Responsive Caregiving as an Effective Practice to Support Children’s Social and Emotional Development

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NCEC/TL

Session
Objectives

At the end of this presentation, you should be able to:

• Identify the strategies children use to connect to other people and learn about their world in the first years of life.

• Summarize the importance of healthy and supportive early relationships and responsive caregiving.

• Describe at least three research-based components of high-quality interactions with children.

Session
Agenda

Here’s what we’re doing today:

1. Young children learn from social interactions with the people around them.

2. Responsive, back-and-forth interactions are key to learning.

3. A deeper look at responsive caregiving as an effective teaching practice.
What Is Responsive Caregiving?

Responsive Caregiving: An Effective Teaching Practice

• Responsive caregiving refers to a parenting, caregiving, and effective teaching practice that is nurturing and responsive to an individual child's temperament and needs.
• Responsive caregiving lets you get to know each individual child, their strengths and challenges, and allows you to customize interactions accordingly.
• Responsive caregiving allows educators to adapt classroom and home activities for children of all abilities and language backgrounds.

Responsive Caregiving: Learning from Families

Observations of children's families can help guide your interactions according to home language, culture, and children's differing abilities.
Responsive Caregiving Essentials

1. Young children learn through social, responsive back-and-forth interactions with other people.

2. Each child has unique needs and preferences: caregivers and teachers can, with attention and reflective practice, be responsive to and build upon each individual child's pattern of development and learning.

3. Because of the social and relationship-based nature of young children's learning and brain development, responsive caregiving supports the foundation for most other learning in young children.

Outcomes of Responsive Caregiving

• Improved relationships and confidence with others
• Improved motivations in academics
• Increased likelihood of completing high school or attending college

Key for outcomes is responsive caregiving early on and consistently

Johnson, Dweck, & Olson, 2007; Johnson et al., 2010; Erikson, Strieby, & Erickson, 1985; Moss & In-Laurent, 2001
Children Learn from Social Interactions

Responsive Caregiving

Forming Emotional Bonds – Essential for Learning

Born Ready to Interact

Meltzoff & Moore, 1977, Science
Learning from Social Interactions – Sharing Attention: Part I

Meltzoff et. al., 2009

Adapted from Brooks & Meltzoff, 2008

Learning from Social Interactions – Sharing Attention: Part II

Number of words spoken

Age

10 mo 14 mo 18 mo 24 mo

20 mo

Average child

Born to Interact – But Familiarity Matters!

- Babies learn through social interactions with others – even strangers.
- However, familiarity matters: babies prefer specific, individual people they have lots of experience with.
- Includes familiar teachers, education staff, and caregivers: importance of continuity of care.
Sharing Attention – In Practice

- Use face-to-face social cues as a guide.
- Point out and label things throughout the day.
- Wait for an infant or toddler to "catch up" so that you can share attention.
- Try following their lead by following their eye gaze or gestures so that they can share attention with you.
- How have you seen eye gaze used? How might you use what you know about sharing attention as a strategy?

Responsive, Back-and-Forth Interactions Are Key to Learning

There Is No Substitute for Human Interaction
There Is No Substitute for Human Interaction

Infants’ Ability to Tell Mandarin Chinese Sounds Apart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6-8 months</th>
<th>10-12 months</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seattle Babies</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese Babies</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
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Exposed To Mandarin

Seattle Babies

Taiwanese Babies

Adapted from Kuhl et al., 2008
Infants’ Ability to Tell Mandarin Chinese Sounds Apart

Responding Contingently Boosts Language Growth

• When infants receive immediate, or contingent feedback to their sounds or actions, babies babble more and babbles become more complex.
• These results suggest that infants that are not yet speaking can learn new sound patterns when adults respond contingently to babbling.
• High-quality interactions should be in-person and contingent to boost learning.

Research to Practice: Learning Happens in Relationships

• Young children learn from social interactions – they notice our speech, gaze, actions, mood, and whether we respond to their behaviors.
• Learning happens in relationships.
• The relationship teachers and other educational staff have with the children in their group is fundamental to a child’s learning.
• Contingent interactions can happen in any situation, even in large group settings like a classroom.
A Deeper Look at Responsive Caregiving as an Effective Teaching Practice

Responsive Caregiving: Responding to the Unique Needs of the Child

• Caregivers who are attuned to child and respond consistently help the child feel safe and supported.
• Education staff can be trained in how to watch and respond to these cues.
• It can take time and experience with an infant to figure out what they need.
• Continuity and consistency in caregiving can build stronger relationships.
Schedules and Routines Help with Learning

- Individualized schedules and routines help children to focus on learning.
- Consistency of the pattern is key.
- How have you used schedules and routines in your work with young children?

Sometimes Babies Just Need a Break!

- Babies have a LOT to learn – and that can be exhausting!
- What signals do babies give to tell you when they need a break?

Reading Cues from Children: “I Need a Break!”
**Not all Stress Is Equal: Mild Stress**

**Tolerable Stress**

**Toxic Stress**

- Toxic stress can occur by experiencing severe and/or chronic stress (especially during childhood) in the absence of protective, adult relationships.
- Results from strong, frequent, and/or prolonged activation of the body's stress-response systems in the absence of the buffering protection of adult support.
- Responsive caregiving creates strong bonds with children, building resilience to toxic stress.
Children Are Resilient

Responsive Caregiving in Practice: New Experiences

Wrap Up: Building a Pattern of Responsiveness

It is impossible to be completely responsive all of the time.

Most important that child has at least one responsive, consistent caregiver that is responsive to their needs most of the time.

An overall responsive, nurturing relationship with an adult teacher, educator, parent, or caregiver that is consistent over time builds a strong relationship between adult and child that has many beneficial outcomes.
Resources

- Introduction to Temperament: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/introduction-temperament
- Individualization – Resources: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/individualization
- Social Emotional Development – Resources: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/social-emotional-development

Thank you!

Please fill out a survey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BabyTalks_11-07-17