

# FLOOR TIME FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

## INTRODUCTION

Parents considering using Floor time as an intervention for their child should ideally see a trained therapist in this area. However, it is acknowledged that some parents may not be able to afford intervention services, or may not be able to access them in their area. This guide explains the basics of how to use Floor time, and parents are encouraged to explore further resources and advice before commencing home-based Floor time.

### STEPS IN FLOOR TIME

**1 Observation:** Both listening to and watching a child are essential for effective observation. Facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, body posture, and word (or lack of words) are all important clues that help you determine how to approach the child, e.g.:

- is a child's behaviour relaxed or outgoing?
- Withdrawn or uncommunicative?
- bubbling with excitement?
- is the child a real enterprising person?

**2 Approach** - open circles of communication : Once a child's mood and style have been assessed, you can approach the child with the appropriate words and gestures. You can open the circle of communication with a child by acknowledging the child's emotional tone, then elaborating and building on whatever interests the child now.

**3 Follow** the child's lead : After your initial approach, following a child's lead simply means being a supportive play partner who is an "assistant" to the child and allows the child to set the tone, direct the action, and create personal dramas. This enhances the child's self-esteem and ability to be assertive, and gives child a feeling that "I can have an impact on the world." As you support the child's play, the child benefits from experiencing a sense of warmth, connectedness and being understood.

**4 Extend** and expand the play : As you follow the child's lead, extending and expanding child's play themes involves making supportive comments about the child's play without being intrusive. This helps the child express own ideas and defines the direction of the drama. Next, asking questions to stimulate creative thinking can keep the drama going, while helping the child clarify the emotional themes involved, e.g.: suppose a child is crashing a car: Rather than ask critically, Why are those cars crashing? You may respond empathetically, those cars have so much energy and are moving fast. Are they trying to get somewhere?

**5 Child closes the circle of communication** : As you open the circle of communication when you approach the child, the child closes the circle when the child builds on your comments and gestures with comments and gestures of own. One circle flows into another, and many circles may be opened and closed in quick succession as you interact with the child. By building on each other's ideas and gestures, the child begins to appreciate and understand the value of two-way communication.

# CONTENT

Day  
1

- Introduction to autism disorder

Day  
2

- The importance of early intervention of autism

Day  
3

- Approaches of the early intervention of autism

Day  
4

- Understanding of floor time as a play intervention for children with autism

Day  
5

- Discussing of a home-based play therapy applying through pre-school level children
- Understanding of floor time how to manage parents in order to apply at home
- Sample videos of floor time courses.

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# OUTCOMES

## GOALS OF FLOORTIME INTERVENTION

Floor time aims to help children on the autism spectrum to:

- become more alert
- take more initiative
- become more flexible
- tolerate frustration
- sequence longer actions - plan and execute them
- mediate process of finding solutions
- communicate gesturally and verbally
- take pleasure in learning.

## EVALUATING YOURSELF

- Do I use a calm voice?
- Do I give gentle looks?
- Is my body posture supportive?
- Are my actions non-intrusive?
- Do I use encouraging gestures?
- Do I demonstrate calm and supportive listening?
- Am I aware of the child's rhythms and gestures?
- Am I able to help the child identify play themes?
- Do I expand the child's drama by staying involved with the theme and elaborating the details?
- Am I able to help the child extend the drama by summarizing main ideas of play themes?
- Do I observe the behaviour, language, and gestures of the child?
- Do I observe the child's style of relating?
- Do I approach the child slowly, with respect and thoughtfulness?
- How often do I allow the child to take the lead? Do I follow that lead?
- Do I let the child know through gesture, facial expressions, emotional tone, and supportive body posture that I am there for the child?
- Do I know when to be verbally responsive, and when it is better to quietly share a child's emotion?
- Do I work to understand the emotional needs of the child?