Module 4
Relationships as a foundation for social and emotional learning

Knowing a child well allows an educator to interact with the child based on their unique characteristics. This kind of relationship is the foundation for positive social and emotional learning and development, and mental health.

Connections to the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard

The EYLF acknowledges that strong, respectful relationships enable educators to support children’s learning more effectively. The relationship itself provides a secure base for children to form new relationships with children and other adults (Learning Outcome 2) and to play, explore and experiment confidently.

NQS Quality Area 5 (Relationships with Children) highlights the importance of educator-child relationships being respectful and equitable. When educators know each child well, they can be intentional in their practice and use their relationships to support each child. In planning the program, educators have social and emotional learning in mind (NQS Quality Area 1).

The second Principle in the EYLF (Partnerships) highlights that having strong relationships with families helps build strong relationships with children. The NQS identifies that collaborative relationships with families are fundamental to achieve quality outcomes for children (NQS Quality Area 6).

“Educators are responsive to all children’s strengths, abilities and interests. They value and build on the children’s strengths, skills and knowledge to ensure their motivation and engagement in learning. They respond to children’s expertise, cultural traditions and ways of knowing, the multiple languages spoken by some children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the strategies used by children with additional needs to negotiate their everyday lives.”

(Early Years Learning Framework, p.14)
### Activity

**How well do we know the children in our service?**

Think of a child you know really well and work through these questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you know about the child?</th>
<th>How did you gain this knowledge?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the significant people in the child’s life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you know about the child’s family, such as culture, shared interests, family activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you know about the family’s child rearing practices?</td>
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<td>Are there significant past experiences you are aware of in the child’s life?</td>
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<td>How does the child prefer to be comforted when they are upset?</td>
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<td>What signals indicate the child is tired?</td>
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<td>How does the child prefer to settle to sleep?</td>
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<td>How much physical contact do they prefer?</td>
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<td>What events trigger strong emotions?</td>
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<td>What challenges them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the child’s usual level of physical activity?</td>
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<td>How does the child adjust to change?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are their likes and dislikes?</td>
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<td>What are their strengths?</td>
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<td>What interests them?</td>
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<td>How do you build on the child’s interests for further learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel you know when to intervene and when to leave the child to persevere at a task?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Discussion

**Developing relationships**

What arrangements does our service have in place to establish and maintain relationships with children and their families?

What do I do to build warm, positive relationships with the children in my group and their families? How do I maintain these relationships?

“Educators’ practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children’s involvement and success in learning. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children’s learning.”

(Early Years Learning Framework, p.9)
Knowing a child well helps us to form and maintain relationships with them. Being predictable, consistent and in tune with a child allows these relationships to develop and flourish. Record any observations or questions you may have in the space below.

“As I watch early childhood educators getting to know children, it’s not about what you do necessarily...it’s not about the activities you set up or the things you think that maybe children might like to do, like the train set or the play dough or washing the babies, whatever it is. It’s more about being with them in the things that they chose to do. And it is in those encounters that we have with children that we can really get to know them.”

Catharine Hydon, KidsMatter Component 2 Professional Learning Video 4.2

“Both periods of being ‘in tune’ and ‘out of tune’ provide learning opportunities for children’s social understanding and developing sense of self.”

(Tronick, 1989)

In this scenario there are three roles: a child, an adult and an observer. If you are the child, put yourself in their shoes. If you are the adult, imagine you are ‘out of step’ with the child. You could be distracted, unavailable or misunderstand what the other person wants.

**Activity**

**In and out of tune**

| Scenario 1: Child-Adult | Child is having difficulties tying his shoe laces and needs some assistance  
Adult is typing on the computer |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scenario 2: Child-Adult | Child is feeling hungry and wants something to eat  
Adult is setting the table |
| Scenario 3: Child-Adult | Child wants a book read to her  
Adult is looking for her reading glasses |
| Scenario 4: Child-Adult | Child is crying after hurting his finger  
Adult is washing the dishes |
| Scenario 5: Child-Adult | Child broke his toy and wants it fixed  
Adult is on the phone |
What are the first steps you take in building relationships with children?

How do you get to know a child in the beginning of their participation in the service?

How do you continue to build on your relationships with children and their families as they participate in the service?

How do you model consistent and predictable behaviour for children throughout the day? What would support you to respond in this manner?

How do you include your relationships with children in your observations or reflections? How does, or could, this support the development or maintenance of these relationships?

When children feel safe and secure in their relationships, they become confident to explore and discover their world, providing them with the tools to support their mental health and wellbeing.

“Educators who are attuned to children’s thoughts and feelings, support the development of a strong sense of wellbeing. They positively interact with the young child in their learning.”

(Early Years Learning Framework, p.12)
Think about how the relationship you share with a child allows you to intentionally support their social and emotional learning. Write down some examples of when you feel you are able to intentionally support a child’s learning as a result of knowing the child well.

If there is a child who is new to the group or who you don’t know very well, how does that affect your capacity to support that child’s learning?

You might also be interested in...


Module 5 is scheduled for:

Date: 
Time: 
Venue: