

ATTENTION AUTISM

Introduction

“Attention Autism” or the “Wow bag” was developed by a Speech & Language Therapist called Gina Davies. The idea is to develop the attention skills of a child or young person based on the developmental stages of attention. Although originally designed for use with children and young people with autism, in the Learn to Live Federation we find that it helps develop the attention skills of many of our students, whether they have autism or not.

The programme breaks down into 4 different stages.

Stage 1 - The aim is to develop attention to a brief, attractive adult-led task;

Stage 2 - To sustain attention for longer to a task which has a beginning, a middle and an end;

Stage 3 - To copy a simple activity or pay attention to a peer carrying out the task;

Stage 4 - to carry out the activity independently after a transition.

At Ellen Tinkham and Bidwell Brook schools, most of the work we have done so far is on Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Stage 1 – The Attention Grabber

- Have a bag, bucket or box of 3 or 4 fun toys. Toys should be fun for the child or young person to look at / listen to;
- Sit the child or young person in front of you out of arm’s reach, preferably on a chair. Preferably have another adult sitting next to them modelling good attention skills – looking but not touching!
- Sing the song (to the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush) “I’ve got something in my bag, in my bag, in my bag. I’ve got something in my bag – I wonder what it is?”
- Pull one item out of the bag and demonstrate it. Take your time and try to build anticipation – “wow, look!” Play with the item for around 2 minutes maximum. If it’s something which you can pause (e.g. a cause and effect toy, bubbles etc), build in a gap and see if your child requests “more”, either by signing or vocalising;
- Bring all the items out one at a time, demonstrate them for around 2 minutes each, and put each one back in the bag when finished with;
- **NB – it’s really important that the child or young person does not get to play with the items! This can feel a bit mean but the whole point of the activity is**

to build their attention to something an adult is doing. This is a very important skill to develop for communication and learning.

- Repeat the game daily. It will get to the stage that your child or young person will be able to anticipate the session when they see the chair out and the bag or box ready. When they are able to sit unaided and follow the session for around 10 minutes, they are ready to move onto Stage 2.

Stage 2 – The Attention Builder

- Carry out Stage 1 with the bag and 3 or 4 items, then move on to Stage 2. This is an activity with a beginning, middle and an end;
- There is absolutely no limit to what you can do at Stage 2 – use your imagination and whatever you have in the house. There are some ideas written below to get you started;
- The same principles apply – the child or young person is expected to sit and watch rather than join in, and you as the lead adult are trying to build anticipation and build in some opportunities for the child or young person to communicate – e.g. request “more”
- Try and keep your talking very limited and allow lots of time and silence between each action. This allows opportunities for more communication;
- The aim is for the child or young person to be able to pay attention to the whole Stage 1 and Stage 2 tasks for up to about 20 minutes.

Stage 2 Ideas:

Name of Activity	Resources Needed	What to do
Rice rain	Uncooked rice in a tub Tupperware box with tin foil on the top Tray Kitchen roll tube or toilet roll tube Small cup / shot glass	Scoop the rice up with the cup; Put the tupperware with foil on it on the tray; Put your hand on the bottom of the kitchen or toilet roll tube; Pour the rice in and let your fingers gently allow the rice to sprinkle out onto the tin foil Key words to say: “Fill it up”, “listen”, “ready, steady, go!” “rice rain”, “empty”, “all gone” “finished”
Flour faces	Black paper Flour	Lay the black paper out flat;

	Sieve Small cup / shot glass	Scoop some flour up with the small cup or shot glass; Pour it into the sieve and sprinkle it slowly onto the black paper – lift the sieve as high as you dare! Once all the flour is on the paper, draw a simple circle with your fingers, then 2 eyes and a smile Key words to say: “Fill it up”, “ready, steady, go!” “eyes”, “smile”, “happy face”, “finished”
Shaving foam cakes	Shaving foam Cupcake cases Glitter / food colouring if you have them (not essential) Fly swatter or wooden spoon Tray	Lay 3 empty cupcake cases out on the tray; Fill each one with shaving foam; Sprinkle glitter or food colouring on the top; Take the fly swatter or wooden spoon, build the anticipation, then SPLAT the cakes! Key words to say: “Fill it up”, “one, two, three”, “ready, steady, go!” “SPLAT”, “uh-oh!” “all gone”, “finished”

More Information:

For more advice and ideas on Attention Autism, there are videos on the Home Learning pages on the school websites:

<http://ellentinkham.devon.sch.uk/homelearning/>

<http://learn.bidwellbrook.devon.sch.uk/>

Gina Davies has a very interesting, helpful website with lots of activity ideas and advice:

<http://ginadavies.co.uk/>

She also has a Facebook page with lots of ideas and videos on Stage 1 and 2 activities. Many of these have been specifically designed to do at home with limited resources:

<https://www.facebook.com/ginadaviesautism/>

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