

People Games: What Are They?

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



By waiting, Kelsi’s father gives her a chance to take a turn.

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.



Benjamin likes to run back and forth...



... so his dad turns his love of movement into a game of Chase.



Lynsey likes to hide behind the couch...



... so her mother turns her hiding into a game of Hide and Seek.