



Transcript for the [video](#):

Building Positive Relationships With Young Children

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Narrator (over music): Building positive, nurturing relationships with the children in your care is the single most critical thing you can do as an early childhood provider. But why is it so important? And what are some of the things you can do to help foster strong, positive relationships with children?

Building Positive Relationships with Young Children (0:30)

Michelle Levy, Connecticut Office of Early Childhood: Relationships are a cornerstone of children’s ability to develop those social skills and those self-regulation skills—the ability to understand their own emotions and respond appropriately to the emotions of others.

Heidi Maderia, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Infant Mental Health: When they are so young, they only function within a relationship. So when that relationship is a quality, responsive, nurturing relationship, a child then feels that sense of security and trust, and they begin to develop a sense of self-esteem, self-regulation; they begin to manage those emotions. And within that relationship, when they feel safe and secure, then they also feel like, “Now I can explore; I can venture out; I can discover what’s over here; I can try new things.” And that exploration is the true piece of learning.

Janette Rivera, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Windham Early Head Start: It’s important to build relationships with children, because they’re with you most of the day. The only way they’re going to get through is bonding with you. Playing with them, just spending that time with them.

Janette sings with baby.

Strategies to Build Positive Relationships (1:45)

Mary Watson Avery: Children really need to feel connected to the people around them. They have to feel understood. One of the questions I pose to caregivers and teachers is what are

your essential messages that you want to be giving to kids? Why are you a teacher in the first place? There are teachers who will say “I want children to feel safe in my classroom;” “I want children to feel loved.” How do the children know it? Well, I greet every single kid in the morning. I am affectionate with kids; I’m sensitive to when they need some encouragement.

Teacher: She will be so happy. I can tell that you’re happy making it for her, too.

Mary Watson Avery, ASPIRE Institute at Wheelock College: Yeah, those are all very concrete ways to get across your message. You’re communicating to children with every piece of how you’re reacting to them and acting with them.

Amy Figueroa, Preschool Teacher, Hartford Women’s League: I definitely think that we always make sure the children know we’re there for them—always acknowledging their actions, their words, paying attention—letting them know that we want to listen to them.

Jacqueline Holmes, Infant Teacher, Hartford Women’s League: I talk to them, all the time, sing for them. When they’re not feeling good, I hold them. Make them feel comfortable when they’re teething or feeling sad. Just nurture them all the time. All the time, like they’re my own kids. And that’s how it feels sometimes, anyways.

Jamie Vallarelli, Kindergarten Teacher, Natchaug Elementary School: So I really try to get to know my students in the first month of school. So I know all of my students’ brother and sister names, all of their pets, and all of their interests, and they really respect me for that.

Responsive Caregiving (3:26)

Heidi Maderia: Responsive caregiving really is responding to the individual needs of each child, thinking about each child as an individual developing on their own trajectory, at their own rate—and you responding to them as they develop.

Teacher: You did it! You cut it in half!

Heidi Maderia: When we’re looking at infants, we’re looking at responding to their cues—how promptly, and how appropriately we’re responding to those cues.

Teacher: You want me to come? Ok.

Heidi Maderia: You can see: how are they are responding when you look at them or you stick out your tongue. With your face, your tone of voice, and you’re singing a song; you are being playful. And show different sorts of feelings and facial expressions to a baby.

Teacher: Boo! Boo!

Heidi Maderia: So all of those are those positive interactions that happen during the daily routine.

Teacher: Numm, numm, numm, numm, numm.

Heidi Maderia: When you are feeding them, when you are diapering them, just really paying attention to... “I’m not feeding them, this is just a task” but thinking about the quality of that relationship and how you’re developing that bond with that child, and that emotional bond then becomes a very strong relationship—and that’s how it develops a secure attachment.

Baby: Ah! Ah!

Teacher: Hi! How are you?

Heather Mulrooney, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Windham Early Head Start: Trust and attachment is a large part of early infancy. You really need to know the child. And that may take some time. It may take going over to them four or five times and they’re not really responding; and then sitting back and saying “Well, let’s try a different strategy.”

Responsive Caregiving in Preschool (5:23)

Heidi Maderia: In preschool, how do you become responsive if you are setting up this curriculum?

Karen: “We are going to help the frogs.”

Heidi Maderia: If you have that every child must sit down and cut today with scissors because you are trying to develop their fine motor skills, you’re really not paying attention to, or responding to, the needs of that child. So it’s about really finding that balance—developing all the skills that you want to see for them to be ready for school, but really responding to what it is that they really like.

Karen DelMastro, Preschool Teacher, Windham Early Childhood Center: Each day I have a plan with what I’m going to do. But sometimes they’ll take it in another direction. And you have to be able to step back and watch what they’re doing. We always need to let children create and do things and take their own interests. Sometimes there are skills that I want children to work on, and they might not be interested in it. Like I might want them to be writing a letter, and they don’t really want to do it at that point, but I know they love sand. So I’ll put out a little sand table and they can make little squiggles and circles in the sand, and they’re developing that fine motor. You can teach through those materials that children are interested in.

Karen: Oh, I think you came up with another way to get the water in there!

Jennifer Wolff, Preschool Teacher, Cook Hill Integrated Preschool: There have been so many days where I sit down and I may think that I have the ideal lesson for circle time, and one key word that you may say in your lesson triggers something else and they go off on their stories. It's important to foster that love and that desire to talk about that, especially when more than one child really wants to talk about that topic.

Girl: And then, and then, when you have to go on a boat, you have to have a life jacket on.

Ashley: You're right. Sounds like you've been on a boat recently. Did you go on a boat recently? Yeah? I thought so.

Ashley Anderson, Preschool Teacher, EASTCONN – Plainfield Head Start: One particular boy in my class loves board games, and whenever I initiate new board games in the classroom I'll specifically say, "Oh Chase, you're going to be so excited today, we have a new board game!" And I can tell that that's what he's going to choose for the day and it gets him excited. And I think it also shows him that I pay attention to what it is that he's interested in.

Ashley: What did you get?

Boy: Six!

Ashley: Six! You didn't even have to count.

Heidi Maderia: You can capitalize on that opportunity as a responsive caregiver to respond to them within what it is that they find joy in.

Boy: I make a star!

Teacher: Oh, I love that! You made a star.

Heidi Maderia: In the long term, this translates into adult relationships—what they're willing to do as far as exploring new things, and thinking about themselves as a lovable person.

MUSIC begins (8:23)

Heidi Maderia: And it's that quality of the relationship that we're looking at.

Janette Rivera: Just understanding who they are is very important.

Jamie Vallarelli: They know that I care about them. I think that's one of the most important things a teacher can do.

Karen DelMastro: Children are interested in what they want to do, and we need to encourage them and support it and just channel it.