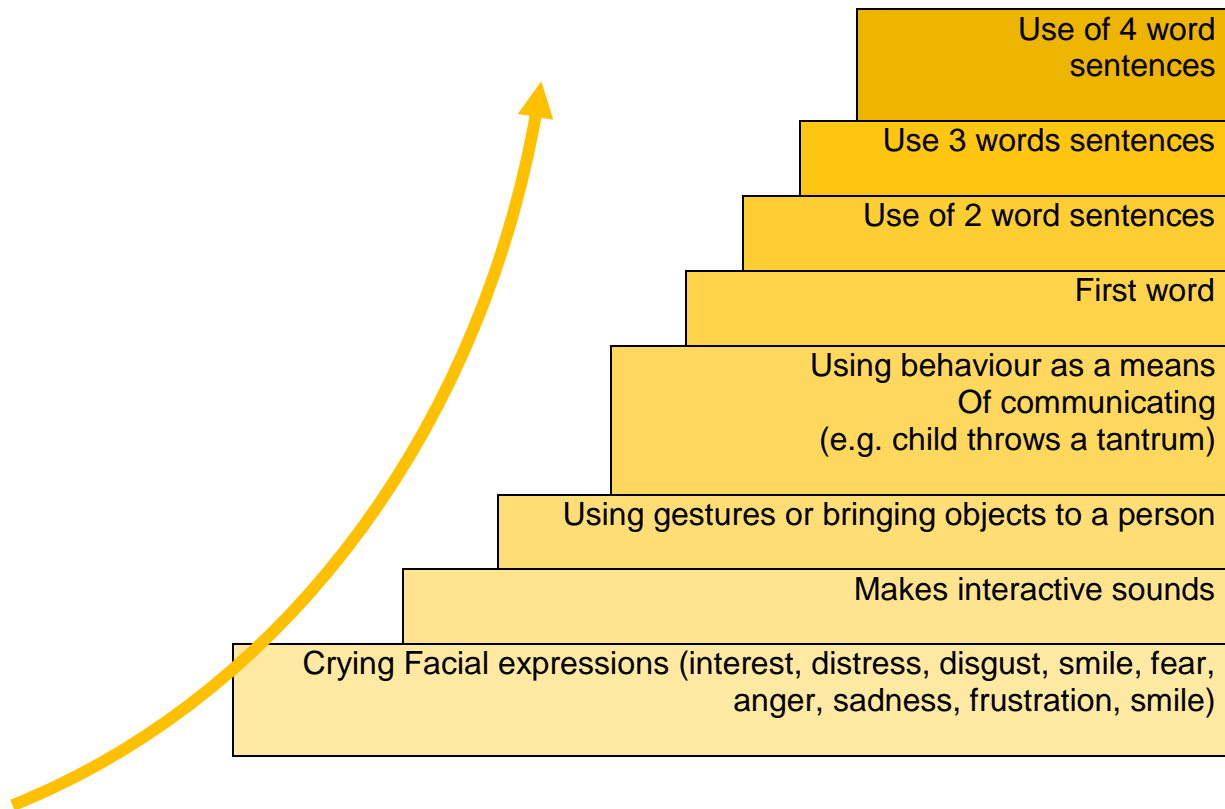
**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Expression

We communicate for many reasons from getting someone's attention, to expressing feelings, wants and needs, asking for help, asking questions, requesting or sharing information, to socialising with others.

How a child usually learns to get their message across to us



How to help your child when they have limited or no speech

- **Respond to your child's attempts to communicate.**
 - Your child may try to get your attention by crying, making sounds, body movements, looking at you, or pointing at what they want
 - Acknowledge their communication and give them the item/action requested
- **Provide opportunities for communication.**
 - Try not to anticipate your child's needs. Wait for your child to show some communication before providing the item to them
 - Place favourite toys out of reach, in see through containers, or in containers that are difficult for a child to open and wait for your child to ask for the item
 - In a familiar game or routine, make a mistake or forget something- such as the bubble bath at bath time- and wait for your child's comments
- **Offer choices.**
 - Offering choices gives your child an opportunity to control their environment
 - Choice enables your child to learn how to communicate what they need or want, rather than others giving your child what think they want
- **Give your child time to respond.**
 - It might take your child a long time to communicate with you
 - Try not to rush in and fill the silence
 - After giving them time to respond, prompt them to make a choice
- **Turn Taking**
 - In conversation, we take turns being the listener and speaker. You can teach turn taking in games such as peek-a-boo, rolling a ball back and forth to each other, and imitating actions and sounds.
- **Expand on what your child says.**
 - Provide opportunities for your child to comment and make remarks during activities
 - You can expand on what your child says by saying the sentence back to them in a longer form. E.g. If your child says "more biscuit" you can reply with "want more biscuit." This way you are teaching them to say longer sentences

How to expand your child's speech

Feely bag

1. Place a range of objects in a pillowcase, ideally things from different categories and functions (e.g. food, clothes, animals, transport, things from the kitchen and bathroom)
2. Ask your child to choose one object in the bag and describe to you how it feels. Then let them have a peek and give clues about what the object is.
3. Place a 😊 face on a chart for each piece of information your child provides (e.g. name, colour, shape, size)
4. When your child has run out of descriptions for the object, ask questions about the remaining areas (e.g. where would you find it, what category is it? Is it an animal? etc.)

Photos

- Place some photos of people in your child's life and ask them to pick a photo and then name that person

I Spy

- Take turns describing an object you can see. Give one clue at a time, allowing your child to give a few guesses before giving the child the next clue (e.g. "I spy with my little eye something beginning with 'G', its red, it's a fruit, its round, and it's a.....grape!")

What to do when your child's speech is unclear

- Do not pretend to understand your child when you have not. Instead ask them to give more information (e.g. Where would you find it? What colour is it?) or use gesture
- The aim is for your child to realise that they have not been understood and spontaneously provide with more information (e.g. when your child says 'dodo' and realised he /she was not understood, rather than give up or become frustrated, he /she then might say 'its round and you eat it.' Then as a parent you may be able to work out that he wants a doughnut)

How to help your child's speech development at home

Time

- Prioritise time together apart from your daily routine. Leave time for your child to make discoveries and mistakes. Wait to see what your child will do or say before you jump in

Lots of talking

- Talk about what you are doing (even boring every day things), what you can see, how you feel, talk about planning things, ask for things.

Encourage and reward your child for all communication attempts.

- Tell them specifically why you are pleased, e.g. "That was a new word you used, well done", or "That was clear talking, good boy"

Life experiences

- Understanding the world around is important for language development. Provide a wide range of experiences

Risk taking

- Show your child that it is okay to make mistakes, tell them when you get something wrong, and reward them for having a go

Look

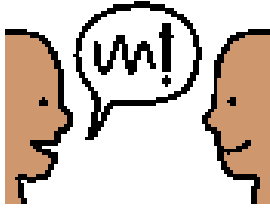
- Your child may communicate by ways other than talking! It is important to respond to body language, facial expression, tone of voice, actions/gestures, and eye gaze. Demonstrate these to your child

Play

- Make time to follow your child's wish in play, let them lead. If they want to play with the cardboard box, start talking about the box!
- Get down to their level. Be flexible
- Show them how to play if they are not sure

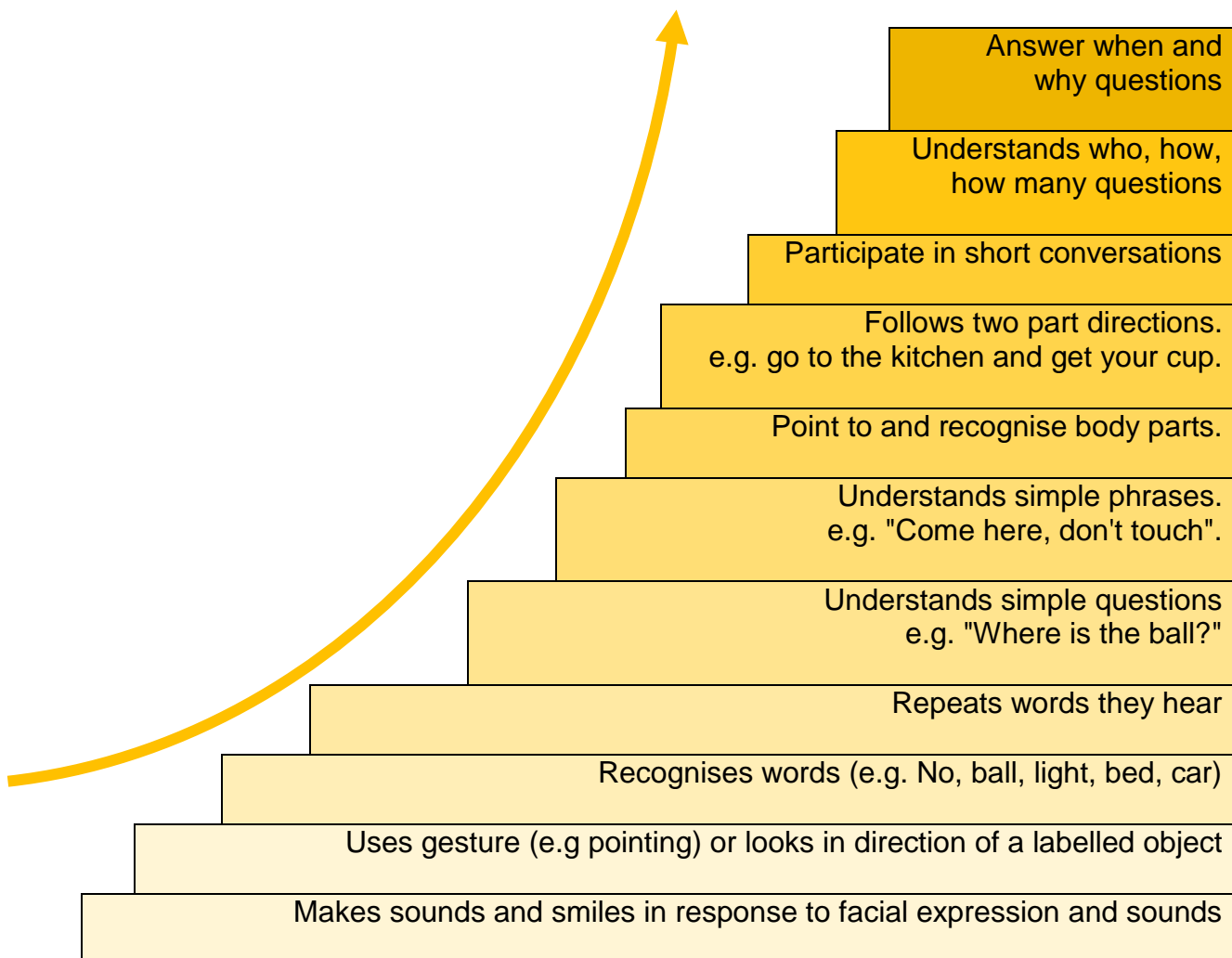
Good Questions

- What now? What next? Who? Why? Where? How? What's happening?
- Do you want a ___ or a ___? Ask questions, even if you need to model the answer.
- Always use more comments in playtime than questions



Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand what people are saying and to follow instructions. It may also include understanding social cues such as body language, facial expressions and gestures.



How to help your child's comprehension

Be sure that you have your child's attention before speaking to them

- Call their name.
- Make sure you use eye contact.

Keep it simple

- Keep instructions and requests short and simple

Allow time

- Some times children need some time to process an instruction.

Repeat and rephrase

- When talking about new things you may have to repeat the information you give your child.
- Give clear examples that are easy for your child to visualise and use pictures to assist.

Give two alternatives

- When you ask a question, give a choice of answers, e.g. would you like an apple or a pear?

Help with competing sentences

- Ask a question and then begin to answer it, e.g. how do we know John is happy? We know because he is.....(e.g. smiling or laughing)

Following commands

- Teach your child to follow commands of increasing length and complexity within the play setting e.g. "get the ball", and later "get the ball and the shoe"
- Once understanding is established with a particular command, add variety to the way it is presented e.g. "put the paper in the bin" versus "throw it away"
- Use a lot of repetition as you describe things or events, particularly during routines such as mealtime, bath time or dressing
- Whenever your child indicates something without using words, provide your child with the single word or picture match

Eye contact

- Look directly at your child when you are talking to them. Watch their eyes and you will know if they are following you or if they are confused.

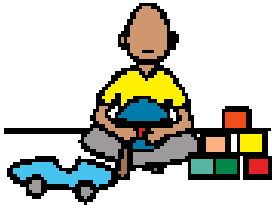


Play and Community



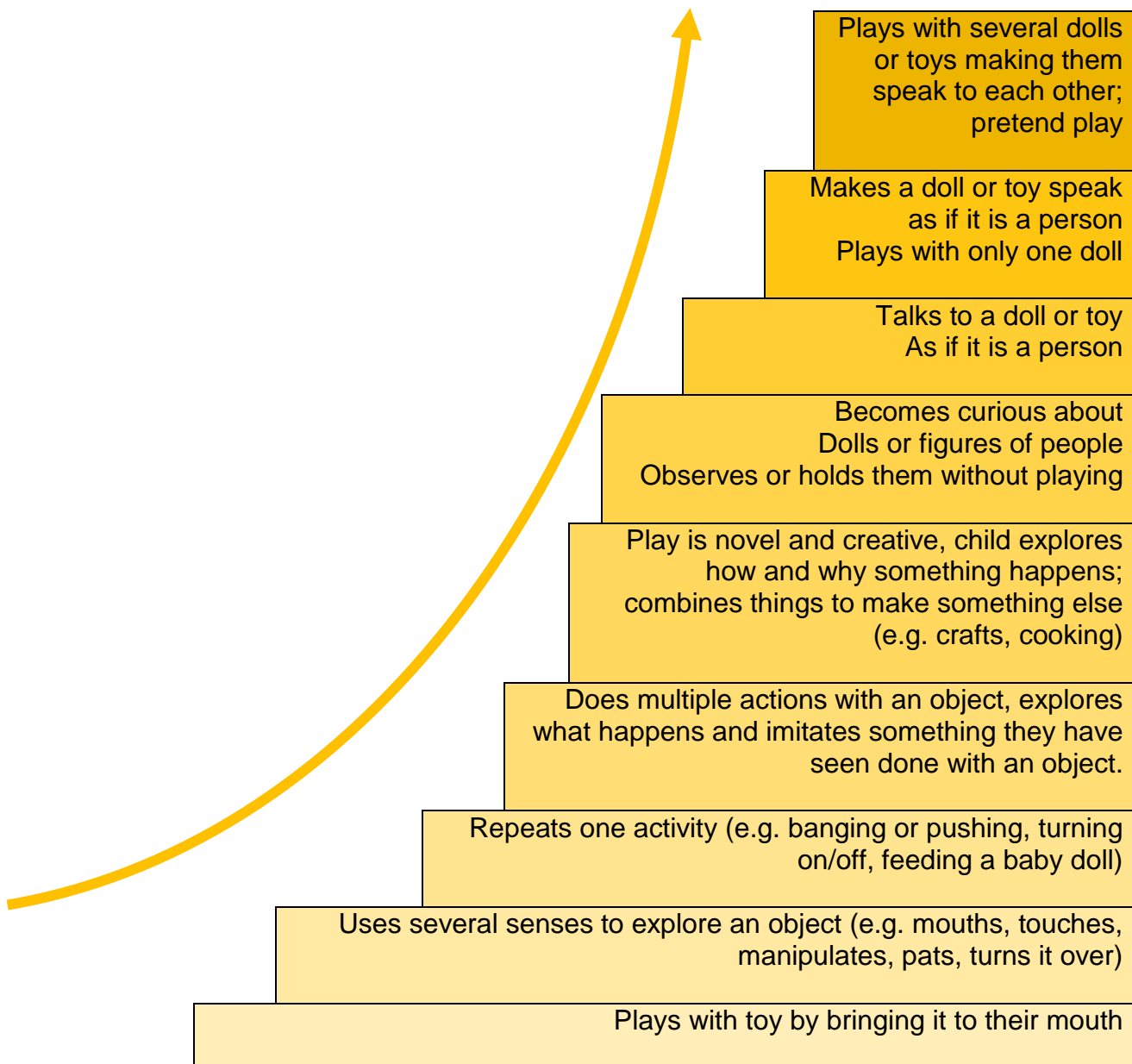
***“Focus on your child's
achievements”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Play

How a child usually learns to play on their own



How to help your child to play on their own

Show and tell your child 'how to play' by getting down on the floor with them. Tell them what the toy is and talk about what you are doing whilst playing.

Arouse curiosity in your child regarding a toy 'what is it?'

Encourage exploration 'look at what this can do!'

Give opportunity for your child to practice. Show and tell over and over.

Increase variety

- Once your child is able to play with a toy as shown, then you can introduce some creativity 'what else can I do with this?'
- Show different things that can be done with the toy and increase the amount of time spent playing with it.
- Now see if your child spontaneously plays with the toy by themselves. If so, then it is time to introduce a new toy and repeat 'show and tell' again

Give structure when playing with toys

- Have a short road to push the car along with a start and finish point

Construction Toys

- When making items (e.g. Lego, building blocks), have a finished item so that your child knows what to aim for
- Have pictures of the steps to get there and only the materials needed to complete the item, not lots of extras

Pretend play

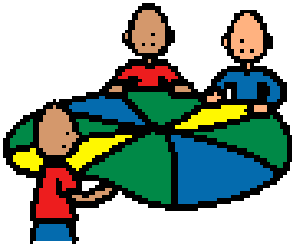
- This can be taught by 'show and tell' with your child
- Start with simple everyday activities such as brushing doll's hair then move onto pretend actions (pretending to sleep, eat)
- And finally pretending items are something else (using a banana for a phone, a block as a car)

Games with rules

- Have the rules clearly explained in pictures
- Have turn taking card or a symbol to make it clear whose turn it is

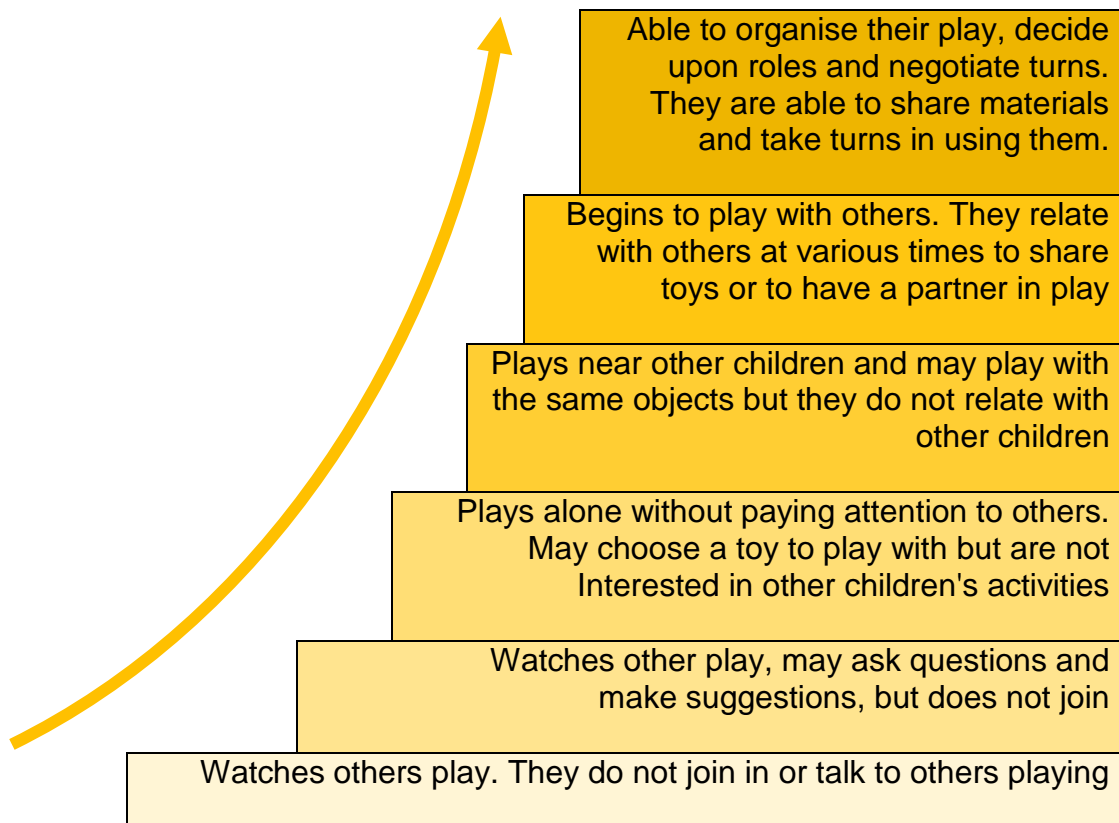
Social games

- Start with ball play and simple 'show and tell' of actions (e.g. roll ball, throw ball) and then responding to commands
- Then ask your child to return the ball to you
- Start playing the game with an adult and then move to ball play with another child



Playing with Others

How a child usually learns to play with other children



How to help your child to play with others

Encourage communication

- Help your child to be understood by others by repeating or rephrasing what your child meant to say to another child;
“Peter said he would like some more pizza”
- Encourage children to talk to each other;
“Ask Stephen if you can play with it”
- Invite children to play with each other;
“Michael, please set the table with Nicola”
- Ask children to help each other;
“Zach, Jo needs some help”

Indirect praise

- Praise for playing together;
“That was nice of you for helping Sara make her pizza”

Alerts

- Alert your child to what’s happening, but don’t tell them to play together;
“Sarah has pizza for everyone”

Rules

- Remind your child about the rules for playing together;
“We have to share out toys”



Community

'Inclusion' means that all children can participate in activities in life and the community.

Feeling 'included' improves everyone's quality of life, regardless of our age;

- Children with a disability can lead positive, happy lives and bring joy to themselves and many people.
- Quality of life is not about ability - we all have different abilities.
- Quality of life is about your child feeling well, being safe and comfortable, having experiences to enjoy, feeling that she is a lovable person, and having some things that she can feel proud of being able to do.

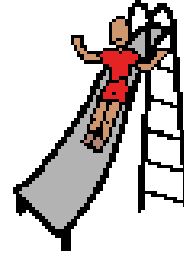
To help your child feel included begin by encouraging your child to join in with siblings, cousins, friends' children, and other peers.

Some other ideas for you to get out and about with your child and encourage them to experience a wide variety of community based activities include the following:

- Going to a local park, playground, Kings Park or the zoo
- Going to the beach or the river joining the local swimming pool
- Attending library story time
- Participating in playgroup
- Joining in at jungle gym
- Participating in music and dance activities
- Attending a local fair or event
- Going to your families' favourite sporting event, e.g. the football, netball.

You Local Area Coordinator (LAC) may be able to help you with more ideas and support.

Play grounds



The play ground is a fun place for your child to play outdoors with other children and apply new physical skills.

It also provides them with a wonderful opportunity to practice following instructions and learning new words such as “over, under, around and through” as well as interacting with other children.

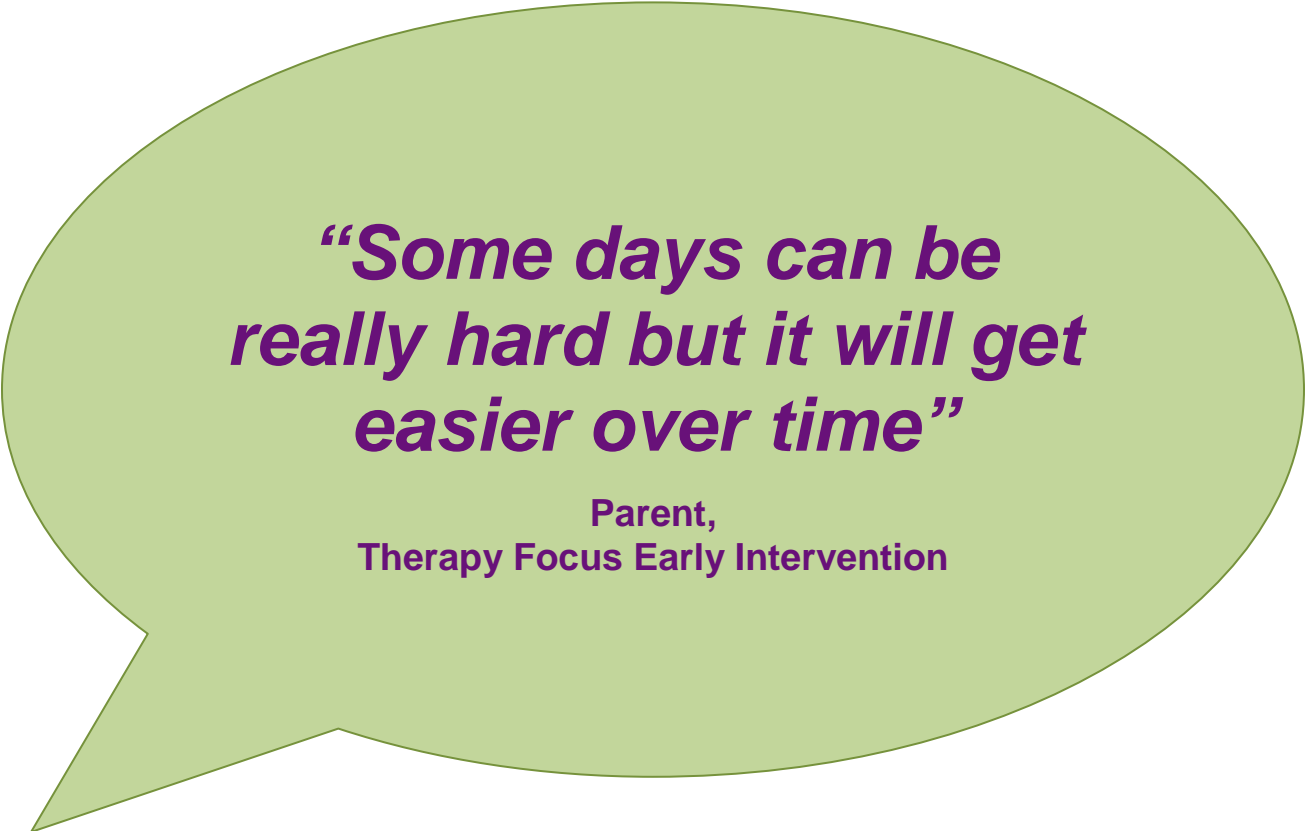
To be safe, it’s best to keep watch when children are balancing, climbing and running.

Here is a list of a few great playgrounds in Perth. For further information on playgrounds in your area, contact you local council.

- Kings Park lotteries playground
- Carine open space playground
- Perth Zoo playground
- Hyde Park has a wheelchair accessible swing
- Inglewood Park, Wordsworth Ave, Inglewood
- Heathcote playground, Applecross
- Whiteman Park
- Mawson Park, Hillarys
- Clarko Reserve, Trigg
- Liberty Wing playground



- Supporting Good Behaviour



***“Some days can be
really hard but it will get
easier over time”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Supporting good behaviour

Children behave the way they do for a reason, such as running away when noises are very distracting to them. In order to change their behaviour it is important to work out the reasons behind the behaviour. Finding a way of responding to these reasons will help in promoting good behaviour.

A good idea is to document exactly what is happening prior to any inappropriate behaviour, to see if there are any consistent triggers to the behaviour and to help problem solve your child's behaviour. Ask yourself the following questions;

- What is my child doing? (Tantrums, hitting, biting, running away)
- At what triggers this behaviour? (loud noise)
- What does it gain them? (release from noise)
- What does it get them out of? (Doing something they don't like)
- How do I support my child to respond appropriately (don't reinforce the behaviour, offer child a 'break', model the right way to respond)

Sometimes triggers aren't immediately clear. The inappropriate behaviour can be a build up of different triggers or circumstances.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is something that effects behaviour.

Positive reinforcement; giving something positive, like a reward, in response to good behaviour is likely to increase the behaviour. Some examples include praising your child, reading them their favourite book, watching their favourite DVD, or giving them a hug.

Show your child what you want them to do and provide them with positive reinforcement for their efforts towards that goal, e.g. a sticker for packing up the first of their toys. This will encourage them to pack up more than one toy next time around. Build on the good things they do, step by step.

Reinforcement charts or schedules can be set up to remind your child about good behaviour. Reinforcement schedules can be **consistent** (eg. every time I dress myself I get a reward), **intermittent** (eg. I get a reward every so often for listening to instructions) or **diminishing** (eg. I get a reward after every 2 times I use my manners/ every three times/ every four times, etc).

When using a reinforcement schedule, such as a star chart, make sure it is used for only one behaviour so that your child makes the connection between the good behaviour and the reward. Once your child has learnt the right behaviour, the reinforcement schedule can be used to teach another good behaviour response.

Reinforcement cont.....

In order to decrease inappropriate behaviour, we may remove something enjoyable from the child, like TV time, or give something negative such as household chores to do. This is **negative reinforcement**.

After showing your child that their behaviour was inappropriate through negative reinforcement, always model the appropriate behaviour. This way, your child learns how to respond the right way next time.

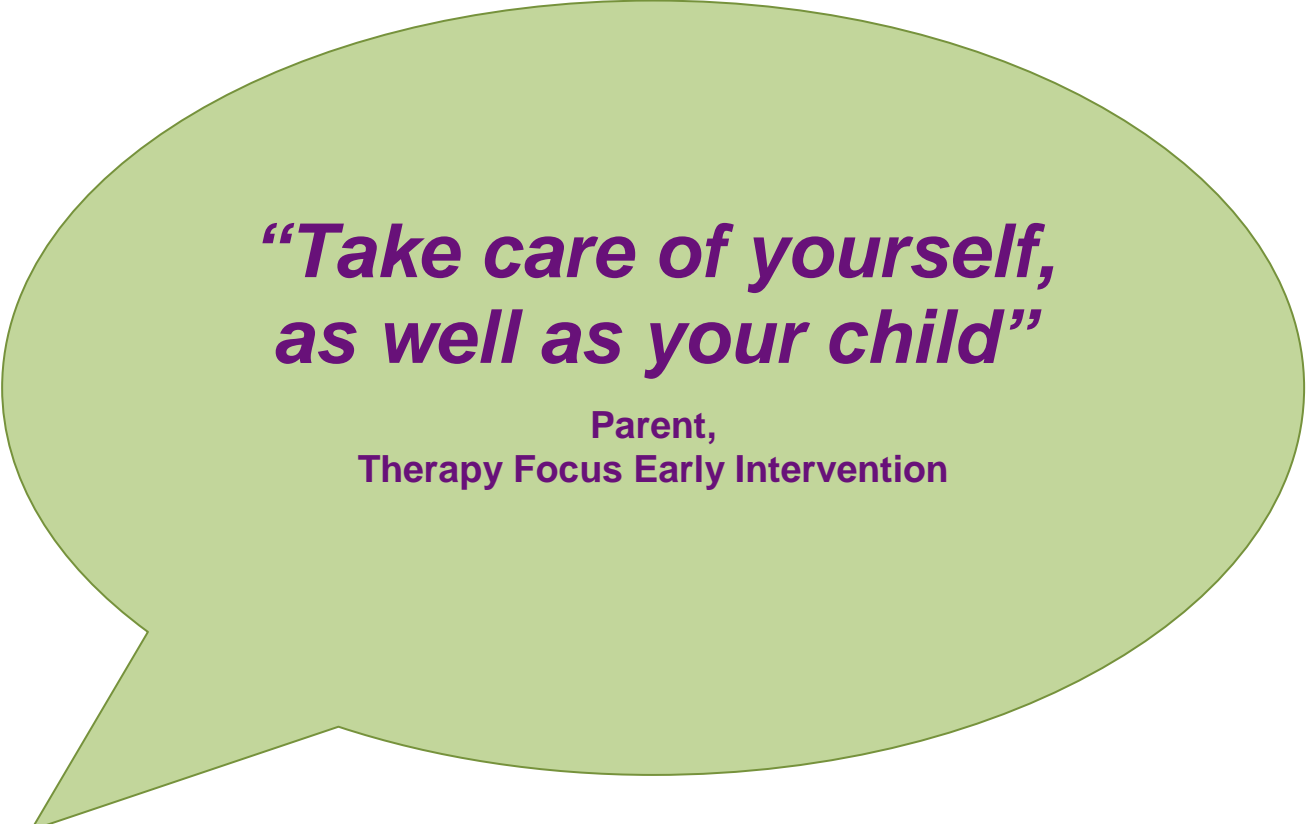
Sometimes what we think is a punishment is in fact a reward. This is sometimes the case with 'time out' strategies.

'Time out' is seen as giving the child a chance to calm down and removing them from getting attention or disrupting others. It is expected that the negative behaviour will reduce because of the negative reinforcement of being taken away from the fun activity and isolating the child.

However 'time out' might work to increase negative behaviour if a child wants to be away from the crowd, the room/, or the noise, or wants to get out of doing something. In other words, time out rewards a child who wants out!



- Looking after you



***“Take care of yourself,
as well as your child”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**



Looking after yourself

Some common early reactions of parents and families to the birth and diagnosis of a child with a disability. Parents can feel a combination of feelings at once, including the following:

Shock	Despair
Confusion	Dizziness
Denial	Insomnia
Disbelief	Detachment in relationships
Numbness	Depression
Sadness	Hopelessness
Disappointment	Anger
Feelings of loss or guilt	Lowered self esteem
Disorganisation	Anxiety

The importance of taking care of yourself as well as your family and children is well recognised but often difficult to achieve.

These feelings may be compounded by the following problems:

- Obtaining an accurate diagnosis
- Informing siblings and relatives
- Locating services
- Seeking to find meaning in the disability
- Addressing the issue of stigma

Coping Strategies

Coping includes any attempt or effort to manage stress, regardless of how well it works.

Coping strategies that involve efforts to alter the cause of the stress are known as problem-focussed coping.

Problem focussed coping ideas include the following:

- Identifying a problem, coming up with a number of possible solutions and then implementing the solutions.
- Seeking support from families, friends or new people in a similar situation.
- Asking your friends or family to listen to you. They don't need to solve the problems. Being heard is a valuable experience for everyone especially when you may feel stressed.
- Using respite care to give your self a break from childcare.
- Working out a way to change your original beliefs about having a child with a disability and coming to a new understanding.


Coping strategies that attempt to avoid or release the emotional responses to stressors is known as emotion-focused stressors.

Emotion focussed coping ideas include some of the following. Remember everyone has their own unique ways; this list will give you a few ideas.

- Distracting yourself by doing something that you enjoy. e.g. a hot bath, having a cup of tea, doing some craft or gardening.
- Withdrawing for a period of time to reflect on your new situation.
- Exercise. This is a well known stress buster! e.g going for a walk, ride or swim.
- Spend time in nature or visit your favourite place. e.g. Kings Park, the beach, the river, your parents or friends home.
- Watching television, a movie or reading a book



Some Success Stories



***“We're amazed!
Now he initiates joining in
and uses full sentences to
communicate”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**

The magic of Michael's early years

Michael (5) has progressed with leaps and bounds thanks to early intervention therapy implemented by a dedicated team.

"When I started teaching Michael in kindergarten last year, he lived in his own little world, played by himself, was non verbal and used miming to communicate," said Michael's teacher Suzette Quinn.

"The early childhood years are a time of rapid language, cognitive, motor skill development. Supporting children who experience difficulties in these areas needs to happen early so that they can learn at a time when development is occurring rapidly," said Michael's Speech Pathologist Theresa Pastor. "Addressing needs early gives the child the best chance of coping with future school and academic demands."

Therapy Assistant Deborah Macleod works closely with Michael, his family and teacher to implement therapy programs developed by Michael's occupational therapist and speech pathologist. Services can start off in the home, and then extend into the school or play group as the child's world grows.

"Michael is such a pleasure to work with. Our therapy is play based, so through a range of games, he learns language skills and practices different hand and movement skills," Mrs Macleod said.

"Michael has made tremendous progress. His growth has made him more independent which has been wonderful for his self esteem and confidence."

Michael's teacher and mother are delighted at the difference the therapy has made to his skill development.

"We're amazed! Now he initiates joining in and uses full sentences to communicate," Mrs Quinn said.



Isis stands on his own two feet

Isis is a delightful young four year boy who loves dinosaurs, superheroes and is a keen budding artist.

Isis has baffled doctors since birth.

Doctors thought Isis may have had hypotonia however his neuro-muscular condition still remains un-diagnosed.

A large part of Isis' early years were spent in Princess Margaret Hospital. Isis was dependent on a gastric tube at 1 year of age.

"At 3 months of age he was very floppy and his sucking reflex went. He was wasting away and I had to try and feed him all day long to keep him alive," Isis mother Jasmine Bailey-Barfuss said.

Things are now looking up for Isis. He goes to Butler Primary School and thanks to a dedicated team he is making progress.

Isis receives Therapy Focus's therapy services. Isis' physiotherapist, occupational therapist and clinical psychologist work with his teacher, educational assistant and family to support Isis in reaching his potential.

Isis' physiotherapist has worked closely with Isis to get him walking on his own two feet.

"Isis' condition affects his mobility, balance and co-ordination," physiotherapist Anne Ingram said. "Super-Isis always gives it a go. We have a lot of fun."

"Isis is now able to move around independently and safely. He can participate in fun outdoor activities with greater ease."

"He used to get bowled over all the time but he walks quite well now," Jasmine said. "Anne has built a relationship of trust and shows his teacher and assistant what he can do and how to support his development."

Isis' occupational therapist has worked with Isis to toilet train him, using a special toilet seat.

"We're taking small steps, using rewards and praise and trying not to make a big deal out of it so he doesn't feel pressured." Jasmine said. "He's getting stronger and improving everyday."





Resources



***“I find my GP,
Child Health Nurse,
or Local Area Coordinator
can be helpful”***

**Parent,
Therapy Focus Early Intervention**

Therapy Focus Resources

The following resources are available for short-term loan by calling 9478 9500. After confirming that your child is on the Therapy Focus Early Intervention wait list, we can arrange for the resource to be delivered to you.

Forging Friendships

This is a social skills resource for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This is a step-by-step guide for educational staff planning and facilitating social skills groups.

Sport with Friends

The value of physical activity is increasingly recognised as crucial to children's health and well being. Sport with Friends is designed to facilitate physical activity and develop gross motor skills of children with disabilities, whilst also encouraging socialisation with their peers.

Joining In

This resource focuses on fostering confidence to participate more fully in community life by developing essential life skills such as conversational skills, emotional and social problem solving, and personal management of behaviour in public.

Building Buddies-Early Interactions (Volume #1)

A program for developing early social interactions and social closeness for children of all ages with complex communication needs. This volume is relevant for children who show little interest in people.

Building Buddies-Social Skills for Children who use Other Ways to Communicate (Volume #2)

A program for developing social interactions between children of all ages who use alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems and their peers. This volume provides skills in using alternative communication systems to interact with other children.

Building Buddies-Play Skills (Volume #3)

A program for developing the play skills of young children. This volume is relevant for children who have a limited range of toys they play with and require skills in playing with other children.

Building Buddies-Friendship Skills (Volume #4)

A program for developing the skills necessary for making friends in preschool and lower primary school. For children with basic language skills, this volume provides strategies for children to make friends at school.

More Therapy Focus resources available for loan

Ready Steady School

This resource is a booklet designed for children who are making the big step into year 1.

Caring for Carers: Helping your Child Develop Social Skills

This resource is a toolbox of tips for those who care for a child with a disability who is experiencing difficulty socially or playing with others. For teachers, educational support staff, families, carers and therapists.

Caring for Carers: Helping your Child Develop Self Care Skills

This resource is a toolbox of tips for those who care for a child with a disability who require support in developing skills such as dressing, toileting, bathing, and eating and drinking. For teachers, educational support staff, families, carers and therapists.

Caring for Carers: Helping your Child Develop Communication Skills

This resource is a toolbox of tips for those who care for a child with a disability experiencing difficulty getting their message across. It is also useful for children using augmentative and alternative communication and for helping children understand language. For teachers, educational support staff, families, carers and therapists.

Fitting the pieces together: A handbook for Families

This is a handbook for families who have a child with a disability and the therapists who work alongside them. It provides information about five guidelines that families and therapists believe are important to working together.

Helpful websites

The internet contains a lot of valuable information. Sometimes it can be hard to find quality information in a volume that won't overwhelm you.

Below are a few sites that you might find helpful.

www.therapyfocus.org.au

In the 'resources section' of the Therapy Focus website there are a large number of helpful links under topics including research, health, and community support.

www.therapyfocus.org.au/resources/communitydirectory

Include Me is a comprehensive community directory of services, supports, and programs available throughout the Perth metropolitan area which is available for families, therapists, and everyone in the community to access. Therapy Focus will continue to update this information and would appreciate your support in doing so by letting us know about other support in the community that you have accessed.

www.raisingchildren.net.au/

Use the search window in the top right corner of the page, type in any child's skill area you would like some information on, e.g. 'dressing independently.'

www.activ.asn.au/parentportal

Activ Library's Parent Portal provides a starting point for parents and carers wishing to find information about intellectual disability and autism.

www.polyxo.com

This is a website focussing on the needs of children with autism. Follow the link under 'how do we teach' to 'social stories'. Social Stories are tools for teaching social skills to children who have autism and related disabilities. When choosing a social story, you need to work out which skill or situation you wish to focus on. You can then keep a journal of social stories you write with your child for easy reference.

www.meerilinga.org.au

Meerilinga aims to be a centre of excellence contributing to the development of our young citizens, their families, and the community. Meerilinga can provide information on services such as childcare, parent support, and community facilities.

www.ngala.com.au

Ngala is an Early Parenting Centre with a passion for supporting and guiding families and young children through the journey of early parenting.

www.disabilityfirststop.asn.au

This one stop disability information site is full of valuable information. Services include: Access to many forms of information. Referral to relevant services. Assistance with individual planning. Linking people who have had similar experiences. Access to counselling.

Helpful telephone numbers

Carers WA 24 hour carers helpline: 1800 007 332

Carers WA provides three ways for family carers to talk it over either over the telephone, face to face, or email counselling.

Family Helpline: 9223 1100

The Family Helpline is a free, confidential telephone counselling and information service for families with relationship difficulties.

Kalparrin: 9340 8094

The Kalparrin centre is a drop in centre for families of children with special needs. It is a place where families can get info and support related to their child's disability. It is based at PMH, Subiaco and operates Mon-Fri 8.30-4.00pm.

Ngala: 9368 9368

Ngala Helpline is the listening ear for over 20,000 callers annually including fathers, mothers, grandparents, and carers of babies and young children in Western Australia. They provide brief support and reassurance for parents and seek to encourage confidence by outlining options for parents.

RUCSN: 9249 4333

The Resource Unit for Children with Special Needs aims to facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs in child care in WA. They have a library located in West Leederville.

Activ Sitter Service: 9258 4711

Activ Sitter Service Program provides a carer who volunteers their time to care for your child with an intellectual disability, and their siblings, while you take care of your appointment.

Noah's Arc Toy Library: 9328 1598

This is a toy lending service for children with special needs located in North Perth.



www.therapyfocus.org.au

