

# THE VALUE OF SPECIAL TIME

## WHAT IS SPECIAL TIME?

- Play with your child helps them to feel valued and special. Although children do play independently and spontaneously, research tells us that children benefit from these interactions with adults. It supports them to learn through play and helps to strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- In particular, play and interaction where the child chooses the activity, that is, the child is in control of the play is helpful for the child's development. Also, the child is likely to be more interested and engaged.
- Children thrive off responsiveness from parents. During special time, this means attending to them and watching them engage in an activity carefully and with interest.
- This is enhanced by commenting on what your child is doing, how they might be feeling, and what social skills they are using. By doing this, the child also knows they've got your full attention. Young children may not always know the answers to questions, and so commenting on what they are doing has benefits for their learning of language and concepts.
- Importantly, this is special time for you both to get enjoyment from, so have fun!



## WHAT CAN YOU COMMENT ON DURING SPECIAL TIME?

Objects <i>e.g. square; horse; colour red...</i>	Emotions <i>e.g. you look really proud of your tower; the cowboy seems frustrated; the dinosaur looks really happy</i>
Social behaviours <i>e.g. thank you for sharing with me; you are waiting patiently for your turn;</i>	Other

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SPECIAL TIME?

- Support a child's development – children learn new skills and concepts, as well as skills in problem solving
- Allowing children to explore and experiment through play is really stimulating and helps the young child's brain development
- Through this interaction with parents, this has a positive impact on children's speech and language development
- Special time with a caregiver helps children feel valued and understood
- Special time helps build the parent-child relationship
- Play can be a powerful way of supporting children to empathise with others, that is, through play children can start to understand how other people feel



- Special time playing with caregivers helps children make sense of the world
- Children can learn to understand and manage their emotions through play. This can have a positive effect on how they feel about themselves
- Play encourages their creativity and imagination

## REFLECTIONS ON SPECIAL TIME

Take some time to reflect on the special time you have had with your child. Note down what you were doing together e.g. playing with cars, playing a boardgame, baking, playing football etc. Think about what you were commenting on and the response from your child. How did you feel?

Special time activity	What were you commenting on?	How did your child respond?	How did you find special time?