

Joint Attention (Hanen)

Joint attention happens when two people pay attention to the same thing and let each other know that they are sharing that moment. They do this by looking at each other, gesturing (pointing to it), and/or saying something about the thing they are paying attention to.

6 months: Coordinated joint looks

- This skill has three steps and is initiated by the child
- The child looks at an object, then a person, then back to the object, or
- The child looks at a person, an object, and then back to the person.
- Becomes more intentional around 12 months

10 months: Showing

- Holds up an object to show someone

12 months: Following gaze

- Follows someone's gaze to a nearby item or person

13 months: Reaching and giving

- Child reaches for and gives items to a person to make a request

14 months: Following a point

- Child looks in the direction of someone's pointed finger

16 months: Pointing with clear communicative intent

- When pointing emerges, it is used both for requesting and joint attention

20 months: Using a variety of nonverbal means for sharing attention and requesting

Ways to address joint attention:

- Build your therapy around what the child shows an interest in.
- Do not think that therapy must always happen at a table.
- Sit on the floor and play!
- Sing songs and finger plays with motions.
- Physical play (chase, tickle, ride horse, etc)