

Building Positive Relationships with Young Children

Building Positive Relationships

This is a foundational component of good teaching. All children grow and thrive in the context of close and dependable relationships that provide love, nurturance, security and responsive interactions. A positive adult-child relationship built on trust, understanding and caring will promote children's cooperation and motivation. Research shows that having a positive preschool experience and a warm open relationship with their child care provider are important protective factors for young children. Protective factors produce direct improved effect for children in at-risk situations from academic and behavioural problems.

Giving time and attention are two important approaches to take towards young children and are a precedent to the optimum use of utilising behaviour change strategies for two reasons;

1. Taking time to build relationships may reduce challenging behaviours lessening the need for assessments and interventions strategies.
2. As relationships build children may respond to the positive influence of that adult and seek out ways to gain more positive attention.

Getting to know you

Gain an understanding of children's preferences, interests, background and culture. With young children this is mostly accessed by observing children and by speaking directly to parents and other caregivers. The adult can then ensure that the content of a child's play and any conversations are relevant. Adults too can share their interests, likes etc when appropriate.



It takes a lot of love

For many children developing positive relationship with adults is a difficult task. Prior negative history may make relationship building a long task. Look for opportunities throughout the day by giving as much praise/positive affirming statements to children every day as some children may have only heard criticism.

Making deposits

Taking time to build relationship is like making a deposit in a child's relationship piggy bank, when children are criticised it is like making a withdrawal from the piggy bank. As a reflection tool think about whether a comment/strategy is making a deposit or a withdrawal in this bank. It can be difficult to build positive relationships with children who 'push our buttons' and make us feel angry, frustrated or guilty, than those who respond to us. However, these children are the ones who need positive relationship with adults the most, but will take commitment and consistent effort.

