

Supporting Children's Emotions and Feelings

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All children experience emotions and feelings however children need to learn how to express and deal with their feelings and emotions. Children need assistance from adults to recognise their emotions and what they mean. They need adult support to express their emotions in a safe and appropriate way.

The role of the caregiver in assisting children to understand and deal with their emotions encompasses an approach to monitor children's growth and development and provide opportunities to practice skills of dealing with emotions.

Suggested Strategies

The following strategies are just some examples which may be applied to support children's emotional development. This list is only the start and it is dependant on a variety of factors such as environment, length of time child is in care, child's interest, likes, dislikes and skills already achieved.

- Create personal space boundaries e.g. rug/mat, hula hoop
- Allow children to contribute in making their own personal space
- Help children express their understanding of their emotions by asking questions e.g. "tell me more", "how do you feel about that?"
- Acknowledge the child's feelings/emotions "I can understand that you are sad"
- Create "feelings" books/pictures/posters that show different emotions e.g. sad, happy, angry
- Provide words to help children talk about how they feel
- Provide activities/group time experiences that allow children to practice identify emotions/feelings e.g. emotion face masks with sad, happy etc.
- Use mirrors for children to show different emotions
- Read stories and emotions and feelings
- Use music and movement to identify differing emotions
- Set and clarify non-negotiable limits e.g. "it's okay to be angry but it is not okay to hit/pinch"
- To help children recognise other peoples feelings ask questions such as "How do you think Jane feels? How can you tell she is angry, sad etc."

- Model the expressing of emotions and feelings with the children e.g.” When I lost my..... I was really angry with myself.....
- Provide opportunities for children to work in pairs. This helps with their self worth and self esteem
- Utilise the dramatic play area for children to learn and understand about emotions and feelings

References:

- Carter M.A. “Emotion Fitness for Kids” Setting kids up for the game of life. Carter 2007
- Wheeler E.J. “Conflict Resolution in Early Childhood” Merrill Prentice Hall 2004

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