

IN Interviews: Wait Time Transcript
LISA POFF, Program Coordinator

Well, Annie, we've talked about several different strategies today, and I wonder if there was a particular one that you've found to be really effective, or you've used a great number of times?

ANNIE HUGHES, Teacher for Visually Impaired

Yes. The one that I like the best and the, you know, our amazing presenter yesterday talked about it at length, is what I call "wait time." And what we have to realize is that as adults most of us have pretty intact, you know, neurological systems. We can process lots of sensory input at one time. Lots of things can be coming at us, and we can take it all in and analyze it and figure out how we want to react to things. But some of these little ones with these very significant challenges, processing is one of their biggest issues, and so what to us seems like a reasonable amount of time, with our intact processing system, is not the case with these little ones. So, for me, whenever I think about asking a child, let's say I'm having to make a choice, and I have two concrete objects, and I'm wanting them to choose, and I'm saying, you know, choose. Which would you like, and maybe I present it on a black piece of Velcro on a little tray, and I'm showing, hand on her hand, this is one option, and this is one option, and I'm waiting for them to feel it and look at it, and I pull their hand back, and I say, "Choose." You know, I hold their hand and say, "Choose. Which would you like?" And then, I take a little vacation, and I wait. Because in order for them to make a choice, first, they're going to have to remember, what the heck were those things that I just was feeling? I can't see them very well. What were those things? And what do I really want to do? And I have to think about that for a while, and then there's motor planning that has to come into play. If I'm going to indicate what thing I'm going to plan, pick, then I'm going to have to plan to lift up this arm and move this hand. That motor planning takes a lot of, that takes a lot of mental energy and time, and then indicate my choice. So, I always, I count to 30. I took a vacation, and I just wait because a lot of times the problem is people don't wait. And then, right about the time that the child was ready to muster up a response, the choices are whipped away, and they go on to something else, and the child did never get to communicate what they wanted. And even if, even if I've counted to 30, and I've taken my little vacation, I've waited, I try again. Again, you know, here's your first choice. Do you want [inaudible], do you want this? And give them time to really explore it. And then, or maybe you want this. Give them time to explore it, and then pull the hand away but not quite as far maybe so they don't have as far to go. And then, again, I put my hands, which, you know, you chose which, you know, and then, again, wait. Just wait. Give them the honor of the time they need to muster a response, you know, to decide. If, after doing that several times, they still haven't responded, then, you can help them make a choice

and say, "Well, since you're having a little trouble deciding, let me help. How about if," and then take their hand and move it, you know, "I want the," and lay their hand, and then verbalize what that choice is, and then do that. But waiting, if you wait, a lot of times they will choose, or they will respond, and that applies to almost anything, whether it's a visual response or a motor response or, you know, if you want them to make a sound with their mouth, or anything that you're asking them to do, give them the courtesy and the dignity and the time to answer. So, anyway, that's, wait, I think waiting is one of the most important things to remember. Don't be impatient. It's a busy, hurried world out there but not for this little one. This little one needs you to gear down, gear down and give time for a response.