

Attention Autism: A Practical Workshop



Joint Attention – SCERTS model

Key aims from the SCERTS model that Attention Autism aims to develop are:

- **Shared attention** – this includes the pupil looking towards you, looking between you and an object and looking at what you point to
- **Sharing emotion** – this includes the pupil using facial expression or vocalisation to share positive and negative emotion
- **Sharing intention to regulate behaviour (request and protest)** – Attention Autism models key words and gestures that a pupil could then use to request. It also gives them the opportunity to protest things they don't want to do
- **Sharing intention for social interaction** – this includes taking turns and gaining people's attention through gesture and vocalisation
- **Joint attention** – commenting on actions or objects

Key Aims of Attention Autism

- To provide a learning experience that children will remember.
- Engaging participants in visual and dynamic activities.
- Creating opportunities that the child wants and chooses to be a part of.

Setting up

- No furniture barriers.
- Always introduce the activities with simple drawings on a whiteboard.
- Keep the space clear.
- Organise in advance.
- Use materials from right to left.
- Include tidying up as part of the session.

Adult Roles

- It is beneficial if the leading adult changes for the pupils to engage with a range of people
- Adults should not talk or give instructions to one another or the pupils during the session

Supporting Adults:

- Model appropriate listening and attention including expected behaviour, use of gesture and facial expression
- Allow pupils to 'wander' at stages 1 and 2. Do not try to redirect the children to the group, either verbally or physically. It is the lead adult's role to make the activity as enticing as possible for them to return or watch from a distance.
- Offer support through redirecting at stages 3 and 4 if required e.g. supporting a pupil to move to the front of the room for their turn.

The Four Stages

- Do not move onto the next stage until pupils have acquired the relevant skills - use the intervention records provided to monitor progress.
- Introduce every session with simple drawings and single words on a whiteboard. Cross off each activity once complete and introduce the next.
- It is ok to split your group if pupils are working at different levels.

Key Aims of Stage 1

- To develop focused attention as part of a group
- To develop attention following adult led tasks – use exaggerated facial expressions and vocalisations like ‘oo’ or excited gasps.
- To anticipate and experience shared enjoyment – by making yourself and the items exciting, pupils will become focused on the activity providing them with the opportunity to see and hear good models of communication with an aim to develop their own spontaneous use of gesture, facial expression and words.

Implementing Stage 1

1. Use your whiteboard to introduce 'bucket' + your next activity (e.g. snack, outside, PE)
2. Start with your bucket on your right hand side, bring it into the middle to use then move to your left once finished with.
3. Introduce the activity with a song ("I've got something in my bucket, in my bucket, in my bucket, I've got something in my bucket, I wonder what it is")
4. Show up to 3 items in turn from the bucket using exaggerated facial expressions, leaving pauses to build anticipation and labelling the items using single words. Repeat the word several times as you explore the item.
5. Once you have finished, close the bucket and cross 'bucket' off your whiteboard before introducing the next activity.

Key Aims of Stage 2

- To maintain and re-focus attention – you will create a sequence leading up to a grand finale.
- To increase use of vocalisation and expressive language in a social context and for sharing enjoyment – use things that are highly visual and appealing for the pupils.
- To increase understanding of specific vocabulary, verbs and concepts including short phrases

Implementing Stage 2

1. Cross off 'bucket' on your whiteboard and introduce your stage 2 activity
2. Introduce each item you will be using e.g. 'flour' (start with your items on your right hand side, bring them into the middle to use them then move to the left once finished with)
3. Repeat the name of each item as you use it. Begin to introduce verbs as you carry out actions e.g. 'flour...pour....pour the flour'
4. Once your sequence is complete, say 'tidy up' or use a tidy up song as you move items to your left hand side
5. Cross off the activity on your whiteboard and introduce your next task.

Key Aims of Stage 3

- To manage shifting and refocusing attention – pupils will shift their attention from watching to taking part
- To take turns in a group and imitate actions and vocalisations modelled by an adult – a supporting adult will have demonstrated the task first

Implementing Stage 3

1. Cross off 'stage 2' on your whiteboard and introduce your stage 3 activity
2. Use a big, open gesture to invite your supporting adult to the front. The supporting adult will demonstrate how to complete the task as you comment on it/ lead it.
3. Direct your supporting adult back to the circle and invite the first pupil up (supporting adults can provide physical prompts if needed at this stage)
4. Once all pupils have had a turn (some may choose not to participate), share the group achievement if this is appropriate for your task
5. Tidy up the resources placing them on your right hand side. Cross off the activity on your whiteboard and introduce your next task.

Key Aims of Stage 4

- To manage shifting and refocusing attention to several tasks
- To imitate actions modelled by an adult in order to complete a sequence
- To complete independent work following adult instructions

Points to remember:

- The independent task can be differentiated depending on individual targets. Prepare a kit for each individual before your session.
- Supporting adults can act as a physical prompter to help pupils move between the group and their workstation.

Implementing Stage 4

The stage follows a sequence of:

1. **Focus and sustain attention** on the lead adult to watch a demonstration
2. **Shift attention** to move to a desk/ workspace
3. **Focus and sustain attention** on their independent task within their workspace
4. **Shift attention** to move back to the group
5. **Focus attention** to celebrate everyone's achievements

Planning and Recording

A range of session plans are available from The Talking House following specific themes or topics.

Sessions can be 'random' based on your pupil's motivators – Pinterest and the Attention Autism facebook group are great for new ideas.

An Intervention Record template is available from The Talking House and can be adapted to suit your data recording.

Questions

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us:

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