**Connecting and communicating: 18-35 months**

*This video explains how communicating with toddlers helps them learn and develop. When you show interest in what kids are doing and ask questions, you can boost their self-esteem and give them a chance to try out new words.*

[Mum and daughter sit at the kitchen table reading a catalogue]

Mum: Spotlight. Stocktake sale.

Daughter: Yay.

Mum: Forty percent off.

Daughter: Yaaayy.

Mum: [pointing, showing daughter] There’s a sewing machine. Look, the towels. And some sheets.

Narrator: Things like catalogues are a great source of words and pictures and can help your child to build on the words she knows. Point to a picture in a catalogue and ask your child if she knows what it is. If she does, praise her and tell her a bit more about the item.

Mum: Where’s pink?

Daughter [pointing]: There.

Mum: Where’s white?

Daughter: There.

Mum: Where’s yellow?

Daughter: There!

Mum: Good girl. Where’s the red one? Can you see the red one? Little one?

Narrator: A simple thing like preparing a snack is a great learning opportunity.

Mum: Apple and sultana. Say apple.

Daughter: Apple.

[Mum talks about apples and sultanas and puts them in a bowl]

Narrator: You can talk about the shape, size and colour of the food as you prepare it. Encourage your toddler to tell you about the food. This simple chat can help expand your child’s vocabulary by adding to the ideas and words she uses.

[Child is putting sultanas into a bowl, one at a time].

Mum: One, two, three, four...

[Outside, Mum helps daughter into the stroller and talks about what she is doing]

Narrator: Talking together about what you are doing can help your child understand what is happening around her, and gives her a sense of why things happen.

Mum [helping daughter do up the buckle]: That way. Now move your fingers. Move your fingers. Good girl.

Narrator: Giving simple instructions and using gestures helps your child understand what you’d like her to do. You can use everyday moments like this as opportunities for your child to learn.

Narrator: Everything is a learning opportunity.

Mum: Red flower. Do you want it? Yes? Say yes? Yes. [Gives daughter the flower] Say thank you.

Daughter: Thank you.

Narrator: When you are walking down the street, describe what you see, a flower, the street, the cars. If your toddler doesn’t understand, try using different words. Talking a lot is the best way to help your child learn language.

[A mum and her toddler son exploring in the park together]

Narrator: Let your child show you the things he is interested in. Children love the fact that everything is new to them and exploring the world is the best kind of learning.

Mum: It’s wood. Where are you off to now? Oooh, what does that feel like?

Narrator: Everyday objects are interesting to a curious toddler. Talk with your child about how things feel, their shape, their colour and where they come from.

[Another mum is walking along the street with her son]

Mum [pointing to the ground]: look at the brown leaf.

Son: Aaah!

Mum: That fell from the tree.

Son [pointing up]: Aah, trees.

Mum: It fell down from the tree. Yeah. [Mum and son playing in the park]

Mum: Are you going to put the shapes in the truck? Oh, wow!

Narrator: Everywhere you go you can introduce new words to your child. You can use action words like ‘push’ and ’put’ to explain the things you are doing and descriptive words like ‘smooth’ and ‘hard’ to describe objects. Remember, the more words your toddler hears, the more words he will learn.

[Mum and child count cars together]

Mum: Do you want to count the cars? We’ll start from here. Look, we’ll start from the white one.

Son: One ...

Mum: One...

Narrator: Children love counting, so use your environment. Counting items, like cars, helps your child to learn about how numbers are used. Repeating things over and over again, will strengthen your child's memory and help expand her vocabulary.

Son: ... five, six.

Mum: There’s six cars parked on the side of the road. You love cars, don’t you?

Son: Yes!

[Mum pushing daughter along the street in the stroller]

Mum [pointing]: Look on the car, can you say ‘G’?

Daughter: G

Mum: Yeah. What colour is the car? Say orange? Orange.

Narrator: Learning about colours and numbers can be a good talking point when you are out walking. With every new bit of information, or every new question your child has, you can help her build early thinking skills.

[Mum comes to watch her daughter drawing]

Mum: Did you draw? What did you draw?

Narrator: Showing interest in the things your child does is a great way to boost their self esteem. Asking her about her work gives her a chance to use the words she knows to tell you about it. Listening carefully, looking at your child, smiling and repeating what she says, shows that you understand and appreciate what she is doing.

[Mum comforting her son who has a sore foot]

Mum: Mum will put Wiggles [a Band-Aid] on Terralee’s foot. OK?

Narrator: Your toddler may have strong feelings. It’s important to recognise these feelings - even when your child is not happy. Talk about the feelings, and use words to describe them. Be gentle and loving as your child starts to understand his emotions.

Son: Crying.

Mum: Oh, come here. [gives him a cuddle and kiss] Kiss. I love you.