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**ASD Tips**

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## Helping Children Learn to Play

**It is always a good idea to start with things the child already finds motivating. Chances are that if you observe carefully, you will discover the things your child is interested in and will be able to find toys that are motivating. Once you have found those toys, the goal is to make playing lots of fun.**

One tool that works very well is video modelling. Video modelling is a tool that promotes play behaviours in a way that is motivating and attention holding for children with ASD. The *Teach Me to Play* DVD (Cardon, 2007) depicts children playing appropriately with a variety to toys at each developmental stage and, therefore, can be used to help your child learn to play with toys.

Video modelling promotes appropriate play behaviours free from reliance on other people, which in turn means less chance for prompt dependency. A child who is less prompt dependant in play can initiate play on his own. And a child who can play appropriately and independently becomes free to focus on interactions and peers that can promote socialization.

When helping a child learn how to play, it is important to watch & wait to see what toys your child appears to be interested in. Maybe there is a theme to the items she is attracted to. Maybe the child likes every toy that has wheels or every toy that has a particular character associated with it. Maybe there is a sensory component involved in the sole play, and she likes every toy that spins or lights up.

Remember, you want your child to play with toys because of the important developmental milestones toys help children achieve. At the same time, you want your child to play with toys because of the great interaction opportunities they promote. Toy time is a chance for grown-ups to be silly and fun and let their hair down. It is also a great time to establish an emotional connection with your child. So think about the stage of play your child needs to start with and create some fun and motivating interactions. As always, teach your child how and when to take his turn.

