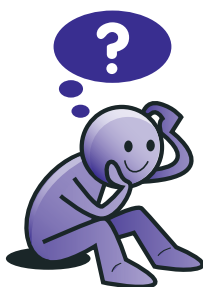


Section 7.4

Learning the meaning of 'why'

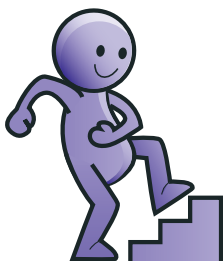


Why is this important?

'Why' questions help to develop causal relations, that is something happened because of something else (e.g. the boy is crying because he fell off his bike). As verbal reasoning skills develop, children learn that 'why' questions can probe increasingly more abstract concepts.

What to do

- Collect some simple action pictures that illustrate 'cause and effect' activities.
- Use 'why' as you ask the child about the pictures, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why has the man got his umbrella?'
 - 'Because it's raining.'
 - ★ 'Why is the girl running?'
 - 'Because she's trying to catch the bus.'
 - ★ 'Why can't the boy reach the cake?'
 - 'Because he's too small.'
 - ★ Include questions here about feelings/emotions that the child can relate to his/her own experience (e.g. 'Why can't the boy reach the cake? Because he's too small. How does he feel?').
- Encourage sentence completion (e.g. 'Why has the man got his umbrella? Because ...').
- If this doesn't do the trick, model the right response.



Step up

- Don't use any additional signs/symbols/written word prompts.
- Choose more challenging pictures.
- Read a story together and ask 'why' questions relating to the story.
- Ask simple 'why' questions about the child's daily routine, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why do we wash/brush our hair?'
 - ★ 'Why do we go to school?'
- Doing this throughout the day will aid generalisation.

Step down

- Use a sign or gesture as you say 'why'.
- Use a written word or symbol as well as the sign. Point to the symbol/word as you ask the question.
- Model the correct response and ask the child to repeat.
- Act out the cause and effect using toys or even yourself!

