



PARENT Connection

TPAS NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2012



Using Natural Environment Teaching in the Summertime

Written by: Courtney Vibert, Instructor Therapist, TPAS, Surrey Place Centre

Summer provides many options of fun activities for you and your child. These summer activities are a great way to strengthen your relationship with your child and can also serve as wonderful teaching opportunities. One strategy that uses the principles of applied behaviour analysis is Natural Environment Teaching (NET). This is a strategy that can be used in any environment (e.g., the pool, the playground, at home, etc.) to build on your child's existing skills and to teach new skills. NET begins by identifying what is currently of interest to your

child. For example, if your child is interested in a toy train, set up the environment so that you are a key part of that activity. Build the track together, but prepare the environment by putting the materials on a high shelf or in a difficult to open box to increase the value of your involvement. To be best prepared for meaningful NET opportunities, identify a variety of relevant goals for your child. Common goals that are often addressed through NET are functional communication, imitation and social skills. You may use the train to target your child making requests by


holding a train car or piece of the track in order to motivate your child to ask for it in a way that is appropriate for them. This may include pointing, making a one-word request or making a request using a sentence. In order to target imitation, model rolling a train down the track and assist your child to copy this action. Social skills may be targeted by taking turns adding cars to the train. Show your child that interacting with you and engaging in play activities together is the most fun option.

There are numerous opportunities for parents to teach skills to children during daily routines. By teaching language in your child's natural environment, it is immediately useful to him, making the language more likely

to be remembered. NET involves teaching skills and concepts where they are used naturally which may help your child to understand these concepts more fully. For example, if you are trying to teach your child about rain, picture cards could be one tool to teach the label of the weather, but venturing outside on a rainy day can help to teach many concepts related to rain (e.g., rain is wet, you wear a rain coat when it raining).

The next time you go to the playground, try using NET to expand your child's skills. For example, if they love the swing, work on requests for "up", "push", and "higher." You may need to begin by prompting the appropriate language (e.g. "Push," "Push me," "I want a push," etc.), and then set up a requesting opportunity and pause to wait for your child's request. Finally, reduce your assistance or modeled language so that your child is requesting independently.

If you go on a road trip, plan some activities to play in the car as a way to teach communication or imitation skills. Sing some songs while leaving out key words for your child to fill in, such as "The wheels on the bus go..." or "Head, shoulders, knees, and..." Gross motor imitation of the movements that go with the songs, identifying body parts in the songs, and verbal imitations can also be worked in. NET is a creative way to learn while you and your child are having fun!

 For some additional ideas go to www.connectability.ca. The articles *Building Social Skills* and *Fun Language Activities* offer some more examples of how to use everyday activities to increase your child's skills.

Meet Your Family Support Coach

Victoria Shute and Heidi Hoile, Family Support Coaches, TPAS, Surrey Place Centre

Whether you are a family waiting for IBI services to begin or are currently receiving IBI, you will be receiving Parent Education and Support Services through a Family Support Coach in your quadrant. The Family Support Coach's role is to keep you informed of and facilitate parent education opportunities. Additionally, they will provide you with information on determining community resources that are relevant to your family. By participating in Parent Education and Support Services you will be:

- **aware** of behavioural strategies that promote your child's learning
- **engaged** in setting attainable goals for your child
- **active** in your child's IBI experience
- **informed** about the community resources that are available to you

Information on Parent Education and Support Services is available through the Family Support Coaches in your quadrant. Also see the Upcoming Events column for current learning opportunities.



TPAS Parent Education and Support Services

Written by: Kelly Alves, Parent Education and Support Supervisor, TPAS



"Parent Education" refers to programs or trainings that are designed to provide parents with information or teach them skills. Parent education has been continually recognized as a key component of quality behaviour intervention programs. The research related to parenting a child with autism supports that families who participate in education and networking opportunities can experience meaningful benefits. These benefits may include feelings of having effectively contributed to the development of their child, improved family interactions and decreased parental stress.

TPAS Parent Education and Support Services aims to provide a supportive forum where parents and caregivers can share their parenting experiences, practice teaching strategies and learn how to access community resources. These parent education opportunities are delivered by your Family Support Coaches.

For additional parent education resources ask your Supervising Therapist or Family Support Coach about titles in the Parent Library

Upcoming events:

Please visit www.surreyplace.on.ca for more information & other events

Special Topic Workshops

- **Communication**
- **Diet and Nutrition**
- **Toilet Training**

All special topic workshops will be held in each quadrant. Please contact your Family Support Coach for dates and locations.

Respiteservices.com— All about Respite

Respite creates greater opportunities for all family members to participate in community activities and allows parents and guardians time for themselves. Respite is a valuable community resource that all families should learn more about. Families are encouraged to contact an Access Facilitator from www.respiteservices.com to find out more about this resource. Parents are invited to call 416-322-6317 ext. 1 to learn more about upcoming respite and funding workshops in their quadrant.

TPAS Festival

August 11, 2012, 10:30-1:30
Location: 2 Surrey Place
RSVP at 416-925-5141 ext. 2363 by July 30, 2012

Group Stepping Stones Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)

Coming soon! Please contact your Family Support Coach for more information.

To register for any of the listed events, please contact Susan Varga at 416-925-5141 ext. 2363