



Transcript for the [Video](#):

Reflecting on Our Reactions and Responses to Children's Behavior

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Narrator (over music): Early childhood professionals need to be able to model how to express feelings in appropriate ways. But how can you be an effective model when you're feeling upset or under stress? What are some of the ways you can monitor your own feelings and reactions, and how can you respond calmly to children when you may not feel calm inside?

Ann Gruenberg: When children are having difficulty, it's easy for adults to just take that personally. It's important for teachers not to assume that when a child does something really impulsive, that they're trying to be mean, or that they're doing it to push buttons, that's not really what's going on.

Acknowledging Your Emotions and Hot Buttons (0:54)

Kara Wanzer: One of the things we work with teachers a lot on is how to recognize their own hot buttons. What are those behaviors that drive you crazy?

Ruth Ettenberg Freeman: When this child does this behavior, this is what happens to me, and describe the symptoms, describe what it feels like to get escalated and get aware of that.

Ashley Anderson: When I'm frustrated, I call it my Ball of Rage in my stomach. You know, you're, you're just, they're pushing your buttons and there's nothing you can do that's going to change that at that particular moment.

Ruth Ettenberg Freeman: When you're in an environment where you're in close contact with human beings—especially uninhibited, very expressive, young human beings—that it's normal to feel sad, it's normal to feel despair, it's normal to feel scared and furious and angry.

Ashley Anderson: If I'm feeling that in the classroom, and that's how, internally, I feel, it's going to be projected on them. And that's not fair to them; it's not fair to me; it's not fair to anybody in the room.

Kara Wanzer: That's been a real taboo subject when we think about that with teachers. We shouldn't have these feelings about kids—but the truth is, we're people, too. It's really important that we start to recognize our personal feelings when we're in a relationship with a child.

Jamie Vallarelli: Every teacher has a child that does push their buttons. And I think, you know, those children—they're the children that need you the most, and you have to keep that in mind at all times.

Planning Ahead for Your Response (2:19)

Amy Figueroa, Hartford Women's League: I think teachers can get stressed out at work, sometimes in the classroom can be very busy and hectic.

Ruth Ettenberg Freeman: If your kid's having a meltdown, your brain goes on fire; you feel like it's an emergency. And the adult has to learn how to de-escalate—not just get affected by the child's feelings and react that way.

Teacher: Can you tell me what was happening? Did you want a turn with the flashlight? Yeah, who was using the flashlight?

Boy: Me.

Teacher: You were using it? Ok, well, let's go talk to Sander and say, "Sander, I was using the flashlight."

Ann Gruenberg: A starting point for a lot of people is recognizing that they do have that opportunity, rather than just feeling out of control themselves.

Pat Kitchen: I just got to sit back and watch every now and then, take a breath. And you've got to, for yourself, too, and say, okay, we're not going to explode or anything; let's see what's going on here.

Kara Wanzer: We really talk to teachers about how their personal reaction should not be their professional action.

Girl: Stop it!!!

Boy 1: Stop it.

Girl: Stop it!!

Boy 2: ENOUGH!

Teacher: Oh, wait, hold on, freeze, freeze. Remember this morning we talked about talking to

Hunter? You don't need to yell at him.

Kara Wanzer: That we go from knowing enough about ourselves and what we're experiencing emotionally.

Jamie Vallarelli: Cause a lot of the time it is something that is really bothering them, and is upsetting them. So if you kind of ask and probe a little bit, they are able to express a little bit of what's wrong, and it's easy to talk with them and try to figure out a solution.

Girl: She took my marble when it fell out of my pocket, and I brought it from my house!

Teacher: Your marble? That's ok, I'll get it back for you.

Pat Kitchen: I go for humor. Just go with that, and if they see you laughing, they don't have any choice, you know, they'll start to laugh and giggle. Get everybody in a good mood, and, you know, you can't tell jokes, not with this crowd. You've got to find something silly to do.

Pat: I forgot!

Getting Support from Colleagues and Supervisors (4:30)

Kara Wanzer: So, what we like people to do is put a reflective kind of conversation in place with the colleagues that they work with – that this is difficult for me, so there are times where like, “I'm tagging out now; now I need you to step in.” These are plans that we need to have in place.

Amy Figueroa: We definitely support each other in the classroom. And we also pick up a lot of each other's kind of cues. As teachers, sometimes if one teacher needs to just go out in the hallway, we're really able to do that, and communicate to each other.

Modeling Calm Responses for Children (5:07)

Ashley Anderson: We do a lot of self-speak to the children about it, like, “Wow, I'm really frustrated right now,” and my Teacher Assistant will be like, “Oh Miss Ashley, is there anything I can do to help you?” And we use it as a learning opportunity to mirror to them—first of all, how to support a friend when they're in that place, but then also so that they become aware of how we're feeling.

Kara Wanzer: When we think about what the next steps have to be, we really first have to acknowledge our own feelings. That's what we're asking kids to do is acknowledge how they're feeling and then express it in an appropriate way, so teachers really have to practice those skills, too.

Ashley Anderson: Being able to use those moments as teachable moments with the children so that they can understand, first of all, it's ok to be frustrated. Everybody feels frustrated and upset, or angry at times, but how you handle it, and what you do with it, that's what matters.