Respectful Relationships Education
Birth to Kindergarten

April 2017
Introduction

The Early Years Respectful Relationships package has been developed by the Tasmanian Department of Education and Education and Care Sector representatives. It supports families, educators and other professionals to develop and embed children’s social and emotional learning and wellbeing through their everyday interactions. The package focuses on children from birth to five years in early learning settings and includes references to a range of professional publications and resources to complement the content.

The package is aligned with and underpinned by the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the approved learning frameworks\(^1\). It is designed to support educators in planning and implementing programs that:

- assist children to develop strategies that support a positive sense of identity
- build children’s and families’ understanding of respectful relationships
- support and extend children’s abilities to recognise and manage their emotions
- help children to recognise and respond appropriately to other people’s emotions
- develop each child’s awareness of feeling safe and secure.

The Respectful Relationships package integrates social and emotional learning pedagogy that supports the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Educators’ understanding of social and emotional competencies enables optimal learning environments to be provided for each child and family. The learning environments educators create encourage children and families to explore, solve problems and develop positive relationships. Educators focus on scaffolding children’s learning through play, inquiry led experiences and intentional teaching to encourage children to express, regulate and learn appropriate responses in meaningful ways. Educators support families to reflect on their relationships with their children and consider ways to strengthen this at home.

The EYLF highlights the importance of working in partnership with families to promote consistent messages about respectful behaviour and maintaining supportive, respectful environments that assist children to be safe and protected from harm.

The package highlights educators’ responsibility to model and promote supportive respectful relationships alongside families, as well as to monitor the safety and well-being of children.

Families, carers and staff have shared responsibility for promoting respectful positive relationships with children and within the community. Support for families and carers is recognised as pivotal to a happy and safe childhood.

Important considerations

\(^1\) Approved learning frameworks referred to throughout the document are Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009) and My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (FSAC) (COAG, 2011). Reference to EYLF reflects both approved learning frameworks.
• Educators are aware of mandatory reporting requirements and legal issues in relation to child abuse and neglect
• Early learning settings have processes in place to make sure families are aware of the mandatory reporting requirements for educators
• Protocols, policies and procedures are reviewed in collaboration and clearly communicated to staff and families to ensure the appropriate safety and well-being of children
• Early learning settings support and promote self-care of their staff members
• Early learning settings have processes in place to address, support and promote staff wellbeing
• Educators inform families of services and agencies that provide advice and/or additional support
• Educators examine their own values and beliefs and consider the influence these have on interactions with families and children

Links between the Respectful Relationships Teaching and Learning Package – Early Years and Foundation to Year 12

The Respectful Relationships Package – Early Years and the Foundation to Year 12 Respectful Relationships Teaching and Learning Packages are designed to connect with and complement each other in a similar way to the relationship between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum (Connor, 2012). For example it is highlighted that:

‘Teachers in the early years of school are encouraged to build on what children know and can do, consolidating capabilities for later learning. They gradually introduce the content of the Australian Curriculum as learners demonstrate the ability to access it and they revisit concepts and skills as required to ensure solid foundations for next stage learning’ (Connor, 2012, p.6).

The Respectful Relationships – Early Years Package helps to build the base that supports educators in the formal years of school to develop children’s knowledge, understanding and capabilities in ways that enable them to access the content of the Respectful Relationships Teaching and Learning Package Foundation to Year 12.

Educators are encouraged to use their knowledge and understanding of each child to identify starting points. Resources should be selected in ways that acknowledge and respond to the diverse skills and qualities of individual learners. For example, Prep teachers may choose to use some of the content and strategies from the Respectful Relationships - Early Years Package to help children increase and consolidate their skills and abilities to self regulate. Similarly, there may be times when Kindergarten teachers may access some of the Foundation Stage content of the Respectful Relationships - Primary Years Package. This provides an equitable and respectful platform for all learners and values some of the key concepts presented within the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

‘Children do not magically become different kinds of learners as they move from prior-to-school settings into the first years of school, so there are principles of teaching, learning and provision that apply to educators in both sectors’ (Connor, 2012, p.27).
How to use this resource

The Respectful Relationship Early Years program is divided into three focus areas

Focus Area 1: Developing Respectful Relationships
- Inquiry 1.1: Identity
- Inquiry 1.2: Relationships

Focus Area 2: Emotional Intelligence
- Inquiry 2.1: Recognition of emotions
- Inquiry 2.2: Regulation of emotions

Focus Area 3: Feeling Safe and Secure
- Inquiry 3.1: Protective behaviours
- Inquiry 3.2: Help seeking skills

The package is designed to be used flexibly. It can be worked through sequentially, or particular focus areas may be selected to respond to the needs and interests arising in individual learning settings.

Each Focus Area includes:
1. Overview
2. Learning outcomes
3. Learning and Regulatory Frameworks – including The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), Framework for School Age Care in Australia (FSAC) and the National Quality Standard (NQS)

Each Inquiry includes:
- a. Introduction
- b. Learning intentions (specific skills, knowledge and dispositions for learning in this inquiry)
- c. Reflecting on practice
- d. Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for learning
- e. Examples in practice
- f. Planning cycle
- g. Resources

Early learning settings are encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and practices of inclusive education through respecting diversity and actively considering the diverse interests, strengths, goals and learning needs of all participating children and families (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009).

Importance is placed on educators building their understanding and appreciation of cultural and familial diversity and developing their own cultural competence as emphasised in the EYLF, Australian

Educators are encouraged through the EYLF to develop and promote an increased understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ deep knowledge traditions and holistic worldview and to recognise their place in Australian society as Australia’s oldest living culture (COAG, 2009).
Glossary

**Agency:** being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one’s world (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.45)

**Approved learning frameworks:** include Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (COAG, 2009), the National Quality Standard (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA, 2013) and My Time, Our Place Framework for School Age Care (COAG, 2011)

**Babies:** young children aged 0 -18 months

**Early learning setting:** long day care, occasional care, family day care, multi-purpose Aboriginal Children’s Services, pre-schools and kindergartens, play groups, creches, early intervention settings and similar settings (COAG, 2009, p. 45), as well as Child and Family Centres

**Educators:** early childhood practitioners who work directly with young children in early childhood settings (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.45)

**Families:** a close group of adults and the children they look after. Includes caregivers such as step parents, adoptive parents, grandparents and identified significant others closely connected to children and parents

**Families expecting a baby:** all persons who will parent a child, regardless of conception and birth circumstances, such as blended families, adoption, surrogacy or in-vitro fertilisation

**Intentional teaching:** involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have ‘always’ been done that way (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.45)

**Pre-schoolers:** young children aged 36 – 60 months, including children attending Kindergarten.

**Reflective practice:** a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics, and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision making about children’s learning (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.45).

**Toddlers:** young children aged 18 – 36 months

**Genuine Partnership:** a relationship between families and early childhood educators that is built through trust, valuing each other’s knowledge and contributions, open communication, shared understandings and decision making (Council of Australian Governments, 2009)

**Personal safety network** – an identified plan that includes people, places and actions.

**Play based learning:** A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p.45)
Focus Area 1: Developing respectful relationships

Birth to Kindergarten
Developing respectful relationships overview

Respectful relationships are important for individuals to lead successful and productive lives (Department of Education, 2014). From a base of respectful relationships within our homes, immediate family and friends we can embrace life in ways that empower us to learn, grow and evolve as active citizens in our communities and the wider world (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

When children have positive experiences they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of ‘belonging’. Relationships are the foundations for the construction of identity - ‘Who I am’, ‘how I belong’ and ‘what is my influence?’ (DEEWR, 2009, p. 20).

Building respectful relationships supports children in family violence situations to increase the opportunities for them to successfully seek help and support from trusted adults. The long term community focus on building respectful relationships aims to reduce and break generational cycles of ongoing domestic and family violence situations (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016).

Learning outcomes

Educators: foster respectful relationships and a strong sense of identity through engaging in reflective dialogue with colleagues, families and children to identify, construct and scaffold learning experiences and interactions

Children: develop strong respectful relationships with significant caregivers, educators and peers and form positive self identities

Families: feel valued as their children’s first educators and work with educators in genuine partnerships to develop an understanding of the importance of respectful relationships and a strong sense of identity

Learning and regulatory frameworks

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Framework for School Age Care in Australia (FSAC)

All Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and the FSAC are linked to children developing respectful relationships.

Links to the National Quality Standard (NQS)

All Quality Areas of the NQS support children developing respectful relationships. The following quality areas are particularly supportive to this inquiry.

Quality Area 1 - Educational Program and Practice

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
Inquiry 1.1 - Identity
Introducing the importance of identity

A positive self identity helps shapes a person’s future.

‘Self identity is the concept you develop about yourself that evolves over the course of your life. This may include aspects of your life you have no control over, such as where you grew up, or the colour of your skin, as well as choices you make in life, such as how you spend your time and what you believe’ (Study.com, 2016).

The family and the community strongly influence the development of young children’s self identity. A child’s self identity evolves through relationships with people, places and things and the responses from others (Commonwealth Department of Education, 2009). The interactions and opportunities provided in early learning environments support each child to develop their self identity. It is important to provide opportunities that promote:

- Care, empathy and respect
- Children’s rights
- Gender fairness and respect for each gender
- Cultural competence e.g. cultural and family structure
- Confidence to express feelings and be heard

Learning intentions

- Educators and families will work together in partnership to develop and maintain environments and relationships where positive self identities are fostered

- Educators will intentionally plan opportunities that strengthen each child's sense of who they are and how they belong

Reflective practice

Before exploring the concept of identity in practice, in this inquiry, consider the following questions.

In what ways do you:

- help families develop an awareness and understanding of the effects of stress and abuse on the developing child?
- build families’ capacity to access support in circumstances that may be impacting on their safety and wellbeing?
- build knowledge and understanding of the importance of identity in relation to self, children and families?
- sustain learning environments in which children and families feel safe, secure and supported?
- support children to develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency?
- support children, families and colleagues to interact with others with care, empathy and respect?
- support children, families and educators to develop an understanding of gender equity and self belief and that gender does not define capabilities?
• support children, families and educators to develop an understanding of individual family structures and acceptance of difference?
Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions about identity

Educators’ practice

Educators:
• share aspects of themselves that make them who they are.
• seek to understand families’ perspectives and circumstances and how these influence on the development of their child’s identity.
• respond to children to support the development of secure attachments.
• acknowledge and encourage the development of children’s strengths, interests and abilities to support children’s self identity.
• listen to children and help them listen to others.
• encourage children to be persistent in finding solutions to challenges and problems in ways that are respectful and do not dominate others.
• support children to value and respect themselves and others regardless family structure, gender, ability, cultural practices or ethnicity
• support children to speak up and help others when they observe unfairness (Early Childhood Australia, 2016)

Examples of key observable behaviours - identity

Families expecting a baby:
• are engaged in health and wellbeing practices such as appropriate rest and relaxation, and being mindful of consuming healthy foods and drinks.
• are supported and acknowledged by key companions in the pregnancy.
• are empowered to make key decisions that influence healthy pregnancy, birth, mental health and wellbeing.
• have access to family and community supports.

Babies:
• are supported by familiar adults to build secure attachments.
• are involved in caring interactions with familiar adults in engaging and supportive environments.
• are relaxed and comfortable around familiar adults.

Toddlers:
• are comfortable and confident to play and take on roles not defined by gender.
• are gaining confidence to express themselves and are responded to by adults in a timely and appropriate ways
• are supported by adults who follow their lead in all learning environments.
• are confident to explore their world and return to their caregiver for support when needed.

Pre-schoolers:
• are supported to express themselves, to be assertive and resilient when persisting in challenging circumstances.
• explore aspects of identity, and engage in play opportunities where they learn to value and respect their own and other’s gender in a physically and psychologically safe environment.
• feel listened to and have a sense of equity in their lives.
• establish and maintain respectful and trusting relationships with other children.

Families:
• have the confidence to advocate for themselves and influence what happens in their world.
• develop individual caregiving and parenting strategies that enhance their children’s wellbeing and development.
• respect, celebrate and respond to the unique strengths, interests and personality traits of their children.
• build understanding and respect for their family culture and backgrounds and feel positive about sharing their beliefs and values with their children and others.


Add other examples here:
### Examples in practice - identity

Identity is fostered through supportive and responsive interactions during the day to day opportunities provided in learning environments. While educators plan intentionally, they also seize spontaneous teachable moments in play, routines and everyday experiences to support the development of each child’s identity.

Educators can support learning about developing each child’s identity through everyday practices:

#### Pre-birth

- Educators share information with families about health and wellbeing during pregnancy to support them in making decisions that will give their baby the best possible start in life.  
  *For example*, provide information and support that assists families in accessing additional care and enhances mental and physical health.

#### Babies

- Educators provide experiences that promote interaction in a secure environment to support the development of identity. For example, use mirror play to provide opportunities for self recognition and exploring facial expressions with a supportive adult.  
  - Adults respond to each child’s cues promptly and respectfully to build trusting relationships.
  *For example*, cuddling, smiling, touching and engaging in responsive verbal and non verbal communication.

#### Toddlers

- Educators provide open ended play experiences where staff and families interact with individual children and follow their lead in play. Child led play, supported by a trusted adult, strengthens a child’s sense of agency and the ability to make choices.
  *For example*, provide children with opportunities to imitate, dress up and explore different roles in gender equitable contexts, such as putting clothes in the washing machine or gardening.

#### Pre-schoolers

- Educators provide experiences and environments that foster each child’s sense of belonging, and opportunities to develop their identity and respect for others.
  *For example*, educators invite families and children to contribute photos and stories about their families to be collated in a class album. The album becomes a living interactive document that is accessible to children and families. It enriches everyone’s knowledge and understandings of the individuals and family groupings within the early learning community. This can be further developed through discussions with individuals, in small groups or during whole group meeting times.

#### Families

- Educators support families to celebrate their cultural identities by building connections between families and the early learning setting.
  *For example*, each family shares a simple recipe and a nursery rhyme or song that is special to them, as a way of recognising similarities, differences and building connections across cultures.
Planning cycle

The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to identity. It is designed for educators to work in partnership with families to focus on the strengths, interests and knowledge that effectively support and involve children in their learning and development.
Reflect/review- Principles- Consideration has been given to supporting children to develop respectful relationships that promote an understanding of gender equity. Educators use reflective practice to challenge their own beliefs and values in relation to gender equity, and work collaboratively to support children in non-judgemental ways.

Practices- Consideration has been given to acknowledging and supporting children from a strengths based perspective i.e. embracing children’s current knowledge and understanding, building on from what children ‘can do’. Intentionally teaching through play is the foundation of the learning experiences.

Learning Outcome 1 Children have a strong sense of identity:
- children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities.
- children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Data-from observations, voices of children/parents, photographs, work samples etc.

Educators have noticed a small group of boys and girls dominating particular play spaces. When the boys are in the block area they are telling the girls that they cannot play with the blocks because they are only for boys. When the boys try to join the girls in the home corner the girls have been saying the boys cannot play because the home corner is for girls. During outdoor play time the same small group of children have been observed playing an imaginative game about camping and visiting the beach, together, in the sandpit. They negotiate with each other to share equipment and are observed to laugh and use gestures that appear to indicate that they are enjoying the game.

Analyze- What learning is taking place here?

In both instances, where the boys and girls use gender specific language e.g. “Go away, this space is just for boys/girls”, they are learning that this type of response to each other enables them to maintain control of the desired play space. The children may be drawing on more traditional constructs about play that portray certain toys/play areas are designed for specific genders.

During their play in the sandpit they are learning that they can all successfully play, learn and have fun together.

Plan- What other learning is possible?

Educators plan to spend time with the children in the block and home-corner and provide support through questioning and modelling that helps the children become self-aware of their own and others’ feelings. Educators could explore with children:
- what it feels like to be excluded.
- what everyone enjoys doing in both play spaces.
- ways to include all children regardless of gender.

Educators plan to facilitate an inquiry with children that tunes children into the many roles and experiences enjoyed by both boys, girls, men, women in our worlds. For example:
- looking at the different jobs people do e.g. female/male nurses, female/male builders.
- discussing and exploring our families and the roles that family members take on e.g. mums and dads change nappies, clean and do gardening jobs.

Act do

Educators allocate time during the staff meeting to reflect and discuss their beliefs, values and understandings of supporting children to understand gender equity. They discuss and plan relevant professional learning.

Educators evaluate and adjust the program to allow time for educators to engage with and support play and learning in the block and home corner.

Provide props that support the strengths and interests of boys and girls in play spaces. For example:
- provide a diverse range of dress ups for everyday jobs e.g. fireman, nurse, doctor, builders in the home-corner.
- provide horses, cars, road signs, dolls, scarves, natural materials to the block area.

Early learning setting 3-5 years

Planning cycle example – identity and gender equity

Resources - identity

Circle of Security International
http://circleofsecurityinternational.com/

KidsMatter - Early Childhood

Early Childhood Australia - Start Early Modules

Australian Human Rights Commission

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Body Safety Education Resource Kit
http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk

Childrens Books

Hoberman, M, A, & Boutavant, M 2009, All Kinds of Families, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, USA.
Newman, L, Cornell, L 2015, Heather Has Two Mommies, Candlewick Press, USA.
Oelschlager, V 2010, A Tale of Two Daddies, Vanita Books, USA.
Pessin-Whedbee, B 2016, Who are you? The Kids Guide to Gender Identity, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, Great
Inquiry 1.2 - Relationships

Introducing the importance of relationships

Positive relationships with children and families provide the foundation for all learning. Educators who are responsive and respectful promote children’s sense of security, belonging and strengthen families trust (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

‘Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support can assist children to develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others. They also help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and team work.’ (COAG, 2009, p.12)

Learning intentions

- Educators will work in partnership with families and children to explore, understand and strengthen the relationships they have.
- Educators will engage in critical reflection individually and collaboratively to build and promote a culture of respect within early childhood settings and their local communities.

Reflective practice

Before exploring relationships in practice, consider the following questions.

In what ways do you:

- reflect on, and consider changing the way you work with or interact with families?
- reflect on your personal values and beliefs and the influence these have on your interactions with families?
- provide opportunities for educators and families to increase their understanding of the importance of bonding and attachment?
- support yourself, families and colleagues to be confident in helping children develop trusting relationships with significant others?
- support yourself, children, families and colleagues to further develop an understanding of empathy?
- support yourself, families and colleagues to respond to children’s verbal and non verbal cues respectfully, sensitively and promptly?
- model reaching peaceful resolutions to conflicts with children, families and colleagues supporting everyone to discuss differences of opinion respectfully?
- promote two way turn taking conversations with families, educators and children?
Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for relationships

**Educators’ practice**

Educators:
- initiate and maintain interactions and conversations with families.
- are active participants in their own learning about relationships and encourage families to be involved in their child’s learning journey.
- support families to understand their own relationships.
- support children to understand how to build and maintain positive relationships.
- intentionally support others to increase their capacity to enhance children’s skills, knowledge and understanding of relationships.
- build their own and others’ understanding of developing and sustaining positive relationships.

**Examples of key observable behaviours - relationships**

**Families expecting a baby:**
- build relationships where they can share their experiences and emotions in relation to the pregnancy.
- have the assistance of a partner or trusted friend and access to community services.
- are provided information and ways to link with agencies and services.

**Babies:**
- respond to faces they know with pleasure and express sadness when separated from familiar caregivers.
- show enjoyment in receiving cuddles and emotional attachment to family members.
- use non verbal and verbal utterances to express themselves.

**Toddlers:**
- begin to show signs of empathy and care for others.
- seek reassurance and comfort from a trusted adult.
- are confident exploring their environment and enjoy interacting with known adults.
- enjoy watching and imitating the play of other children.

**Pre-schoolers:**
- begin to recognise feelings and explore ways to express their feelings.
- enjoy the company of other children, but at times find it hard to share or take turns.
- continue to need adult comfort and reassurance at times.
Families

- respond in a supportive way to children’s needs using kind words and gestures.
- feel supported in their roles as their children’s educators.
- develop strong positive relationships with their children and educators to enhance their wellbeing.
- support their child’s learning by following their lead as they explore their world.


Add other examples here:
Examples of relationships in practice

Positive relationships are built over time through ongoing genuine and respectful interactions where individuals feel valued, listened to and comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas. Building such relationships with families enables two way communication that provides the opportunity for ongoing trusting conversations (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

Educators can support learning about relationships through everyday practice:

Pre-birth

- Educators share information with families about the importance of supportive relationships and family wellbeing during pregnancy to foster the best possible start for their baby.

  For example, provide information and support that assists families to access additional support networks.

Babies

- Educators provide environments that strengthen the attachment between families, caregivers and children. Warmth and affection in early relationships provides protection for babies from the bio-chemical effects of stress. (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

  For example, provide opportunities for families and their babies to engage in rhymes that involve face-to-face interaction and closeness such as Round and Round the Garden, Ring a Ring a Rosie, Hush Little Baby.

Toddlers

- Educators provide an environment where respectful, reciprocal and responsive interactions are modelled so that families and children feel secure and supported.

  For example, educators and families provide materials and toys such as farm animals and blocks to support children’s imaginary play and help them to explore and understand their worlds. They follow their children’s lead as they play and imagine with the toys. They may copy the child moving the cow across the paddock and imitate the sounds a cow makes.

Pre-schoolers

- Educators provide environments that support the ongoing development of respectful relationships. Positive social values and behaviours such as empathy, inclusion, sharing, cooperation and helping other people can be explored.

  For example, educators and families support children in the care of a classroom pet. This provides a context to develop empathy for the needs of the pet, and social skills such as turn taking in caring for the pet.

Families

- Educators provide a comfortable and welcoming environment that promotes positive and respectful interactions between families, educators and children.

  For example, educators provide comfortable adult seating and access to tea and coffee, which invites families to relax, interact with others and experience a sense of belonging.

Planning cycle – The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to relationships. When using the planning cycle it is important to remember that a true understanding of a child’s social competence is best gained through observation during play. This can allow educators to tune in to ‘what children can do’ and ‘what might be next’ in their learning journey (Mathieson & Raban, 2013).
Reflect/review
Principles
Consideration has been given to the importance of attachment between babies and their caregivers as a way to promote healthy relationships. Educators use ongoing reflective practice and professional inquiry to examine and develop their practice.
Practices
Intentional teaching practice guides educators’ engagement with families to actively develop their relationship with their child.
Learning Outcome 1 Children have a strong sense of identity:
  • children feel safe secure and supported.
  • children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Data - from observations, voices of children/parents, photographs, work samples etc.
During a planning meeting educators discuss their concerns regarding a parent and their young baby. The baby is the family’s first child and they attend the early learning setting one day per week. The baby is always dressed smartly and the parent speaks proudly about the baby and becoming a new parent. The baby has a quiet nature and doesn’t appear to request a lot of attention through sounds and gestures. The parent often chooses to leave the baby in a space by themselves where they have access to toys away from the other children. The parent doesn’t usually interact much with the baby and is very proud that the child does not demand attention. The parent reports that when they are at home they try not to pick the baby up too often because they don’t want to spoil them.

Analyse - What learning is taking place here?
The educators are learning that they have a proud new parent who may not be aware of the importance of interacting with their child to develop relationships and strengthen attachments.
The parent is learning that their baby appears content to spend long periods of time alone without demanding their attention.
The parent may be imitating their parenting style on their own experiences as a child or other parents they know.

Plan- What other learning is possible?
Educators plan to spend time with the parent and baby getting to know each other and develop trusting relationships.
Educators plan to comment on what the baby does during play times and encourage the parent to watch and wonder about their baby’s play. During this time and as appropriate, educators sensitively introduce the parent to key concepts around bonding and attachment. This would include promoting healthy development and reducing stress through:
  • serve and return two way communication.
  • responding promptly to the baby’s gestures and cues.
  • predictable warm and affectionate responses.

Educators plan to build their understanding of bonding and attachment through professional inquiry and research.
Educators plan to practice respectful and sensitive dialogue with colleagues through role play to support their conversations with families. Colleagues provide feedback to each other that supports growth and the development of skills in talking with parents.

Act do
Identify the most suitable staff member to focus on building a trusting relationship with the parent.

Educators work collaboratively to enable the identified staff member to spend sufficient time each week developing a strong relationship with the parent.

Provide a welcoming play space for babies who visit the centre that includes a comfortable seat for parents to sit close by.

Educators intentionally and respectfully talk and share information with parents about bonding and attachment. The educators encourage parents to support their baby’s development through modelling:
  • responsive two way interactions with babies.
  • tuning into babies gestures and cues.
  • predictable caring responses.

Early childhood settings-Babies
0-6months

Planning cycle practice example – responsive relationships
Include a blank planning cycle template

Resources - Relationships

Early Childhood Australia: Start Early Modules

Kids Matter Early Childhood

Raising Children’s Network
http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/child_development_relationships.html

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

Body Safety Education Resource Kit
http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk

Childrens Books


Focus Area 2:
Emotional intelligence

Birth to Kindergarten
Emotional intelligence overview

The period of early childhood involves the development of social and emotional competencies that contribute to children’s overall health and wellbeing. Within these competency areas, children develop skills in self-awareness, self-regulation, relationship building and responsible decision making. The growth of these competencies involves the process of children developing skills to understand and manage emotions, demonstrate empathy, make decisions and establish positive relationships with others (California Department of Education, 2016, Huit & Dawson, 2011).

Research by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007) reviews the impact stress and high levels of cortisol have on the developing brain. The long term effects elevated cortisol has on neural circuits involved in memory and emotion can impair neural connections in the brain responsible for high order skills. These findings demonstrate that emotional wellbeing and social competence provide a strong foundation for brain development and the development of secure relationships in early childhood experiences (Winter, 2010).

Children experiencing family violence and trauma typically exhibit extreme emotional responses during their daily lives. This can be a key indicator in identifying children who could benefit from additional support in processing and regulating their emotions. Working with children to express a healthy range of emotions, in a safe environment, can be a key driver in supporting children’s wellbeing, and in helping the healing process for those who have experienced trauma (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010, Child Safety Commissioner, 2009).

Learning outcomes

**Educators:** engage in conversations with colleagues, families and children to provide learning experiences and interactions that promote the development of emotional intelligence, including self awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, recognizing emotions in others and social skills (Goleman, 2009).

**Children:** develop a strong sense of wellbeing and build their emotional competencies through the interactions and experiences they have with trusted adults and other children.

**Families:** build an understanding of the importance of nurturing their child’s wellbeing and capacity to support their child’s social and emotional development.

Learning and regulatory frameworks links

**The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Framework for School Age Care in Australia (FSAC)**

Recognising Emotions is relevant for all Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and FSAC, and is particularly addressed in:

Learning Outcome 1 - Children have a strong sense of identity

Learning Outcome 2 - Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Learning Outcome 5 - Children are effective communicators

**Relevant links to the National Quality Standard**

Quality Area 1 - Educational Program and Practice

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children
Inquiry 2.1 - Recognising Emotions

Introducing the importance of recognising emotions

Self-awareness refers to a child’s ability to identify and recognise emotions, personal interests and strengths (CASEL, 2016). Families and educators support children to develop the skills of self-awareness through a range of strategies, such as mirroring appropriate behaviours through repeating and practising the actions of others. The relationships children develop through positive experiences contribute to their sense of self, confidence and understanding of how to interact with others. (Bowlby, 1982).

The ability to recognise their own and others’ emotions provides children with signals to seek help and safety in situations of potential risk.

Learning intentions

- Educators will use intentional teaching and resources such as books, felt boards, songs, rhymes and imaginative play scenarios to extend children’s understandings of friendships and emotions.
- Educators will work in partnership with families to support young children to recognise their emotions and to explore appropriate ways to express themselves.

Reflective practice

Before exploring the concept of recognising emotions in practice, in this inquiry, consider the following questions.

In what ways do you:

- use empathy to listen to and support children when they express their emotions and reassure them that it is normal to express a range of emotions?
- support children, families and colleagues to listen, use language to express and understand the emotions of others and themselves constructively and with confidence?
- support children, families and colleagues to show kindness and compassion to each other?
- support children, families and colleagues to communicate feelings of inequity and encourage mutual respect for each other?
- respect families’ privacy, their values and beliefs about parenting and child rearing, whilst ensuring children’s health and safety is maintained?
- support children, families, and colleagues to access a range of supports to maintain their health and safety?
Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for recognising emotions
**Educators’ practice**

Educators:

- develop a deep understanding of each child through conversations with the family.
- listen and respond to children’s verbal and non-verbal cues to offer assistance in ways that respectfully support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
- use intentional teaching and descriptive language to extend children’s understandings of ways to express and understand different emotions.
- use knowledge about each child to guide stepping in and out of children’s play to recognise, acknowledge and validate children’s emotional responses to situations, and to discuss these feelings with them.
- build children’s, families’ and colleagues’ understandings of friendships, and explore feelings and emotions as friendships change and evolve.
- seek support and work collaboratively to maintain their own regulation in the early childhood setting.
- provide opportunities for children to make decisions about rules, expectations and outcomes in relation to their own and others’ behaviour.
- collaborate with families to share a consistent responses to children’s emotions across learning environments.

**Examples of key observable behaviours - recognising emotions**

**Families expecting a baby:**

- are aware of the influence their emotions and stress levels have on the developing baby.
- seek help and support from other services during the pregnancy.

**Babies:**

- express feelings of emotional security through bonding and attachment with their caregivers e.g. cuddles, smiles, and other responsive interactions.
- express needs through verbal and non-verbal communication and respond to care e.g. the baby becomes calm when picked up

**Toddlers:**

- begin to play co-operatively with others.
- demonstrate age appropriate anxiety when separating from significant people, experiencing tiredness or frustration, and seeking comfort when upset or afraid.
- take cues from caregivers regarding attitude to a stranger.
- begin to assist another in distress by patting, making sympathetic noises or offering material objects.
- demonstrate feelings of security and confidence by trying new things, and seeking appropriate support from peers and adults.

**Pre-schoolers:**

- use words to express their feelings in a variety of everyday contexts.
- enjoy playing with other children and recognise when someone is hurt or sad, and offer comfort.
- occasionally have emotional outbursts in response to overwhelming emotions.
• enjoy giving and receiving affection from families.
• begin to understand that others may react to situations in ways that are different to their own responses.

**Families**
• support their children to recognise and manage their emotions when responding to children’s cues.
• reflect on their own behaviour and emotions and how these influence their reactions and responses to their children in everyday situations.
• have sensitive, honest and open conversations with trusted friends and professionals regarding their children’s mental health and wellbeing.


**Add other examples here:**
Examples of recognising emotions in practice

Children’s ability to recognise their own, and others emotions, enhances their capacity to interact successfully. Early childhood settings provide a safe environment for children to develop their awareness of emotional feelings and explore ways of expressing these emotions.

Educators and families play a pivotal role in supporting children in learning to self regulate.

Educators can support learning about emotions through their everyday practice:

Pre Birth

- Educators share information with families expecting a baby about the influence of stress and anxiety on the developing baby and the importance of seeking support if they require additional help.

  *For example*, families expecting a baby having conversations with educators that are open, honest and respectful through providing opportunities for the family to talk with the Child Health Nurse, or other services.

Babies

- Adults respond in a caring, timely way that recognises babies’ verbal and non-verbal signals.

  *For example*, early learning settings provide a private, comfortable space for feed times that support families to respond to their babies’ hunger cues. Educators support the parent by checking if there is anything they require.

Toddlers

- Educators and families provide a safe environment for children to explore their world and develop abilities to recognise their emotions through interactions with peers and caring adults.

  *For example*, educators and families providing support to a child who is upset because she wants to join in the sandpit play but there are not enough spades. The caring adult talks to the child about how she is feeling and then suggests possible ways to solve the problem such as taking the child to the shed to find another tool to dig with.

Pre-schoolers

- Educators and families support children when they experience separation anxiety. The adults reassure distressed children that what they are feeling is natural and that they are safe.

  *For example*, families plan to stay for fifteen minutes when dropping their child at an early learning setting. They explain to the child that there will be time to read a story or do a puzzle before they leave. Consistent reassurance and implementation of the leaving routine at drop off time will help the child feel less anxious over time, and to adjust to the separation in a positive way.

Families

- Adults support children in self regulating their behaviour by providing the words to describe the emotion the child is showing. They acknowledge the children’s feelings and provide support to help them self-regulate.

  *For example*, families acknowledge their child’s feelings of frustration and boredom when shopping. They talk to the child about how they are feeling and how they can be involved such as asking the child to find 2 lemons and place them in the trolley, letting the child choose the bread, and encouraging them to read a pictorial shopping list.

Planning cycle – The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to recognising emotions. When using the planning cycle it is important to remember that a true understanding of a child’s social competence is best gained through
observation during play. This can allow educators to tune in to ‘what children can do’ and ‘what might be next’ in their learning journey (Mathieson & Raban, 2013).
Reflect/review

**Principles**—Educators use reflective practice and work in genuine partnership with families to provide a secure base and consistent emotional support for children’s learning and development.

**Practices**—Educators use intentional teaching practices to support children’s emotional learning through play and interactions.

**Outcome 3** Children have a strong sense of wellbeing:

- Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing.

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Data – from observations, voices of children/parents, photographs, work samples etc.

Ava and Morag are both nearly three years old and love to spend time in the home corner. They love to pretend to cook and serve imaginary meals to each other. Their parents and educators have recently noticed that their game is beginning to include some rules e.g. items needing to be placed in certain places and there are specific sequences to the play scenario. Morag and Ava have been getting very frustrated with each other about sharing the toys and disagree about the play scenario. Yesterday they both became very distressed, crying and grabbing toys from each other when they both wanted to be the cook. Ava and Morag’s parent reports similar patterns in their play outside of the early learning setting. They would like some advice about supporting the girls’ play and helping the girls maintain their friendship.

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Analyse – What learning is taking place here?

Ava and Morag’s play is becoming more complex and they are beginning to learn and notice that other people can have different thoughts and ideas.

They are developing their independence and learning to be assertive. They are using emotions and gestures to try and have their needs met.

The adults are learning that the girls require support and that gentle adult guidance would help them to learn to recognise their own and each other’s emotions, and negotiate their desired play sequences together.

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Early learning setting – Toddlers

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Plan – What other learning is possible?

Educators plan to spend time with the girls in the home corner, intentionally drawing the girls attention to their body language and facial expressions as they play, to help them begin to identify each other’s feelings. Educators model a range of expressions and language that identify emotions as they play with the girls in the home corner.

Educators plan to use comments, questions and resources that support the recognition of emotions. For example, ‘Can you see how Ava’s lips are shaking and she has tears in her eyes? I think she is feeling sad’.

Educators plan to talk with families to develop a shared understanding and consistent strategies that help the girls to learn about each other’s emotions.

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Act do

Educators will:

- use critical reflection and appropriate resources to explore effective strategies in supporting the girls.
- organise the day to ensure there is sufficient time to support Ava and Morag’s play in the home corner.
- make time to meet with Ava and Morag’s parents to share understandings about the girls play and discuss strategies that will support the girls learning at home and in the early learning setting.
- provide experiences using felt story boards and storybooks that explore emotions in everyday contexts for children.
Include a blank planning cycle template

**Resources - recognising emotions**

The Centre on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Vanderbilt University

[http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu)

**Body Safety Education Resource Kit**
[http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk](http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk)

**Children’s Books**

Inquiry 2.2 Regulating emotions

Introducing the importance of regulating emotions

Regulation of emotions

To use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour and to manage or to adjust emotions to adapt environments or to achieve goals (Andrew Coleman, 2008).

Self-regulation refers to children’s ability to manage their own behaviour, and monitor and control impulses, emotions, or thoughts, and change them in accordance with the situation (Cook, 2014). Families and educators support children to develop self-regulation strategies through intentional planning, reflecting and managing the environment. Educators and other professionals assist children’s individual development by providing learning environments for children to practise self regulation. In early learning settings experiences that promote self regulation are child centred and inquiry based. The effects of self actualisation needs proposed by Maslow (1962) highlight the role educators and families have as facilitators of children’s skills to contribute to success at school, work and community life.

Learning intentions

- Educators will develop programs and practices that provide opportunities and experiences for children to learn and develop self regulation skills through routines, physical play experiences and responsive relationships.
- Educators will reflect with children, families and colleagues to build understanding of themselves and others, supporting everyone’s self regulation and making adjustments that accommodate individual differences and stages of development.

Reflective practice

Before exploring regulation of emotions in practice, in this inquiry, consider the following questions. In what ways do you:

- consider how your beliefs and attitudes influence the ways in which you guide children’s behaviour?
- respond to children in a fair and consistent way that models appropriate responses to their behaviours and emotions in everyday contexts?
- respectfully manage situations where you experience challenges in relation to guiding the behaviour of a child or group of children?
- support children to express a wide range of emotions, thoughts and views with purpose and confidence?
- talk with children about the outcomes of their actions and the rules and reasons for these?
- support children to remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear?
- use your knowledge of individual children’s personalities to consistently guide their behaviours in strength based ways that focus on self regulation, self esteem and friendships?
- work with families and other professionals to develop behaviour management strategies that are tailored for individual children?
• seek additional support and advice from other professionals to gather strategies that assist children to regulate their emotions.
• seek to understand families’ differing expectations for their children’s behaviour and develop shared understandings and consistent responses?
Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for regulating emotions

Educators’ practice

Educators:

• in partnership with families provide children with time, support, strategies and options to help them understand their own and others’ emotions, learn to respond appropriately and manage/resolve emotions effectively

• model language that children can use to express themselves, such as ‘When I feel angry, I want to go outside and stamp my feet’ and provide positive reinforcement when children identify their emotions and respond appropriately

• use intentional teaching and realistic behavioural expectations to extend children’s understandings of fairness, rights, equity and social justice

• provide differentiated learning experiences with appropriate levels of cognitive and physical challenge for children to solve problems, overcome difficulties, experience success and at times experience failure, in a supportive environment

• are intentional and purposeful when designing and setting up the environment and experiences to encourage children’s collaborative play opportunities, providing areas for children to be by themselves and organised to minimise potential conflicts. For example, by positioning the quiet experiences, such as the literacy corner, away from more physical activities, such as the blocks and building area

• allocate time within the program for children to engage in physical and quieter activities that encourage self reflection and self regulation, for example sensory play experiences, jumping, or listening to music

Examples of key observable behaviours - regulating emotions

Families expecting a baby:

• understand the importance of their own self regulation and the influence maternal behaviours have on the emotional wellbeing of the developing baby and are supported in developing realistic expectations of parenting

Babies:

• are supported by educators and families to settle into the early learning setting each day. 

• are comforted and reassured when experiencing unfamiliar routines, new people or new places

Toddlers:

• build their understanding of how they feel and use language to label their emotions through the support of caring adults

• are supported to be playful and respond positively to others

• try new things, take on new challenges and try to do things for themselves

Pre-schoolers:

• think things through before acting and frequently control their impulses.

• are able to start or stop doing something even if they do not wish to do so and talk themselves through difficult situations

• wait for their turn at an activity, routine or favourite experience
• help other people with tasks and show empathy towards others.

Families:

• acknowledge children’s positive choices to manage their own behaviour.
• work alongside educators to communicate, share and establish consistent practices to support individual children’s behaviour.


Add other examples here:
Examples of regulating emotions in practice

Studies show that self regulation lays the foundation for a child’s long term physical, psychological, behavioural and educational wellbeing (Shanker, 2012, cited in Shanker 2013, p.21). Opportunities provided in early years settings can assist a child’s ability to self regulate, to deal with a stress or challenge and recover. Early years settings also provide an opportunity to support families in deepening their understanding of self regulation. (Shanker, 2013).

Educators can support learning about regulating emotions through everyday practice:

Pre-birth

- Educators encourage families expecting a baby, to take time out for themselves. Self care assists in reducing stress and supports providing a calm environment for the developing baby.

  For example, expectant mothers practise self care by going for a walk, a swim, a massage or reading a book.

Babies

Educators work in partnership with families to discuss how predictable routines can support children’s development of self regulation.

  For example, families establish a predictable, workable routine in preparing their child for bed using regular steps such as bath time, teeth cleaning, story time, bed time, sleep.

Toddlers

- Educators talk with families about sensory play and how it can help children manage their emotions.

  For example, Children help to fill the tub with warm, bubbly water, bathing the dolly, enjoying the sensation of the warm water and squeezing the sponge.

Pre-schoolers

- Educators acknowledge and provide for each child’s need for physical activity as part of healthy development. This includes times when children find it hard to focus and experience emotions such as frustration and anger.

  For example, Educators provide children with opportunities to move and interact within small and whole group learning experiences such as participating in a related music and movement activity after listening to a story and before settling for a discussion.

Families

- Educators and families discuss children’s behaviour and develop an understanding that tantrums and emotional outbursts are a part of children’s early development. Educators support families’ awareness of the elements that affect their child’s regulation. They explore strategies that support children’s self regulation that may include things that activate or help calm their children in everyday contexts.

  For example, families and educators provide children with objects or materials to squeeze to help them be calm and regulate at times when they need to concentrate and attend to learning experiences such as squeezing playdough while listening to a story.

Planning cycle – The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to the regulation of emotions. When using the planning cycle it is important to remember that a true understanding of a child’s social competence is best gained through
observation during play. This can allow educators to tune in to ‘what children can do’ and ‘what might be next’ in their learning journey (Mathieson & Raban, 2013).
Reflect/review

**Principles** - The educator and parent work in partnership to share insights and perspectives about John. They make joint decisions about the best ways to support his learning and development.

**Practices** - A holistic approach guides John’s mother and his educators when planning which strategies will best support John in his development of self-regulation.

**Learning Outcome** - Outcome 3: Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing

- Children show an increasing capacity to understand, self-regulate and manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others.

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Data

John is 3 1/2 years old. His family day care educator has noticed that he has been recently displaying varying levels of self-regulation. When he arrives in the morning he appears tired, quiet and withdrawn. He doesn't want to play with the other children. At different times through the day he becomes very energetic and runs through the house, using a loud voice, as he crashes his favourite car into people and objects in his pathway. He laughs and runs away when his educator tries to redirect his play and help him calm. His mum has talked to his educator about her concerns regarding his behaviours. She feels he doesn't listen to her and that she is not easily able to go to places like the supermarket.

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Plan

Educators plan to talk with John’s mother to develop a shared understanding of his behaviours and explore why he may be finding it difficult to regulate his behaviours.

Educators and John’s mother plan to investigate strategies that may support him to regulate his behaviours at family day care and home. They consider his developing self-regulation and think about supports that will help him to activate and calm as required. For example:

- sensory supports like time on the trampoline.
- physical supports like regular timing of indoor and outdoor play.
- emotional supports like regular 1:1 play experiences.
- consistent routines like sleep and meal times.

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Act do

The educator to arrange times to speak with John’s mother that will allow them to talk privately.

The educator to seek professional support through her family day care scheme for advice on strategies and supports, if required, in consultation with John’s mother.

Adults will provide consistent routines at home and family day care that are predictable and give John balanced opportunities for quiet and physical play.

Adults will use strategies that help John regulate his behaviours in ways that are safe and don’t interfere with others e.g. when he wants to run, use loud voices and crash toys he will be supported to play outdoors and be provided appropriate experiences to satisfy his urges.

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Analyse - What learning is happening here?

The adults are learning that John is displaying a range of levels of self-regulation. He is sometimes under-aroused and sometimes over-aroused.

John may be learning that his energetic and loud play gains him the attention of adults.

The educators are developing an understanding of John’s daily life with his mum and some of the challenges that they both experience.
Include a blank planning cycle template

Resources - regulating emotions

Kids Matter Early Childhood

Body Safety Education Resource Kit
http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk

Children’s Books


Focus Area 3:
Feeling safe and secure
Feeling safe and secure overview

Providing an awareness and understanding of protective behaviours supports educators, families and children to develop everyday skills and help seeking strategies that keep them safe. Intentionally teaching age appropriate help seeking strategies in a safe environment supports children to feel confident in managing challenging situations.

All children have the right to feel physically and psychologically safe at all times (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, 1996). Raising awareness develops capacity in the family and community to prevent episodes of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Educators, families and communities play a role in protecting children of all ages (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

The attitudes families and educators have towards sexuality, including religious beliefs, cultural background and personal feelings, affect their responses to children’s sexual behaviour. Children learn from their past experiences and what they see and hear. Over recent years children have been exposed to an increase in sexualized images in the media and on television, which may influence their learning about sexual behaviour (Protective Behaviours Consultancy Group of NSW, 2014).

*Children who have been taught protective behaviours are more likely to be able to discern threats to their safety and more likely to suggest using personal safety strategies than comparison children* (Johnson, 1985, cited in Protective Behaviours (WA), 2016).

Learning outcomes

**Educators:** engage in critical reflection individually and in collaboration with colleagues and families to build and promote a culture of safety, within early childhood settings and their communities.

**Children:** develop an understanding of safe and unsafe feelings and recognise body signals that are triggered by these feelings.

Children develop an understanding of a personal safety network and how this may be used to keep them safe.

**Families:** work in partnership with educators to explore and understand safe and unsafe situations children may encounter, including family violence, or abuse, and support children to develop protective behaviours.

Learning and regulatory frameworks links

**The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Framework for School Age Care in Australia (FSAC)**

Feeling safe and secure is relevant for all Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and FSAC, and is particularly addressed in:

- **Outcome 1** Children have a strong sense of identity
- **Outcome 3** Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- **Outcome 5** Children are effective communicators

**Relevant links to the National Quality Standard**

Feeling safe and secure is relevant for all the standards, and is particularly addressed in:
Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety
Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children
Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
Inquiry 3.1 Protective Behaviours

Introducing the importance of protective behaviours

‘Protecting children from harm is a responsibility shared by the family, the general community, community agencies and professionals working with children’ (Royal Children’s Hospital Safety Centre, 2009, p84).

From a young age children are able to recognise when they feel sad or scared. It is important that as they begin to understand their feelings, body reactions (butterflies), and name their body parts that conversations about keeping safe occur (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

Developing a child’s protective behaviour skills provides them with strategies that can help them to be assertive and look after themselves in unsafe situations such as child abuse and family violence (Daniel Morcombe Foundation, 2016).

‘One of the signs of child sexual abuse is sexualised play. On the other hand, some forms of children’s sexual interest are normal and healthy as they explore and learn about how their bodies work… The distinction between unhealthy and healthy sexual play rests on its context and content… (Porter, 2008, p.180)’.

It is important for early learning settings to build their knowledge and understanding of normal and healthy sexual development in the early years. This will support adults in knowing when it is appropriate to peacefully set boundaries and support children to change the focus of their play. When necessary educators seek further support and enact mandatory reporting processes (Porter, 2008).

Further information about children’s sexual development is provided in the resources section of this inquiry.

Learning intentions

- Educators will support children to develop an understanding of feeling safe and unsafe.
- Educators will work with families and children to explore and develop safety networks.
- Educators will work with children and their families in knowing who to turn to, or what to do if they do not feel safe.
- Educators and families will help children to understand that their bodies belong to them (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2009).

Reflective practice

Before exploring protective behaviour in practice, in this inquiry, consider the following questions.

In what ways do you:

- provide opportunities to take risks that are developmentally appropriate and enable children to experience safe and unsafe feelings in a secure environment?
- help children to recognise the signals within their bodies when they are feeling safe and unsafe?
• help children to identify the people they can trust as part of their safety network?

• help children know who to turn to, or what to do if they do not feel safe?

• support children to feel confident to talk about concerns and to know they will be listened to and not blamed?

• work with families in teaching children about their bodies, including teaching the correct names of body parts and that their bodies belongs to them?

• reflect on our work with children, families colleagues in relation to building our knowledge and understanding of a child’s healthy sexual development?

• develop strategies and supports to guide conversations in relation to behaviours that influence healthy sexual development?

• provide support to children, families and colleagues in response to a situation where an unsafe behaviour has impacted on a child?
## Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for protective behaviours

### Educators’ practice

**Educators:**

- support families to understand children’s healthy sexual/personal development.
- talk with families and children about feelings and emotions that provoke sadness, fear and a sense of safety.
- work with children and families to understand the importance of personal boundaries and developing ways to be assertive and resilient in keeping themselves safe.
- build families’ understanding of the importance of using correct names for body parts.
- support families and children to identify their trusted adults and develop safety networks that include a plan of action when they feel unsafe.
- respond sensitively and appropriately to all behaviours.

### Examples of key observable behaviours - protective behaviours

#### Families expecting a baby:

- connect securely with trusted adults to help them keep safe.
- access services to help them be safe and address challenges.

#### Babies:

- express their emotions freely.
- seek comfort from trusted adults.

#### Toddlers:

- demonstrate healthy sexual behaviours that are spontaneous, curious and easily recognised and redirected if necessary e.g. wanting to touch other children’s genitals or enjoying being nude.
- demonstrate feelings in relation to feeling safe or unsafe such as children verbalising their fear of going down a slide
- seek out trusted adults when they need support.
- use the correct anatomical names of body parts.
- are assertive in relation to others’ touch e.g. they have control over who touches their body and can refuse to cuddle or kiss a family friend.

#### Pre-schoolers:

- demonstrate healthy sexual behaviour which is curious, light-hearted, mutual and easily distracted including games such as ‘doctors and nurses’ and ‘show me yours and I’ll show you mine’
- display verbal and non-verbal cues to request privacy around bodies.
• demonstrate increased curiosity about people e.g. questions about babies, gender differences.

• begin to be assertive in expressing their feelings, and resilient in keeping themselves safe.

• seek support from their network of safe adults when they feel unsafe or scared.

**Families:**

• model healthy intimate relationships.

• communicate age appropriate messages to children about sexual behaviour e.g. you can touch your private body parts when you are alone.

• respond to children in a timely and appropriate way and recognise children’s discomfort.

• support children to identify their support networks and the actions they can take e.g. five safe people.

• engage in conversation with educators to build an understanding that protective behaviour information will keep children safe.

• use careful and informed judgement to assess and make considered decisions when leaving their children in the care of other people.


**Add other examples here:**
Examples of protective behaviour in practice

Protective behaviours provide children with the skills to keep themselves safe. Early learning settings offer opportunities for families and children to deepen their understanding of the importance of protective behaviours, in a safe environment.

Educators can support learning about protective behaviour through everyday practice

Families expecting a baby:

- Educators support families to develop a safe and secure living environment and a network of trusted adults who promote safety and security for the family.

  *For example*, families access support to secure safe living accommodation.

Babies:

- Educators provide opportunities that support the strengthening of attachment between families and babies. Warmth and affection in early relationships provide protection for babies from the bio chemical effects of stress.

  *For example*, educators encourage families to participate in baby massage groups where parent child attachment can be strengthened and natural conversations about body parts can occur.

Toddlers:

- Educators provide a safe and secure environment that is responsive and respectful of the unpredictable nature of toddlers. Educators comment and respond during everyday routines and experiences that help children learn about their bodies, appropriate touch and ways to keep themselves safe.

  *For example*, educators talk to children respectfully about what they are doing as they change nappies asking permission to touch their bodies. They use opportunities such as nappy changing time to model the correct names for their body parts.

Pre-schoolers

- Educators use intentional and spontaneous teachable moments to support children to learn the proper names of their private and public body parts.

  *For example*, educators explain boys’ private body parts include nipples, bottom, penis, scrotum and testicles and girls have nipples, a bottom, breasts, a vulva and a vagina (Raising Children Network, 2015).

- Educators provide developmentally appropriate opportunities to take reasonable risks to support children to recognise feelings of being frightened or unsafe.

  *For example*, children experience developmentally appropriate risk taking opportunities supported by adults to explore feeling scared or unsafe and actions they can take. Such as, climbing a ladder to go down a slide or exploring a natural bush environment.

Families

- Educators foster a culture of open dialogue with families that support an understanding of the importance of teaching their children about private body parts.

  *For example*, educators introduce conversations about abuse prevention through children’s story books. These books can be used as a conversation stimulus and can also offer a one-step-removed strategy. This introduces the subject without focusing attention on the child and can promote discussion with children about safety, feelings, relationships and problem solving, in a safe, controlled environment.
Planning cycle – The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to the regulation of emotions. When using the planning cycle it is important to remember that a true understanding of a child’s social competence is best gained through observation during play. This can allow educators to tune in to ‘what children can do’ and ‘what might be next’ in their learning journey (Mathieson & Raban, 2013).
Reflect/review
Principles: Ongoing reflection informs planning to support children’s sexual development and curiosity in their bodies.
Educators use a process of inquiry to consider developmentally appropriate play and to consider patterns of play and development that may be unusual.
Educators challenge their own beliefs and values in relation to appropriate sexual behaviour in young children.
Practices: Consideration has been given to acknowledging and supporting children from a strength based perspective i.e. creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children’s learning.
Learning Outcome 1 Children have a strong sense of identity:
• children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities.
• children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Data-from observations, voices of children/parents, photographs, work samples etc.
A group of children aged 3-5 years are playing in the sandpit. One 3 year old child is observed to be using a scoop to put sand inside their own pants. A 5 year old child appears to notice this behaviour, but continues to play alongside, filling their truck with sand. A second child aged 5, tells the 3 year old to pull their pants down and they will pull their pants down too. Both children then stand in the middle of the sandpit with their pants down. When the educator moves over to ask the children to pull their pants up, one of the 5 year olds says they are playing ‘stripers.’ The 3 year old looks confused and happily pulls up their pants and goes back to playing with the other children.

Analyse- What learning is taking place here?
During their play in the sandpit the children are learning that they can all successfully have fun and play together.
The children are beginning to learn about public and private body parts and that private body parts need to be covered in public places.
The older child may be learning that he can instruct younger children to follow his directions and influence their behaviour.
The children may have some confusion with the term ‘stripper’.

Early learning setting 3-5 year olds

Plan- What other learning is possible?
Educators intentionally plan to spend time with the children to provide guidance that will help them learn about staying safe.

Educators plan to explore with children:
• private and public body parts.
• appropriate touch of private body parts.
• the importance of keeping private body parts covered up in public.
• what we do if we feel uncomfortable with sand in our pants, shoes, socks, eyes or mouth.
• the importance of looking after each other and making your own decisions to stay safe.

Educators intentionally plan to support parents to develop shared understandings and knowledge of the children to provide relevant support and guidance.

Educators plan to support the children to understand their feelings, listen to their bodies, and know who to talk to when they are not feeling safe (safety network).
Include a blank planning cycle template

Resources - Protective Behaviours

Daniel Morcombe Foundation
www.danielmorcombe.com.au

Brave Hearts- programs and supports to educate children to receive effective personal safety and education
https://bravehearts.org.au/

Positive and Protective – Identifying and responding to sexual behaviours in children and young people

Body Safety Education Resource Kit
http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk

Safe4Kids Protective Education Program
The Safe4Kids Protective Education Program has been designed for early years educators, in childcare centres, family day care, play groups, home-schooling groups, and also for primary school teachers. The program is appropriate for children aged from three years, and for children with special needs. It is culturally sensitive and children are taught age-appropriate abuse-prevention education concepts, and given the opportunity to practise these new skills in a safe, controlled environment. It is linked to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and National Quality Framework

Maggie Dent’s story book and resources list

Children’s sexual development and behaviour
Children’s sexual development and behaviour – pants aren’t rude (2nd edn) by Pam Linke (Early Childhood Australia Publication)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/sexualdevelopmentandbehavior.pdf
Inquiry 3.2 - Help seeking skills

Introducing the importance of help seeking skills

Help seeking, in relation to respectful relationships, is a coping strategy that involves seeking social or emotional support from other people. Help seeking relies on trust. Having trusting relationships with young children can play a protective role as they feel comfortable to approach an adult for support (Cahill et. al., 2014).

It is important that children develop an understanding of their safety networks from a young age and are supported to understand who to tell if they have worries or something doesn’t feel right.

Learning intentions

- Educators, families and children will work in genuine partnership to foster open pathways, where each individual feels able to seek help when dealing with problems that are too big to solve alone.
- Educators will share information regarding other support services available to families.
- Educators will provide opportunities and support children in developing the skills necessary to recognise safe and unsafe feelings, and to seek help.
- Educators and families will support children to identify their safety networks including the adults they can approach for help or actions they can take to seek help e.g. phone 000

Reflective practice

Before exploring the concept of help seeking in practice, in this inquiry, consider the following questions.

In what ways do you:

- support children to identify people and situations where they feel a sense of belonging?
- support children to identify situations where they feel safe or unsafe?
- support children to consider the adults they feel they can trust and talk to?
- provide opportunities for children to build communication skills that support them to seek help and provide help to others?
- support children and families to know when and from whom help can be sought?
- provide opportunities for children to practise solving simple interpersonal problems?
• provide an environment where respect and trusting relationships are promoted?
• encourage children and families to reach out and communicate for comfort, assistance and companionship?
• support families to understand the important role adults play in protecting children?
Developing skills, knowledge and dispositions for help seeking

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<tr>
<th>Educators practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Educators:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• in partnership with families, support children to recognise when they may need to seek help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• in partnership with families, support children to recognise when they feel safe or unsafe.</td>
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<td>• in partnership with families, encourage children to use words to express the way they are feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• in partnership with families, support children to develop assertiveness and persistence in seeking help.</td>
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<td>• provide play opportunities that help children to practise solving interpersonal challenges.</td>
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<td>• support children to identify the qualities in people that make them feel safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• support children to name people they can approach or actions they can take if they feel unsafe.</td>
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<td>• share information with families regarding other services that offer support and help.</td>
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Examples of key observable behaviours - help seeking skills

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<th>Families expecting a baby:</th>
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<td>• are supported to access community services.</td>
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<td>• build trusting relationships and communicate openly.</td>
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<th>Babies:</th>
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<td>• seek help through crying and gestures, and are responded to by adults promptly in a predictable way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• are helped by caring adults who respond to their cues and describe what they are doing.</td>
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<td>• appear relaxed, comfortable and express their needs freely.</td>
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<th>Toddlers:</th>
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<td>• confidently use gestures, words and verbal utterances to seek the help of trusted adults.</td>
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<td>• begin to interact with their peers, observe and practise different ways of seeking help.</td>
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<td>• begin to show empathy towards others, such as cuddles and giving a toy to a sad friend.</td>
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<td>• begin to take on the role of helper, assisting other children and adults in activities such as putting toys in the basket or helping mum put the milk in the fridge.</td>
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<th>Pre-schoolers:</th>
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<td>• are supported to express themselves, to be assertive and to seek help when the problem is too big to solve alone.</td>
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<td>• observe adults modelling help seeking behaviours in their interactions with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• feel confident to express themselves using words and gestures, and are responded to by educators and families calmly and consistently.</td>
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<td>• feel understood and listened to.</td>
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<th>Families:</th>
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• help their children when they require support.
• model positive ways to express needs.
• listen, believe and respond to children expressing concerns about their safety.
• use non-violent, positive behaviour strategies, including clear and consistent verbal and non verbal responses to support children’s behaviours.


Add other examples here:

Examples of help seeking skills in practice
Help seeking behaviours are fundamental to the positive development of a child’s mental health, wellbeing and safety. Help seeking skills can be promoted by providing opportunities for children to lead their own learning, share and negotiate (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

**Pre-birth**

- Educators provide information about the support services available within the community to families expecting a baby. The importance of accessing help if needed is discussed. Educators build genuine relationships with families supporting open communication and trust to develop.

  *For example*, a mother who is experiencing anxiety about her capacity to manage four children is supported to talk with the Child Health Nurse, or other families in a similar situation.

**Babies**

- Educators provide opportunities that promote interaction and attachment between the baby and caring adult. Educators attune families to respond to the cues of their baby, explicitly modelling where necessary.

  *For example*, educators support families to engage in play with their baby and respond to their cues such as cuddling the baby when they indicate they have had enough play time.

**Toddlers**

- Educators provide open ended play experiences where children are able to explore their world and experience situations where ‘help’ may be required. This provides a safe environment to learn how to seek help and to help others.

  *For example*, a child on a push along bike may require help to ride up a slope. Adults model to the child how to ask for help. asking for example ‘Would you like help? I can push you’. Adults provide the child with appropriate language such as, ‘Push me please.’

**Pre-schoolers**

- Educators recognise that as children’s social interactions and verbal skills develop there are increased opportunities to practise ‘help seeking’ skills.

  *For example*, educators provide materials for cubby building. As the children build and require additional resources or support, they are encouraged to seek help.

**Families**

- Educators support families to nurture their children’s help seeking behaviours by responding to their needs in a helpful and predictable manner.

  *For example*, educators introduce families to the concept of a safety network and support them to help their children to identify and know their five safe adults in ways that are developmentally appropriate (Daniel Morcombe Foundation, 2016).

**Planning cycle** – The following planning cycle can be used to inform practice about what children know, understand and can do in relation to help seeking skills. It is designed for educators to work in partnership with families to focus on the strengths, interests and knowledge that effectively support and involve children in their learning and development.
Reflect/review

**Principles:** Educators use reflective practice to support their partnerships with parents and gain insights about their own and others’ understandings of protective behaviours.

**Practices:** Intentional teaching practice guides learning in partnership with families.

**Learning Outcome 1** Children have a strong sense of identity:
- children feel safe secure and supported.
- children take considered risk in their decision making and cope with the unexpected.

**Learning Outcome 3** Children have a strong sense of wellbeing:
- demonstrate trust and confidence.
- show increasing independence in personal safety for themselves and others.

Data - from observations, voices of children/parents, photographs, work samples etc.

During morning tea parents are overheard discussing their concerns about how much children hear and see violence and abuse through the media. The parents are wondering how they can support their children to be safe without causing them to be distrustful or frightened.

During staff reflections that day the team reflect on the parents’ conversations. They discuss their beliefs and understandings and agree to implement some actions that will help the parents explore their concerns and learn about ways to help their children stay safe.

Analyse - What learning is happening here?

Educators are learning that parents have concerns about keeping their children safe.

Educators develop an understanding that parents feel safe and trust each other to explore their concerns.

Educators are learning that they need to have an understanding of ways they can support parents to keep their children safe within a secure and supportive environment.

Act do

Educators introduce families to the concept of Personal Strategy Network Plans. They encourage parents to support their children in becoming familiar with safe actions they can take when they feel unsafe or need help.

Educators and families help children develop their Personal Safety Network Plan e.g. using a hand image to record the name of a trusted adult on each finger such as mum, dad, teacher, grandma, auntie or uncle, principal.

Educators and families to discuss other actions that could help to keep children safe e.g. dial 000; run away from the situation where you feel unsafe and talk to a trusted adult.

Educators and families to provide opportunities for children to learn their personal safety plans through role play scenarios, For example: ‘What do you do if you get lost in the supermarket?’

Plan: What other learning is possible?

Educators plan to discuss with families the strategy of children developing a personal safety network, people they can trust and go to for help, and actions they can take to keep themselves safe.

Educators plan to support children in feeling confident to ask for help, and learn that asking for help is important when they feel unsafe or unable to solve problems themselves. Educators to explore asking for help with children:
- When do we ask for help?
- Who do we ask for help?
- How do we know the people we can trust?

Educators plan to support children to develop a personal safety network plan using the fingers and palm of a hand.
Include a blank planning cycle template

Resources - help seeking skills

Daniel Morcombe Foundation

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria


Body Safety Education Resource Kit
http://e2epublishing.info/shop/trk

Children’s Books


References and further reading


Dyer, E, O’Hagan, A 2016, *Violence free begins with me: Jade speaks up teachers guide to sessions for years 5-8, Violence Free Communities, New Zealand.*


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Respectful Relationships Package- Early Years