

# Sharing Attention During Early Childhood

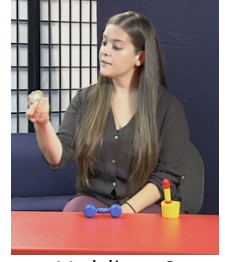
Eyes tell us a lot about what other people are interested in, and what they are thinking. Infants rely on nonverbal social cues such as eye gaze before they develop language.



Looking



Pointing & Looking



Holding & Looking



## The Take-Home

- In their first days and weeks of life, newborns love to look at faces, especially the eyes. Around 3 months of age, infants engage in dyadic eye contact, or face-to-face eye contact with another person. Through eye gaze, infants and caregivers create a strong emotional connection. This connection helps a baby feel loved and learn about other people.
- Gaze following is a powerful way for infants to learn and form social connections before they are able to talk.

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## Science Says

- From birth, children show interest in other people. By late infancy, they engage with others through joint attention. Joint attention is sharing attention between objects and other people.
- Around one year of age, children recognize the importance of other people's eyes. They begin to follow others' eye gaze.
- Children's gaze following predicts other developmental outcomes, like language development. Sharing eye gaze doesn't come as naturally to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This can affect their language and communication skills.



## Try it at Home

- Expand upon words your child says, what your child points to, or what you both hear.
- Point to new objects that your child has not seen before, and tell him what it is called. Ask him to describe the image to you.
- Read a book with your child and ask them to point out various images in the pictures.