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Creative STAR
Learning Ltd

Parent Advice Sheet: A Sense of Time

Children need lots of experiences and conversations to learn about time. It is an abstract concept that is much more than being able to read a clock face. Without understanding time, children can experience frustration or anxiety as they may not get why certain events are not happening immediately or how long they have to wait for something to occur. As adults, our job is to make time more apparent and relevant to children.

Practical ways of seeing time pass

Using an old-fashioned egg timer where children can see the sand pass through has more meaning to children than looking at a digital clock when waiting for one or two minutes to pass. This can be useful for taking turns or showing long to go before needing to get ready to go somewhere.

Providing pictures that can help indicate sequences of time

This could be sticking photos that indicate breakfast, going to nursery, play time, bath time, story, bed time around a face clock. This helps children understand what happens when. It is also useful for developing routines and sticking to them. Whilst digital clocks are increasingly the norm, a face clock can help young children see how the hands move and the links between seconds, minutes and hours.

Singing and listening to songs

This can help children develop an understanding of how long an activity should take. For example, singing the same nursery rhyme when washing hands after going to the toilet. You can let your child choose a favourite tune and tidy up together whilst it is being played.

Talking about and recording longer periods of time.

Advent calendars are helpful for counting down to Christmas. The same approach can be applied to other religious, cultural or family events. Use a calendar to mark off the days and talk about how many are left before the big day.

A photo album of your child is a lovely talking point as he or she can see how they have grown and changed over the months and years. Remember to ensure the sequence of photos is accurate.

Experiencing seasonal changes.

Going for weekly walks or visits to a familiar park, wood or natural spaces helps children develop their concept of the seasons and how they change. Your child could take a photo each time you go



and create a special photo album.

Gardening is also good for children to witness slow changes especially when they can harvest fruit and eat fruit and vegetables or enjoy seeing their special flower grow week on week.

Go for a rainy day bus ride

Buy an off-peak day pass and see how long it takes to get different places. Help children identify key landmarks on the journey. Let your child choose which bus stops to hop on and off. Remember to check the time table at each bus stop to decide where to go next. Show children your watch or the time on your phone. Talk about how long you will have to wait – perhaps the next bus will come soon, later or it's not long now. Play simple timing games whilst waiting for the bus such as running on the spot for 10 seconds or estimating how long it takes for a chosen car to drive by.

Play Poohsticks

Drop sticks into a river or stream on one side of a bridge and time how long each one takes before emerging on the other side of the bridge.

Dandelion time

In the Spring, blow on a dandelion clock. If it takes four puffs to blow off all the seeds then it is four o'clock.

Watch the sun set and sun rise

In the winter months, this can happen without the need for late nights or early rises. Remember to wear lots of warm clothes, bring a warm drink and food to eat. Find a place with a good view nearby.

Show your child how to measure time

Most mobile phones and tablets have a stop watch and countdown feature. A fun challenge can be to try counting to ten and seeing if you can take exactly ten seconds to do this.

Look inside old-fashioned clocks

Many show the cogs and pendulums that make the clock work. Find out how the clock is wound up to keep going.

Bake a cake with your child

Show them how to set the time to know how long the cake needs to be in the oven.

Books, songs and rhymes

These are also useful for talking about time, reinforcing the sequences of the days of the week and months of the year and discussing the seasons. Examples include:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- *The Bad-Tempered Ladybird* by Eric Carle
- *What's the Time, Spot?* By Eric Hill
- *What Time is It, Mr Wolf?* By Debbi Gliori
- *A Second is a Hiccup* by Hazel Hutchins
- *Clocks and More Clocks* by Pat Hutchins

Vocabulary - Using these words as you talk with your child can be helpful. Remember to ensure they know that some words have the same meaning such as midday and noon.

After, afternoon, almost, analogue, before, clock, date, day, digital, evening, fast, forever, hour, how long, later, midday, midnight, minute, moment, month, morning, nearly, never, next, night, noon, now, quickly, season, second, slow, soon, sunrise, sunset, then, week, year.

Also refer to the days of the week, months of the year and seasons.