Activity Sheet 5.4

Play Skills

1) **Spend the first few moments JUST OBSERVING your child. Then,**

2) **IMITATE your child’s play.**
   - Focus on what your child is doing. For example, if your child is drawing a tree, start drawing a tree.
   - This shows you are interested in and want to be a part of your child’s play.

3) **DESCRIBE your child’s behavior.**
   - Provide a running commentary of your child’s play.
   - Be descriptive. State exactly what your child is doing: “You’re pushing a train around the track.”
   - This lets your child know that you’re interested and paying attention.
   - You can promote learning by emphasizing certain words (e.g., “You’re pushing the red car.”)

4) **REFLECT your child’s vocalizations.**
   - Repeat or paraphrase what your child says.
   - Immediate attention for any vocalizations may promote language development.
   - The restatement can also correct speech in a nondirective manner.

5) **TARGET naturally occurring SOCIAL and PLAY SKILLS.**
   - Social skills:
     - This can include requesting, sharing, or taking turns.
     - Use praise to underline social interaction in your child’s play.
     - Model the skill, and label your interactive behavior (e.g., when giving the crayon you are using to the child, say, “I would like to share my crayon with you.”)
     - Teach without being directive or leading the play.
   - Play skills:
     - This can include using imaginative play with a doll or creating a story with characters.
     - Use praise to underline what you notice in the child’s play.
     - Model plausible extension of your child’s play behavior (e.g., if the child is pushing cars around, say, “Your cars are driving around getting ready for a race. Here’s the starting line.”)

6) **PRAISE your child as often as you can!**
   - Focus on “positive opposite” behaviors. For example, if your child usually takes toys from you without asking, praise any instance that he asks if he can play with a toy you are holding.

7) **AVOID commands or direct teaching of play.**
   - The short-term goal is to promote interactive play skills.
   - Interactive play skills are not about suggesting what the child should do.
   - If the child doesn’t obey, the play can become unpleasant.

**IF THE CHILD BECOMES UPSET DURING THE PLAY, END THE PLAY CALMLY AND TRY AGAIN LATER!**