



## SUPPORTING EYE CONTACT

**Eye contact** is important because:

- Shows that your child is **listening**
- Allows them to see your **mouth movement** to help support speech development
- Helps them to **store words** that they have heard so that they might **use** them later on
- Supports **turn taking**
- Support **understanding** of **facial expressions**.

**Why do some children struggle with eye contact?**

- Eye contact can be **overwhelming** for some children as they have **process** so much when they use this (e.g. facial expressions, words to listen too, mouth movement when speaking).
- Therefore some children find eye contact **really difficult!**

**How can I help my child to make eye contact?**

- **Mirroring**
  - Try being your child's **mirror** i.e. copy exactly what they do including any sounds they make in play.
  - This can help children to make eye contact as it **reduces pressure** to communicate and often, it's **unexpected** so they start looking to see what you're up to!
- **Stay silent**
  - Try sitting in **complete silence** until your child has made eye contact.
  - When they look, **name** what they are playing with using a **single word** (e.g. "train").
  - This helps as the child might start to learn that in order for you to speak or name a toy, the child must make eye contact.
  - Once this has been realised, they might start **making this more** often as they want you to **name toys** for them!
- **Games**
  - You could use games such as bubbles or a click clack track and before you blow the bubbles/let the car go, use **ready...steady....go!**
  - Before you say 'go', **pause and wait** for the child to make eye contact – once this has been made, **say 'go!'** and blow the bubbles/let the car go.
  - You can also use games like blocks to build a tower but make sure you only give the child a **couple at a time**.
  - When the child **wants another block**, you could try waiting for eye contact before giving them another block.

**My child still isn't making eye contact, what can I do?**

- The main thing to do is **keep going!**
- It might be that your child **hasn't started to notice** that you are using the techniques to help them make eye contact so it's important to be **consistent** with using this to try and **help them** as much as possible.
- Speak to the **Speech and Language Therapist** that is supporting your child for more ideas on how to support this – we will be happy to help you