

### Attention Seeking Behaviour

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As humans we all want and need attention. Children like to have adults spending time and attention with them, noticing things they do and acknowledging their efforts. At various times some children require more attention than others. It can be difficult for the adult to continually be providing the attention they appear to want but at the same time it is important to respond in a supportive manner.

Basic guidelines for resolving attention seeking behaviour can be applied to all situations. Usually the behaviour that is out in the open and easily observed can be of assistance to deal with the issue.

Behaviours that occur out of sight and appear not to be focussed towards the adult but to peers can be a little harder to identify. However it needs to be acknowledged that attention seeking behaviour with peers is also showing the child's need to be included, part of the group and regarded as a friend.

This kind of behaviour is not in isolation and there are many environmental factors which may contribute to this such as family situations, loss of normal family life (e.g. death, divorce, change of house, parent/s' increased work load outside of the home), change of routines, staffing and other children leaving the centre.

In approaching behavioural issues, it is important to take each child and their behaviours in context and respond according to your knowledge of the child and situation. It is important to be creative in your approach and open to learning from the child and yourself. The ultimate goal is to support the child to learn to be thoughtful and considerate in relation to both themselves and others.

#### **Food for Thought**

- ❖ Children who feel happy and positive about themselves act happy and positive.
- ❖ Children's behaviour is linked to their age and development, not their character.
- ❖ When adults give children time with them to talk, play, feel close, children feel valued and secure.

### Suggested Strategies

- Spend time observing the overall social relationship behaviour of the child as well as the response of the other children.
- Consider the interaction with other children (often such a child does not have satisfactory interaction skills with peers)
- Consult with the parent discussing what you have observed.
- Create environments with sufficient space that are likely to encourage social interaction
- Plan activities in which children can practice co-operating, sharing and helping.
- Give thought to transition times between activities.
- Set up activities that elicit co-operative behaviour and provide opportunity for children to practice helping, sharing and working together.
- Help children understand and deal with their strong feelings.
- Encourage children to label their own feelings and tell each other how they feel.
- Lead children through discussions of feelings and ways to be helpful using pictures, stories or puppets.
- Provide children with time to practice their listening skills.
- Plan to provide special time with each child or with only two children together. Having two children together helps create the opportunity for individualised attention as well as helping children gain an understanding about thinking of others.
- Special games as whispering secrets can be planned for with definite rules e.g. one secret at a time, the secret has to be a happy secret

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