

Appreciating the Learning Differences

Part 2

How Typical Children Learn	Is this also true in autism?	What can parents and teachers do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day children will learn or do things that warrant attention and praise. • There is ample evidence that children learn more and faster in positive circumstances. • Research on brain chemistry shows that children are unlikely to direct their attention fully to the learning at hand when they are stressed, fearful, or confused. 	<p>Young children with autism may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not understand or be motivated by general praise such as 'good boy' • be in a state of high arousal or anxiety making it harder for them to perform well • be confused by the learning situation and consequently may be harder to engage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a calm and nurturing approach to learning • Remember to give specific, positive reinforcement e.g.: <i>"Good sitting with feet on the floor"</i> • Remember to teach and not just test. Errorless learning is where you help your child not to fail when they are learning a new skill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When children initiate activity or are actively engaged, they typically learn more. 	<p>Young children with autism may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find it difficult to know what to attend to in learning • have problems maintaining attention, or shifting attention from one thing to another • be less engaged with activities not of their choosing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to engage / disengage your child from activities • Teach your child to participate in less preferred activities e.g. <i>"First- Then"</i> • Structure daily routines to ensure your child remains meaningfully engaged in activities that grow skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play is an extremely important way that children learn. • Play provides natural, fun ways to explore and to have trial-and-error experiences in a safe, enjoyable setting. 	<p>Young children with autism may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not understand how to use objects in play, sometimes using them inappropriately i.e.: throwing, rotating, looking sideways at toys • spend time placing objects in rows, ordering and re-ordering favourite toys • show unusual responses to some objects, either being very fascinated or very fearful • not look up at friends during play • not understand how to join-in play with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure play to help your child understand the sequence of activities toward a goal • Play needs to be enjoyable for true learning to take place • Use your child's interests and expand these gradually to be more varied or creative • Helping your child may involve learning new skills from a more able player, gaining a desired object from someone else or sharing a sense of enjoyment from the actions of the other person • Reduce language and use more "SHOWING" how to in play. Follow your child's lead.



Autism Consultant, WeCAN Early Intervention Programme