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I Want More!

Reinstatement

Reinstatement is often the first clear communicative intent that a child learns to express. Reinstatement takes two major forms: a) repeating a desired action and b) requesting more of an item.

Repeating an Action

For many children, learning to express the desire to repeat a pleasurable activity is the first real experience they have in connecting their own behavior to the behavior of other people. In reinstatement activities, the learner is first engaged in a desired interaction, often a physical one such as rocking back and forth or bouncing on your knees. Pauses are inserted into the activity to allow the learner an opportunity to indicate that he would like it to continue. He may express this desire by looking at you, continuing the movement or by vocalizing, fussing or smiling. Signing or saying “more” is not the goal, since those are abstract expressions that are not appropriate objectives at this point. Instead, the focus is on what signals the learner *naturally* provides upon the cessation of the activity, perhaps in an attempt to make it happen again. These behaviors may not necessarily be directed toward a partner at this point; the child may not even sense the partner’s role in providing the activity. But these behaviors do reveal the learner’s desire for more of the activity. The partner’s response, namely to repeat the activity when the signal is detected, helps the learner to begin to make the connection between what he does and what happens in response. With repeated experiences, the child learns to produce the signal *with the intent* of asking the partner to repeat the activity or “do it again.”



Requesting More of an Item

Reinstatement may also take the form of expressing a desire for more of an item, such as more juice to drink or more blocks to play with. In this case, the request generally comes after a portion of the item has already been consumed or used and another portion is wanted. To encourage a learner to request more of an item, use small portions of food items or provide only a few items at a time from sets of multiple items such as blocks or a collection of toy farm animals. This creates the need to ask for more items repeatedly. The additional items should be placed so that the learner is aware of their presence but cannot get them independently. Once the learner finishes a portion or needs more of a set of items, then a specific behavior is targeted to request more. For instance, the learner might reach for the box that the crackers are in, hold up an empty cup for more juice, or vocalize when the teacher holds up another block.

