

Together Time

Building Healthy Relationships Through Everyday Activities

Jordan Sachse, OTD, OTR/L

Program Overview

Together Time is a group and home-based intervention program for parents and their children that treats the functional aspects of parenting. The focus is on everyday activities as a way of increasing caregiver-child attachment through daily routines. The program is led by a licensed occupational therapist and is strongly rooted in occupational therapy, emphasizing the “work” of daily living. These groups were implemented with parents with intellectual disabilities and their young children under age three.

Five Group topics are used to incorporate relationship building activities into daily routines

Week 1& 2	Dressing
Week 3& 4	Grooming
Week 5& 6	Bedtime
Week 7& 8	Playtime
Week 9&10	Mealtime

Key Together Time Components for group and home sessions:

- Daily Routine Session Themes
- Parenting Strategies
 - ✓ Put safety first
 - ✓ Learn something new
 - ✓ Always show love
 - ✓ You can make it fun



What Parents are Saying:

- “The thing I liked best about the *Together Time* group was meeting people and [child’s name] can play with other kids.”
- “I learned songs and great parenting skills.”
- “I learned to let my child be independent.”

Program Objectives

The program design meets the needs of the children and caregivers by:

- Creating groups of peers to address isolation and empower members
- Using everyday activities to target specific knowledge and skill gaps related to child development
- Emphasizing positive parent-child interactions
- Teaching and learning in the natural home environment with immediate feedback
- Teaching tasks in small, manageable parts.
- Enriching naturally occurring routines for improved mother-child relationships and children's development



Family Goals for the group:

Parents were asked to identify activities of daily living they would like to work on to improve their skills in caring for their child over the 10 sessions. Responses included:

- “I want my child to want to play with me”
- “I want my child to have a bedtime routine”
- “I want my child to be able to put on his own shirt”
- “I want to know more about what my child should be doing at his age.”



Lessons Learned

At the end of the *Together Time* program, parents reported:

- Positive change in their children’s ability to be independent.
- Greater feeling of satisfaction in their child’s performance.
- More frequent interactions with other parents and feeling more comfortable talking to other mothers.

These changes indicate families were growing and developing skills in areas they identified as meaningful and useful to their individual needs. This group is also addressing the problems of isolation we know that parents with intellectual disabilities often experience that can be devastating to the healthy growth and development of their children.



Lessons Learned

The information gathered from this project and the assessment and evaluation tools employed showed:

- *Together Time* group sessions help families feel less isolated and build positive interactions, leading to healthier growth and development.
- The group promotes a supportive and social environment for parents to share feelings and new ideas and parents felt connected to one another.
- Parents enjoyed having designated times and activities to play and interact with their children.
- Parents benefited from PLAY strategies repeated throughout the 10 sessions to improve parent-child interactions.
- *Project Linus* blankets were useful carry over tools in many of the home and group activities.

Activities of Daily Living

Functional Parenting

Increase Caregiver-Child Attachment