Module 4
Relationships as a foundation for social and emotional learning

What will participants learn from this module?

When you have completed this module, participants will:

- have an improved understanding of the importance of knowing the children well
- be able to identify practices that help build and maintain warm, positive relationships with children
- have an improved understanding of how educator-child relationships impact on children’s mental health, now and in the future.

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. Teaching and learning occur through the relationship as children learn most effectively from people they have relationships with. 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. Through these relationships children learn in all five Outcome areas.

Educators can be intentional – that is, deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful (EYLF Practice) – in their teaching when they use their relationship and gain increasingly deep knowledge of each child. In planning the program educators have social and emotional learning in mind and use their relationships with children to teach (NQS Quality Area 1).

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children highlights the importance of respectful and equitable educator-child relationships. The relationship can have these characteristics only when educators know each child well. Effective planning for each child in relation to their social and emotional learning and their learning in general is only possible when educators know each child well.

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

Preparation for this session

You will need:

- Component 2: Professional Learning Participant Workbook
- Video 4.1: Why is it important to know a child well?
- Video 4.2: How do we get to know the children well?
- Video 4.3: Relationships as the foundation for children’s mental health
- Butcher’s paper
- Markers
Suggestions for how to run this module

1. Talk about ‘Making a difference’ in Module 3
   This guided participants to take notice of a more challenging interaction they’ve had with a child (e.g., they had to stop or redirect a child) and answer some reflective questions about it.

   Discuss the following as a group:
   - What did you notice?
   - What have you learned?
   - What next?
   - How will this affect your practice?

2. Introduce the module to the group
   Module 4 focuses on building relationships as the foundation for children’s learning and development.

   Content includes:
   - a video about the importance of knowing the children you work with really well
   - an activity about how well your team know the children in their care and how they went about getting to know them
   - an activity and a video that look at what it means to be in tune with children
   - a video about how relationships with children support their learning and development
   - a discussion about what the team learned during Module 4.

3. Video 4.1: Why is it important to know a child well?
   Time: 5 mins 3 secs

   This video covers:
   - the importance of knowing children really well
   - the importance of knowing children in the context of their family and community.

   Tips for watching this video
   - There is space for participants to make notes about this video in their Participant Workbook on page 37.
   - Following this video, the team will think about how well they know the children they work with, how they gained this knowledge and the arrangements the service has in place to do this.
4  Activity: How well do we know the children in our service?

This aim of this activity is for participants to reflect individually on how well they know the children at their service and how they gained this knowledge.

Instructions

1  Ask participants to think of a child at the service they think they know really well.

2  Ask participants to go to page 38 of the Participant Workbook and work through the questions in the table with that child in mind.

3  Debrief by coming back together and briefly discussing the following as a group:
   - Were you able to provide responses to all or most of the items for the child you had in mind?
   - How did you gain your knowledge of this child? What were the main strategies that you used?

Tips for this activity

- If participants need some help identifying how they gained knowledge of the child they have in mind, it might be useful for them to think about things like information given on enrolment forms, meeting and talking with different family members, and talking to the child.

- It will probably become clear to participants that they know some of the children at the service really well and others not as well. If this happens, reassure participants that this is common.

- The debrief should be short. It links with the next discussion where the group will explore what systems their service already has in place to help them establish and maintain relationships with children and families.
5 Discussion: Developing relationships

This aim of this discussion is to have the team identify the systems your service already has in place to help them establish and maintain relationships with children and families. Participants will also reflect on what they do individually to establish and maintain these relationships.

Instructions

1. Ask participants to form small groups or pairs (depending on the size of the group). One member should be nominated as scribe.

2. Using butcher’s paper and markers, ask each group to brainstorm and make a list of all the things that the service already has in place to establish and maintain relationships with children and their families.

3. Come back and share the lists as a large group.

4. To conclude this activity, ask participants to individually answer the following questions on page 39 of the Participant Workbook:
   - What do I do to build warm, positive relationships with the children in my group and their families?
   - How do I maintain these relationships?

Tips for this discussion

- If groups find it difficult to identify what the service is already doing to establish and maintain relationships with children and their families, encourage them to think broadly about things like:
  - enrolment forms and information provided by families
  - having one educator allocated as a primary carer for a child
  - encouraging children and families to share news or items from home (e.g., photos from a holiday)
  - ongoing discussions with parents that may be supported through the use of written information or communication books.
5 Discussion: Developing relationships (continued)

- If participants are finding it difficult to identify what they personally do to establish and maintain relationships with children and their families, encourage them to think about things like:
  - spending time ‘being’ with each child
  - having relaxed, two-way interactions with children
  - having ongoing discussions with parents and carers about their child’s unique characteristics (e.g., preferences, tired signals and interests)
  - regularly observing children engaged in different experiences while they’re with different groups.
- This discussion may also result in some ideas about what could be improved or changed at the service. It may be helpful to note down these ideas for Component 2 planning and use the Plan-Do-Review process to develop an Action Plan or Quality Improvement Plan.

6 Video 4.2: How do we get to know the children well?

Time: 6 mins 50 secs

This video covers:
- how to get to know children and use this knowledge to establish relationships with them
- how predictability and consistency support relationships
- what it means to be in tune with a child.

Tips for watching this video
- There is space for participants to make notes about this video in their Participant Workbook on page 40.
- This video links to the next activity, which is about understanding what it is like to be in tune and out of tune with children.
7 Activity: In and out of tune

This aim of this activity is to experience what it means to be in tune or out of tune with another person.

Instructions

Part 1: Being out of tune

1 Define in and out of tune by saying something like:
   “Being in tune is the ability to engage in coordinated interactions with another. It’s about responding in a way that is a ‘fit’ with a particular person. Being ‘out of tune’ is like being out of step with someone – missing each other’s cues and stepping on toes. Siegel (1999) defined ‘attuned’ as including the alignment of states of mind in moments of engagement, during which affect is communicated with facial expression, vocalisation, body gestures and eye contact.” Early Years Learning Framework p.45

2 Divide participants into groups of three (two actors and one observer) and ask participants to choose a role.

3 Ask participants to read and select a scenario from page 41 of the Participant Workbook.

4 Read the following:
   “If you are the child, put yourself in his/her shoes. If you are the adult, imagine you are ‘out of step’ with your partner – you could be distracted, unavailable or misunderstand what the other person wants. Think how you might interact with the other person. For the next minute, I want you both to experience what happens between you. If you are the observer, watch closely and notice what is happening for both individuals.”

5 Debrief: After a minute get everybody to come out of their role and discuss the following:
   - How did you feel as an out of tune adult? As the child?
   - What did you observe? What else could be done to be out of tune?
   - What might the implications of being out of tune be for this relationship? How is each participant likely to respond?
7 Activity: In and out of tune (continued)

Part 2: Being in tune

6 Bring the debrief discussion to a close and get participants to go back into the same group they worked in before.

7 Read the following:

“Now I want you to experience the scenario again, but this time I want the adult to be in tune with the child. You do this by being attentive and available, understanding what the other person wants, and being sensitive to their needs. Think about how you might now interact with this child. If you are the observer, watch quietly again and notice what happens for both individuals.”

8 Debrief: After a minute wrap up the activity and discuss the following:

- How did you feel as an in tune adult?
  As the child?
- Did putting yourself in the child’s shoes help to increase your understanding of what it feels like to be a child in a relationship?
- What can you take from this experience to use in your relationships with children?

9 Summarise the discussion, invite everyone to step out of their role, and conclude the entire activity by saying something like:

“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). Being out of tune is a normal part of relationships, and provides social and emotional learning opportunities for both children and staff such as learning how to manage emotions and how to reconnect and get the relationships back in tune.”

Tip for this activity

- The in and out of tune scenarios are in the Participant Workbook on page 41.
8 **Video 4.3: Relationships as the foundation for children’s mental health**

Time: 9 mins 36 secs

This video covers:
- Relationships between children and educators are a foundation for children’s mental health, now and in the future.
- When children feel safe and secure in their relationships with others they become confident to explore and access opportunities.
- Within a warm, positive relationship, educators are able to directly provide opportunities to support children’s learning and development.

**Tip for watching this video**
- There is space for participants to make notes about this video in the *Participant Workbook* on page 42.

9 **Discussion: Knowing children**

The aim of this discussion is to have participants reflect on what they have learned in Module 4.

**Instructions**

The following questions can be discussed either as a whole group or in smaller groups.

- Think of a time when really knowing a child increased your effectiveness at supporting their learning. How did you use your relationship with the child to support their social and emotional learning?
- In what ways did knowing the child influence your response or decision making?

10 **Introduce and discuss reflections**

Reflecting on new content is a good way to wrap up each module and summarise what has been covered. The following questions can support reflection, although you may wish to add your own to suit your team. Reflective questions can be considered during the module, at the end of the module or at a separate time. Reflective questions can be completed individually, in pairs or as a group.

More information on using reflective questions can be found at the start of this manual on page 5.

- What are the first steps you take in building relationships with children?
10 Introduce and discuss reflections (continued)

- 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?

Tip for this reflection
- Reflective questions are in the Participant Workbook on page 43

11 Making a difference

This section provides an opportunity for participants to connect learning from this module with their daily practice outside of the Professional Learning. Participants are asked to engage with the content between modules through reflection, observation or action. There will be an opportunity to discuss experiences at the start of the following module. More information can be found at the beginning of this manual on page 6.

- 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?

Invite participants to share their thoughts at the next Professional Learning session if they feel comfortable.

Tip
- There is space for participants to record reflections in the Participant Workbook on page 44.
12 Note the readings in You might also be interested in…


13 Planning your next Professional Learning module

Module 5: Curriculum decisions and social and emotional learning is scheduled for:

Date:

Time:

Venue:
Plan for Module 4: Relationships as a foundation for social and emotional learning

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<th>Content</th>
<th>Time allocated</th>
<th>Covered</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review of Module 3 ‘Making a difference’</td>
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<td>Introduction to the module</td>
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Content from previous session to come back to

Total time