

GET IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

How to become part of your child's attention through NDBI

Instead of asking your child to “pay attention,” try making yourself interesting enough to notice. In Naturalistic Developmental Behavioural Interventions (NDBIs), we create opportunities for connection and learning by following the child's lead, joining their interests, and making interactions enjoyable and meaningful.

1 FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

Notice what your child is already interested in.

Ask yourself: What are they looking at? What are they reaching for? What makes them smile, move, or become excited? What are they repeatedly doing? Join in rather than redirecting.

2 GET INTO THEIR SPOTLIGHT

Position yourself where your child is naturally looking or playing.

Try: Getting down to their level • Sitting nearby • Moving into their line of sight • Joining their play without taking over.

You don't need to demand eye contact. Shared attention can happen through looking, listening, moving, playing, or engaging together.

3 MAKE YOURSELF PART OF THE FUN

Become a partner in something your child already enjoys.

Try: Copying their actions • Adding an interesting sound or movement • Taking turns • Being playful and animated • Pausing briefly to create an opportunity for interaction.

Think: “How can I make being with me enjoyable?”

4 PAUSE & WAIT

Sometimes the most powerful interaction is doing less.

Pause during a favourite activity and give your child time to: Look toward you, reach, gesture, vocalise, move closer, or communicate in their own way. A pause creates space for your child to participate.

5 RESPOND TO THEIR COMMUNICATION

Communication is more than words.

Notice and respond to: looks • gestures • sounds • movements • facial expressions • AAC • words • actions. Treat these as meaningful communication and respond to what your child is telling you.

REMEMBER

Connect before you direct. Follow before you lead. Join before you teach.

The goal isn't to make your child attend to you. The goal is to build shared attention, connection, communication, and joyful participation—on their terms.

NDBI TIP: If your child is interested in it, start there. Their interests are an invitation to connect.