



**CHCECE033**

**Develop positive and  
respectful relationships  
with children**

**LEARNER  
GUIDE**



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## This Learner Guide

### **CHCECE033 - Develop positive and respectful relationships with children (Release 1)**

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to communicate and interact respectfully with children and to guide their behaviours in ways that support their agency, positive sense of self and self-regulation.

This unit applies to educators who work according to established policies and procedures and under the guidance of others in regulated children's education and care services in Australia.

The skills in this unit must be applied in accordance with Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation, Australian standards and industry codes of practice.

No occupational licensing, certification or specific legislative requirements apply to this unit at the time of publication.

**A complete copy of the above unit of competency can be downloaded from the TGA website:**

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCECE033>

## About this Unit of Study Introduction

As a worker, a trainee, or a future worker, you want to enjoy your work and become known as a valuable team member. This unit of competency will help you acquire the knowledge and skills to work effectively as an individual and in groups. It will give you the basis to contribute to the goals of the organisation which employs you.

It is essential that you begin your training by becoming familiar with the industry standards to which organisations must conform.

## This Learner Guide Covers

Develop Positive and Respectful Relationships with Children

- I. Interact Positively with Children
- II. Support and Respect Children
- III. Identify Factors That Influence Behaviour of Individuals
- IV. Identify Factors That Influence Group Dynamics
- V. Support the Development of Pro-social Behaviours
- VI. Reflect on Relationship with Children

## Learning Program

As you progress through this unit of study, you will develop skills in locating and understanding an organisation's policies and procedures. You will build up a sound knowledge of the industry standards within which organisations must operate. You will become more aware of the effect that your own skills in dealing with people have on your success or otherwise in the workplace. Knowledge of your skills and capabilities will help you make informed choices about your further study and career options.

## **Additional Learning Support**

To obtain additional support, you may:

- Search for other resources. You may find books, journals, videos and other materials which provide additional information about topics in this unit.
- Search for other resources in your local library. Most libraries keep information about government departments and other organisations, services and programs. The librarian should be able to help you locate such resources.
- Contact information services such as Infolink, Equal Opportunity Commission, Commissioner of Workplace Agreements, Union organisations, and public relations and information services provided by various government departments. Many of these services are listed in the telephone directory.
- Contact your facilitator.

## **Facilitation**

Your training organisation will provide you with a facilitator. Your facilitator will play an active role in supporting your learning. Your facilitator will help you at any time during working hours to assist with:

- How and when to make contact,
- what you need to do to complete this unit of study, and
- what support will be provided.

Here are some of the things your facilitator may do to make your study easier:

- Give you a clear visual timetable of events for the semester or term in which you are enrolled, including any deadlines for assessments.
- Provide you with online webinar times and availability.
- Use ‘action sheets’ to remind you about tasks you need to complete, and updates on websites.
- Make themselves available by telephone for support discussion and provide you with industry updates by email where applicable.
- Keep in touch with you during your studies.

## **Flexible Learning**

Studying to become a competent worker is an interesting and exciting thing to do. You will learn about current issues in this area. You will establish relationships with other students, fellow workers, and clients. You will learn about your own ideas, attitudes, and values. You will also have fun. (Most of the time!)

At other times, studying can seem overwhelming and impossibly demanding, particularly when you have an assignment to do and you aren't sure how to tackle it, your family and friends want you to spend time with them, or a movie you want to see is on television.

Sometimes being a student can be hard.

Here are some ideas to help you through the hard times. To study effectively, you need space, resources, and time.

### **Space**

Try to set up a place at home or at work where:

1. You can keep your study materials,
2. you can be reasonably quiet and free from interruptions, and
3. you can be reasonably comfortable, with good lighting, seating, and a flat surface for writing.

If it is impossible for you to set up a study space, perhaps you could use your local library. You will not be able to store your study materials there, but you will have quiet, a desk and chair, and easy access to the other facilities.

## **Study Resources**

The most basic resources you will need are:

1. A chair
2. A desk or table
3. A computer with Internet access
4. A reading lamp or good light
5. A folder or file to keep your notes and study materials together
6. Materials to record information (pen and paper or notebooks, or a computer and printer)
7. Reference materials, including a dictionary

Do not forget that other people can be valuable study resources. Your fellow workers, work supervisor, other students, your facilitator, your local librarian, and workers in this area can also help you.

## **Time**

It is important to plan your study time. Work out a time that suits you and plan around it. Most people find that studying, in short, concentrated blocks of time (an hour or two) at regular intervals (daily, every second day, once a week) is more effective than trying to cram a lot of learning into a whole day. You need time to ‘digest’ the information in one section before you move on to the next, and everyone needs regular breaks from study to avoid overload. Be realistic in allocating time for study. Look at what is required for the unit and look at your other commitments.

Make up a study timetable and stick to it. Build in ‘deadlines’ and set yourself goals for completing study tasks. Allow time for reading and completing activities. Remember that it is the quality of the time you spend studying rather than the quantity that is important.

## Study Strategies

Different people have different learning ‘styles’. Some people learn best by listening or repeating things out loud. Some learn best by ‘doing’, some by reading and making notes. Assess your own learning style and try to identify any barriers to learning which might affect you. Are you easily distracted? Are you afraid you will fail? Are you taking study too seriously? Not seriously enough? Do you have supportive friends and family? Here are some ideas for effective study strategies:

1. **Make notes.** This often helps you to remember new or unfamiliar information. Do not worry about spelling or neatness, as long as you can read your own notes. Keep your notes with the rest of your study materials and add to them as you go. Use pictures and diagrams if this helps.
2. **Underline keywords** when you are reading the materials in this Learner Guide. (Do not underline things in other people’s books.) This also helps you to remember important points.
3. **Talk to other people** (fellow workers, fellow students, friends, family, or your facilitator) about what you are learning. As well as help you to clarify and understand new ideas, talking also gives you a chance to find out extra information and to get fresh ideas and different points of view.



## Using this Learner Guide

A Learner Guide is just that, a guide to help you learn. A Learner Guide is not a textbook. Your Learner Guide will:

1. Describe the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve competency for this unit.
2. Provide information and knowledge to help you develop your skills.
3. Provide you with structured learning activities to help you absorb knowledge and information and practice your skills.
4. Direct you to other sources of additional knowledge and information about topics for this unit.

## How to Get the Most Out of Your Learner Guide

Some sections are quite long and cover complex ideas and information. If you come across anything you do not understand:

1. Talk to your facilitator.
2. Research the area using the books and materials listed under Resources.
3. Discuss the issue with other people (your workplace supervisor, fellow workers, fellow students).
4. Try to relate the information presented in this Learner Guide to your own experience and to what you already know.
5. Ask yourself questions as you go. For example, ‘Have I seen this happening anywhere?’ ‘Could this apply to me?’ ‘What if...’ This will help you to ‘make sense’ of new material, and to build on your existing knowledge.
6. Talk to people about your study. Talking is a great way to reinforce what you are learning.
7. Make notes.
8. Work through the activities. Even if you are tempted to skip some activities, do them anyway. They are there for a reason, and even if you already have the knowledge or skills relating to a particular activity, doing them will help to reinforce what you already know. If you do not understand an activity, think carefully about the way the questions or instructions are phrased. Read the section again to see if you can make sense of it. If you are still confused, contact your facilitator or discuss the activity with other students, fellow workers or with your workplace supervisor.

## **Additional Research, Reading, and Note-Taking**

If you are using the additional references and resources suggested in the Learner Guide to take your knowledge a step further, there are a few simple things to keep in mind to make this kind of research easier.

Always make a note of the author's name, the title of the book or article, the edition, when it was published, where it was published, and the name of the publisher. This includes online articles. If you are taking notes about specific ideas or information, you will need to put the page number as well. This is called the reference information. You will need this for some assessment tasks, and it will help you to find the book again if you need to.

Keep your notes short and to the point. Relate your notes to the material in your Learner Guide. Put things into your own words. This will give you a better understanding of the material.

Start off with a question you want answered when you are exploring additional resource materials. This will structure your reading and save you time.

## Introduction



The quality of educator-child relationships has a significant impact on children's sense of safety and belonging. When children feel valued and respected in early childhood education settings, they develop the confidence and self-esteem to grow to their full potential and develop positive relationships with others.

Positive and respectful relationships with children in early childhood education and care are marked by the following features:

- **Proactivity**

Educators with positive and respectful relationships with children are able to anticipate, recognise, and accommodate children's need for unconditional love and acceptance, recognition, safety, belonging, fun, success, limits, and control before problems arise.

- **Realistic success orientation**

Educators with positive and respectful relationships with children are able to help the children in their care achieve success by providing clear instructions, defining boundaries, offering choices, and expecting age-appropriate behaviours and responses. They are able to help children establish their own success through positive relationship building, healthy attachments, and a proper understanding of the world around them.

- **Cooperation**

Educators with positive and respectful relationships with children are able to bring about cooperative behaviour in them through means other than adult approval or avoidance of negative adult reactions (e.g. criticism, shaming). They are able to encourage children to freely explore various experiences on their own accord, and not because of the fear of being punished.

- **Supportiveness**

Educators with positive and respectful relationships with children are able to respond to children's feelings and problems with support, acceptance, and validation. They are able to provide outlets that allow children to express their feelings without hurting themselves or others.

- **Integrity**

Educators with positive and respectful relationships with children are able and willing to make decisions based on the best interests of the children in their care instead of simply following tradition. They are able to collaborate with the children's families and, if required, the community to provide the children with the most appropriate learning experience as reasonably possible.

A positive and respectful relationship is one that allows children to express themselves and get something back. It is a kind of relationship where they feel listened to and heard, and they are accepted and free to be who they are. It is one where children feel safe, secure, and free to explore their world.

As an early childhood educator, developing positive and respectful relationships with the children in your care brings about several benefits. A child who feels comfort and security in a centre is more likely to participate in play and other learning activities. A positive sense of self allows children to exercise their agency and self-regulation. It also allows them to have their self-esteem and wellbeing needs met, enabling them to develop normally across all domains of development, including social and emotional. These are among the many reasons why children need to have positive and respectful relationships.

In this learner guide, you will learn how to do the following:

- Interact positively with children
- Support and respect children
- Identify factors that influence behaviour of individuals
- Identify factors that influence group dynamics
- Support the development of pro-social behaviours
- Reflect on relationships with children

### National Quality Framework (NQF)

The National Quality Framework was established on 1st January 2012 and applies to most early years learning centres (EYLC) in Australia. In Western Australia, the National Quality Framework (NQF) also extends to home-based care.

The National Law defines an '*education and care service*' as any service that provides or intends to provide regular education and care to children under 13 years old (with some exclusions).

### Further Reading



For more information on services excluded from the National Law's definition of 'education and care service', you may refer to the exact definition of the term provided in Part 1 Division 5 of the National Law linked below.

[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)

The aim of the National Quality Framework is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in childhood care and education services through:

National  
Regulations and  
the National Law

National Quality  
Standard

Quality assessment  
rating process

National approved  
learning  
frameworks

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) oversees the National Quality Framework and ensures its consistent and effective implementation. Regulatory authorities administer the NQF in each state/territory. These authorities often act as part of the state/territory education department or agency. To determine which regulatory authority is responsible for administering the NQF in your state/territory, you may check [here](#).

## National Legislative Framework

The national legislative framework consists of:

- the Education and Care Services National Law (known as the ‘National Law’)
- the Education and Care Services National Regulations

The national legislative framework creates a national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services. The National Law provides the objectives and guiding principles of the National Quality Framework. The objectives and guiding principles shape the provisions outlined in the NQF.



## Further Reading

For further information on the objectives and guiding principles of the National Quality Framework, read the Introduction (pages 9–11) of the Guide to the NQF linked below.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

The NQF operates under an applied law system where there is a National Law, and each state/territory (except Victoria and Western Australia) has Application Acts. Essentially, the same law (Education and Care Services National Law Act) is applied in each state/territory with some provisions to satisfy the different needs of each state/territory. In the case of Victoria, the state passed the [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#), from which the other jurisdiction’s Application Acts are based. Western Australia passed its own Education and Care Services law ([Education and Care Services National Law \(WA\) Act 2012](#)) without basing it on Victoria’s Education and Care Services National Law. The legislation followed in the rest of each state/territory are presented in the table below. Links have been provided for you to access and review the applicable law in your state/territory.

<b>State/Territory</b>	<b>Application Acts</b>
Australian Capital Territory	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011</a>
New South Wales	<a href="#">Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010</a>
Northern Territory	<a href="#">Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011</a>
Queensland	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011</a>
South Australia	<a href="#">Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011</a>
Tasmania	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (Application) Act 2011</a>



## National Quality Standard (NQS)

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets benchmarks for the quality of education and care services. It establishes seven quality areas where education and care services are assessed and given a rating to determine compliance. These quality areas are important outcomes for children, especially in their early years.

The quality areas of the NQS are as follows:



The NQS aims to promote children's safety, health, and wellbeing; focus on achieving outcomes for children through high-quality educational programs; and give families an understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

For this unit, you will focus on Quality Areas 5 and 6. You must be familiar with the different standards and regulations associated with these quality areas to satisfy the requirements of this unit. The underpinning regulations of the NQS quality areas are outlined in the Education and Care Services National Regulations. These regulations support the applicable laws by providing operational requirements for an education and care service. You may access the regulations for Quality Areas 5 and 6 in the table below.

Underpinning Regulations of Each Quality Area
Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

## **Quality Area 5: Relationships with children**

The objective of this quality area is to promote responsive and respectful relationships with children that promote their sense of security and belonging. This is to guarantee that children feel free to explore their environment and engage in play and learning.

This quality area outlines two standards for relationships with children. The standards and their elements are presented in the table below.

<b>Standard 5.1</b>	<b>Relationships between educators and children</b>	<b>Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.</b>
Element 5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident, and included.
Element 5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
<b>Standard 5.2</b>	<b>Relationships between children</b>	<b>Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships</b>
Element 5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from, and help each other.
Element 5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

*Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at 19th April, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation, please go to <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au>.*



### **Further Reading**

For further information on operational requirements related to Quality Area 5, you may refer to pages 450–451 of the Guide to the National Quality Framework.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

## **Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**

The objective of this quality area is to recognise that it is fundamental for education and care services to have collaborative relationships with the families of the children in their care. It also recognises the importance of partnerships in the community based on active communication, consultation, and collaboration to achieve quality outcomes for children.

This quality area specifies two standards for collaborative partnerships with families and communities. The standards and their elements are presented in the table below.

<b>Standard 6.1</b>	<b>Supportive relationships with families</b>	<b>Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained, and families are supported in their parenting role</b>
Element 6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
Element 6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values, and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
Element 6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
<b>Standard 6.2</b>	<b>Collaborative partnerships</b>	<b>Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning, and wellbeing.</b>
Element 6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
Element 6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion, and participation in the program.
Element 6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

*Sourced from the New South Wales Legislation website at 19th April, 2021. For the latest information on New South Wales Government legislation, please go to <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au>.*



## Further Reading

For further information on operational requirements related to Quality Area 6, you may refer to pages 452–453 of the Guide to the National Quality Framework.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

Throughout this learner guide, you may need to refer to your organisation's policies and procedures. In these cases, ensure access and review the policies and procedures of the early years learning centre you belong to.



## Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Sparkling Stars is the simulated early years learning centre environment referenced in our learning resources.

Their policies and procedures are published on their site. You can access them through the link below:

[Policies and Procedures](#)

(username: newusername password: new password)



## I. Interact Positively With Children

All adults have a fundamental moral and ethical obligation to nurture and protect children. You can do this by applying ethical and moral nurturing practices in your everyday work with children.



When working with young children, educators must develop nurturing relationships to build positive and trusting relationships and bonds. These bonds help you support and guide children as they develop physically and psychologically. The bonds also allow them to develop their positive self-image and self-esteem, making them feel valued and respected.

Making time for nurturing experiences with children provides you with quality time to get to know each child and lets you enjoy the quiet moments of togetherness and conversation.

Your role as an educator becomes more fulfilling when the children under your care can spend time in environments that nurture them. The times you spend sitting in the sandpit involving yourselves in creating a sandcastle and singing learning songs and rhymes, sitting on a soft pillow together telling and reading stories, or sitting with children at mealtimes and having meaningful conversations about their day are the moments that educators bond with children and develop close relationships.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Respond sensitively and respectfully to all children's efforts to communicate
- Engage in sustained conversations with individual children about things that interest the child and encourage them to share their stories and ideas
- Communicate during practical tasks in ways that help create a relaxed and unhurried routine
- Participate in children's play and use children's cues to guide the level and type of involvement
- Model positive interaction with others

## **1.1 Respond Sensitively and Respectfully to All Children’s Efforts to Communicate**

Part of interacting positively with children is responding to all of their efforts to communicate with you sensitively and respectfully. Sensitively and respectfully responding means being aware of how your words can affect the feelings and attitudes of the children. It is understanding and appropriately responding to the needs of the children in your care. Appropriately responding means the response you give aligns with individual children’s current developmental stage.

### **Development of Communication in Early Childhood**

The language and communication skills of children in their first five years develop at a fast pace. This fast development is caused by the brain developing new neurons and connections between these neurons to facilitate the function of expressive and receptive language. Consider the following factors that affect the development of communication and language skills of children from birth to 5 years:

- **Parental interaction**

This kind of interaction involves a combination of behaviours, feelings, and expectations that are unique to a child and their parent. Interacting with their parents enable children to learn communication skills such as sharing with, cooperating with, and respecting others.

- **Learning environment**

This kind of environment involves the physical locations, contexts, and cultures where children learn to communicate with other people around them. Children should be provided with a safe and open learning environment to support their development.

- **Health problems and physical development**

Health problems that affect hearing are also likely to cause problems with the development of a child’s communication and spoken language skills. Facial muscles relevant to speaking (e.g. the muscles around the mouth area) must also work properly to facilitate the healthy development of communication skills.

- **Language exposure**

Children exposed to an environment where people around are reading and speaking are likely to develop their communication skills faster than others. The exposure also helps them build a strong vocabulary.

## **Responding Sensitively and Respectfully to Children**

Demonstrating sensitivity when responding to the children in your care supports the features of a positive and respectful relationship, especially proactivity and supportiveness. How you respond generally depends on how they communicate with you, which depends on the child's age. For babies and infants, communication usually comes in the form of non-verbal cues like crying and cooing at first. They start developing verbal communication skills through babbles at 3–4 months. At 8–9 months, they start making longer sequences of sound, which may sound like normal speech, and by 10–11 months, they begin communicating with purpose through pointing or looking. Around 12–14 months, they may start saying simple words such as 'mama' or 'dada.' Between birth to 18 months, a child may communicate to you in the following ways:

- bringing and showing you an object
- using sounds or grabbing you by the hand
- waving to say hello or goodbye (or saying 'bye')
- using gestures or simple words to request things
- shaking their head or pushing an object away as a means of protesting something
- vocalising, pointing, or saying simple words to get your attention and comment on an object

Babies and infants respond positively to 'baby talk' (e.g. 'Hellooooo widdleee guuuy, hooow's my widdleee boyyy') and may even prefer it to normal grown-up talk. At around 12 months, children are already able to understand simple instructions complemented by verbal and visual cues. Even if they seem to not understand you at first, talking to children at this age will help develop their communication skills as they grow up.

*Based on [Speech and language development for babies](#), used under CC BY 4.0.  
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A baby's brain is underdeveloped at birth, and they do not yet have the ability to soothe themselves whenever they feel strong emotions. It is up to you as their educator to respond consistently with compassion. Consider that babies typically want constant physical contact when responding to their efforts to communicate their emotions (e.g. crying). Responding sensitively means understanding the inner rhythms of each child in your care (especially babies) and scheduling activities around them. A child's inner rhythm is the typical ebb and flow of their energy levels. For example, a child may have more energy in the morning and less in the afternoon, while another child may be the opposite.

At 18 months to age 2, children begin to develop basic communication skills. From the five to twenty words they may know at 18 months, the number of words children know by age 2 may range from 150 to 300. They start to communicate using words or short phrases for various language functions, such as saying ‘hello’ or ‘bye’ to greet people, saying ‘no’ or ‘mine’ to protest, and saying ‘cup’ while pointing at a cup to request for an object. They may also use short phrases such as ‘what is this?’ to get your attention. At this stage, you can respond sensitively by addressing their object of concern. Reply to their greetings and answer their questions (e.g. ‘that is a cup’). Responding in this way encourages them to explore as their communication skills further develop.

Children’s language skills begin to develop quickly between ages 2 and 3. At this stage, they may begin having conversations with you. They may not always make sense to you, but the more they feel understood, the more motivated they are to continue having conversations with you. At ages 4–5, children begin using terms like ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘here’, and ‘there’ correctly. They begin to discuss their emotions and feelings regularly and can start making indirect requests (e.g. saying ‘I am bored’ when they want to play). Listen to what children want to tell you, no matter how non-sensical they may be, and encourage the children to continue the conversation until they are satisfied. This is called engaging in sustained conversations, which is discussed further in the next subchapter.

As an early childhood educator, you must respond to *all* efforts to communicate made by the children in your care, including the tantrums they may throw. Tantrums are real emotions that you must take seriously. Children often throw tantrums when they experience very strong emotions that their underdeveloped brains are unable to manage in a more socially acceptable manner. You can respond to tantrums sensitively and respectfully by comforting the child instead of getting angry and punishing them.

Fostering a respectful environment in your centre will help you respectfully respond to the communication efforts of the children in your care. A respectful centre is safe, harmonious, equitable, and non-discriminatory. Educators in a respectful centre value and support the abilities of fellow educators, children, and their families. Treat the children in your care with courtesy, respect, and consideration at all times.

When the children in your care share their feelings and views on certain things, you must listen to, hear, and respect them. As an early childhood educator, you respond sensitively and respectfully to all children's efforts to communicate by listening to them and acknowledging their attempts to communicate with you. Much like older children and even adults, children in early childhood who feel listened to and whose presence are acknowledged are given the opportunity to feel worthy and loved. This feeling of worth will help them develop positive relationships of their own and help them feel safe, secure, and supported as they grow up.

## **1.2 Engage in Sustained Conversations With Individual Children About Things That Interest the Child and Encourage Them to Share Their Stories and Ideas**

As early as age 2–3, individual children will start attempting to communicate with you through conversations using the few words they know. As an early childhood educator, you must entertain these attempts and engage them in sustained conversations.



By engaging in sustained conversations and encouraging children in early childhood to share their stories and ideas, you support the development of their communication and cognitive skills and allow them to explore and build on their interests, strengths, and knowledge. Sustained conversations also help children feel supported and build on their budding self-esteem.

Your conversations with the children in your care become sustained when you build on what they say. Sustained conversations promote inquisitiveness in children and encourage them to explore their own interests and ideas. Sustained conversations are supported by sustained shared thinking, which occurs when children and educators work together to discuss and talk about things in an extended way. It typically involves genuine, back-and-forth discussion and inquiry and collaborative problem-solving. Supporting shared sustained thinking also strengthens the features of a positive and respectful relationship with children, especially supportiveness.

*Based on [Discussions and investigations to develop literacy](#), used under CC BY 4.0.  
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### 1.2.1 Engaging in Conversations With Children to Encourage Sharing of Stories and Ideas

Consider the following when engaging children in sustained conversations:

Pay attention, listen carefully, and show genuine interest when children share their stories and/or ideas

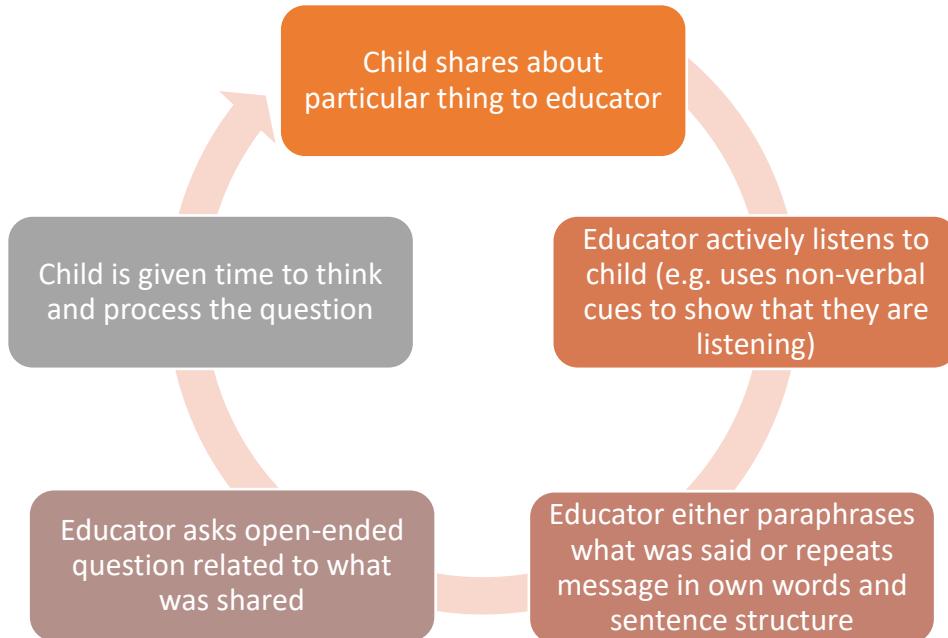
Ask open-ended questions like 'what if' and 'why' to encourage them to expand on their ideas

Encourage asking questions to stimulate their curiosity

Provide children with ample time to ask and answer questions

You can use the communication techniques of active listening and effective questioning to engage children in sustained conversations. *Active listening* means acknowledging and valuing what children are saying and ensuring that they know that you are listening properly. It shows the children that you understand their viewpoint and creates an atmosphere of cooperation. Active listening is often complemented by questioning skills to confirm that the point being communicated is fully understood. You can use *effective questioning* to encourage children to express themselves more and extend their thinking. After questioning, you may give them time to process or think about the question. When they are ready to share, you must actively listen.

The process of engaging children in sustained conversations may look like this:



When engaging children in sustained conversations, you must remember to communicate positively and respectfully. You can communicate positively by acknowledging their stories and ideas. It is crucial for children to have no fear of judgement and to feel that they are heard and understood. Use your body language as you actively listen to show that you are interested in what they are sharing (e.g. being at eye level while they share, nodding, and smiling).

You must also communicate respectfully by using simple words or words that children understand when questioning or paraphrasing what they have shared. If they do not understand a word that you used, take it as an opportunity to expand their vocabulary by explaining what the word means in terms that they understand.



## Further Reading

For an example of how an early childhood educator can use sustained shared thinking and conversations to encourage sharing of stories and ideas among children in early childhood education and care, watch the video on the page linked below from the Victoria State Government Department of Education and Training.

[Volcano: investigations and sustained shared thinking](#)



### **1.3 Communicate During Practical Tasks in Ways That Help Create a Relaxed and Unhurried Routine**



Your centre likely requires the children in your care to participate in practical tasks as part of their curriculum. Practical tasks are opportunities to experience and master practical skills usually developed at home. These include:

putting away toys

dusting shelves

planting seeds in  
the garden

wiping windows

setting the table  
for a meal

clearing the table  
after a meal

watering the  
garden

making beds

Element 5.2.1 of the NQS warrants that children are supported to collaborate, learn from, and help each other. As an early childhood educator, you can use practical tasks as a means to allow children in their early childhood to collaborate with each other and direct their own learning. You can do this by creating an atmosphere that is relaxed and unhurried. A relaxed and unhurried atmosphere is one where children feel free and secure to explore and engage in experiences that interest them.

You can create this atmosphere with how you communicate with children while they are doing practical tasks. You can keep conversations light-hearted, such as talking about the food you are about to eat while setting the table for a meal. You can also incorporate fun activities and games into practical tasks such as singing while cleaning or making a game out of putting the toys away. Consider the following when giving instructions during practical tasks to establish a relaxed and unhurried routine:

- Get down to children's eye level when speaking to them.
- Use simple and short sentences. Ensure that instructions are given in a language children can understand.
- Keep your voice calm and clear.
- Use gestures to emphasise things you want the children in your care to notice.
- Gradually lessen the number of times you give instructions and reminders as the children in your care get better at remembering how to do practical tasks.

*Based on [Teaching skills to children: different approaches](#). © 2021 Raising Children Network.*

An example of a routine that should be relaxed and unhurried are mealtimes. Mealtimes should be a positive experience for children, especially during their early years. Relaxed and unhurried mealtimes are essential to helping children develop good eating behaviours. You can create positive mealtime experiences for the children in your care by communicating positively and respectfully. Consider doing the following to create positive mealtime experiences:

- Signal mealtimes using a transition activity (e.g. a specific song or activity like washing hands or laying the table). A transition activity allows children to refocus their attention from the previous activity to the next. Transitions are further discussed in Section 2.2.3.
- Keep mealtime conversations light-hearted. Give everyone the chance to contribute to conversations initiated by either the children or the caregivers. You could talk about what they are interested in, their recent experiences with their families or in the service, what they played in the morning, and so on.



## **1.4 Participate in Children’s Play and Use Children’s Cues to Guide the Level and Type of Involvement**

Children make sense of the world through play as they explore, experiment, role-play, and hypothesise. Play is a child’s ‘work’. Play provides children with the opportunity to be in control and make their own choices without the constant direction of adults. When children engage in play, you must be aware of how you involve yourself in their play. Remember: play is a chance for children to direct their own learning and explore their individual interests while collaborating with each other. Pay attention to the signals and cues that children may give to direct your involvement in their play.

Wait for children’s cues before participating in their play. Doing so tells them that you respect their space and helps you build trusting relationships with them. How you are invited to participate in their play may present differently depending on the age or abilities of the children in your care. The cue to join may come from them, inviting you to participate in the play. For example, they may say, ‘I’m the chef, you’ll be the customer,’ in which case, you will play the part of the customer and may start involving yourself in the play by doing things such as asking what food are available. Observe their non-verbal behaviours. Sometimes, children may just hand you objects related to their play without explicitly telling you what kind of play they are doing. In these cases, you will have to observe for yourself what play they are engaged in and participate accordingly.



Follow the children's lead in the play. They should direct the type and level of involvement you have in their play. The type of involvement can include setting the play environment, providing the materials, or setting up challenges for the children. The level of involvement is the extent of involvement you provide them during play. An example of a cue children may give to help guide the type and level of your involvement is telling you to 'get the shop ready' or 'sit down while we prepare the food.' You must also take note of non-verbal cues such as their body language, fidgeting, facial expressions, and restlessness. When you see that a child seems to be feeling left out of their peer's play, you can work with them until they become comfortable playing with others.

Children should remain in control of the play even when you participate as an educator. Listen to what they have to say during play and use simple language when asked questions. Be careful not to show any impatient body language, such as sighing or foot-tapping. Doing so will help you maintain a respectful and equitable relationship with the children.

Pay attention to the children's body language while participating in their play. They may not agree with you participating in their play but are unable to verbally communicate this. This highlights the importance of observing their play before participating. If the dynamic changes as you participate in children's play (i.e. you start directing their play instead of them directing it themselves), it may be best to step out of the play and supervise them instead.



Children require active adult supervision at all times to guarantee their safety. Remember that as an educator, you are acting in place of the parent. This means the parent is placing an enormous amount of trust in you to care for their child and expects you to exercise the same standard of care they would exercise in their own home.

In addition to supervision, some adult support will be required for experiences so children can be involved in the experience. This is especially true with younger children.

Consider this example. A child is creating a finger-painting masterpiece. What sort of assistance do you think you will need to provide? It may include putting on a smock, cleaning up the paint, or washing their hands. On the other hand, you may need to assist a child who becomes stuck or falls while climbing. Sporting games may require you to provide support and guidance.

## **1.5 Model Positive Interactions With Others**

Positive relationships are ones that are responsive, warm, trusting, and respectful. These relationships promote people's wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security, and belonging. Children in early years education are expected to start learning skills necessary to develop positive relationships with others. Because children learn through imitating the adults around them, you have an important place in a child's life as an educator. They will copy what you do and will pick up many of their behaviours and communication patterns from you.

As an early childhood educator, you must model positive and respectful behaviours when interacting with both children and adults, such as listening, speaking, and taking turns in conversations, tone, body language, and the respect shown to others. Interactions become positive when they assist in developing positive relationships. Examples of positive interactions include responding sensitively and respectfully to conversations and acknowledging and being sensitive to other's needs and feelings.

It is crucial to model kindness, empathy, respect, and the expression of feelings, for example: 'I can see that Patty does not like it when you push the blocks over' and 'Do you think Patty might feel better if you were kind and helped her to build them up again?'. Part of positively interacting with others is using positive communication.



Consider the following aspects of positive communication models when communicating with children:

Communicating with children in a positive manner rather than in a negative manner

Focusing the communication on the behaviour, not on the child

Showing positive body language when talking to the child (e.g. smiling, nodding head, eye contact)

Reinforcing the appropriate behaviour, not the child

Of course, it is also essential to demonstrate positive communication and respect in interactions with other adults, such as other educators and professionals, and the families who use the service. There may be particular challenges involved when communicating with families from different cultures to your own. However, fostering mutual respect by showing understanding and valuing diverse viewpoints will go a long way to ensuring positive interactions. Some ways you can model positive communication include the following:

- creating contact (e.g. greeting and using the child's name)
- showing interest (e.g. asking open-ended questions)
- offering genuine praise
- providing encouragement and support
- actively listening
- using positive non-verbal communication (e.g. smiling and making eye contact)

## Checkpoint! Let's Review



1. Responding sensitively to the children in your care will depend on the current developmental stage they are in.
2. Active listening and questioning skills can be used to engage in sustained conversations with the children in your care.
3. Practical tasks can be good play experiences and should be provided to children in a relaxed and unhurried atmosphere.
4. Always model positive and appropriate behaviours when communicating with both children and adults.

## Learning Activity for Chapter 1



Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

## II. Support and Respect Children



In the previous chapter, you learnt how to interact positively with children. Developing respectful and supportive relationships is achieved by listening to, hearing and taking into account the views and feelings of each child, and helping them establish secure attachments and develop self-regulation.

By developing learning programs that are responsive to each child and build on their culture, strengths, interests, and knowledge, you are ensuring that children experience safe and stimulating learning environments. You support children to recognise and deepen their understandings about other people and how values and beliefs influence their own worldview by engaging them in meaningful conversations.

It is crucial to demonstrate sensitivity and initiate warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with all children and also their families. Families can be supported by honouring their choices and decision making and demonstrating respect and understanding of their views and values.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Implement practices that empower children to exercise their right to be active participants in their own lives
- Organise spaces, resources and routines within scope of own responsibility that reduce the potential for children's stress or frustration and increase their ability to have agency and be decision makers
- Support practices and routines that honour children, their family and the community context
- Show genuine interest in, understanding of, and respect for all children
- Comfort children who cry or show signs of distress in ways appropriate for individual children

- Respond positively to varying abilities and confidence levels and acknowledge children's efforts and achievements
- Support children to recognise and label their range of emotions
- Model self-regulation through gentle and calm behaviour and provide reassurance when children express distress, frustration or anger
- Support children's agency to make choices and experience natural consequences

## **2.1 Implement Practices That Empower Children to Exercise Their Right to be Active Participants in Their Own Lives**



Children should be encouraged and supported to make meaningful and significant choices that impact their own lives. As an early childhood educator, you can achieve this by empowering children to be active participants in their own lives. Empowerment is allowing the child the agency to make their own *meaningful* choices. Simple choices like which plate or coloured pencil they want to use while empowering the children to some degree are not enough to encourage children to embrace their own agency.

Educators need to develop positive relationships with children because children are more likely to participate in play and other learning activities if they feel comfortable and secure in the early childhood centre. It is equally important for educators to develop respectful relationships with children because children who are not marginalised or discriminated against can build their self-esteem and explore their own identity.

Empowering children to exercise their right to be active participants in their own lives allows them to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. It enables them to make choices about the things that affect them and to become more independent.

Empowered children are happier and more comfortable with who they are and can adapt to most situations. When children feel they have a say in their own lives, they can build resilience. Children with self-respect are better able to understand and empathise with others. They become better and more actively engaged learners.

As an educator, you can empower children by developing responsive learning programs that build on each of their individual strengths, interests, and knowledge. Developing responsive learning programs means getting to know them well and providing them opportunities to reach goals that are challenging but achievable. Responsive learning programs support the features of a positive and respectful relationship with children, especially proactivity, supportiveness, and integrity.

Some practices you can implement to support the empowerment of children in early childhood include the following:

Get to know the children in your care

Give them responsibilities that build on their strengths

Focus on behaviour instead of the child when behaviour needs to be addressed

Provide choices to the child

Ask for the child's permission

- **Get to know the children in your care**

The more you know about the children in your care and their families, the more you can give authentic responses to them. You can build your relationship with them the same way you build relationships with anyone else. Sit down, talk, share, and respond with care and empathy. Doing so will help you establish their strengths, which will help in the following practice.

- **Give them responsibilities that build on their strengths**

By giving children responsibilities according to their strengths, you allow them to exercise their sense of agency with the skills they are good at. This improves their self-esteem and makes it easier for them to feel a sense of accomplishment. This will encourage them to develop attitudes related to being responsible. Observe children while doing activities in the centre, such as during play, and note what they are good at. Assign children responsibilities based on your observations.



- **Focus on behaviour instead of the child when behaviour needs to be addressed**

When children behave in ways that need to be addressed, you must address the behaviour without making them feel that they are being scolded for who they are. Focusing on behaviour implies that the thing being addressed is related to a specific situation that can be changed.

- **Provide choices to the child**

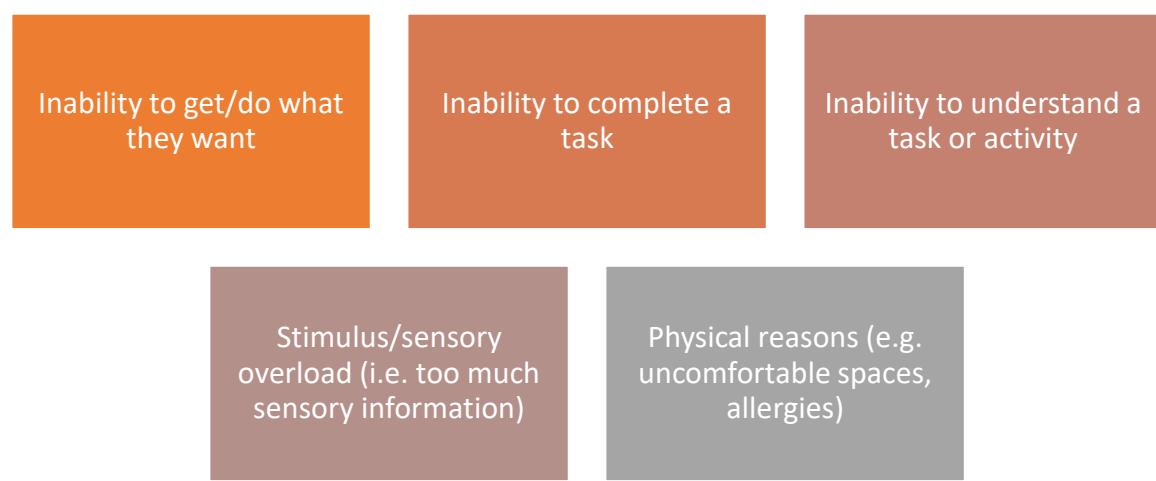
Providing choices to children is an easy way for you to allow them to exercise their sense of agency. As previously mentioned, simple choices like which coloured pencil they want to use is not enough to encourage children to embrace their own agency, but it can be a start.

- **Ask for the child's permission**

Asking for permission works double-fold as a way for children to exercise their own agency and as a way for you to model how to respect other people's agency to the children in your care. However, asking for permission may not be appropriate for everything, such as in circumstances relevant to children's health and safety. When it is appropriate, ask for children's permission when you want them to perform an activity.

## **2.2 Organise Spaces, Resources and Routines Within Scope of Own Responsibility That Reduce the Potential for Children's Stress or Frustration and Increase Their Ability to Have Agency and Be Decision Makers**

The way that spaces, resources, and routines are organised can help or hinder children's comfort levels. A lot of thought and planning needs to go into organising these so that children experience safe and stimulating learning environments where the potential for their stress or frustration is reduced. Stress or frustration can come about in children for various reasons. These reasons may include:



As an early childhood educator, you must identify any possible source of stress or frustration the children in your care may have. You must also guarantee that the children's sense of agency is supported. This allows children to regulate their own behaviours and become capable decision makers. You must address these when organising spaces, resources, and routines for them. How you organise these will depend on your scope of responsibility in your centre. Your scope of responsibility in your centre may range from the request and purchase of resources and restructuring spaces and routines to only working with what is supplied to you. Regardless of scope, you will always be responsible for reducing the potential of children's stress or frustration as an early childhood educator. Proper organisation of spaces, resources, and routines ensure that the children in your care experience safe and stimulating learning environments. Environments are safe and stimulating when they encourage children to explore and play with as minimal risks as reasonably possible. When you ensure that children experience safe and stimulating learning environments, you support the features of a positive and respectful relationship, especially proactivity and cooperation.

## 2.2.1 Organise Spaces

A well-designed space encourages children to feel happy and confident to participate in the experiences provided within it. This stimulates the children to achieve the desired objectives from their experiences without becoming stressed or frustrated. It also develops their sense of agency as they are free to engage in experiences that they are interested in.

Whether the space is indoors or outdoors, the materials and experiences you provide need to be arranged invitingly. Each environment should also include various places for children to undertake different types of play.

The following checklist provides some ideas to think about when setting up new spaces or reflecting on existing ones.

Items to check	Check	
	Yes	No
<i>Does your list include the following items?</i>		
Private places	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soft spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Open-ended materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recycled materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consideration of children's height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>What about the layout of the playroom and playground?</i>		
Clear pathways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Active/passive areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Juxtaposition, i.e. What goes next to what?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spaces for one child, two children, three children, four children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Play spaces are 1.5 times the number of children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Items to check	Check	
	Yes	No
<i>Ask yourself the following questions:</i>		
How does your room sound and smell?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it convey a positive image?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do you feel about working in this environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do you think the children feel in this environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it interesting for the children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there elements of beauty?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there unique features that capture the children's interest to explore and use their imagination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any unexpected pleasures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the play spaces uncluttered, tidy, and safe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

You will need to consider how the various play areas will work together. Children need a selection of both quiet and active play areas. Quiet areas allow the children to relax, create their own experiences, and have some alone time. This could include a book corner, for example. An active area should provide the children with a place to be noisier, move around more, and engage in more lively play.

An attractive or aesthetically pleasing environment will offer choices, space, time, variety, and ownership. A well-planned activity room will be set up, ready for the children to use and incorporate appropriate equipment, toys, materials, and furniture.

Spaces should be geared towards the children and consider their needs. Allot space where the children can store their personal belongings; provide child-sized and child-friendly furniture and equipment; and offer equipment that all children can use regardless of ability and without the help of an adult.

Other considerations include:

- installing and using low shelves so children can access equipment and toys on their own
- maintaining neat and tidy storage spaces so children can see what is there
- arranging equipment in logical ways so that children can find them (e.g. storing shovels with pails)

You must also organise spaces in a way that eliminates hazards that might harm children while they perform or participate in activities. Examples of common risks in early childhood education and care are slips, trips, and falls. Make certain that measures are taken to minimise these risks as reasonably possible. For example, you can ensure that spaces where children are expected to perform physical activities have soft and non-slippery surfaces (e.g. carpeted floor, sand) to minimise the risk of serious injury due to slips, trips, and falls.



## **2.2.2 Organise Resources**

Stress, frustration, and conflict can happen when children have to compete for scarce resources (e.g. when two children want to play with the same toy dinosaur at the same time). It is important to have a number of the same or similar items available. Preparing sufficient resources to address the needs of the children in your care will help minimise or eliminate stress, frustration, and conflict caused by scarce resources. Other points of consideration when organising resources include using open-ended materials and organising resources for easy access.

### **Open-Ended Materials**

By providing children with open-ended materials or materials that can be used in various ways, you allow them to dip into their imagination and find creative new ways to use everyday objects. Doing so also generates opportunities for children to explore and create in individual ways. Using open-ended materials also stimulates the learning experience of the children in your care. It encourages children to explore and express their ideas and feelings.



Examples of open-ended materials you can organise for children in early childhood education and care are art and craft materials. Supplying art and craft materials for children provides them with the opportunities to make things and use the materials in their own unique and creative way. However, not all art and craft materials are open-ended. Colouring books; stencils or dot-to-dot drawings; ready-made cut-outs of birds, butterflies, and animals; or traced drawings for children to colour in or paint-by-numbers do not make a creative experience. These are adult-directed activities and only provide practice in fine motor skills. Educators need to give the children opportunities to create for themselves rather than always be involved in adult-directed experiences. Children can become frustrated when blocked from expressing their creativity.

Open-ended materials are those that harness the children's imagination and have no limit to how they can be used. These could include plasticine, clay, dress-up materials such as hats and gloves, and cooking utensils which could all be used in various games and experiences.



### **Organising Resources for Easy Access**

Simply dumping materials on the floor or in the sandpit does not show a caring, thought-out plan. Instead, you could arrange buckets and spades to be ready for use or display and set up trains on their tracks. You should also re-set these play experiences during the day for other children.

Good preparation in organising resources in advance helps reduce children's stress and frustration. It is essential for children to easily see, reach, and access the materials they might want to play with without asking for help or competing with other children's space.

### **2.2.3 Organise Routines**

During playtime, children are often interrupted to stop their play so routine tasks can be completed. However, as children get older, their needs will change to include continuity of play.

It is essential for you as an educator to think about how you organise your time and space, including spaces for routines. Routines are important in early childhood settings to secure a smoothly running and predictable environment for children.

#### **Transitions**

Transitions in early childhood education and care refer to moving children from one location or activity to another. Transitions often happen throughout children's daily lives and provide excellent opportunities for you as an educator to engage and build relationships with the children in your care. How you plan transitions and guide children through them will influence their experience of the succeeding activity.

Transitions often mean children have to stop doing one activity to start doing something else. Children can become upset and frustrated if they have to stop playing suddenly. Similarly, they may feel stress when they have to move from one location to another or when they are being left at the service by their parents.

Remember to communicate using positive language and non-verbal gestures to ease children as you help them transition. Give them a warning before respectfully asking for them to stop their play. Many centres give a 5-minute notice. It can be marked by ringing a bell, playing the tambourine, giving verbal instruction, or playing a particular piece of music to let the children know that the transition from free play to a routine time is about to happen.



You must find ways to allow children, especially the older children, continuity of play throughout your routines. This may include children's work or constructions being placed on shelves for continued creation after the routine time has finished or to show to their parents at the end of the day.

Continuity of play encourages the children to participate in the program and fully invest in the experience as they know they will not have their work destroyed or packed away. If their work and efforts are not valued, they may choose not to create beautiful constructions next time, as they feel it is not seen as worthwhile.

During transitions from one location to another, you can explain to them where they are going and what will happen there to reduce the potential for stress. This helps them set realistic expectations about where they are going. You can help transition during arrival at the service by telling children what they will be doing for the day and when their parents will be back. Small, non-verbal gestures like smiling at children as they are being left at the service and slowly leading them where their peers are will help ease them through the transition from being under the care of their parents to under the care of the service.

## **2.3 Support Practices and Routines That Honour Children, Their Family and the Community Context**

When you honour children, their families, and the community you work in, you respect their diverse experience, attitudes, beliefs, and values. You approach interactions with an open mind and work together to create the best possible outcomes for each child. Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standards requires early childhood education and care services to form collaborative partnerships with children's families and the community. These partnerships are important because they enhance children's inclusion, learning, and wellbeing as they progress through the early years into school.



### **Further Reading**

Refer to pages 257–281 of the Guide to the NQF for guidance on how to satisfy Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standards.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

Communicating with children's families is imperative to plan the best and most inclusive program. This involves initiating warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with them and their children. Communication with children's families may help you uncover information about the children in your care that will help you come up with creative and fun ideas to improve their learning experience. Collaboration is critical here—include everyone in working towards creating the best experiences for the children, and it will run much more easily overall. By initiating warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with children and their families, you support the features of a positive and respectful relationship, especially integrity.

Effective partnerships are evident where:

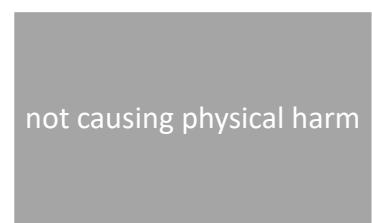
- Centre behaviour codes are developed, through the management committee or governing council, in partnership with families and the community and are reviewed annually.
- Centre behaviour codes are provided to and discussed with enrolling families.
- Effective communication and cooperation between families and educators are present to ensure that children's behavioural and developmental needs are met.
- Discussions with families and exchange of information with other services are kept confidential.

### 2.3.1 Practices and Routines That Honour Children and Their Families



As an early childhood educator, you have the responsibility to support the practices and routines that children and their families follow. Supporting their practices and routines ensures that the choices and decision making of the children's families are honoured and supported and helps you maintain collaborative partnerships with them.

Practices and routines include the ground rules that are followed by children at home. Basic ground rules should be fairly standard across families and childcare centres. These rules include the following:



As routines are indispensable for children, consistency between home and childcare is vital. This is especially important for babies and toddlers who are learning self-regulation and developing their personal rhythms.

Some rules and routines can be adapted to suit the child's needs, and some will not. Your policies and procedures must guide you on the things that can be altered and the things that are not negotiable.

For example, mealtimes and rest and sleep times could be changed for children at the centre to maintain the consistency of these times at home. Physical care routines such as nappy changing, oral care, and skin care can also be adjusted to maintain the continuity of the child's experience from home to the learning centre. This includes how you communicate with them as they go through these routines. Allow them to take their time and go through each step of the physical care routine while providing support only where it is needed.

However, some things may not allow for change. For example, if the rules of the childcare centre do not allow balls to be kicked indoors, this would need to be discussed with parents, and the child would need to understand the rules for this are not the same as at home.

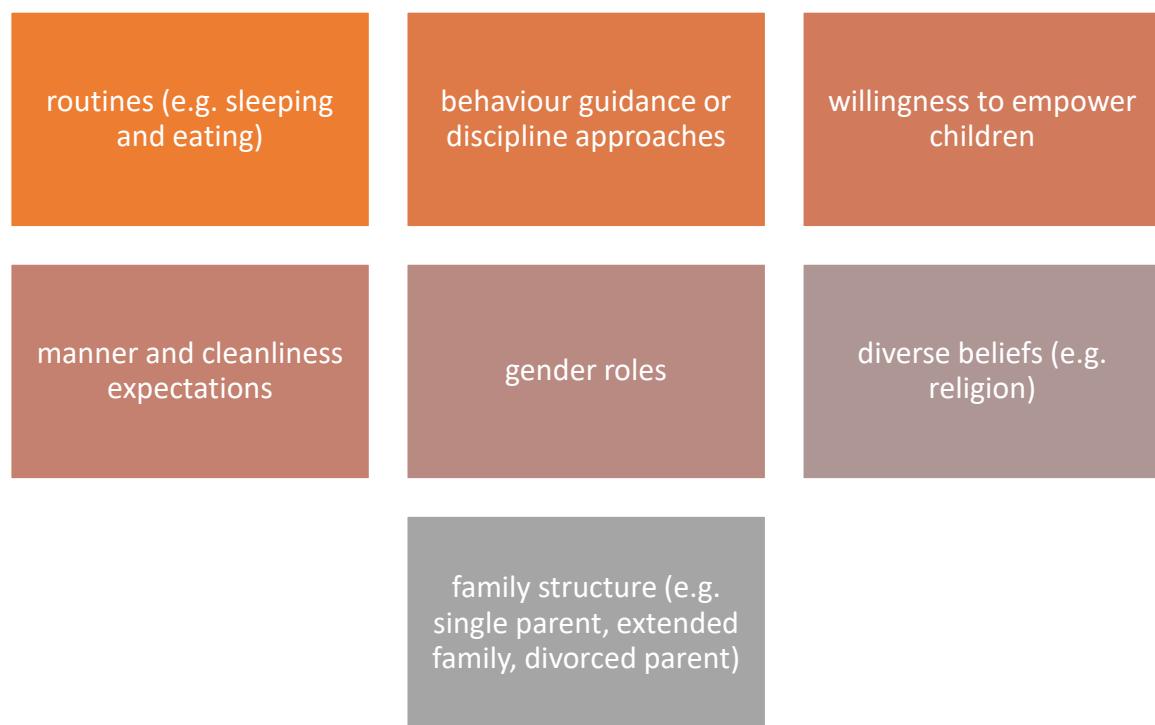
How you explain rules to children will depend on their age. For example, it is easier to explain the rule 'we do not kick balls indoors' to a 5-year-old than to a 1-year-old child. Therefore, it will be up to you to explain rules in a language that the child understands.

### **Establishing Practices and Routines in Consultation With Families**

Not all children are the same, and not every household is the same. This means that what some children are allowed to do, others are not. Therefore, you will need to communicate with the families of each of your children and understand the rules of their home to maintain consistency and continuity for the children. There would be no point in allowing children to do things in your care that they cannot do in the home.

The norms of the cultural group a child's family belongs to influence the family's norms. Families who follow the norms of their cultural group are often called 'traditional.' Other families may not be as culture-bound. Such families may be influenced by other factors such as socioeconomic status, life experiences, and personal beliefs. Some families consider themselves 'cosmopolitan' and do not identify with any particular culture. Identifying the norms followed by a child's family will help you determine how you can support their choices and decision making in terms of their child-rearing practices and routines.

Child-rearing practices may differ between families in the following areas:



Note that some child-rearing practices may have to do with a person's culture. However, there are other factors that influence how a family raises their children. As an early childhood educator, you need to carefully consider the child-rearing practices of a child's family before you go ahead and select processes, strategies, or techniques to respond to the child's behaviour. This is significant for meeting all the elements of Standard 6.1 of the National Quality Standards. Respecting families' choices and decision making is also essential to supporting the features of a positive and respectful relationship with the children in your care.

You can do this by working together with families and asking them about their cultural norms, household traditions, and practices. Decide which of these you can apply to your service. Remember that cultures in your service may be diverse, which means you will have to accommodate all of them as reasonably possible. Explain to the families why not all norms they practise can be followed for their children to cater to the other children in the service. When families feel that efforts are being made to understand why they do the things they do, they become more receptive to establishing a warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationship with you as their children's educator.

## **Respecting Cultural Differences Between Families**

It is necessary to demonstrate sensitivity in all interactions with children and their families and strive to initiate and maintain warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships. For example, you can show respect for Muslim beliefs by not serving pork at a barbecue. You can take this even further by providing opportunities for children to understand other cultures and how they can show respect for the differences between each culture. Like their families, when children feel that they are understood and given the opportunity to do the same for others, they are empowered to build warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships.

As an early childhood educator, you must incorporate the diverse cultures, beliefs, and values of children and their families in your learning program. You can provide resources, experiences, and interactions that reflect the children's daily lives in your care in this way. Programs that incorporate diverse cultures and beliefs are also excellent opportunities for you to build warm, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with the children's families. Supporting their practices and routines includes assisting the children in understanding their own worldview and helping them develop the skills to interact with different cultures in the larger society.



### **2.3.2 Practices and Routines That Honour the Community Context**

Element 6.2.3 of the National Quality Standards states that a service must build relationships and engage with its community. Involving the community in your learning programs, like consulting those belonging to a cultural group or even inviting culturally relevant guests to the service, builds respect for diversity and cultural competence in the community context. Members of diverse groups within the community can share their interests and expertise with the children in the service to help extend their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live and contribute. This also allows you to demonstrate respect and understanding of the views of other professionals across different cultures.



As an early childhood educator, you must seek information or strategies from professionals in the community to enhance your learning program. Use community resources to improve your learning program and provide quality learning experiences for the children in your care. This practice ensures that no opportunities are lost for the children's learning. It also guarantees that you reflect and incorporate the diversity of the local community across the service's operations. You must consider different perspectives to verify that the outcomes of your programs are fair, equitable, and respectful.

## 2.4 Show Genuine Interest In, Understanding of, and Respect for All Children

Showing genuine interest, understanding of, and respect for children means listening to, hearing, and respecting their views and feelings. This is also called giving a child positive attention, which is essential to their self-image and development. It helps them feel secured and valued, which is part of your responsibilities as an early childhood educator. The feeling of security and worth will help children develop a secure attachment with you as their educator. Secure attachments are characterised by children feeling protected by their caregivers and knowing that they can depend on them. Secure attachments meet their need for security and understanding. Children develop secure attachments when they receive consistent, responsive, and nurturing care from their caregivers.



Some ways you can help children establish secure attachments include the following:

- **Learn to understand the behavioural cues of each child**

This includes watching their facial expressions and body movements to determine what they need at the moment. Understanding behavioural cues is especially important for infants who are unable to verbally communicate what they want or need. For example, an infant may adjust their body position or change their facial expression to indicate that they are cold or need to be held and cuddled.

- **Take opportunities to talk, laugh, and play with each child**

Smiles, laughter, and interaction are all vital to a child's development. Communication and play are important for the development of secure attachments with children. When opportunities present themselves, participate in play with the children in your care. This was discussed in Subchapter 1.4.

- **Work with other educators in the service**

Secure attachments with children are most effectively developed when both you and they are in a quiet and alert state. If you spread yourself too thin and attempt to help each child establish secure attachments by yourself, you run the risk of being burnt out and being ineffective in meeting your goal. Work with other educators in the service to ensure that you and the children get the support that they need.

Helping children establish secure attachments and giving them positive attention support the features of positive and respectful relationships with them, especially realistic success orientation and supportiveness. When children feel that they are understood and respected and their needs are provided for, they learn to trust their caregivers and feel worthy of being loved.

### **Showing Genuine Interest in Children**

Show children that you value them by taking a genuine interest in what they are doing. Ask questions, listen to their responses, participate in sustained shared conversations, and build relationships with each child. Showing genuine interest in children helps them establish a secure attachment with you and provides them with a template for establishing secure attachments with others.

When communicating with children, get down to their eye level, use their name, smile at them, and use open and friendly body language. Show each child that you like and respect them. This is essential for children to build their self-esteem.

How you choose to spend your time is determined by your interests and what brings you enjoyment. The same goes for children as well. A child's interests will determine which experiences they will enjoy taking part in. You can show that you understand them by incorporating their interests into their activities in the centre.

Make sure you suggest experiences that are familiar to the child initially. Then when they are comfortable, you can gradually introduce the unfamiliar. It is indispensable always to keep the emotional needs of the child in mind.

To encourage a sense of achievement, suggest uncomplicated experiences that the child can easily accomplish, then offer more complicated experiences to provide them with a challenge. If you can provide experiences of interest to children, they are much more likely to want to participate in the activity and enjoy it much more.

## Observing Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Access in Services

Children, especially in the early years, use differences to organise their experiences. They sort things into different categories and focus on one thing at a time. An early years learning centre may be a child's first exposure to people and cultures different from them and the ones they are familiar with. This collection of different cultures and beliefs is called *diversity*. As an educator, you must model respect and understanding for children of different cultures.

Ways you can deepen children's understanding of other people and cultures include the following:

Demonstrating the differences and similarities among the children in the centre

Explaining why particular children may be treated differently to respect their culture

Providing opportunities for children to listen to people from different backgrounds and their perspectives

Encouraging children to view differences as something that makes someone unique and interesting



You must also deepen the children's understanding of how their own values and beliefs influence their worldview. This supports the features of a positive and respectful relationship with children, especially realistic success orientation. *Values* are principles or qualities that an individual or a group of people hold in high regard, while *beliefs* are the things that someone believes to be reality.

People tend to think that their beliefs are based on reality, but it is really their beliefs that guide their experiences. Values and beliefs reflect who a person is and how they live their life. You can deepen children's understanding of how values and beliefs influence a person's worldview by providing opportunities for them to share what they know about other cultures and correcting them when necessary.

For example, you can have each child share their cultural beliefs in a group and allow the other children to ask questions about these beliefs. In this example, you must be prepared to answer questions about the values and beliefs of the children in your care when they are unable to answer themselves. Collaborate with the children's families to ensure that you understand their culture. How to form collaborative partnerships with the families of the children in your care is discussed in the previous subchapter.

Inclusion in early childhood education and care services reflects the acceptance in society of the principles of social justice—that all children, regardless of ability levels and backgrounds, have the same intrinsic value and are entitled to the same access to, and opportunities for, participation, acceptance, and belonging.

Inclusion can be demonstrated through the following principles:

- Respecting, including, and promoting each child's religion, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical and mental ability in the centre's procedures, activities, and physical environments
- Recognising that children are active agents in their own lives and learning and engaging with all children regardless of their background and culture



### Further Reading

For information on what inclusion is according to the National Quality Framework and how services can create inclusion-ready environments, watch the video from ACECQA linked below.

[ACECQA - Inclusion](#)

As an early childhood educator, you will likely be taking care of a diverse set of children. Each child in your care will have a unique learning trajectory that needs to be supported through responsive, individualised learning and development opportunities to reach their full potential. They also have unique experiences of context and culture. You must practise equity in these situations. You can demonstrate equity through:

- Recognising the complex nature of disadvantage and acting purposefully to address it, such as implementing differentiated instruction (bridging the gap) or individualised support for marginalised and indigenous children
- Engaging every child in challenging, age-appropriate learning experiences which involve different learning experiences appropriate to their skills and knowledge

You must also ensure that your programs can accommodate children with disabilities if you are dealing with any. Consider the following principles of access in the context of early childhood education and care:

- Ensuring that children with disabilities have access to the childcare centre by designing, constructing, and maintaining facilities and environments that are physically accessible, safe to use, and appropriately located
- Supporting the communication needs of children with hearing and/or vision impairment and giving them proper assistance to communicate effectively and efficiently

## 2.5 Comfort Children Who Cry or Show Signs of Distress in Ways Appropriate for Individual Children

When a child is upset, it is crucial to help them feel safe. Children may express signs of distress, and these signs may differ according to age or culture. For example, you can tell that infants and young children are showing signs of emotional distress when they are:

showing very little emotion	showing little to no interest in sights, sounds, or touch	appearing to reject or avoiding being touched or held
not turning to familiar adults	behaving aggressively	showing sudden changes in behaviour

Children cry or display these types of behaviour when they are upset. As their carer, you must respond to these signs of distress by addressing what they are distressed about. Holding and cuddling while making reassuring sounds may be enough for babies and infants, but for toddlers and up, you will need to find out what caused them to feel distressed and tailor your response accordingly. Ensure that your response does the following:

Encourage the child to express their emotions

Help the child understand the situation that triggered the feelings

Support the child to improve the situation

Addressing children's distresses is also a good opportunity to lay the foundations to build their resilience. *Resilience* is the ability to bounce back from the things that hurt them. This may include situations like their siblings getting ill, family members and pets passing away, or things not going the way they had hoped. Many of these may not be in your power to fix, but you can help children deal with these situations by supporting them in building resilience.



Teaching children to solve their problems independently helps them to believe that they are strong and capable. When children are allowed to experience minor disappointments and challenges and work solutions independently, they are better equipped to deal with the significant challenges in life. As an early childhood educator, you can support them in building resilience by showing that you care and allowing them to feel safe and supported while working on solutions.

Some techniques for building resilience include:

- modelling optimism and encouraging children to have an optimistic outlook
- teaching children how to 'reframe' their problems (i.e. turning the situation around and looking at it from a different angle)
- encouraging children to look for the opportunities in the situation, the 'silver lining'
- encouraging healthy risk-taking and facing their fear
- letting them know you believe they are capable
- teaching children coping skills to help them relax and be calm when they experience stress or frustration (e.g. deep breathing, drawing, or listening to music)
- helping children to embrace their mistakes as a necessary part of their growth, for example, providing strategies for improvement if they had trouble completing an activity
- teaching children to label their emotions to help them make sense of what they are experiencing (this will be further discussed in Subchapter 2.7)

## 2.6 Respond Positively to Varying Abilities and Confidence Levels and Acknowledge Children's Efforts and Achievements



Children can be unpredictable, and at different ages, can respond differently to experiences. Aside from age and culture, the differences can be due to their varying abilities and confidence levels. *Varying abilities* refer to what a child is currently capable (or incapable) of, such as the ability to understand and anticipate cause and effect, lack of fear, ability to concentrate and stay 'on task,' the emotional states of the child, and the tendency to imitate and follow others. *Confidence level* refers to how much a child believes in themselves and what they do well. As an early childhood educator, you must respond to the differences of each child positively and acknowledge all their efforts and achievements.

Positively responding includes aligning activities, facilities, equipment, and resources with their varying abilities and confidence level. It also includes helping children become aware of what they can do, supporting and encouraging them to take calculated risks, and facilitating learning and development activities that highlight children's abilities and confidence. By doing these, you allow the children in your care to feel secure, confident, and included.

## 2.6.1 Factors That Determine Children's Abilities and Confidence Levels

The abilities and confidence levels of the children in your care vary according to the following factors:



### Age or Developmental Stage

What a child can do is directly related to their age and/or current developmental stage. Developmental milestones are useful for determining what a child may be capable of at a certain age. For example, children between 1–2 years old are capable of dancing in place to music while those between 8–12 months old are only just starting to support themselves to stand up with adult assistance.



### Further Reading

For further information on the developmental milestones of a child from birth to 5 years old in relation to the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards, read this resource available on the website of the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

[Developmental Milestones and the EYLF and NQS](#)

When determining children's abilities and confidence levels, make sure that their age and current developmental stage are considered and taken into account.

## **Strengths**

Strengths refer to areas of development that children have already mastered or have almost mastered. They may involve repetitive tasks or tasks that have been purposely organised to cover certain developmental areas such as:



You can identify an individual child's strengths through monitoring their play, skills, and behaviour. These observations can then be used as a basis for planning an environment that is suitable and enjoyable for children.

For instance, a 3-year-old child may enjoy painting with green paint. As a gross motor skill, this is part of a child's physical development. You may organise for that child to paint with a range of different colours; you may first introduce red and then yellow and so on.

## **Needs**

Children's growth and development rates will vary. Children will also attain specific skills at different ages. Needs refer to skill areas that children are still in the process of developing, acquiring, mastering, or improving.

For instance, you may recognise that a child is still in the process of mastering a specific fine motor skill, such as holding a pencil, when other children in the same age group can already do this independently. Provisions would need to be made to support the child achieve success in a given task, such as getting the child a thicker pencil, a bigger piece of paper to draw on, or perhaps pencil grips to assist the child. An adult may also sit with the child and demonstrate to help them further understand. Another activity that may help build a child's fine motor strength could be giving the child play dough.

## 2.6.2 Responding to Children's Skills and Acknowledging Their Efforts

You must respond to children's varying skills by aligning activities, equipment, and resources with their individual needs. It is essential to provide children with challenges. However, challenges that rely on skills that have not yet been developed by a child or have not mastered yet may cause feelings of failure and frustration. Success is a necessity for children.

Examine the following examples to learn about how a child may become aggravated by a task that requires a skill that they have not developed yet.

*A 2-year-old child may be able to colour using a pencil, but a more suitable material would be a thick crayon, as the child would most likely have trouble gripping the pencil. Developmentally, the 2-year-old child can hold the crayon with a palmar grasp, making it easier to colour in.*

*A complex puzzle that contains several different pieces may provide the child with a challenge. However, if the child has not yet developed the cognitive skills needed to problem-solve or the eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills to fit the pieces where they belong, they may become very frustrated.*

As an early childhood educator, you must provide children with challenges that they can reasonably accomplish using the skills available to them, but also present an opportunity for them to develop other skills. You may offer children resources and equipment for skills they have not mastered yet on sequential days, so they have a substantial opportunity to master them. You may also adapt or adjust the experience by adding or taking away some of the equipment or resources or reorganising the experience to broaden the child's development or skills based on the interests of the child.

Play spaces must be set up using age-appropriate equipment and toys. Equipment and toys should match the age and developmental abilities of the children you are caring for. For example, children under two tend to explore using their mouth, so tiny beads or toys are not suitable as they are a choking hazard. Children from 2–3 years old are still developing balance and control of movement and need simple, low obstacle courses to explore to ensure they do not have fall injuries.

Learning experiences should also be age-appropriate. This means catering to different safety and development requirements, as well as various communication skills. Observe children and identify their interests and developmental skills so that you can create a personalised supportive environment. That way, you can create experiences within routines that meet individual needs.

Monitoring and observing children's reactions to the play environment is crucial to ensure they are both interested and challenged. However, it is just as important to look out for indications that particular equipment or activities are too challenging, causing the children to become frustrated or discouraged.

You can employ a range of strategies to help create appropriate experiences. By varying small parts of these strategies to suit different developmental capabilities of the group, you can use many of the same strategies across several or all age groups. The thing that links all these strategies is that they all involve working with the children and building the experiences and environment from the children's interests.

However, take note if a child really does not want to participate in an activity. You can try to encourage the child to participate using a strengths-based approach. Using this approach means looking for opportunities to complement and support the existing strengths and capacities of a child. Investigate why they do not want to participate and offer an alternative activity that still builds on their strengths. Ensure that children never feel forced to participate in an activity they do not want to participate in as means of respecting their choice.



## Acknowledge Children's Efforts and Achievements

It is equally important to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of children. Acknowledging children when they try motivates them to try harder and they will more likely see trying hard as a good thing in itself. Acknowledging children when they achieve something encourages them to keep improving and learning. When you recognise when a child learns something significant and make use of this recognition to enhance learning relationships, you support the features of a positive and respectful relationship with children, especially cooperation and supportiveness.

As you interact with the children in your care, there may be instances where you notice children achieving skills or knowledge that they did not have before. For example, a child may have started out being unwilling to or having trouble with sharing toys with their peers, but after days of learning about the value of sharing, they were finally sharing toys with other children and engaging in shared play. In this instance, you can use descriptive praise to reward the child for their achievement. *Descriptive praise* means telling the child exactly what it is that you like. In this case, you can say, 'I like the way that you share with your friends now.' This tells the child exactly what it is they have done well and encourages them to keep doing what it is they have done well.

Recognising when a child learns something significant also helps you as an educator to reflect on what it is that helped the child learn this significant thing. You can then feed this knowledge back to your practices in the service to improve learning relationships with the children in your care and enhance their learning experience. Listen to some of the encouragements you and other educators use throughout the day and reflect on how you might further encourage children to continue their learning.



## **2.7 Support Children to Recognise and Label Their Range of Emotions**

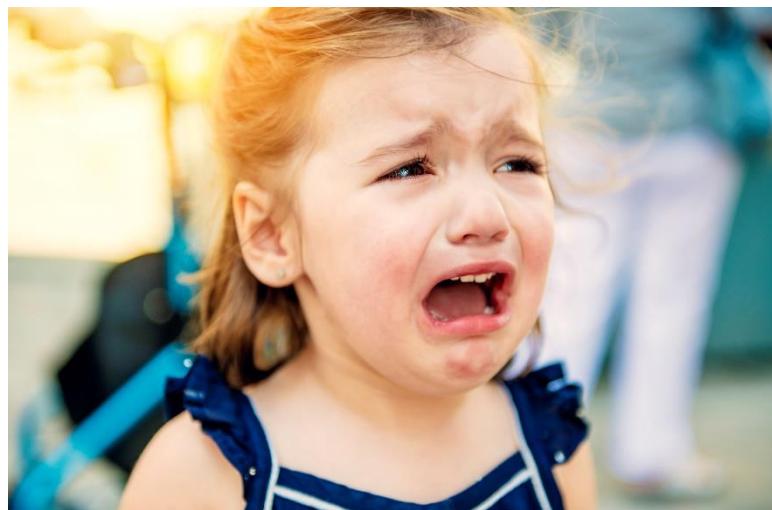
The ability to identify, understand, and label emotions is part of emotional literacy. Recognising and labelling emotions is a developmental skill that must be learned. Emotions are easier for children to express when they are aware of their feelings and are able to label them. The intense emotions of a child are also sometimes decreased just by explicitly expressing how they feel. Identifying and expressing their feelings is a skill that will help children manage their emotions better as they grow up.

### **2.7.1 Recognising Emotions**

Children need to learn how to recognise emotional cues in both themselves and others. For example:

- a crying infant might be feeling anxiety or disgust
- a toddler laughing and clapping their hands might be feeling satisfied or amused
- a 3-year-old child throwing a tantrum might be feeling dismayed or tensed

The ability to recognise the feelings of others helps build empathy and emotional intelligence. Understanding their own emotions assists children to self-regulate. Supporting children to recognise emotions involves discussing with and guiding them to become aware that they are feeling these emotions. You can do this by engaging the children in your care in sustained conversations through active listening and effective questioning (as discussed in Subchapter 1.2).



It is essential that children understand the reasons for different emotions in themselves and others and that emotions may differ between situations. For example, you may say, ‘You look like you might be feeling worried, Child A, are you worried that you would not have time to take your turn with the farm animals?’ Be sure you take the time for the child to think about and respond truthfully. Be careful not to ‘second guess’ what they are feeling but instead encourage them to express their feelings and reasons.

## 2.7.2 Labelling Emotions

Attaching words and meaning to emotional cues helps children express them more clearly. Support children to build a vocabulary of emotion words such as sad, angry, happy, or scared. You can teach them more specific emotions like disappointed and gloomy for sad, and excited and comfortable for happy to help them express their emotions better. Visual aids that a child can hold up, such as cards with the word and facial expressions, can assist the learning.

Tell the children in your care to look at each other's faces and ask them how they think they are feeling. Acting out or role-playing different emotions with children is another excellent strategy to help children recognise and label emotional cues. Pretend to be feeling a particular emotion and ask children to guess what you are feeling. There are opportunities all around to point out and talk about emotions. The more exposure children have to talking about feelings, the more 'normal' it becomes.

## 2.8 Model Self-Regulation Through Gentle and Calm Behaviour and Provide Reassurance When Children Express Distress, Frustration or Anger

Some children have learned to be loud or to act out to get what they want. They may scream and shout, snatch things, or throw tantrums. This may be a behaviour they are copying from somewhere else. It may also mean that they need to be aggressive to be heard at home. *Self-regulation* is the ability to recognise and control one's behaviour and responses to emotions and events in one's environment. It includes being able to do the following:



Sourced from *Social and emotional development of toddlers*, used under CC BY 4.0.  
© State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training).

Children develop self-regulation by experiencing warm and responsive relationships and by watching the adults around them. It starts from birth but develops most in the toddler and preschool years. Children self-regulate their emotions in different ways at each stage of development. For example:

- **Infancy (0–12 months)**

Infants might suck their fingers for comfort or look away from their caregivers if they need a break from attention or are getting tired.

- **Toddlerhood (12 months to 3 years)**

Toddlers can wait a short time for food and toys but might still snatch toys from other children if it is something they want. Tantrums happen when toddlers struggle with regulating strong emotions.

- **Preschoolers (3–5 years)**

Preschoolers start to know how to play with other children and understand what is expected of them. For example, a preschooler might try to speak in a soft voice if they are at the movies.

When children feel strong emotions that they do not yet know how to express properly, they will likely throw tantrums or behave in erratic ways. You can model a calm and gentle behaviour in these situations by regulating your tone of voice when speaking to children who are behaving erratically and approaching them in a calm manner. Ask them how they feel, why they feel that way, and how you can help them.

By modelling calm and gentle behaviour, you provide a template for children to develop self-regulation skills. You give them an alternative model that demonstrates you can behave in this way and still have your needs met. Young children learn by imitation and will copy your behaviour. Helping children develop self-regulation supports the features of positive and respectful relationships with them, especially supportiveness.



When you are calm and gentle, you also create a calm and peaceful environment. This type of environment reduces children's stress and anxiety. It helps them to be aware of their surroundings and to listen and learn better. Some children find early childhood settings confronting because they are quiet, shy, or sensitive. A calm, gentle environment will help these children to feel safe.

## Providing Reassurance

Children need constant reassurance that they are loved, valued, respected, and heard. When a child becomes distressed or angry, they may have trouble managing their emotions. Teach them strategies to identify and express their feelings, and reassure them that they are being heard and understood.



Take the time to comfort, listen, and understand what a distressed child is feeling and why. Then, while remaining honest, reassure them that everything will be ok. Help them brainstorm solutions to their problem. Let them know they are not alone, and you are by their side.

Children feel comforted and can trust when they know that you are there to help and support them. You must be willing to listen and respond to every child in a fair and supportive manner.

*Instead of: 'I will do it, it looks too hard for you.'*

*Say: 'If you are not sure what to do, ask me, and I'll help you.'*

*Instead of: 'Do not be silly, you are a big boy, go and talk to Child B yourself.'*

*Say: 'I'll stand here beside you while you ask Child B if you can join in with his game.'*

## **2.9 Support Children’s Agency to Make Choices and Experience Natural Consequences**

Providing children with choices helps to avoid power struggles. When you offer real alternatives to a child, you provide an opportunity for them to exercise choice, which helps to empower them and increase their willingness to cooperate.

*Instead of: ‘I want you to get dressed now.’*

*Say: ‘What would you like to put on first—your pants or your shirt?’*

*Instead of: ‘I want you to get ready now.’*

*Say: ‘What would you like to do first—put on your shoes or fix your bed?’*

Choices give children a sense of control over the things that affect them. It helps to build their self-esteem and to feel respected. When children have agency, they are empowered.

There are many opportunities throughout the day where you can allow children to make choices, such as which type of fruit they want to eat or which book they want to read. Set up spaces, resources, routines, and experiences in ways that maximise the opportunities for children to make decisions.

Like adults, children prefer to have a say in what activities they wish to participate in and which equipment they want to use. It is essential to provide the children with both a choice and a range of different experiences. Keep that choice in mind throughout the day so that if the children miss out on something earlier, they can choose it later on. Tailor it to the needs, abilities, and interests of the children to provide the best possible experience.

When offering children choices, do so positively and respectfully. Do not use choices as a threat or punishment. Offer specific and limited choices that achieve the same goal. Provide options and explain the consequences of each. Allow the child plenty of time to decide what they want to do and to ask questions.

### **Allowing Children to Experience Natural Consequences**

Natural consequences are what naturally follows from a particular action. For example, if you go out in the rain, you get wet. Allowing children to experience the natural consequences of their choices and actions is a powerful way for them to learn from their mistakes.

Children have to experience some natural consequences to solidify their learning about cause and effect. An example of a natural consequence might be when the rules are not to run in the corridor, but a child decides to do it anyway, and then they fall. You must ensure the safety of children even as they are made to experience natural consequences. This can be done in the way you organise the spaces in the centre (as discussed in Section 2.2.1).

## Checkpoint! Let's Review



1. Children are empowered when they can make choices and decisions about the things that affect them.
2. Organising spaces, resources, and routines in early childhood education and care service helps provide children with a safe and stimulating learning environment.
3. Supporting practices and routines that children follow in their homes is a way of respecting the choices and decision making of their families.
4. Children of all ability levels and diverse backgrounds have the same intrinsic value and are entitled to the same access to and opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging.
5. Early childhood educators have a responsibility to comfort children who are in emotional distress.
6. Children's stress and frustration can be reduced by the way spaces, resources and routines are organised.
7. When children learn to identify, understand and label their emotions, they are building emotional intelligence. Awareness of their feelings helps them develop the skills necessary to develop self-regulation.
8. Children must be allowed to experience natural consequences to solidify their learning of cause and effect.

## Learning Activity for Chapter 2



Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

### III. Identify Factors That Influence Behaviour of Individuals



In the previous chapter, you learnt how to support and respect children in ways that allow them to feel secure, confident, and included. In this chapter, you will learn about the different factors that affect the behaviour of individuals. ‘Nature versus nurture’ often gets brought up when asked what influences an individual’s behaviour. On the side of ‘nature,’ people argue that intrinsic factors such as genetics have more influence over an individual’s behaviour. In contrast, on the side of ‘nurture,’ people argue that social and environmental factors have more impact on behaviour.

While the debate is still up in the air, one thing most researchers agree on is that ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ interact with each other to influence behaviour. As an early childhood educator, you must identify the ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ factors of the children in your care. Knowing and understanding these factors will help you provide them with better and more personalised support.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Identify factors of the social and physical environments of the child's home and community which may impact on the child's behaviour
- Gather information about the child's education and care social and physical environments to facilitate understanding of the child's behaviour
- Assess the child's individual stage of development, temperament, and personality to facilitate understanding of the child's behaviour
- Reflect on own pedagogical practices and identify how they may influence behaviours
- Use information collected to inform a holistic understanding of the child's behaviour

### **3.1 Identify Factors of the Social and Physical Environments of the Child's Home and Community Which May Impact on the Child's Behaviour**

*It takes a village to raise a child.* This proverb is often used to say that it takes an entire community of people to guarantee that a child grows up in a safe and healthy environment. Children in their early years develop mainly through their relationships with certain people, such as their parents and caregivers. To some degree, a child's social and physical environments at home and in the community truly influence their behaviour.

The brain of children in their early years is vulnerable to environmental influences. Adverse experiences in early childhood are damaging and can shape a child's brain in ways that have long-lasting effects. Severe and sustained stress from sources such as neglect, chronic abuse, or trauma in the early years is toxic to the growing brain and can impair its development.

The cumulative impact of risk factors experienced by children can lead to a range of social, emotional, cognitive, and health problems. Understanding factors that impact a child's behaviour in their social and physical environments will help you provide better support and possibly extend their learning outside of the centre.

## Influence of Parenting on Child Behaviour

Parenting provides an important method through which children learn about their culture and heritage; this helps them develop their own identity and understanding of the world.



While problems are regular occurrences and can happen to anyone at any time, an unhappy parent self-absorbed in dealing with their problems will less likely spend a sufficient amount of time with their child. In cases like this, a child may attempt to attract their parents' attention through noisy and challenging behaviour.

If it is unclear to a child what is and is not allowed, it can result in challenging behaviour. This is because guidelines and limits let a child know that certain behaviours are not acceptable.

Factors that influence the quality of parenting a child receives include:

- The amount of time parents or other primary caregivers spend with their children. This may be influenced by work or study pressures, employment conditions, access to transport and commuting time, and managing multiple caring roles within the family, such as looking after more than one child, a family member with an illness or disability, or a frail-aged parent.
- Different cultural attitudes and approaches to parenting
- The quality of interactions between parents and their children. Children will learn best when they have relationships with adults that are secure and trusting.
- The presence of conflicts in the home, such as arguments and relationship breakdowns, power struggles or domestic violence
- Substance abuse and mental health issues
- The level of financial pressures and poverty

Centres can present a range of activities to provide education and support for new parents and provide extended parenting support and education to vulnerable families.

### **Lack of Interest and Attention**

Children need adult attention and interest at home to feel valued. A lack thereof may affect their behaviour. For example, some parents may not:

- read to children or engage with them in other learning activities
- play with them
- talk to them and ask questions
- show interest in the things that children are interested in
- involve children in sporting and physical activities

Positive attention is key for the development of a child's self-image. A child's confidence and capability to build their own relationships with others is largely dependent on them having a healthy self-image. If a child is not given enough attention at home, it typically manifests itself in them having trouble interacting with their peers.

## Trauma

Trauma can have serious effects on children, even as babies. Examples of traumatic events that they may have experienced include car accidents, bushfires, sudden illness, traumatic death in the family, crime, abuse, or violence in the community. When young children experience a traumatic event, they may become prone to feelings of helplessness, fear, and anxiety, affecting their behaviour in various ways, including:

- loss of playful and engaging smiling
- avoidance of eye contact
- mood changes (i.e. they may not seem to enjoy activities they used to like)

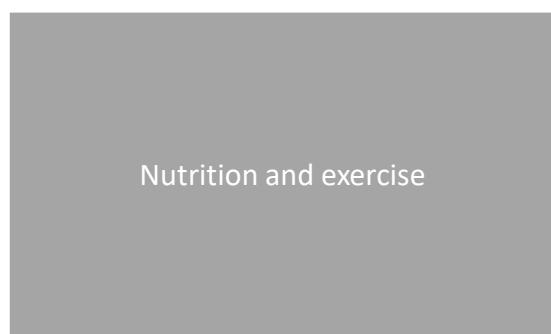
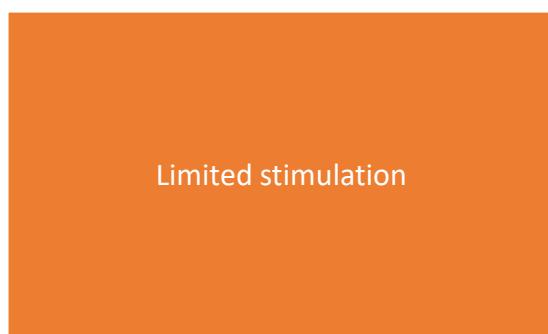
Traumatic events can also lead to cases of developmental regression, where children may experience a range of symptoms:

- difficulty sleeping, especially alone
- separation anxiety from parents or guardians
- trouble learning or focusing
- engaging in aggressive, rage-filled, and other negative behaviours

### 3.1.2 Factors of the Physical Environment That Impact on the Child's Behaviour

Physical environment refers to the physical description of a child's house or community. It may include the layout of the house, the layout of the area around the house, the child's room, and the resources available at home and in the community. What resource a child and their family have access to typically depends on their physical environment.

Lack of access to particular resources can negatively impact a child's development and behaviour. Factors of the physical environment that may impact children's behaviour include the following:



### **Limited Stimulation**

A lack of positive stimulation at home due to a lack of resources may affect a child's behaviour. *Stimulation* refers to the encouragement of the development of a child, such as in terms of physical or social skills. Research shows that a child's academic progress and level of engagement is affected by:

- the learning environment provided at home
- access to resources such as books and toys
- parents' attitudes and values towards education
- parents' involvement in the child's learning, both at home and the level of engagement in centre activities

A family's ability to provide a stimulating home learning environment and engage in the educational process can be limited by:

- financial disadvantage
- low parental educational attainment
- parental mental health problems

### **Nutrition and Exercise**

Poor nutrition and the overconsumption of foods such as high-sugar foods can affect a child's behaviour, including how much a child interacts with their peers in play. Factors within the family that may affect child nutrition include:

- availability and affordability of nutritious foods (i.e. fruits and vegetables)
- family's ability to provide adequate meals and snacks daily
- knowledge of food and nutrition matters

Physical activity can have an impact on children's behaviour and may be affected by:

- access to local recreational and sporting facilities
- adequate time for children to engage in physical activities
- positive parental and sporting role models

### **3.2 Gather Information About Aspects of the Child's Social and Physical Education and Care Environment to Facilitate Understanding of the Child's Behaviour**

Outside of home and the community, children's behaviour is also influenced by their education and care setting's social and physical environment. The *education and care setting* refers to the early years learning centre the child is currently (or has been) enrolled in. For most children, an early years learning centre is their first experience of an environment outside of their home and community.



Children often have their first interactions outside of the familiar territory in early childhood education and care settings.

Information about a child's education and care environment helps you understand their behaviour better. By examining what children may be interacting with outside of their home and community, you can identify the possible cause of the behaviour that factors in their home and community environments cannot properly explain.

Relevant information about the child's education and care social and physical environments include:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Physical environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilities and resources within the centre</li><li>• Layout of the centre</li><li>• Posters and displays</li></ul>   |
| Social environment   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relationships and interactions with educators</li><li>• Relationships and interactions with other children</li><li>• Relationships and interactions with other staff</li></ul> |

You can gather these pieces of information by accessing resources or documents from the early years learning centre the child is currently (or was) enrolled in. These may include the child's records (e.g. observation records, learning stories, enrolment forms, and assessments), spoken accounts from co-educators, and the centre's floor plan.

### **3.3 Assess the Child's Individual Stage of Development, Temperament and Personality to Facilitate Understanding of the Child's Behaviour**

As previously mentioned in this chapter's introduction, a child's behaviour is influenced by the interaction of their 'nature' and 'nurture.' Children's intrinsic nature includes their stage of development, temperament, and personality. The interaction between these three, together with the external environment, affects the way a child behaves. You will need to determine each child's individual stage of development, temperament, and personality to properly assess how these factors influence their behaviour.

#### **3.3.1 Stages of Child Development**

Depending upon the age of the child, expectations of behaviours will vary. As children grow, so too does their behavioural development. Some strategies to support behaviour will very clearly be more appropriate for one age group than another, while other strategies may simply need some adaptation to suit any age group. One good indicator of a child's current stage of development is their age. Consider the following description of what children in each age group are capable of doing or understanding:



- **Infants (0–12 months)**

At this age, children will not have a clear understanding of consciously intentional behaviour. An infant will not understand that pulling your hair is unacceptable behaviour; they are simply exploring. Infants cannot understand conscious reactions during interactions with others and may grab things from others because they do not understand the concept of sharing. Infants will cry to express needs or get your attention and often use actions to communicate likes or dislikes.

- **Babies (12–24 months)**

During this stage, behaviour is influenced by increased mobility and language onset. Babies begin to explore cause-and-effect relationships. They are still unable to consciously plan actions; understand, remember, or follow rules; or comprehend sharing. However, they start to show greater interest in other children, develop independence, and test boundaries.

- **Toddlers (2–3 years)**

Toddlers can imitate their peers, start to alternate roles in play, and begin to establish friendships. They may become easily frustrated when things do not turn out as expected, test the limits of their behaviour, and throw a tantrum. Children of this age are beginning to learn right from wrong and comprehend the relationship between actions and consequences. They will be able to follow simple rules and must learn to deal with the frustration of being told ‘no’. Toddlers also learn that disappointment, frustration, and anger are all bearable emotions that do not lead to alienation.

- **Preschool-aged children (4–5 years)**

By this stage, children remember past experiences with others, which can become part of the self-concept. Children will compare themselves to others, develop an understanding of social rules and empathy, and show a systematic increase in pro-social behaviour and a natural decrease in aggressive behaviour. Preschoolers learn how to be friends, become more competitive, and may sometimes use words to hurt others. Children at this stage will often ask questions, become more critical, manipulate ideas internally, be consciously aware of their own interests and intentions, talk through things in a simple manner, and make appropriate decisions before acting.



## **Emotional and Social Development: Birth to 5 Years**

The optimal time for social and emotional development is from birth to 12 years, although they have already developed set behaviours by the time they are 6–8 years old. Various aspects of emotional and social development, such as awareness of others, empathy, and trust, are important at different times and start to be nurtured through early experiences and relationships.

Emotional attachment is developed from birth to 18 months. This period is when babies and toddlers are forming attachments with parents and primary caregivers. Whether these relationships are positive or negative can have long-lasting effects on children's social and emotional development.

The part of the brain that regulates emotion is shaped early on by experience and forms the brain's emotional wiring. Early nurturing is critical to learning empathy, happiness, hopefulness, and resiliency.

Social development, including both self-awareness and the ability to interact with others, occurs in stages. For example, sharing toys is something that a 2-year-old's brain is not fully developed to do well, so this social ability is more common and positive with 3–4 years or older children.

Each child will have a different social and emotional development level, and you will need to identify the child's developmental stage before beginning to set goals for the child's behaviour. This is also true for the child's age and abilities. Not every child has the same ability.



The social and emotional developmental milestones from birth to 5 years old are presented in the table below.

Age Group	Social Development Milestones	Emotional Development Milestones
Birth to 4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ smiles and laughs</li> <li>▪ makes eye contact when held with face about 20cm from face of adult looking at them</li> <li>▪ may sleep most of the time</li> <li>▪ alert and preoccupied with faces</li> <li>▪ moves head to sound of voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ bonding</li> <li>▪ cries (peaks about six to eight weeks) and levels off about 12–14 weeks</li> <li>▪ cries when hungry or uncomfortable and usually stops when held</li> <li>▪ shows excitement as parent prepares to feed</li> </ul>
4–8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ reacts with arousal, attention, or approach to presence of another baby or young child</li> <li>▪ responds to own name</li> <li>▪ smiles often and shows excitement when sees preparations being made for meals or for bath</li> <li>▪ recognises familiar people and stretches arms to be picked up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ becoming more settled in eating and sleeping patterns</li> <li>▪ laughs, especially in social interactions</li> <li>▪ may soothe self when tired or upset by sucking thumb or dummy</li> <li>▪ begins to show wariness of strangers</li> <li>▪ may fret when parents leave the room</li> <li>▪ happy to see faces they know</li> </ul>

Age Group	Social Development Milestones	Emotional Development Milestones
8–12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ shows definite anxiety or wariness at appearance of strangers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ actively seeks to be next to parent or principal caregiver</li> <li>▪ shows signs of anxiety or stress if parent goes away</li> <li>▪ offers toy to adult but does not release it</li> <li>▪ shows signs of empathy to distress of another (but often soothes self)</li> <li>▪ actively explores and plays when parent present, returning now and then for assurance and interaction</li> </ul>

Age Group	Social Development Milestones	Emotional Development Milestones
1–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ begins to cooperate when playing</li> <li>▪ may play alongside other toddlers, doing what they do but without seeming to interact (parallel play)</li> <li>▪ curious and energetic, but depends on adult presence for reassurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ may show anxiety when separating from significant people in their lives</li> <li>▪ seeks comfort when upset or afraid</li> <li>▪ takes cue from parent or principal carer regarding attitude to a stranger</li> <li>▪ may ‘lose control’ of self when tired or frustrated</li> <li>▪ assists another in distress by patting, making sympathetic noises or offering material objects</li> </ul>
2–3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ plays with other children</li> <li>▪ simple make believe play</li> <li>▪ may prefer same-sex playmates and toys</li> <li>▪ unlikely to share toys without protest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ shows strong attachment to a parent (or main family carer)</li> <li>▪ shows distress and protest when they leave and wants that person to do things for them</li> <li>▪ begins to show guilt or remorse for misdeeds</li> <li>▪ may be less likely to willingly share toys with peers</li> <li>▪ demands adult attention</li> </ul>

Age Group	Social Development Milestones	Emotional Development Milestones
3–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ enjoys playing with other children</li> <li>▪ may have a particular friend</li> <li>▪ shares, smiles, and cooperates with peers</li> <li>▪ jointly manipulates objects with one or two peers</li> <li>▪ develops independence and social skills they will use for learning and getting on with others at preschool and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ understands when someone is hurt and comforts them</li> <li>▪ attains gender stability (sure she/he is a girl/boy)</li> <li>▪ may show stronger preference for same-sex playmates</li> <li>▪ may enforce gender role norms with peers</li> <li>▪ likes to give and receive affection from parents</li> <li>▪ may praise themselves and be boastful</li> </ul>

Sourced from [Early Years Learning Framework Practice Based Resources - Developmental Milestones](#), used under CC BY 3.0 AU. © Commonwealth of Australia.

The brain is in charge of a person's emotions. Therefore, it goes without saying that brain development affects the emotional development of children. As children's brains develop, their emotional wiring becomes more complex and allows for the expression of more emotions. This usually occurs within the first two years of a child's growth. Consider the following brain development stages and how they affect emotional development:



- **Birth to 12 months**

At birth, the child's brain has 200 billion neurons and grows about 1.7 grams a day during the first year. During this stage, a child's brain's emotional centres develop more than the thinking, planning, reasoning, reasoning, and talking centres.

Because of the emotional centre's rapid growth, infants often get very emotional and 'act without thinking.' Infants are also unable to talk about how they feel since their reasoning, thinking, and planning centres have yet to develop.

- **12 months to 2 years**

Communication across different regions of the developing brain occurs most rapidly during the first two years of life. The most growth still occurs in the 'feeling and emotional' centres and in areas relating to physical skills such as running, jumping, balancing, feeding, and dressing themselves.

The continuous development of the emotional centre of the brain allows toddlers to develop a sense of self. This is an essential stage of children's development of a sense of identity and independence. However, because the emotional centres are much more active than the reasoning centres, toddlers are more likely to react to a situation emotionally.

### 3.3.2 Temperament

Temperament refers to biologically-based individual differences in behaviour independent of learning, values, and attitudes. Temperament refers to how children respond to their environment. These are distinct patterns in behaviour that usually last throughout a lifetime. There are several essential aspects of temperament. These include:

Sociability	Reactivity	Persistence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• tendency to be shy or outgoing in new situations and when meeting new people</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• strength of emotional reactions to positive and negative experiences</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• capacity to maintain attention, despite distractions</li></ul>

You can assess a child's temperament by observing how much (or how little) they show these three qualities. For example, a child can be shy when meeting new people but have strong emotional reactions to experiences and can maintain attention.

It is important to note that while temperament may change a little as a child grows up, they usually remain stable from infancy to childhood – a child's temperament influences how they interact with their environment and may affect their social development.

Based on [The Australian Temperament Project](#), used under CC BY 4.0. Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia.

### 3.3.3 Personality

Aside from temperament, a child's personality will also influence how they behave. Personality refers to patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that characterises a person. It is widely believed that personality is a character trait determined by genetics to some degree. This is because the personality of a person can be affected by their temperament. Children are born with a blueprint for their temperament, or genotype, which they may have inherited from their parents. This remains unobservable and only manifests itself and becomes observable as children interact with their environment. The set of observable behavioural characteristics that result from this interaction is called the *behavioural phenotype*.

You can assess a child's personality by identifying their personality traits. Personality traits are the different characteristics that make up a child's personality. You may be able to identify several personality traits on your own. However, most psychologists today rely on the Five-Factor Model of Personality when assessing an individual's personality traits.

The Five-Factor Model (also known as the Big Five Model) defines five broad traits that, according to the model, make up an individual's personality. The model posits that all other personality traits fall within one of these broad traits. These traits are the following:

### Openness

- creative, open to new experiences, likes thinking about abstract concepts

### Conscientiousness

- good impulse control, goal-directed behaviours, high levels of thoughtfulness

### Extroversion

- assertiveness, sociability, talkativeness, excitability

### Agreeableness

- kindness, affection, other pro-social behaviours

### Neuroticism

- moodiness, sadness, emotional instability

You can assess a child's personality by observing how they behave in different activities and situations inside the service and listing what trait they are exhibiting. You can then sort out the specific traits you listed down into the five broad traits of the Five-Factor Model. For example, you might observe a child to have the following traits:

- |                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ cooperative with peers | ■ tends to talk a lot               |
| ■ likes sharing          | ■ enthusiastic about new activities |

In this example, you can say that the child is exhibiting Agreeableness (cooperative with peers and likes sharing), Extroversion (tends to talk a lot), and Openness (enthusiastic about new activities). If you list down several traits in one of the broad traits, it means that child has high levels of that broad trait. Personalities may be high, low, or somewhere in between on each of the five broad traits. While this is something you can do on your own, it is best to work with a professional (e.g. psychometrician, psychologist) for a more accurate assessment of personality.

You may also consult with a psychologist if you want a more in-depth assessment of a child's personality. Psychologists are able to conduct more extensive tests that can reveal more information about a child's personality. Extensive tests include projective tests, which involve letting children respond to ambiguous stimuli to reveal hidden emotions and internal conflicts.

### **3.4 Reflect on Own Pedagogical Practices and Identify How They May Influence Behaviours**

One other factor that may affect the behaviour of the child is you as their educator, more specifically, your pedagogical practices. *Pedagogical practices* are strategies and practices that educators utilise to achieve learning outcomes. These include the type of communication you use with children.



Be aware of how your cultural beliefs and practices influence the way you communicate with children. This may indirectly impact the behaviour of the children in your care. This is because the way you communicate with yourself (in private thought) and others (in social speech) affects your behaviour in some way. For example, your cultural upbringing may have led you to use words that are more passive than assertive.

This will likely lead to you becoming more reserved or quieter than other educators. You may then rely more on non-verbal gestures when communicating with the children in your care, which may cause difficulty when handling children with unruly behaviour. It may also influence the children in your care to communicate more with non-verbal gestures.

On the other hand, if you were brought up to be more direct with people, this may carry over to your interactions with children. It may also influence them to be more upfront about their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Take note that you are not required to change who you are as an early childhood educator. Awareness of how you may be influencing the children in your care will help you develop practices that will address areas where provisions may be necessary.

#### **Reflective Practice**

Engaging in critical reflection is expected of you in early childhood education. It is a process of thinking about your own perspectives, values, beliefs, skills, and experiences compared to other views and being open to changing your own if needed. Early years educators use critical reflection to drive continuous improvement. It helps you learn, grow, change, and become a better educator.

As part of the critical reflection process, step back and examine your feelings. Ask yourself questions like ‘why do I believe this but not that?’, ‘what is my personal educational philosophy?’, and ‘how do my beliefs affect how I behave with children?’.

Reflect on whether your practices align with the currently accepted pedagogy of children being active, capable learners. Are your actions congruent with this belief? What about your cultural beliefs and practices? How do they influence the ways you communicate and interact with children?

A process of critical reflection is necessary to examine your own cultural biases, values, and beliefs. Remember that your personal experiences shape these. Your personal experiences may include how you were brought up and what you were told as a child. An important part of critical reflection is being able to let go of preconceptions and being open to new and different ways of thinking.

### **3.5 Use Information Collected to Inform a Holistic Understanding of the Child's Behaviour**

Now that you have gathered information about factors that may be influencing a child's behaviour, you can now consolidate your findings and examine how these factors interact with each other to result in the child's current behaviour. A picture of the child's behaviour in their personal, individual context will begin to emerge.



A holistic understanding of a child's behaviour is the acknowledgement of the fact that their behaviour is not the result of one factor alone but the interaction of several different factors. It is the recognition of the fact that a child's behaviour came about because of the connectedness (or disconnectedness) of their 'nature' and 'nurture.'

As an early childhood educator, you can better address a child's needs when you know the different factors that influence how they behave. It allows you to make a more directed approach in dealing with the children in your care.

You will likely be filling out a behavioural report form or a similar document used by your centre to document children's behaviour to satisfy this requirement. When filling out such a document, ensure that the explanation of children's behaviours is based on information gathered from the previous subchapters.

Below is a general template of a behaviour report form that an early childhood education and care service may use.

BEHAVIOUR REPORT FORM	
Candidate name	
Workplace/organisation	
Date completed	

### Child's Information

Child's age		
Sex	<input type="radio"/> Girl	<input type="radio"/> Boy

Notable behaviours observed in the child	Explanation of behaviour	Explanation based on info gathered on child's....:
1		<input type="checkbox"/> Social environment: education and care setting <input type="checkbox"/> Physical environment: education and care setting <input type="checkbox"/> Social environment: home <input type="checkbox"/> Social environment: community <input type="checkbox"/> Physical environment: home <input type="checkbox"/> Physical environment: community <input type="checkbox"/> Development stage <input type="checkbox"/> Temperament <input type="checkbox"/> Personality

## Checkpoint! Let's Review



1. A child's behaviour is impacted by a range of factors, including the social and physical environments of the child's home and community.
2. To understand the child's behaviour, you will need to gather information about their home environment from the child, their family, and other educators.
3. It is necessary to view the child's behaviour in the context of their individual stage of development, temperament, and personality.
4. The way educators achieve learning outcomes and communicate with children also influences children's behaviour.

## Learning Activity for Chapter 3



Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

## IV. Identify Factors That Influence Group Dynamics



In the previous chapter, you learnt about the different factors that may affect an individual child's behaviour. As an early childhood educator, you will likely take care of several children. How a child acts alone may be different from how they act when in a group, and in an early years learning centre, a child will be spending a lot of their time in groups.

Learning social skills and interacting with other children in groups is a fundamental part of early childhood education. Through these interactions—during learning experiences, routines, structured and unstructured play—children learn about themselves and how to form relationships and operate in society.

Children bring the patterns they are learning and copying at home into the early learning centre, including learned perceptions of gender roles. Educators pay close attention to how individual children interact with their peers and their influences on group dynamics. By being aware of children's behaviour and gently guiding and intervening where and when necessary, educators can encourage positive relationship building between children.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Observer interaction and behaviour patterns of children in groups
- Identify gender influences on group dynamics
- Encourage positive relationship building between children

## 4.1 Observe Interaction and Behaviour Patterns of Children in Groups

Children will be spending most of their time at the service interacting with peers and playing in groups. Like adults, children will often behave differently when they are in a group. As an early childhood educator, it is important for you to observe how the children in your care interact with each other to determine where and how you can support them. The interaction and behaviour patterns of people in groups refer to the way they work together. It is also called *group dynamics*. Group dynamics may lead children to make decisions or act in ways they would not have on their own. For this subchapter, you will be observing the group dynamics of the children in your care and how it affects their individual behaviour.



### 4.1.1 Group Dynamics in Early Childhood

Interaction and behaviour patterns you should be on the lookout for include:

any behaviours of concern (e.g. physical attacks, bullying)

indicators that a child is unhappy or upset

children who are withdrawn or not interacting

potentially escalating conflict situations that may require intervention

children exhibiting positive communication (e.g. active listening, appropriate questioning)

children demonstrating pro-social behaviours (e.g. turn-taking, empathy)

children exhibiting negative behaviours (e.g. aggression, selfishness, disrespect)

progress in children's social and emotional development

gaps in individual children's social skills that may require targeted support

You may also want to take note of the groups that children form on their own. These groups may be based on their sex, common ethnicity, or language groups. Some children may also be excluded from groups, in which case you have a duty to find out the reason for their exclusion and provide the necessary support.

Group dynamics can either be positive or negative, which affects how it impacts children's behaviours. Positive group dynamics means that the members of a group work well together. Groups with positive group dynamics typically demonstrate positive behaviours, such as turn-taking, that influence individual children to practise positive behaviours themselves through cooperating with and encouraging others.

Negative group dynamics means that the members of a group perform poorly together. It is usually marked by a lack of trust and constant bickering between the members of the group. Negative group dynamics can cause children to adopt negative behaviours such as becoming aggressive or anti-social.

#### **4.1.2 Observing Children in Groups**

Educators use observation to monitor and record children's interactions in groups. When monitoring children's interactions in groups, it is vital to observe individual children interacting with their peers in a range of contexts, for example:

- structured groups set up by the educator for a particular group activity, where members may be allocated to the group
- informal groups where members are self-chosen and the group activity is child-led, such as children choosing to play together in free play
- large groups of five children or more
- small groups of three to five children

It is also important to observe individual children interacting with their peers in different types of activities, as they may behave differently depending on their level of confidence and interest. Children may display different behaviour at mealtimes compared to when they are engaged in active physical play, arts and crafts, or quiet times.

You can monitor groups by circulating the room and observing the interactions within each group. Be sure to notice both verbal and non-verbal communications, for example, if group members are engaged and listening actively to each other or if one group member is fidgeting or their attention is elsewhere. Also, pay attention to language usage and the quality and quantity of contributions from each group member.

As you scan and move around the groups, you can provide help when required. You can then assist children when they need:

- guidance to interact appropriately with one another
- help to ensure safety
- assistance with routine personal tasks, such as tying shoelaces
- behaviour management

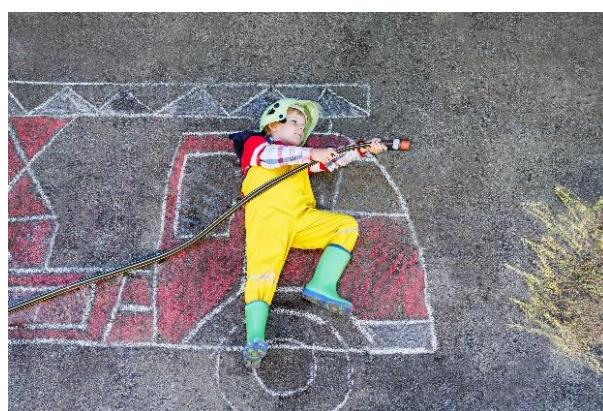
Remember to record any important observations in your daily journal (or a similar document that your centre uses for recording daily occurrences) as soon as possible so that you do not forget. Your notes provide a continuous record that you can use as a reference to find patterns and to inform planning.

## 4.2 Identify Gendered Behaviour Influences on Group Dynamics

Gender identity forms in early childhood as a product of the influences that young children see around them. As children learn by imitation, they copy their role models in the family, in their community, in the early childhood education setting, and increasingly, in the media they are exposed to.

Children are often taught that there are only two genders based on the two sexes (i.e. male and female). However, *gender* refers to a person's sense of who they are, not their physical biology. This means while someone may be physically male, their gender may be male, female, both, or neither. As young children begin to identify themselves as belonging to a particular gender, they copy the behaviour of others of the same gender, especially adults and older siblings.

### 4.2.1 Gendered Behaviour in Early Childhood



Children begin to internalise their attitudes towards the gender of those around them and the things they are told. In families where gender roles are narrowly defined, children will apply these narrow definitions to themselves and their peers. Some children will accept this as 'the way things are'; other children may question it. For example, a young girl might say, 'why cannot little girls be firefighters?' or a

young boy might say, 'why can't boys play with dolls?'. The responses they are given from their family and educators are extremely powerful and have long-lasting effects.

*Gendered behaviour* refers to the ways in which an individual acts according to the gender they identify themselves as. It is how an individual expresses their gender identity. Children typically start to express their gender identity at around 3 years old. This is evident in the way they begin to choose games and activities that they think fit their gender. They also begin to play more with children who are the same sex as them and less who are the opposite.

Children who are gender diverse will also begin to express their identities at the same time other children do. They may begin to dress more like the opposite sex or play games commonly associated with the opposite sex. However, also take note that experimenting with gender roles is normal for all children as they try to learn more about themselves and the world they live in. Children do not start to think about their gender being fixed until 6 or 7 years old.

#### 4.2.2 Gendered Behaviour Influences on Group Dynamics

Children bring the power structures and roles they have internalised at home into the early childhood education setting and act them out in their interactions with their peers. These internalised power structures and roles influence group dynamics in several ways, such as:

- children not wanting to play with other children of the opposite sex
- the games and activities that each is interested in, such as girls preferring dress-ups and playing ‘house’ and boys preferring toy trucks and rough-and-tumble play
- those with narrower gender definitions may attempt to impose roles and behaviours on children whose definition is more fluid—‘you cannot be the doctor, you’re a girl’
- girls may become more passive and not speak up; boys may become more confident and assertive



At around 5 years old, children also typically begin to play separately. Boys often play together in large groups, while girls tend to play in pairs and smaller groups. Just like in the previous subchapter, observe children as they interact in groups. Take note of who they play with and how they do it. Pay attention to how they communicate with each other, both those who are the same sex as them and those who are the opposite. Doing these will help you identify how children’s gendered behaviour affects their behaviour in groups.

### **4.3 Encourage Positive Relationship Building Between Children**

Children's relationships influence their perception of the world. This is the lens through which they view the real world and lays the foundation for relationships as they grow up. The importance of children's relationships even goes so far as to affect all areas of their development.

Relationships allow children to express themselves while receiving something in return. The way their feelings are responded to teaches them about the world and how to behave in it. As an early childhood educator, you have a responsibility to support the children in your care to build and maintain positive relationships with adults and their peers. By encouraging children to build positive and respectful relationships among themselves, you allow them to express and develop their self-confidence and manage their own behaviour.



When children have positive and respectful relationships with their peers, they learn to strike a balance between their own needs and the needs of others. They gain an appreciation for collaboration and teamwork. A child who relates positively with others may display the following behaviour:

engages in cooperative, helping behaviour

challenges peer's behaviour when it is disrespectful or unfair

expresses their feelings and responds to others' behaviours confidently and constructively

explores different identities and points of view in dramatic play



You can encourage positive relationships between children by giving them opportunities to work together or group play. During these group activities, you must sensitively and respectfully direct them towards attitudes and behaviour that will help them build positive and respectful relationships with each other. Some ways you can do this include:

- **Model positive relationships**

Everything you say and do when you are around children can impact their perception of appropriate behaviour and ways of expressing feelings.

It is far easier to guide a child positively than have to implement behaviour management strategies after an issue arises. Remember, prevention is better than cure.

- **Recognise and reinforce appropriate behaviour**

When a child is doing well, it is important to acknowledge their efforts through words or gestures. Positive reinforcement involves adding something to increase response. It helps children build self-esteem and encourages them to continue with the desired behaviour. In childcare, praise is often used as a reward rather than a physical present. It is vital to recognise and reinforce the specific behaviour as well as the child's efforts.



## Further Reading

Element 5.2.1 of the NQS reads: "Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other." You may refer to page 245 of the Guide to the NQF for ways you can support cooperation and collaboration and meet Element 5.2.1.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)



## Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Observing the interaction patterns of children in groups assists educators in planning and identifying support needs.
2. Learned gender definitions and roles influence group dynamics.
3. Positive relationship building between children can be encouraged through the development of pro-social behaviours and conflict-resolution skills.



## Learning Activity for Chapter 4

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

## V. Support the Development of Pro-Social Behaviours



In the previous chapter, you learnt how to identify the factors that affect how children interact and behave in groups. As children grow up, the number and variety of people they interact with will also increase. How they interact with their peers in early childhood will likely influence how they interact with others in the future. Supporting children to develop pro-social skills sets them up for a positive future.

Behaviours are pro-social when they contribute to society. Pro-social behaviours include caring, helping, cooperating, sharing, and volunteering. Skills such as turn-taking, empathy, and self-regulation contribute to the development of pro-social behaviour.

Pro-social skills are developed progressively at each of the following stages:

- **Infancy (0–12 months)**

Infants learn the early signs of pro-social behaviour from their parents, for example, by their parents smiling and hugging them and expressing what they feel when they are near their children.

- **Toddlerhood (12 months to 3 years)**

Toddlers learn to empathise by being near and interacting with other children. Through interaction with others, they learn how to share and collaborate as well as show comfort, such as hugging and holding.

- **Preschoolers (3–5 years old)**

Preschoolers develop complex pro-social skills as they are taught how to properly label their emotions and understand their friends and educators' emotions.

Early education centre policies should support educators to achieve positive behavioural and learning outcomes for all children by providing safe, supportive environments and high quality, developmentally appropriate learning programs.

It is important to remember that every child is unique. Your role is to guide each child's behaviour appropriately while maintaining each child's self-esteem and opportunities to grow and develop.

All educators within an early childhood centre must follow the same behavioural management strategies and be consistent with the techniques. Inconsistent techniques may confuse children and hinder positive relationship building.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Guide children's behaviour in ways that promote self-regulation and preserve and promote children's self-esteem and wellbeing
- Communicate expectations for behaviour based on service policies in ways that children will understand
- Involve children in developmentally appropriate ways when agreeing expectations of behaviour
- Provide instructions and guidance in a positive and supportive manner
- Acknowledge children's positive choices and use clear verbal and non-verbal communication when children make positive choices
- Use positive language, gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them
- Use appropriate strategies to redirect behaviour and defuse situations of conflict or stress
- Identify situations where children may need additional support and seek guidance from relevant supervisor

## 5.1 Guide Children’s Behaviour in Ways That Promote Self-Regulation and Preserve and Promote Children’s Self-Esteem and Wellbeing



Behaviour guidance is a significant part of the learning program in early childhood education. It is intrinsic to every communication and interaction with children, not just when children are misbehaving. A centre’s behaviour management policy and agreed strategies for behaviour guidance can positively or negatively impact children’s behaviour. Both the policy and accepted strategies should be living documents and able to change as needed.

Research has shown that quality learning environments and educators who are respectful, nurturing, and sensitive to children’s needs are essential for achieving positive behavioural outcomes for children. Educators must cater to the individual needs of children and respond to their interests. Adopting a positive and pro-active approach to guiding children’s behaviour reduces challenging behaviours and encourages children to achieve self-regulation, develop positive self-esteem, and increase their wellbeing.

*Self-esteem* refers to the way children think and feel about themselves and how well they do the things that are important to them. When children have positive self-esteem, they are happier and better equipped to maintain positive relationships with their peers. *Wellbeing* encompasses physical and emotional health. Wellbeing is marked by good physical health, positive emotions, feelings of satisfaction, and positive social functioning.

## **Behaviour Guidance Strategies**

You can support children to achieve positive self-esteem and wellbeing by promoting self-regulation. Self-regulation allows them to feel in control of their behaviour and manage responses to their own emotions. Some ways you can support and promote the development of self-regulation in early childhood include the following:

- Provide opportunities to talk about emotions with the children in your care
- Encourage children to name strong feelings when they are struggling with them
- Support children to find ways to react to their strong emotions (e.g. teach them to take breaks or ask for help when they feel overwhelmed)

Remember that it is normal for children to struggle with strong emotions that they may not be used to yet. It is essential for you to be patient as you help children cope with them. As an early childhood educator, you must also give children the opportunity to build up self-esteem and wellbeing autonomously while providing support where it is needed.

The goal of behaviour guidance is for children to understand what acceptable behaviour is over time, learn to manage their own behaviour, and develop self-control. Their need for guidance from adults should decrease as they grow up.

An excellent strategy for guiding children's behaviour is through a strengths-based approach. A *strengths-based approach* in behaviour guidance means focusing on and appreciating a child's strengths and abilities instead of focusing on addressing their deficits. It is asking what works for a child and how it works for them so whatever was done can be continued and developed to match the child's abilities.

A strengths-based approach does not mean accommodating bad behaviour or minimising concerns. Acknowledging that children experience difficulties and challenges that need attention and support from the more capable adults is also part of a strengths-based approach. Examples of ways you can use this approach when guiding children's behaviour include the following:

- Preparing activities that match the abilities and/or interests of individual children when you notice that they are not participating in the current activity
- Identifying why a child is getting frustrated when attempting to accomplish a task and giving the necessary support to help them accomplish it

Most early childhood education and care services have established a range of behaviour guidance strategies that help children learn to manage their own behaviour. All educators must apply these strategies consistently.

Consider the following for developing behaviour guidance strategies:

- Build positive relationships with each child as the foundation for children's self-respect and self-worth
- Use positive approaches (e.g. positive acknowledgement, redirection, and encouragement) when guiding children's behaviour and help them understand how their behaviour impacts their surroundings and other people
- Provide acceptable alternate behaviours when challenging behaviour occurs as a means to support children
- Find appropriate ways to involve the family and the child in addressing challenging behaviour
- Seek help from other professionals when necessary to help with behaviour guidance
- Identify children's strengths and build on them

Sourced from *Strategies to guide children's behaviour*, used under CC BY 4.0.  
© State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training).

## 5.2 Communicate Expectations for Behaviour Based on Service Policies in Ways That Children Will Understand

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, all early childhood education and care services have behavioural guidance policies tailored to align with their organisational policies. These policies are set by management to ensure that how expectations of children's behaviours are communicated is consistent among educators in the centre. Guarantee access and review your centre's policy for managing children's behaviour.



### Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures guiding children's behaviour through the link below:

[Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy](#)

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Expectations for behaviour refer to how children must act while they are in the care of the early years learning centre. It can be based on several factors such as developmental milestones and/or safety controls to minimise risk at the centre. The children in your care must be aware of what behaviour is expected of them. If children are not aware of these, they will not know what is appropriate or not. Inform the child of specific expectations for their behaviour in ways that are appropriate to their level of understanding and following the established behaviour guidance or management policy in your centre.

A behavioural policy will likely include limits to children's behaviour. Limits are stated either verbally or non-verbally and are used to ensure children know the expected behaviours. Keep limits simple, and only those that are necessary. The children will not be able to remember what to do if you set too many. Use simple sentences that children can remember easily. For example:

- ‘We use our walking feet inside.’
- ‘Chairs are for sitting on.’
- ‘We use our quiet voices during rest time.’

Understanding the reasons for limits makes it more likely for children to follow them. Explain the reasons for the children in your care in ways that they can relate to their experience. For example:

- ‘We play with the sand gently, so it does not go into our friend’s eyes.’
- ‘If we put all of our toys back in the toy box, we can easily find them next time we want to play with them, and they will not get lost.’

### **5.3 Involve Children in Developmentally Appropriate Ways When Agreeing Expectations of Behaviour**

Children must play an active part in creating the limits and guidelines for behaviour in their environment. Naturally, the educators in the room would lead the process and ensure that reasonable limits are set. Discussing and setting logical consequences for not following the guidelines may also be appropriate.



Children are far more likely to behave within limits if they have been instrumental in designing them and therefore have a feeling of ownership. When educators consistently apply the logical consequences of not behaving as expected, the limits are further reinforced. They will help the children feel more comfortable in the environment as it is predictable. It is

common for children to ‘test the boundaries’ of a new environment several times to work out exactly where they stand. Making communication clear and consistently applying behaviour expectations are essential for children who are new to the setting.

Consider the following when agreeing on expectations of behaviour with the children in your care:

- **Use methods that are suited to the child's current developmental stage**

Limits and guidelines must be well-understood by children to ensure that they comply with them. This is why you must consider a child's developmental stage when involving them in agreeing on expectations of behaviour. While older preschoolers may be able to make decisions and discuss limits related to an activity or experience., toddlers will not be able to do the same.

- **Ask children what they think about what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour**

As previously mentioned, children are more likely to behave within limits when they feel like they contributed to establishing these limits. Ask them what makes particular behaviour unacceptable by asking them what would happen if someone behaved in that way (e.g. 'what would you feel if someone hurt you?').

## 5.4 Provide Instructions and Guidance in a Positive and Supportive Manner



As an early childhood educator, you must incorporate positive communication techniques in providing instructions and guidance to the children in your care. This includes wording instructions positively by incorporating their strengths and interests (e.g. 'It is a good idea to start picking up toys so we can move on to the painting activity. I know you like to paint' instead of 'Don't leave your toys on the floor').

Providing instruction and guidance in a supportive manner means using language that encourages and enforces children to follow them. It involves relaying them in ways that children can understand. It also includes allowing the children time to comprehend and respond to the given instructions and guidance and clarifying (or simplifying) them. Be specific when acknowledging appropriate behaviour or when instructions and guidance are followed.

Following these practices helps you improve children's self-esteem and support the development of children's pro-social behaviour. You are providing them with a safe environment to explore their own autonomy. When children feel safe, they become more open to learning experiences. They can develop the pro-social skills of emotional regulation and responsible decision making when provided a learning environment where they feel respected.

## **5.5 Acknowledge Children’s Positive Choices and Use Clear Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication When Children Make Positive Choices**

When a child makes positive choices, it is crucial to acknowledge this through words or gestures. Children make positive choices when, even if they are able to make choices that benefit only themselves, they choose to engage in pro-social behaviours. Examples of positive choices children may make include turn-taking and sharing.

Acknowledging the positive choices of children is an excellent way to encourage them to voluntarily act in positive, accepting, and cooperative manners as they grow up. Acknowledgement helps children build self-esteem, develops pro-social skills, and encourages them to continue with the desired behaviour. You can provide acknowledgement to children through the use of verbal and non-verbal communication.

### **Verbal Communication**

In terms of verbal communication, it is vital to recognise and reinforce the specific behaviour, not just the child. It also helps to communicate why the specific behaviour is positive. For example, instead of saying ‘good boy,’ you can say ‘Thank you for taking turns with others. That is very kind of you.’ You can also apply reinforcement by using encouraging words to show warmth, convey openness, and pave the way for the maintenance of positive choices and behaviours.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

Your non-verbal cues must align with your verbal acknowledgements. Consider the following non-verbal gestures:

- **Get down to their eye level**

When you are on the same physical level as the children in your care, they feel safer and more connected to you. It also tells them that you are there for them and paying attention to them.

- **Smile and use open, friendly body language**

When children see that what they have done resulted in something positive, they are likely to behave in the same way or make the same choice in the future. It also improves their self-esteem and builds their confidence when they see that they can depend on you to give them continued acknowledgement if they make more positive choices in the future, which is what you demonstrate when you use open body language.

## **5.5 Use Positive Language, Gestures, Facial Expressions and Tone of Voice When Redirecting or Discussing Children’s Behaviour With Them**

Positive communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is essential to helping children feel connected. As an early childhood educator, you must use positive communication to foster respectful relationships with the children in your care. This is important in providing them with positive behavioural support. Positive communication is especially important when redirecting or discussing children’s behaviour with them.

You may need to talk to children about their behaviours for several reasons. They may be misbehaving or acting out in ways that break the discussed behavioural expectations. They may also be behaving in ways that affect the other children in the service. In these cases, it is your job as their educator to discuss their behaviours with them and, where applicable, redirect them to more productive behaviours.



Effective utilisation of positive language, gestures, facial expression, and tone of voice will go a long way when redirecting or discussing children’s behaviour with them. Consider the following:

- **Positive language**

Using positive language means enforcing children’s strengths instead of focusing on their deficiencies. Not only are their dignity and rights maintained in this way, but they are also encouraged to regulate their own behaviour. Additionally, using positive language means acknowledging that difficulties and challenges are a normal part of life, as well as giving attention and support where they are needed.

- **Gestures**

Gestures refer to the way you move your body as you speak with others (e.g. moving your hands to emphasise what is being talked about). This includes smiling, nodding, and maintaining eye contact, which let children know that you are listening to them. Bend down to their level to show them that you want to be close and help them feel secure.

- **Facial expression and tone of voice**

Children who are just learning to recognise other people’s emotions will likely look at your facial expression and tone of voice to determine how you may be feeling towards them. Even without recognising your emotion, they can sense if you are angry or frustrated and may become afraid of getting in trouble. It is harder for children to think properly if they are frightened or worried.

## **5.6 Use Appropriate Strategies to Redirect Behaviour and Defuse Situations of Conflict or Stress**

No matter how well you communicate expectations of behaviour with children, there will be times when a child misbehaves and conflict arises. As an early childhood educator, it is your responsibility to apply appropriate strategies to redirect these behaviours and manage the conflict or stress that results from them. Again, guarantee access and review your centre's policy for guiding children's behaviour. The strategy you apply must align with your centre's policy to ensure consistency between the actions of all educators in the centre.

### **Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre**



Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures guiding children's behaviour through the link below:

[Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy](#)

*(username: newusername password: new password)*

Redirecting behaviour is a powerful tool for addressing challenging behaviour before it continues or escalates. It lets you guide children to engage in alternative, more acceptable behaviours. When redirecting children's behaviour, you maximise the learning time of all the children in the room as they will not be distracted by the challenging behaviour.



Consider the following when redirecting children's behaviour:

- **Provide choices to the child**

When real alternatives are offered to children, you provide them with opportunities to exercise autonomy. Children are also more likely to cooperate when they decide on the task that they want to do.

- **Recognise and reinforce appropriate behaviour**

Positive reinforcement encourages children to continue with the desired behaviour. It also supports their developing self-esteem. Ensure that you recognise and reinforce the behaviour, not the child.

- **State expectations instead of asking questions**

While offering choices helps children cooperate better, there are times when there is no choice for the child but to do the task at hand. In these cases, it is essential to state rather than to ask. Make sure that expectation of what needs to be done is communicated clearly.

- **Give children time to respond to expectations**

Children respond better to cues and warnings. They should be given time to respond to what is expected of them instead of being demanded immediate results. Give them time to prepare themselves and comprehend instructions.



## **Resolving Conflicts Between Children**

Supporting children to resolve conflicts themselves helps them build conflict-resolution and self-regulation skills. Consider the following ways of communicating positively and respectfully in situations of conflict between children:

- Tell the children involved in the conflict that you will listen to them and help them come up with a solution.
- Listen to both sides of the story. Help them listen to each other's needs and concerns without taking sides or blaming someone. Acknowledge their feelings and help them calm down so they can think rationally. Summarise the situation from each child's point of view. Confirm your understanding and show them that you understand.
- Help the children involved to brainstorm possible solutions and sort through the options to see which ones might meet everyone's needs best. Ensure that they also understand what they have agreed on. Remember to acknowledge their efforts for working things out.

Children feel a greater sense of security and trust when they know that someone is there to protect and help them. Let the children in your care know that you are always willing to listen to them and respond to their needs however you can.



## **5.7 Identify Situations Where Children May Need Additional Support and Seek Guidance From Relevant Supervisor**

Part of Learning Outcome 1 of the Early Years Learning Framework is for children to feel safe, secure, and supported. As an early childhood educator, you can promote this learning by providing them with the support they need for their normal development. Situations where a child may need additional support are usually identified through observation and talking with the child's family and peers. Examples of such situations include abuse and parental neglect.

Monitor the child for any physical or behavioural signs that suggest abuse or neglect and require immediate intervention, such as showing pain when sitting, preferring to be alone, or having inappropriate sexual knowledge.

When recognising signs of a child requiring additional support, be aware of non-verbal actions that might suggest that the child has difficulty doing an activity, such as staying quiet, furrowing eyebrows, or fumbling. Similarly, a child showing violent or aggressive behaviour, such as bullying, pushing playmates away, or forcing them to play, may indicate a need for additional support.



### **Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre**

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures for accidents, incidents, and trauma through the link below:

[Accident, Incident and Trauma \(AIT\) Policy](#)

*(username: newusername password: new password)*

Children with disabilities must also be provided with additional support. Early childhood education and care services must have programs that ensure that all children can participate, learn, and develop in an environment where their strengths and interests are supported. Consult with the families of children with disabilities to identify what specific support they need from the service in terms of their education and care.

## **Seeking Guidance From Supervisor**

You may not be able to provide all the necessary support that the children in your care need. Therefore, you must consult and seek guidance from your supervisor where provisions are needed. The supervisor you approach should be someone with prior experience dealing with a similar situation or someone who can direct you to someone else who can give you better guidance. Inform your supervisor about the situation you have identified and what support you think the child needs. Ask them how you might be able to provide this support.

Seeking guidance or consultation with your supervisor can be done using whatever communication method is available to you (e.g. mobile phone or email) or face-to-face. Whichever method you choose, you must follow your service's established policies and procedures for consultative arrangements or communication. These policies and procedures are established to make the process of consultation or communication consistent among all the service's employees. They also ensure that communication between employees is easily monitored and trackable.

## **Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre**



Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures for communication and constructive workplace relationships through the link below:

[Constructive Workplace Relationships](#)

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## Checkpoint! Let's Review



1. Pro-social behaviour is easier to promote to children who have their self-esteem and wellbeing needs met.
2. Understanding the reasons for guidelines and limits makes it more likely for children to follow them.
3. Involving children when setting expectation for their behaviour also makes them more likely to behave within limits.
4. Language that encourages and enforces children to follow them must be used when giving instructions and guidance.
5. Positive reinforcement encourages children to build self-esteem, develop pro-social skills, and continue with the desired behaviour.
6. Redirecting children's behaviour allows you to guide children to engage in alternative, more acceptable behaviours.
7. Early childhood educators have a responsibility to provide the support that the children in their care need as reasonably possible.

## Learning Activity for Chapter 5



Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

## VI. Reflect on Relationships With Children



In the previous chapter, you learnt how to support the development of children's pro-social behaviours. If you have reached this far in the learner guide and successfully performed the criteria of the unit, you should have almost all the skills needed to develop positive and respectful relationships with children. However, as an educator, you have a duty to improve your practice continually. Critical reflection is an ongoing part of an educator's professional practice. As the relationship between educators and children is the cornerstone of early childhood education, personal reflection on your relationships with children is equally important.

When you step back and examine your own behaviours and how you interact with children, you ask yourself why you do the things you do and if they are always the best possible for the children. By deepening your self-awareness, you can better identify ingrained habits and communication patterns that could be improved.

In this chapter, you will learn how to do the following:

- Identify ways of developing positive relationships through review of own experiences and observation of others in the workplace
- Identify opportunities to enhance own skills through reflection, and develop actions with guidance from supervisor

## **6.1 Identify Ways of Developing Positive Relationships Through Review of Own Experiences and Observation of Others in the Workplace**

One way you can improve your skills as an early childhood educator is by looking into both your and your co-educators' experiences in developing positive relationships with the children in your care. Reflecting on your experiences in the centre allows you to examine your practices and ideas as educators. It allows you to analyse what does and does not work to improve learning and anticipate and prepare for what could happen in the future.



When you reflect on your relationships with the children in your care, you examine your own behaviours and question how your own values, beliefs, and worldview might contribute to these in both positive and negative ways. As mentioned in Subchapter 3.4, your cultural beliefs and practices may influence how you communicate with the children in your care. These may also

influence how you develop positive relationships with them. Document your experiences as an early childhood educator at your centre. Ask yourself questions such as:

**Do I always use a calm and gentle manner when interacting with children?**

**Do I show children that I value them and am interested in what they are doing?**

**Do I use positive communication techniques?**

**Do my non-verbal gestures align with what I say?**

You can also compare your own and learn strategies and techniques that you can apply in your own relationships by observing the practices of other educators and the quality of their relationships with children and documenting your observations about them. Your co-educators may have experiences similar to yours or practices that seem to be more effective than your own. They may also have encountered experiences you have not yet; if so, you learn to anticipate the same thing happening to you.

You can identify ways of developing or improving positive relationships with the children in your care by reflecting on what you have documented. Determine how effective you are in developing positive relationships and identify how you can improve on it. For example, you may find that the children in your care respond better when you use non-verbal gestures. In this case, you can try to incorporate more non-verbal gestures when you communicate with them.

The positive development of the children in your care should be your primary goal as an early childhood educator. Reflect on how you and your colleagues' relationships contribute to the children's learning and identify ways to improve your own practice in terms of your relationships with children.

## **6.2 Identify Opportunities to Enhance Own Skills Through Reflection, and Develop Actions With Guidance From Supervisor**

Engaging in critical reflection regarding your relationships with children will undoubtedly help you identify areas for improvement. The intent of critical reflection, as described by the National Quality Standards, is to gather information with the purpose of gaining insights that support, inform, and enrich the decision-making process in relation to children's learning. There is always room for improvement. Continuous improvement is part of your professional responsibility as an educator.

### **Critical Reflection**



Critical reflection indicates that there is a higher level of reflection involved in the process. In analysing an experience or practice relevant to your relationship with the children in your care, critical reflection divides the process into three subcategories: reflect-on-action, reflect-in-action, and reflect-for-action. *Reflect-on-action* provides an analysis of past experiences and relates those experiences to the situation or issue at hand. *Reflect-in-action* is an analysis provided on how an issue or situation was addressed as it happened; this rationalises the techniques used during the incident. *Reflect-for-action* identifies the actions that would have been taken, provided the person has critically analysed the given situation.

Through regular reflective practice of examining ‘what happened’ and ‘what could be changed or improved’, you may have discovered areas of improvement when reflecting on your experiences and practices as an early childhood educator. Constant reflection can eventually lead to improvement in your work practices. It guides you to process information from multiple perspectives to gain insights that will help support and inform how you develop positive relationships with the children in your care.

### **Working With Supervisor to Enhance Own Skills**

Discuss areas of improvement with your supervisor and ask for advice on how you might enhance your skills in these areas. Although it might be tempting to get everything done fast, avoid trying to tackle everything at once. This will be counterproductive and may lead to burnout. Focus on improving one area at a time. Focusing allows you to devote sufficient time and effort while keeping the possibility of work burnout low.

Develop an action plan to help keep you on track. In your plan, describe the current situation and set clear goals and objectives. Use timelines to show what you will achieve by when. Work with your supervisor to develop some actions to help you reach your goal.

Actions might include:

- Formal training, such as a course or workshop
- Mentoring or shadowing of other educators with strengths in the skill you are planning to enhance
- Informal training such as watching YouTube videos or reading recommended books
- Practising specific strategies such as remembering to use children’s names – keep a tally during the day

Access relevant sources such as the internet, organisations, or colleagues with particular expertise where needed. Remember to include benchmarks to help measure how much you have improved in the areas your work on. Benchmarks could be in the form of statements such as ‘you can tell the quality of your relationships has improved because children are more willingly expressing their feelings towards you.’

## Checkpoint! Let's Review



1. When you reflect on your relationships with the children in your care, you examine your own behaviours and question how your own values, beliefs, and worldview might contribute to these in both positive and negative ways.
2. Observing how co-educators interact with the children in the centre can also provide insight into how you might enhance your practice as an early childhood educator.

## Learning Activity for Chapter 6



Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

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