

Observe, Wait and Listen™ to Connect with Your Autistic Child

Observe, Wait and Listen™ (OWL™) is an important Hanen strategy you can use during everyday moments with your child.

Autistic children may communicate in subtle or unexpected ways. When you slow down and use OWL™, it helps you notice how your child communicates, so you can respond in ways that support communication and connection.

Observing, Waiting and Listening:

- ✦ Gives **your child** a chance to start an interaction
- ✦ Helps **you** slow down, notice your child's interests and respond in ways that keeps the interaction going.

OWL™ can be used anytime — during play, meals, book sharing, getting dressed, or while exploring together.



Observe: Watch Closely to Discover What Interests Your Child

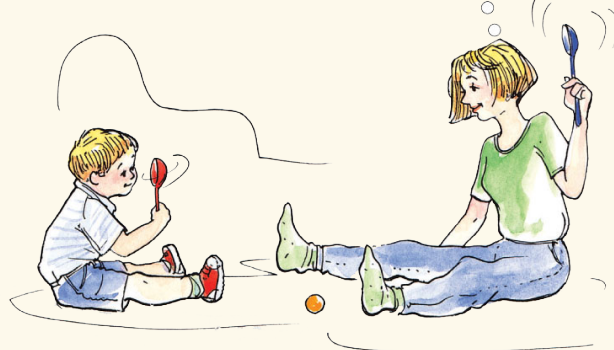
Observing means watching your child closely to see what they enjoy and how they communicate.

When you observe your child, you learn:

- ✦ What captures their attention
- ✦ What activities they enjoy
- ✦ How they share their ideas, needs, and feelings
- ✦ How they respond during interactions

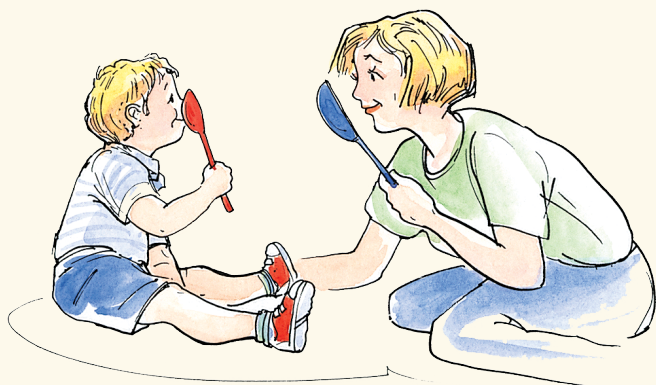
When Julian's mom watches closely, she discovers he's more interested in the spoon than the ball.

He's more interested in that spoon.



Tip: Get down to your child's level. This makes it easier to see what they are noticing and to join in with what interests them.

When you observe your child, your interactions will be more fun because they're focused on your child's interests.



Now she knows how Julian wants to play.



Wait: Give Your Child Time to Take the Lead

Waiting quietly gives your child the chance to communicate in their own way. Sometimes children may seem quiet or unsure about what to do next. Often, they simply need a little extra time to think and respond.

When you wait:

- Your child has an opportunity to start the interaction
- Your child has time to think about what you said
- You may notice small or subtle ways your child communicates

It's okay if your child doesn't start the interaction right away. Waiting still gives them time to share a message when they're ready.

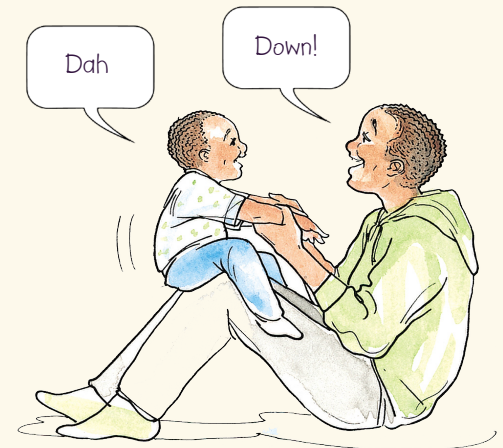
Tip: Try silently counting to 10 in your head before saying or doing something new. This small pause can give your child the time they need.

Listen: Discover What Your Child Is Telling You

Listening means paying close attention to your child's sounds, words, phrases, and intonation.

Listening helps you:

- Recognize the sounds and words your child uses
- Understand your child's messages
- Respond in ways that support back-and-forth interaction



Zachary uses a sound like "dah" to mean "down." By listening and modelling "down," you give a helpful model while still responding to your child's message.

OWL™ Brings It All Together

Observe, Wait and Listen™ helps you notice what interests your child and how they communicate. This supports fun and engaging interactions that create opportunities for communication and connection.

OWL™ is one of many strategies from More Than Words® – The Hanen Program® for Parents of Autistic Children and Children Who May Benefit From Social Communication Support. You can also learn more in the Hanen parent guidebook, *More Than Words*.

Learn more at www.hanen.org/MTWguidebook.

