



# Promoting Social interaction for Children with ASD through Playdates

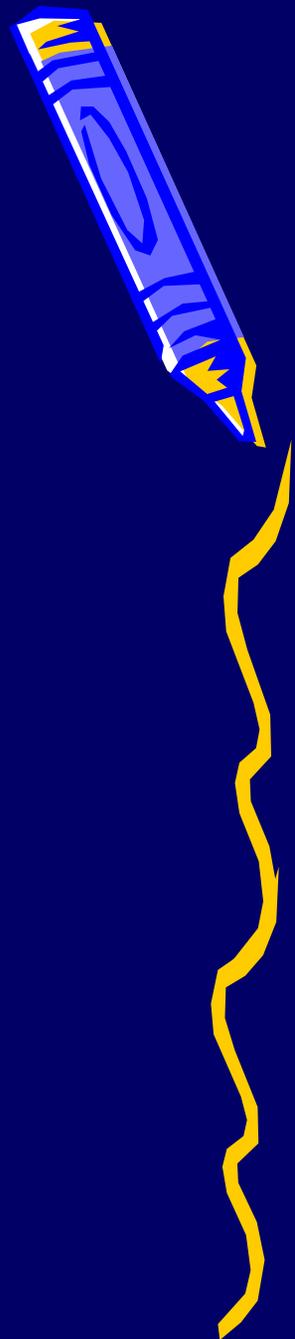
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Autism is a collection of overlapping groups of symptoms that vary from child to child

Siegel, 1996, p.301

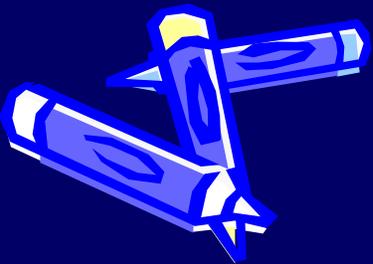


- All children with autism can benefit from positive and supportive interactions with peers regardless of where they fall on the spectrum.



# What does the research tell us?

- Just placing children with and without autism together will not guarantee success.
- Planned opportunities with adult support is needed for success.



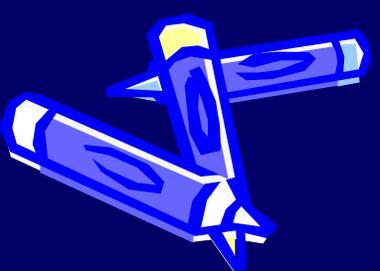
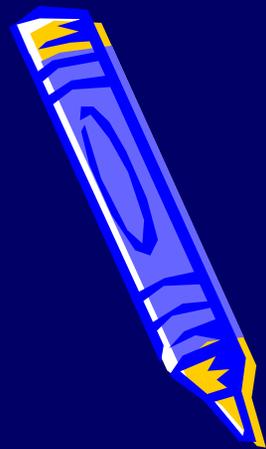
# Getting Started: Planning for the Playdate

- Identify an adult facilitator (i.e., parent, teacher, childcare provider, home interventionist).
- Select a playmate (e.g., a child from the neighborhood, school program or family member)



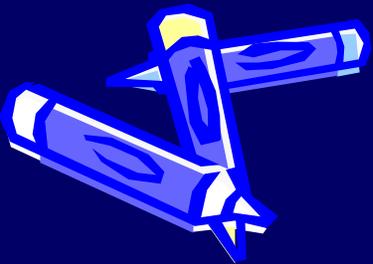
# Characteristics of Playmate to consider:

- Interest in the child with ASD
- Positive attitude and willingness to help
- Parent support from the playmate so regular playdates can occur



# Planning Cont'd

- Consider the length of playdate:
  - Balance between what child with ASD can tolerate and expectation of playmate



# Strategies to Extend Playdate

- Provide frequent "free times" when children can play separately
- Intersperse these "free times" with planned activities
- Also provide outdoor play and snack to extend the time but remain low demand for child with ASD



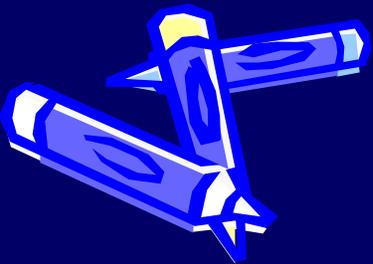
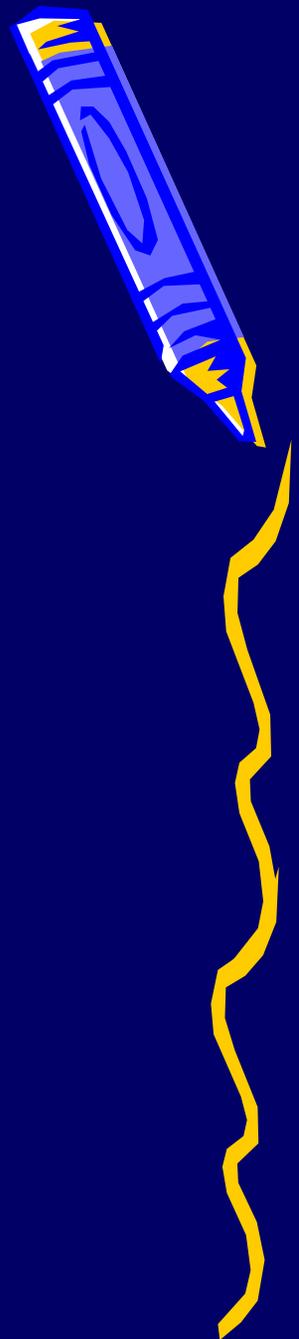
# Next Step: Identify Social Goals for Child with ASD

- The first goal is of course to have fun!
- Use a social skills assessment or rating scale to identify areas of strength and challenge for the target child



# Possible goals could be:

- To maintain proximity to a peer for longer periods of time (parallel play)
- Share toys
- Initiate a request from a peer
- Maintain a conversation



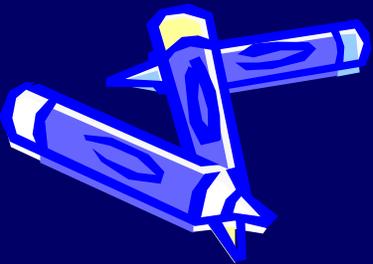
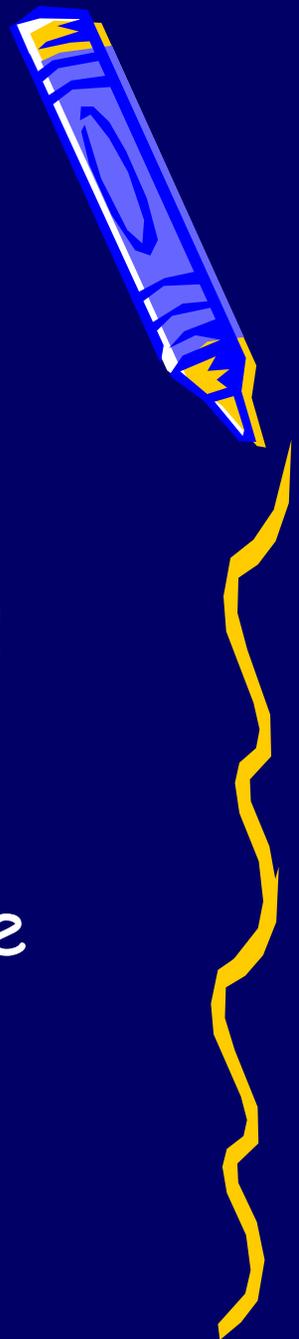
# Setting up the Environment for Success

- Choose a space that is relatively free of distractions
- Create a space that allows for children to move around freely but discourages wandering



# Environment Cont'd

- Provide space for children to play on the floor or sit/stand at a table
- Make toys visible to the children and within reach
- Limit toys so that not all the toys are available at once



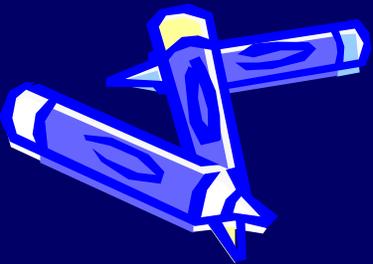
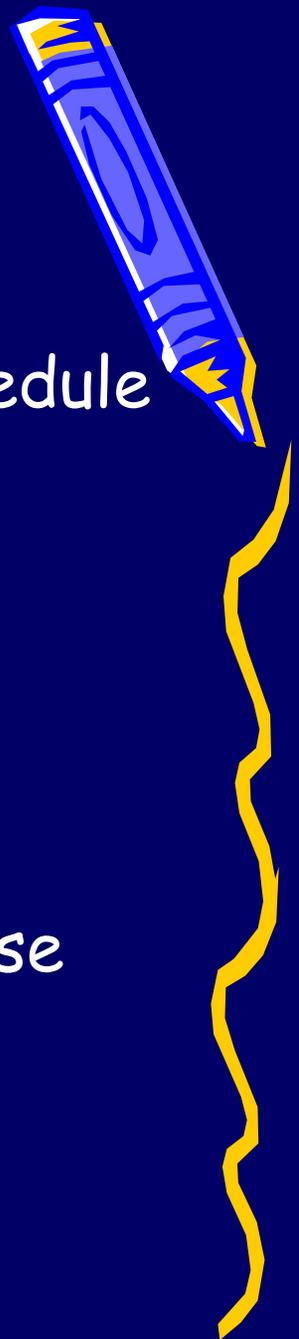
# Environment Cont'd

- Have toys and activities available that both children enjoy
- Materials that require adult supervision (i.e., paint) use a picture to indicate it is a choice



# Provide Structure for the Playdate

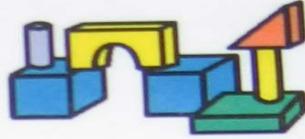
- Provide some structure by creating a schedule or plan at the beginning of playdate
- Let the children set-up the schedule and choose the activities
- Give both children an opportunity to choose



1

1

blocks



2

2

bubbles



3

3

book



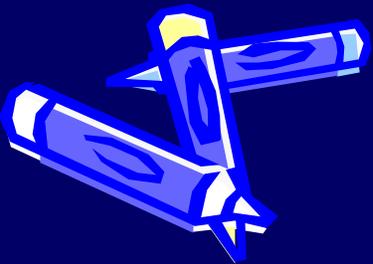
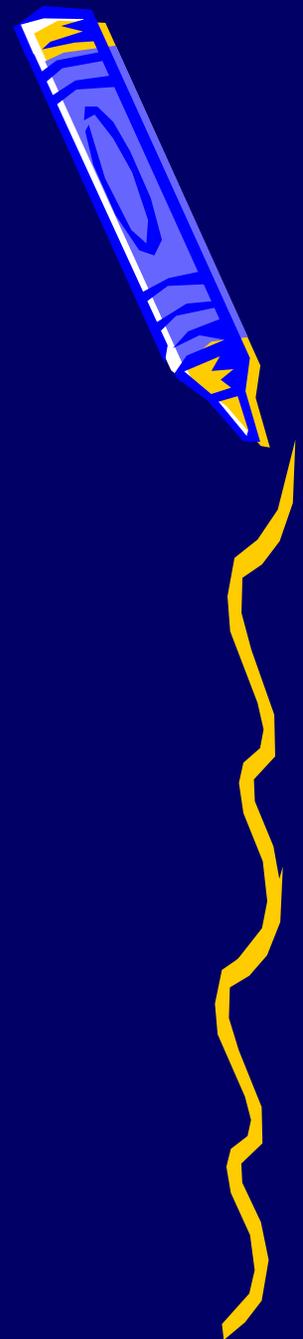
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4

Peter's choice



- Some children can choose activities together creating opportunity for problem solving



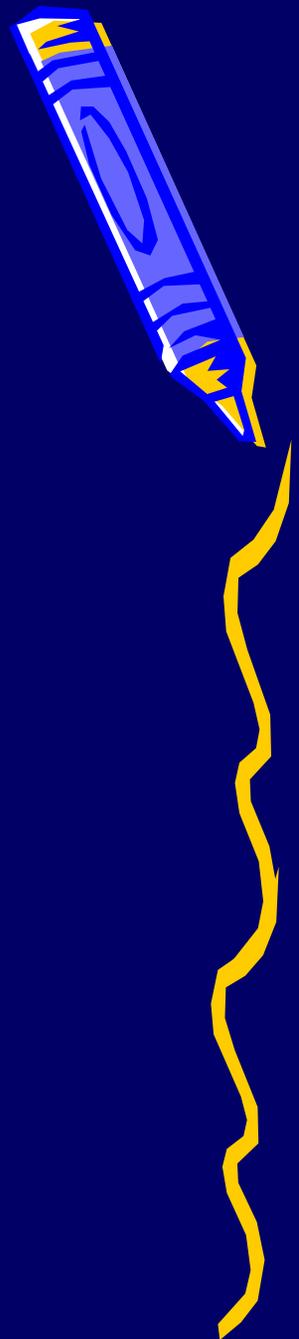
# Tips for Selecting Activities

- Select activities that are motivating to the child with autism but will also be enjoyable for the playmate
- Possible activities:
  - A sensory component
  - Rough and tumble games or physical play (e.g., jumping, swinging)
  - Favorite characteristics or strong interests can be incorporated



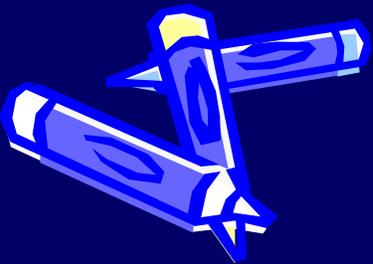
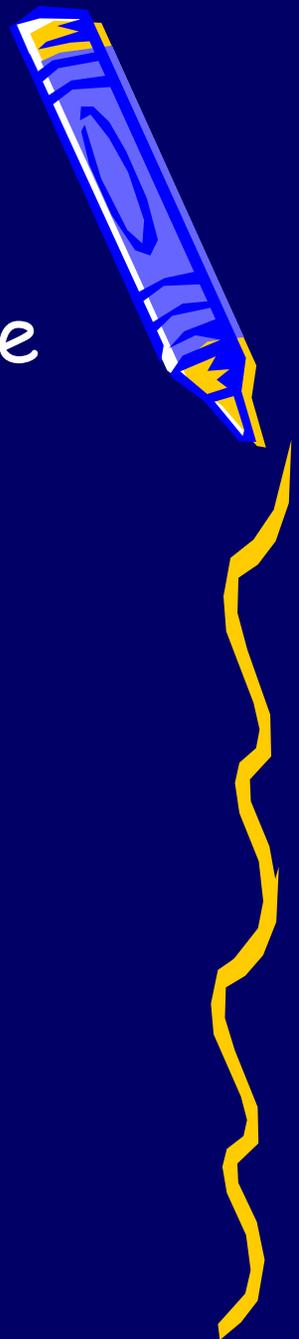
# Selecting activities cont'd

- Select activities that allow multiple opportunities to practice social skills you have selected to target



# Provide Support for Success

- Prompts may be necessary to help the child with ASD be successful
- Prompts can be:
  - Physical
  - Verbal
  - Gestures
  - Pictures



# 5 Simple Prompts to Promote Interaction

- Encourage kids to give each other a high five when they accomplish something together
- Tell kids to ask each other for help if they ask the adult.
- Have the children be in charge of food/art supplies, children need to ask each other for some.

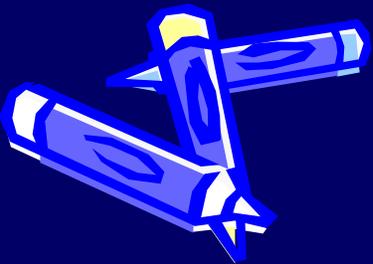


- Hold hands on way to different activities
- Limit some materials so children need to share



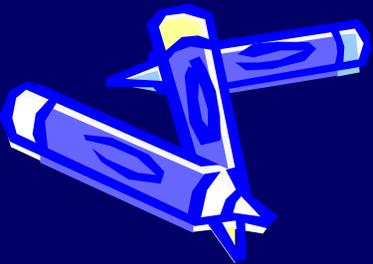
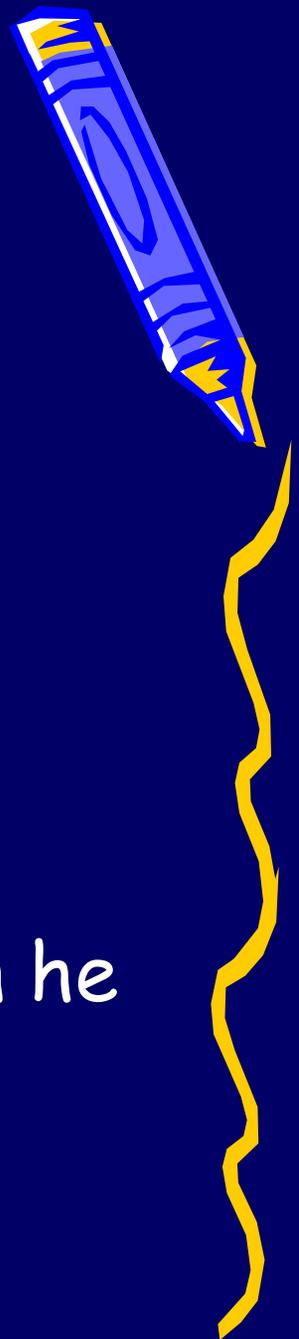
# Peer Mediated Strategies

- Provide coaching to peer to facilitate social interaction
  - This could involve teaching peer ways to get child's attention or ways to get child to respond

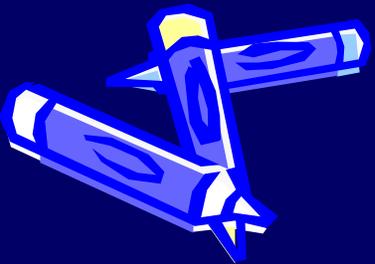
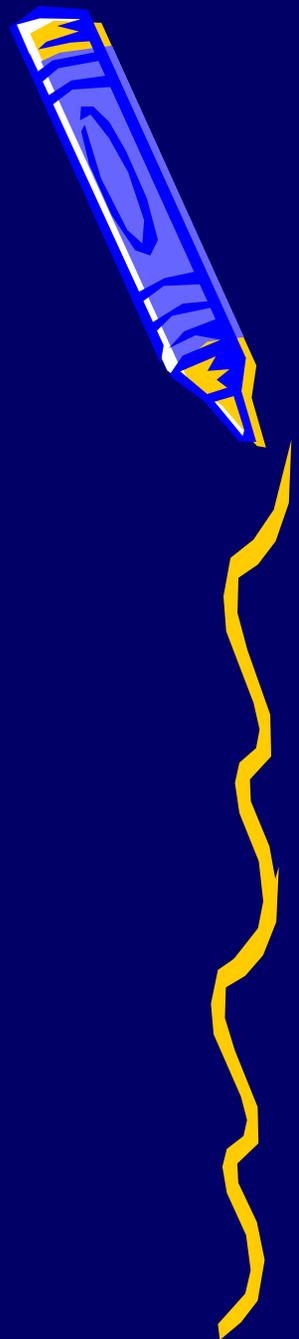


# Provide lots of Praise and Reinforcement

- Praise all interactions verbally throughout the playdate for any interaction
- Specific tangible rewards may be necessary for child with autism when he or she practices and uses a new skill



# Planning Tools



# Resources for Social Skills Assessment

- Baker, J. (2003). *Social skills training for children and adolescents with Asperger's syndrome and social-communication problems.*
- McGinnis, E., & Goldstein, A.P. (1990). *Skillstreaming in early childhood: Teaching prosocial skills to the preschool and kindergarten child. Champaign, Illinois: Research Press.*

