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# Floortime Is About Making An Emotional Connection

*Each step of the Floortime process offers an opportunity for the caregiver to show respect and acceptance of a child's emotions. The play activity or game becomes secondary to the emotional sharing and two-way communication that is developed.*

## 1. OBSERVE FIRST

Before you approach, assess the child's general mood and the emotional tone of the play activity. Listen. Watch. Gather cues: facial expression, gestures, posture, voice tone, words ... or even silence. Is the activity level high or quieter? What is the emotional theme of the play? Think about the child's temperamental traits. How are they affecting the play?

## 2. APPROACH: OPEN THE CIRCLE OF COMMUNICATION

Move close to the child and use appropriate words and gestures to match the emotional tone of the play. Establish an emotional connection by using appropriate facial expressions and body language. Show interest in what the child is doing. Begin by imitating. If the child is not already at play, introduce a toy or game. Start or model play.

## 3. FOLLOW THE CHILD'S LEAD

Let the child respond to the play activity in his own way. Merely be an "assistant." Let the child be empowered by being the director, creating his own play "story." Continue what the child seems to enjoy. Share interest, excitement, and joy. Take turns. The child will experience warmth and connectedness with you and feel understood. Following the child's lead enhances his self-esteem.

## 4. EXTEND AND EXPAND THE PLAY

Make supportive comments, but don't "take over" or intrude. Ask questions to stimulate creative thinking, but let the child problem solve. Let the child's ideas define the direction of the playtime drama. Expand on the child's ideas. Help by clarifying the emotional themes the child is pursuing. Change the play slightly or add something new. Encourage the child with each step of the task. Ignore mistakes but help when frustrated or stuck.

## 5. LET THE CHILD CLOSE THE CIRCLE OF COMMUNICATION

When the child "closes" the communication circle that you "opened," a two-way emotionally responsive communication has occurred. You will have built on each other's ideas and responses and shared a successful playtime interaction. When the child masters a task, wait for the child to look at you. Wait until he expresses pride, and then congratulate the child with praise and excitement. Be sure to let the child bring the activity to a close. Let the child choose a new activity or repeat this one. Show respect by allowing the activity to end when the child becomes disinterested or seems tired.

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A summary on the topic "Floortime," based on *Floortime: Tuning In to Each Child*, by Dr. Stanley I. Greenspan and "Blocks of Pride," *Playing Is Learning*, How to Read Your Baby ©2002.

Note: Floortime is a concept created by Dr. Stanley I. Greenspan. For more detailed study information on the Floortime concept, refer to *Floortime: Tuning In to Each Child* ©1990, Scholastic, Inc. [ISBN #44165-5].