



# Strengthening Leisure Skills

(the best kind of)

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

# What are Leisure Skills?

- skills to occupy themselves during down time or free time
  - the best kind is other activities besides technology or electronics
- skills they can do independently, without others
  - coloring, reading, listening to music, playing a game, playing with toys, crossword puzzles, word search puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, sticker art, swinging, solitaire, arts & crafts

# Why are Leisure Skills Important?

- When your child is bored, what do they do?
- When you are not able to give your child attention, what do they do?
- Can your child entertain themselves without you?

## What if ...

- You could enjoy various activities as a family!
- You could complete a separate task/activity!
- There can be parts of the day when attention is not focused on your child!

These are Reasons Leisure Skills are Important!

# Why are Leisure Skills Important?

- Engagement in appropriate activities during idle times, rather than engage in maladaptive behaviors
- Without leisure skills, maladaptive behaviors may become their preferred activity
- Leisure activity may become a highly preferred activity and can be used as a reinforcer/motivator
- Benefits the Caregiver
  - Provides various activities the family can do together
  - Allows parent to complete a separate task/activity
  - Parts of the day when attention is not focused on the child

# Why are

## (the best kind of) Leisure Skills Important?

- 2013: Suggests that increased screen time in young children is linked to negative health outcomes, decreased cognitive & language development and reduced academic success.
- 2016: Regardless of the developmental stage of the youth, higher levels of screen time were associated with more sleep disturbances, which, in turn, were linked to higher levels of behavioral health problems.
- 2017: Review of research on screen time in children and teenagers found adverse associations between screen time and sleep health
- 2019: 2 hours of screen time/day had increased behavior problems compared to children who watched less than 20 minutes
- 2019: Children who exceeded screen time recommendations had lower levels of white matter in the brain, which supports language, literacy, and cognitive skills.
- 2021: Screen use is linked to lower physical activity, higher BMI and less sleep in teenagers.
- 2022: Daily screen time that exceeds the recommended time is negatively associated with developmental health outcomes in early childhood.

# Teaching Leisure Skills

- Introduce an activity your child has some experience with and for an amount of time where your child can experience some success.
- First/Then is your best friend and a timer is a close 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Limit access to highly preferred activities; use highly preferred activities as a reinforcer AFTER leisure time.

# Teaching Leisure Skills

- Remember antecedent set up (the conditions BEFORE the desired behavior) is SMS friendly, be very thoughtful about setting up the instruction; consider time of day, favorites, limited distractions, prime with already giving sustained attention
- Remember you are building leisure skills not artists, masters of the game, or even followers of the actual rules of the game/activity
- Gradually build up the amount of time spent in leisure activities, the types of leisure activities, and the kind of tasks to be completed PRIOR to access to highly preferred activities



# Teaching Coloring Leisure Skills

- Day 1-3ish: Coloring Step 1
  - Use language/visual, “first color, then one YouTube video.”
  - Put out TWO coloring pages, set timer for 20-30 seconds, color WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Day 3-5ish: Coloring Step 2
  - Use language/visual, “first color, then one YouTube video.”
  - Put out a coloring page, set timer for 30 seconds, stand nearby while using LOTS of praise.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.

# Teaching Coloring Leisure Skills

- Day 5-7ish: Coloring Step 3
  - Use language/visual, “first color, then one YouTube video.”
  - Put out a coloring page, set timer for 30-40 seconds, praise before briefly walking into another room, return and praise some more.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity.  
REPEAT for success.
- Step 4: Repeat over and over while gradually increasing time and gradually decreasing your participation (praise and presence).

# Teaching Puzzle Leisure Skills

- Day 1-3ish: Step 1 (after TEACHING how to approach a puzzle)
  - Use language/visual, “first puzzle, then 3 minutes on phone.”
  - Put out a puzzle size your child can complete, set timer for 20-30 seconds, work WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Day 3-5ish: Puzzle Step 2
  - Use language/visual, “first puzzle, then 3 minutes on phone”
  - Put out a puzzle size your child can complete, set timer for 30 seconds, stand nearby while using LOTS of praise.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.

# Teaching Puzzle Leisure Skills

- Day 5-7ish: Puzzle Step 3
  - Use language/visual, “first puzzle, then 3 minutes on phone.”
  - Put out a puzzle size your child can complete, set timer for 30-40 seconds, praise before briefly walking into another room, return and praise some more.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Step 4: Repeat over and over while gradually increasing time and gradually decreasing your participation (praise and presence).

# Teaching Solitaire Leisure Skill

- Day 1-3ish: Step 1
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise, separating cards into 4 suits.
  - When done give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Day 3-5ish: Step 2
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise, separating cards into 4 suits, and then each suit into descending King-2 order (K, Q, J, 10, 9....).
  - When done give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.

# Teaching Solitaire Leisure Skill

- Day 5-7ish: Step 3
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise, separating cards into 4 suits, and then each suit into ascending Ace-King order (A, 2, 3, 4, 5....).
  - When done give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Day 7-10ish: Step 4
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - WITH your child while using OVER THE TOP praise, play solitaire for predetermined time.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.

# Teaching Solitaire Leisure Skill

- Day 10-13ish: Step 5
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - NEAR your child while using LOTS of praise, play solitaire for predetermined time.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.
- Day 13-15ish: Step 6
  - Use language/visual, “first solitaire, then 1 episode of Barney.”
  - NEAR your child while using LOTS of praise, play solitaire for predetermined time, praise before briefly walking into another room, return and praise some more.
  - When timer goes off give access to preferred activity. REPEAT for success.

# Teaching Solitaire Leisure Skill

- Step 7: Repeat over and over while gradually increasing time and decreasing your participation (praise and presence)

**SOLITAIRE VISUAL**

ORDER:  
A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K

Try and find a home for the top card

Alternating Red and Black

Order
K
Q
J
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2



# SOLITAIRE VISUAL

ORDER:

A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K

Try and find a home for the top card

The image shows a Solitaire Visual game board on a green background. At the top, there are three blue arrows pointing down to the board. The board contains several elements:

- A deck of cards on the left, with a patterned back.
- A waste pile containing three cards: 4 of diamonds, 9 of hearts, and Jack of clubs.
- Four tableau piles, each with a suit icon above it: a red heart, a black club, a red diamond, and a black spade.
- Seven tableau piles with the following top cards: King of diamonds, 6 of hearts, 8 of clubs, 3 of hearts, 10 of hearts, 5 of clubs, and 7 of diamonds.
- A vertical list on the right side of the board, labeled "Order", containing the ranks: K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2. A blue arrow points from this list towards the 7 of diamonds pile.
- A white box at the bottom center contains the text "Alternating Red and Black".

# Teaching Leisure Skills Summary

- Introduce ONE skill at a time.
- Wait to introduce new skills until your child can independently “leisure” for at least 20-30 minutes.
- Again, limit access to highly preferred activities; use highly preferred activities as a reinforcer AFTER leisure time
- Again, remember antecedent set up (the conditions BEFORE the desired behavior) is SMS friendly, be very thoughtful about setting up the instruction; consider time of day, favorites, limited distractions, prime with already giving sustained attention

# Teaching Leisure Skills Summary

- Again, remember you are building leisure skills not artists, masters of the game, or even followers of the actual rules of the game/activity
- Again, remember gradually build up the amount of time spent in leisure activities, the types of leisure activities, and the kind of tasks to be completed PRIOR to access to highly preferred activities

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