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FACT SHEET

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Positive Interactions in Child Care

When childcare workers and children are together, the use of language to communicate is varied. Research suggests that the best adult –child relationships are created by positive communication and interaction. This positive interaction requires a variety of style and behaviour that is appropriate to the developmental skills of the child. The following tips are just a start in this relationship with children. You will know and recognise many, if not all of them. However during the busy day in childcare, adults as well as children often forget to use their words carefully.

Suggested strategies

- **Think before you speak** – *children count on us to make sense of the world*
- **Ensure you have the child's attention** – *get down to the child's eye level*
- **Use words that are appropriate to the child's development** – *make your words simple and clear and say exactly what you mean and be prepared to explain e.g. explaining what "inside voices" mean.*
- **Offer limited choices** – *be prepared to accept what the child chooses*
- **Avoid asking questions to gain a child's understanding** – *asking a child "is that the way we treat our friends?" is really a question that you already know.*
- **Provide the same respect to children as you would to adults** – *children learn from seeing adults doing as they say*
- **Praise children in moderation and only when it is sincere** – *acknowledge the child's attempts e.g. "you have tried very hard at that puzzle" rather than "good boy/girl".*
- **Avoid questions that implies a choice if you don't want to give a choice** – *e.g. Would you like to pack up now? If the child says no then you have to accept that choice.*
- **If children don't comply assume that they have not understood** – *rephrase your sentence.*
- **Encourage infants communication by providing suggested meanings behind the babble** – *"you are crying and want your bottle."*
- **Respond quickly to toddlers and extend their one and two word utterances by adding descriptive words** – *Yes, that is a truck, a **big blue** truck.*
- **Provide warnings and information about what you are doing or want to happen** – *"we are going to the bathroom to wash our hands after you have finished that puzzle."*
- **Ask open ended questions to pre-schoolers** – *"who did you play with in the sandpit this morning?"*
- **Use pictures, labels and signs** – *this assists children with their communication as well as a useful tool for pre-reading skills.*
- **Be aware of your body language-** *when talking to children your body language conveys more of what you really mean than your words.*
- **Be aware of the level and tone of your voice** – *using a soft voice is often more effective in calming a child.*

References:

Mooney C.G. "Use your Words" How teacher talk help children learn. Redleaf Press 2005 USA
Communicating effectively with Children www.extension.missouri.edu

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