

Following are the responsive strategies from Dr. James MacDonald's Communicating Partners Program:

Be Balanced Balancing means acting and communicating as much as your child. It means taking about as many turns as your child, and turns that are about as long as your child's turn. Balancing requires active and silent WAITING for your child to take a turn. As you begin to do a little less, your child will begin to do a little more

Be Matched Matching is about being 'developmentally possible' for your child. It involves doing actions your child can do and using sounds and words your child can say. To help your child learn new actions, sounds and words, try 'progressive matching' : do what he is doing or make sounds like the ones he is making and then show a next possible step. Add another step or a new idea to an action sequence. Expand language in small steps by translating sounds into words or by expanding a one-word statement into two words. Add to whatever your child is currently doing in order to help him make a next step.

Be Responsive Responding involves 'replying' immediately to your child's movements, sounds or words (event the most subtle behaviors) with your own movements, facial expressions, sounds or words. When your child does something, immediately do something in response. He will tend to do more of the things you respond to and less of the things you do not respond to.

Share Control Sharing control means that you and your child make choices and lead the interaction about half the time. Neither partner dominates the activities, decisions, or conversation. If your child tends to be passive or does little when you are together, you need to give him more control by waiting silently and letting him initiate or choose what to do next. If your child tends to dominate, you need to take more control for yourself. (Avoid questions and directives – focus on commenting!)

Be Playful and Affirming Being affirming involves letting your child see that you enjoy and value your time with him. It often means being playful, light-hearted, and even silly. Playful and affirming partners feel relaxed together, have fun together and know that their actions are 'good enough' and won't be judged or criticized. (However, being affirming doesn't mean allowing your child to do whatever he wants. Be affirming while maintaining clear limits about unsafe or unacceptable behavior.)

When you change, your child changes.

Play to Talk; A Practical Guide to Help Your Late-Talking Child Join the Conversation, James MacDonald PhD & Pam Stoika PhD, 2007 Kiddo Publishing

Remember, IMITATION has a tremendous impact on a child's ability to learn so many important skills! Please visit our website for more information and contact us to learn more about developing social communication abilities from the inside out!