

Peter's story



Peter felt a little uncertain as he arrived with his daughter Leena at the kindergarten. It was the first time since he separated from his wife that Leena had stayed at his new house. It was a new experience bringing her to the kindergarten.

As they walked through the door, Leena quickly spotted Hasina, one of the staff members, and ran towards her with her arms outstretched. Hasina smiled warmly as Leena approached and got down on her knees to welcome her. "How are you today Leena?" asked Hasina brightly, "Are you going to tell me all about your stay at your daddy's house?"

Soon Hasina, Leena and Peter were deep in conversation as Leena talked excitedly about her new bedroom and house. Peter smiled to himself. "So this is the Hasina I've been hearing so much about," he thought. He felt happy that his daughter had such a good relationship with someone as caring as Hasina and relieved that she was so welcoming and warm towards him.

Children are building, experiencing and seeing relationships with people as soon as they are born.

Positive relationships play a role in good mental health and wellbeing. They also impact on all aspects of a child's growth and development. Having good relationships with key people is an important part of the early childhood years. Positive relationships help children to develop good social skills and the ability to make and keep friendships. Children also begin developing a positive view of themselves and a sense of what is right and wrong.



Positive relationships are those which are warm, caring, consistent, predictable and open to the other person's needs. They help us to feel safe and secure. When children experience these sorts of relationships they learn to use these skills in their own relationships with others. This then has a positive effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

In an early childhood service, children are part of a 'hub' of relationships between children, families and staff. Together everyone plays an important role in developing positive relationships.

What services could do

Early childhood services help to build positive relationships for children, families and staff in lots of ways including:

- ✦ taking time to develop positive relationships with each child and their family so that everyone feels a sense of belonging and connectedness to the service
- ✦ creating plenty of opportunities for social interactions and social play between children that are fun and promote turn-taking and sharing with others
- ✦ staff joining in children's play as it helps children to learn about social skills
- ✦ sharing with families day-to-day experiences their children have had at the service
- ✦ working closely with other members of staff, sharing ideas, resources and experiences.



What families can do

Families can also help to build positive relationships, for example:

- ▶ be guided by your child's behaviour and interests and encourage their development by reading and sharing stories with them and joining in with their play and social interactions
- ▶ give plenty of encouragement that is specific (e.g. "Well done Philip for sharing with Melissa") and values effort over success (e.g. "Saanjay, you worked really hard on building that castle")
- ▶ create plenty of opportunities for your child to participate in fun and enjoyable experiences with other children
- ▶ make an effort to get to know the staff at the service and let them know you appreciate the care and education they provide, or give them feedback if you think they can do better
- ▶ talk regularly with staff at your service about your child (e.g. how your child has been progressing; what s/he is interested in; how they deal with their emotions)
- ▶ encourage your child to share their home experiences with everyone at the service.

This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The team at KidsMatter Early Childhood also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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