



DEVELOPMENT OF ATTENTION AND LISTENING SKILLS

Children's attention and listening skills move through recognised developmental stages.

STAGE 1 – DISTRACTIBLE (Approx. 0 – 1 year)

This is the stage of extreme distractibility. The child's attention is held only momentarily by the dominant stimulus in the environment.

STAGE 2 – SINGLE CHANNELLED (Approx. 1 – 2 years)

The child is able to concentrate for some time on a task of his/her own choosing. This is rigid and inflexible, as the child has to cut out all other stimuli in order to sustain the attention. Children at this stage are often described as 'rigid' or 'self-directed'. They may appear stubborn and obstinate.

STAGE 3 – ACCEPTING ADULT DIRECTION (Approx. 2 – 3 years)

Although still single channelled, the child's attention now allows a shift from task to directions, then back to task. The control of the attention focus is still largely with the adult, e.g. 'look', 'watch', etc.

STAGE 4 – PRE-DUAL CHANNELLED (Approx. 3 – 4 years)

The child is beginning to control his/her own attention focus although the attention is still single channelled. The child must give his/her full attention – auditory and visual – to directions in order to be able to follow them. He/she does this spontaneously and under his/her own control.



STAGE 5 – DUAL CHANNELLED ATTENTION (Approx. 4 – 5 years)

This is the stage where children are able to give their full attention – auditory and visual – for short periods initially and then longer periods. Integrated attention is then well established and well sustained.

Most children will have well established dual – channelled attention by the time they begin full-time education.

(Adapted from Reynell 1977)

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