Kelsi doesn't play with many toys, but she loves to make music on her toy piano. Her father tries to join in with her but as soon as he touches the keyboard, Kelsi pushes his hand away. When her father persists on playing, Kelsi gets up and takes her piano to her bedroom. Her father follows her, but instead of trying to play the piano again, he picks Kelsi up and throws her into the air. Kelsi loves to be tossed, so she laughs and looks right into his eyes. After a few more tosses, Kelsi is having such a good time that she forgets all about her piano.

Think about what makes it possible for you and your child to “make the connection” and have fun together. If your child, like Kelsi, has trouble including you when he plays with toys, then your most interactive times may be during games that you play together without toys. Almost all children love physical activities – to be chased, tickled or thrown in the air. When you and your child have fun together without toys, interaction becomes easier and there are more opportunities for communication.

In this chapter, we will see how you can turn the physical activities you play with your child into structured and predictable games, called People Games. People Games teach your child about communication because you and your child both need to take turns to play. Let’s look at how Kelsi’s father creates a People Game for her.

Kelsi’s father sees that his daughter loves to be tossed in the air, so he decides to make a game out of it. After tossing Kelsi a few times, he stops and waits to see what she will do. Kelsi extends her arms to ask for another toss – taking her first turn. Then her father takes a turn of his own by tossing Kelsi in the air. Now Kelsi and her father both know exactly what they must do to keep the play going: Kelsi asks for more, and her father continues the game. What was once just a fun activity has become a structured game in which both players have predictable turns.

Everything your child needs to know about communication can be learned in a People Game.

By playing People Games, your child learns to:
• pay attention to you and copy what you do
• take a turn
• give you a chance to take a turn
• continue taking turns
• start the game
• end the game
• start a new game

It’s easy for your child to take turns in People Games because:
• they are structured and predictable
• they have repetitive actions, sounds and words
• your child knows what his turn is and when to take it
• they include sensations that your child likes
• they are fun and exciting for your child, motivating him to keep the game going.
Though you can start a People Game for your child on your own, usually the best way to create a People Game is to observe your child and then join in on what he’s doing. That’s exactly what Benjamin’s and Lynsey’s parents did and the results were better than if they had spent hours thinking up games for their children.

Playing People Games is a little like dancing to Rock and Roll. You need a partner for both activities — and each partner must take his or her turn at just the right time! Both People Games and dancing are fun, but they require a lot of practice before each partner masters his or her turn.

Use the four letters of the word R.O.C.K. to help remember the most important things you must do when you play People Games with your child.

**R.O.C.K. When You Play People Games**

Playing People Games is a little like dancing to Rock and Roll. You need a partner for both activities — and each partner must take his or her turn at just the right time! Both People Games and dancing are fun, but they require a lot of practice before each partner masters his or her turn.

Use the four letters of the word R.O.C.K. to help remember the most important things you must do when you play People Games with your child.

- Repeat what you say and do.
- Offer opportunities for your child to take his turn.
- Cue your child to take his turn.
- Keep it fun! Keep it going!

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