

Get down to child's eye level

When talking to children, kneel or squat down to their eye level.

Why does it help?

- If you do this, the child will know that you are talking to him/her and not to someone else. You can get the child's attention.
- It communicates to a child that you are ready to listen to her/him.
- Being on the same physical level as you can help children feel safe and connected to you.

Getting down to a child's eye level is not only a physical action. It is a mental attitude showing that you are ready to listen to them and that you adjust your expectations to their developmental capacity. By bending your knees you change your position both physically and mentally in relation to the child. You no longer see a child from an adult perspective, treating her/him as a grown-up who should be able to self-control, share with others or follow daily routines (eating, toileting/washing themselves, napping) independently but you adjust your expectations to her/his capacities.

Reflection:

- Am I ready to listen to what a child would like to tell me?
- In which situations is it beneficial to get down to a child's eye level?
- Are your expectations towards a child fitted to her/his developmental stage?

To go further:

We share a piece from Korczak (a Polish doctor and an educator). He wrote it about 100 years ago, seeing the importance to adjust your mind to a child's perspective, not just your body's position.

"You say:

- It's tiring to care for children. / Childcare is tiring.

You are right.

You add:

- Because you have to stand at their level, bend down, bow, make yourself small.

There you are wrong. This is not the thing that tires you the most. It is rather the fact of having to rise to the height of their feelings. To stretch, to lie down, to stand on our tiptoes. So as not to hurt them."