

Being Aware of Children's Needs

Narrator: Welcome to this short presentation on being aware of children's needs. This presentation will highlight the importance of being aware of individual children's needs in the classroom and responding to those needs. This is one in a series of modules on building relationships.

Responding quickly and appropriately to children's needs is an important component of creative, positive relationships with children. The house framework helps us think about all of the important elements needed to support children's preparation and readiness for school. The elements are: The foundation, the pillars, and the roof.

Being aware of children's needs is an important part of the foundation. You'll learn about some of the ways that adults notice and respond to children's needs and how these practices contribute to children's learning and school readiness. Being aware of children's needs means that teachers observe and respond to the individual needs, concerns, and successes of children, in the moment. Early childhood classrooms are busy places.

Sometimes, it can be difficult for a teacher to make the time to get in tune with each child-- but it's important. Let's see how teachers can become more aware and get in tune. Slowing down and really watching or noticing each child helps the teacher get to know the child on a personal level and make an emotional connection with the child. Really watching and being aware means that the teacher can respond to the child's emotions and the ways that the child expresses those feelings.

Teacher: You want to go try and use your words? Yes, let's go try and use our words.

Narrator: Really watching and being aware means that the teacher notices and often anticipates areas of concerns, when the child doesn't understand, or where the child struggles.

Girl: [grunts]

Teacher: Did it work?

Girl: No.

Teacher: No? Can you try again? I bet if you try it again, you might be able to do it.

Narrator: The teacher can provide some extra attention or teach a mini-lesson during this teachable moment. And, really watching and being aware means that the teacher responds to what really matters to that child, whether the child is getting frustrated and needs some assistance, or maybe a little break, or the child isn't able to express himself and needs some extra time or an encouraging look, or the child has something wonderful to share and needs some acknowledgement, right now.

Teacher: Can you -- can you hold that thought for when circle starts, and you can raise your hand and say, "I see something new"?

Narrator: In all these ways, teachers help children feel more secure and comfortable and ready to learn.

Teacher: Very good. High five.

Narrator: Here are a few ways that teachers can get in the moment and be more aware of individual children's needs. Check in: Greet and connect to children as they arrive at school, and make the greeting personal.

Teacher: Hi, Kieryanah. How are you doing today, my friend?

Girl: My mommy bought new shoes for me, and I'm wearing them.

Teacher: She did? They're so pretty. I like that.

Narrator: Then, continue checking in with individual children throughout the day. Use zoning: Use staff zoning practices in the classroom or on the playground to make sure that an interested adult is nearby and watching every child.

Teacher: So, I'm going to go see if Brittany's doing okay.

Narrator: See and be seen. Even when you use zoning, make sure that you can see all the children, and that the children can see you. Be close: Increase your proximity to children, or to a particular child, so that you can see what children need and provide support.

Teacher: What is this? Is it a school bus or a van or a SUV? What is this?

Girl: A bus.

Teacher: A bus.

Narrator: In this short presentation, we talked about the importance of being aware of individual children's needs and being able to anticipate and respond to those needs in the moment. The practices will help teachers build their relationships with individual children, help know each child a little bit better, and help guide children's development and learning. These practices will help your children be both comfortable and eager to learn.

Learn more about being aware and being responsive in our longer module: Being Aware of Children's Needs. Take a look at our tips, tools, and resources. Thank you, for listening, and enjoy the many ways you can get to know your children better.