

Small Group Times

Many children with social communication difficulties find it a bit easier to develop awareness of others and to learn to relate to other children when the 'rules of engagement' are very clear, often repeated and part of a routine. They can see whose turn it is, they know it will be their turn soon and they know what's happening next.

Ideas for small group activities:

- Who's here today using photos.
- Bubbles:
 - ~each child is blown bubbles in turn
 - ~children help to choose whose turn is next
 - ~children choose to have their bubbles blown "up or down".
- Roll the ball to.? Roll the ball to person of their choice and say their name.
- Pass a bag round the circle with puzzle pieces in; take turns to put a piece into the puzzle.
- What's in the feely bag or feely sock? Pass the sock round the circle, "what can you feel"? Then have a look inside.
- Sing action songs.
- Choose a hat to wear and pass the mirror.
- Blow up a balloon and let it go! (For children that avoid being in a group and rarely initiate or respond to attempts to communicate with them, this often gets their interest.)

Offering small group times – things to consider:

- It's a good idea to keep the group quite short so that children are not sitting for too long. It's better to briefly repeat the group every day than to have it last too long.
- To begin with you may need 2 adults until the children have got used to the routine and to the group expectations.
- Start and finish with the same activity each time so that there's a clear beginning and ending.
- Keep a fairly similar routine/sequence to each group.
- Use a visual timetable to show what's going to happen next.

What social interaction skills might children begin to learn from these suggested group activities?

- Names of other children
- That they can be part of a group.
- They can have fun with other children and adults. When having fun children often relax and social skills e.g. eye contact and facial expressions become more natural.
- That they can be listened to.
- How to wait for a turn, how to make choices.
- Begin to develop a greater awareness of what other children might like/ starting to develop understanding of other child's point of view.