

4. Child Led Play – Parenting Video Transcript

This video is going to be about childhood play and descriptive commenting.

Some people say this can't be behaviour management. It is a behaviour management strategy and it's a relationship building strategy. It's the base of the pyramid. So you've got play right here in the middle and play allows for talking, listening, problem solving. It's attention and involvement and empathy which I talked about yesterday.

So I'll tell you more about play and how to do it. Those two skills allow the child to develop their emotional social and academic intelligence and as I said before; I feel like I'm a broken record but I can't say it enough, if children have a good social emotional and academic intelligence the world is their oyster. And you have a positive relationship with your children. They can behave. They can be aspirational. They can make mistakes. They can fail but it's okay to fail because they will have social, emotional intelligence and academic intelligence to work through that failure.

So play is a really important one to talk about and it doesn't take an awful lot. In one sense it's simply complex but let me give you an example.

If I can have two seconds of play with my child (and 'child-led' being the operative word); that is you allow the child to take the initiative. So my child is saying, "Mummy, Mummy I want to play with these rings, I want to play with the rings", and they take it and they put the red ring on top of their head.

So instead of me saying which I used to say before doing Incredible Years, "No you need to put that red on top of the stick", but they would put it on top of their head. I would say "Oh you've got the red ball on top of your head. You're fantastic".

So the speech and language therapists would be so proud of me because I'm teaching the child "put on" and the academic intelligence is "the red circle on top of your head". So in a few seconds they've learnt the colour red. They've learnt the little word "put on" and I'm also validating them. But how happy are they that Mummy's looking at me and really seeing what I'm doing? And so you're building their self-esteem and self-worth as well.

And then normally they are told pass the ball to me and they pass the ball to me and I say, "Oh, my gosh! You're the kindest child in the world. You're sharing". So there's the social intelligence that I'm developing in my child; just with "Oh you're the kindest boy in the world giving me the red ball. You are the best, the very best". So that's building your child's self-esteem, their self-worth and their emotions. So they're feeling happy. I would say, "You're really happy playing with that ring".

The other thing I would like to say. Before I did the Incredible Years Programme I would say that I was a big child at heart. I used to play with my child but I would get the bricks out and build this fantastic garage. So my three year old son would feel.... Well how do you think he felt when I built a fantastic garage with the bricks? He would feel deflated. He did feel deflated. He no more wanted to play with me than with the man in the moon because there's no way at 3 he could build a fantastic

garage. So with child led play the key is allowing the child to take the lead and you can go and build your garage later on if you really want to.

It's about letting the child take the lead and then to add on to that is the descriptive commenting. So with descriptive commenting you're trying to avoid questions. Because if I sat here and asked you what are you doing today? Oh my gosh, isn't social isolation dreadful? What are you doing with your time? Where did you go? What did you do? And how would you feel? You would feel interrogated; no more want to talk to me than the man in the moon. So with our children as well we want to avoid questions.

So initially describe what they are doing. "So I can see you're putting the red ball on top of the stick. You're taking the green ring out; you're taking the big green ring out". Just describe what you can see. In one sense as I said it's a very simple concept and in another sense its quite simply complex.

With child's play it's about getting down to their level with good eye contact. With children with special needs and with children on the spectrum it's about really getting into their spotlight and really tuning into them as well.

So that's my little talk about childhood play and descriptive commenting - the fantastic Incredible Years Strategies. Thank you very much.