

Steps of Floortime™

Floortime™ is a method of gaining interactions typically with difficult to reach children, but easily used with all children. Brief note of introduction: a circle of communication is turn-taking between two communicators. One person says or gestures toward an idea and the other communicator responds through gesture or vocalization.

Step 1 Observation Listening to and watching a child are essential for effective observation. What's the child's style of relating? Is he relaxed or outgoing? Shy or withdrawn? Before beginning to interact with your child, you need to determine the child's mood and emotional state. Facial expression, tone of voice, and words (or lack of words) are all important clues that allow you to gauge your approach.

Step 2 Open a circle of communication Once a comfort level is reached, describe with words and gestures appropriate to the situation. This may mean moving a sought-after block closer to the child or providing a comforting blanket or engaging toy. Another "opener" might be to carefully block a child's attempts to carry on. For example, if the child keeps wandering around the room, somewhat unfocused, get in her way – physically standing in her way so that she can no longer wander. You may eventually back her into a corner. She will likely push you to move, make a sound, or do something to get you out of her way so she can continue what she wants to do. This is opening a circle of communication.

Step 3 Follow the child's lead Even if you have only a few moments to spend with a child, you can be ready to support and encourage him during play. As he makes decisions, takes play in new and creative directions and problem solves, you can identify new directions. Calm attention and supportive comments and questions enhance the communication. Talk about what he is doing. "You're pushing the car. Vroom vroom. It's going really fast! Wow!"

Step 4 Extend and Expand Good Floortime™ users do not intrude on play themes: instead they extend and expand the child's make-believe dramas. This causes fantasy and creativity to move ahead. Now that you are tuned-in and interrelating, it will be possible to take a child's interests one step further. From the above example, you might continue with "You're taking the car to the hospital now. Oooh, someone must be hurt. What can we do to help them?"

Step 5 Child closes the circle During Floortime™, circles of communication may be opened and closed in quick succession or the steps of the adult/child encounter may be extensive. It is important to allow the child to initiate closure following the period of extension and expansion, during which she has built on your responses with gestures and comments of her own. She will indicate when a play drama has at least temporarily reached a conclusion.

(2002) From Floortime™ video By Stanley Greenspan, M.D. (<http://www.icdl.com/dirFloortime/overview/index.shtml>) I have participated in Dr. Greenspan's trainings and receiving a "Certificate of Mastery for completing the Basic Course on **DIR® Model and Floortime™**". I am a proud practicing advocate for Dr. Greenspan's model of therapy.

Form adapted by Kate Ross, MS, CCC-SLP (2011)