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Unlocking the Joy of Reading: A Guide for Caregivers

Welcome to our guide on sparking a love for books and reading in children who might not naturally gravitate towards them. We understand that every child is unique, and sometimes finding that magical connection with books can be a bit challenging. That's why we've created a collection of playful and engaging ideas designed to make reading fun and exciting. Dive in and discover how you can nurture a lifelong love of books in your little one!

Why you should take our advice? The guides shared by Garnet Pediatric Therapy, LLC are written by Caitlin Flanigan, an ASHA certified speech language pathologist with over a decade of experience in pediatric therapy. If you have concerns about your child's speech or language development, reach out to a qualified medical professional for an evaluation or referral. Garnet Pediatric Therapy provides virtual parent training by appointment and virtual or in-home therapy in NJ.

Infancy:

> A child is never too old or too young to encourage a love of books and stories. Infants crave contact with caregivers and the moments between feedings and naps can be a great time to show them high contrast images or simple books. Connection leads to communication and books offer a visual guide and shared point of interest. Reading before bed is a wonderful way to calm down and bond. Incorporating reading into a daily routine and making it an enjoyable experience is a great way to spark a love for reading at an early age.

Babies on the move and young toddlers:

> If your baby is starting to crawl, scoot, walk or use a device to support early mobility they are going to want to explore.

- Keep books accessible and let them be a toy. Board books are durable - make a book tower to knock down or line up books to make a road.
- Keep books on low shelves or a front facing shelf.
- Kids in this age group LOVE to unload bins. Fill a container with books and let them pull them out.
- Books with flaps, sounds, bumps - any extra sensory or interactive aspect – are more engaging. Help your young toddler lift flaps and press buttons. Some children can and will rip off flaps so supervision is recommended.
- Think about scale. There are some massive books out there that can be enjoyed while laying in a propped position on the belly. Exploring a large picture can be much more

enjoyable for some children. Little hands may engage better with little books. I love the standard sized board book but there are some that are even smaller.

As they get older:

The above suggestions may still work well as children age. Especially unloading bins of books and having the freedom to explore, that never gets old.

- If you're not sure where to start, cater to the child's area of interest. There are books about everything - construction, dogs, turtles, bugs. Pick a book about something they love.
- Take them with you to the library or bookstore and allow them agency over the books that come home.
- Speaking of libraries (I love them) visiting yours can be a great weekly activity. Many have children's story time and librarians can help guide you to books of interest. Plus, it's a free, community based activity and a school age child can get their own library card.
- Many popular children's book series have been turned into shows. If your child's favorite show has an accompanying book series - start there.
- Make books a part of seasonal transitions and holidays. Rotating books or pulling them out after some time packed in the attic or basement can make them extra exciting.
- Keep the demands and expectations around reading low. If your child wants to flip through a book and look at the pictures - great! Maybe they will eventually want to hear the story. You can also change the story or simply label the images.
- If your child wants to read the same book or books on repeat, just go with it. I know it can get old but repetition is a great way to learn.
- Audiobooks and story podcasts are and amazing way to help children understand and enjoy a narrative structure. Listening together in the car can help busy families connect over a story on the go.
- Remember that reading is a shared activity. Read with your child. Pause, ask questions, let them explore the story instead of rushing through the words to get to the end.
- More than anything, building books and stories into your daily routine will encourage your child to interact with them.

We hope you find these suggestions helpful and enjoy the connection that comes from sharing a story with your child!

Garnet Pediatric Therapy Guide
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