

Building Trust and Confidence through Leadership

Learning Guide

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Learning Outcomes:

- To identify key principles for effective communication with children
- To develop trusting relationships with children
- To explain process of involving children in decision making

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Learning Guide Feedback Form

Using this Learning Guide

This guide has been written to assist you to learn through self paced study and facilitated professional development sessions held at your children's service.

It is recommended that a senior staff member is nominated to facilitate the PD sessions, however each individual has a responsibility for their own learning, and to assist the team as a whole to work and learn together.

Each person should individually read through the information provided, and then come together with their work colleagues to discuss their understanding of the information and work together to complete the "Putting ideas in practice" exercises. These exercises are always identified with the following symbol:



Write down your answers to the exercises where you see this symbol:



Sometimes you will be asked to complete an action, identified by this symbol:



Many of the practical exercises can be implemented at your centre, and should be used to add to and enhance your professional practice.

If you wish to provide feedback to the developers your comments would be most welcome. Please complete and return the feedback sheet at the end of this package.

12 Key principles in effective communication with children:

- Children are active participants
- Children’s autonomy and initiative is respected
- Children are empowered to express their views and to expect that their views will be listened to
- Children are consulted on matters that affect them at the centre
- Children’s perspectives are acknowledged as valid
- Children’s diversity is valued and honoured
- Children’s consent is obtained before information they have given you, is shared with others
- Communications are at a level which the child can understand
- Children are never intimidated, interrogated or ridiculed
- Children are given sufficient time to respond
- Children are respected and communications with them are honest and sincere
- The child’s family is respected and treated as important people in the child’s life



Putting ideas in practice

Either on your own or with your staff team, think about ways in which you have implemented these key principles in your communications with children.



Building trust

Effective communication is the key to creating a positive, friendly and welcoming environment at your centre – an environment where children are treated with respect, understanding, fairness and courtesy.

Trust is developed where children feel valued and able to express their own opinions without being “put down” or made to feel stupid.

Key actions for building trust:

- **Take the time to get to know each child** – this can be achieved through one on one or group discussions with the children; being relaxed and open with children so they will want to communicate with you; showing a ‘real’ interest in the children and seeking their feedback; recognizing special interests, skills and needs; asking children to complete the ‘Interest Inventory’ (See Appendix). Complete a profile for individual children as a tool to addressing specific behaviour problems – see activity (next page).
- **Take the time to really listen to children** – being sensitive to their feelings; really valuing children’s communications and trying to understand their perspective and way of thinking
- **Be true to your word** – never say you will do something and then not follow through
- **Be fair and equitable in all your interactions with children** – treating all children with the same level of respect and courtesy, be a good role model and encourage the children to treat each other in this way also
- **Never ridicule children or single them out** – this will break a child’s trust in you and cause their self esteem great damage
- **Praise children for their efforts especially when they fail** – children need to learn how to accept failure; and that through failure we learn and grow – it is OK to fail; the main thing is the child has made an effort to have a go. Be careful not to ‘over praise’, as this will be seen as insincere – give descriptive praise e.g. ‘Thank you for helping Sarah put the toys away.’



Putting ideas in practice



How well do you know the children in your OSHC service?

Select a child and see how much information you know about the child by completing the following 'Profile of a Child' sheet. When using this technique always ensure you maintain high levels of confidentiality at all times.

Profile of a Child
Family members:
Friends:
Pets:
Personality:
Any problems at school?
Is the child under stress?
How is the child in games sessions?
Other information:

Developing confidence

Children's confidence is directly influenced by how they are treated by others.

If you communicate with, and treat children as competent and able, they will see themselves in that way and will develop confidence to attempt new things with the belief that they will succeed.

The way you communicate with children will either build or destroy a child's confidence.

Here are some key factors in building children's confidence through communication:

- Communicate at the appropriate level for the child's developmental stage;
- Listen to and support children's ideas and opinions;
- Value children's input and act on their ideas (whenever possible);
- Encourage children to share their interests and skills;
- Encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions;
- Help children to understand that boys and girls are equally competent and able to participate in the full range of life skills, except in some cases where children have special needs – then explain they will participate at their own level;
- Allow each child to have their say when in a group.

Involving children in decision making

“Children should be presented with a range of situations in which they, as individuals and groups, can make decisions for themselves. These decisions should be relevant to the children and they should be able to directly experience their consequences.”

OSHCQA Quality Practices Guide – Principle 5.3

Why is it important to involve children in decision making?

- Children’s confidence and self esteem is enhanced as their ideas are listened to and valued within the decision making process;
- Learning to make decisions is an important life skill – within the OSHC setting children can practice and refine these skills in a safe, supportive environment;
- Children feel involved as an integral and important part of the OSHC centre;
- Children learn to take responsibility for their actions.

Go to the Appendix and overview the following sheets:

Leadership and Life Skills

Setting the ground rules

Activities – Co-operating, Group Development & Lateral Thinking

What sort of decision making can children be involved in?

- **Give children choices** – there should always be alternatives for children so they can make decisions about what activities they will participate in e.g.:
 1. whether they will play alone or with the group;
 2. what materials or equipment they will use;
 3. what they will eat for afternoon tea etc.

- **Ask children for their input into programming** – what are their interests, favourite activities, likes and dislikes; what excursions would they prefer in the forthcoming vacation care program; what new skills would they like to learn; what incursions would they enjoy at the centre; brainstorm theme ideas with the children to extend on play activities.
- **Ask children for ideas for new equipment or toys for the centre** – which of the current equipment do they like the best; is there a game they have at home that they think other children at the centre would enjoy playing; what kinds of activities do they enjoy most; choose new outdoor climbing equipment from a brochure etc.
- **Encourage children to bring their favourite recipes** – ideas for snacks or cooking activities.
- **Layout of the centre** – children can help you to decorate or redesign the layout of the centre or a specific activity area.
- **Hold group meetings** – establish meeting protocols; encourage children to share their ideas; help children to reach consensus, this is another area of life skills.

Some key principles in children's decision making:

- Only offer children genuine choices
- Respect their decisions
- Give children time to do things 'their' way
- Avoid being over protective
- Allow children to try new approaches and ways doing things
- Allow children to make wrong decisions (provided they can do so safely)
- Let children find their own solutions to problems
- Encourage lateral thinking

Putting ideas in practice

Discuss how you will involve children in decision making in your service with the rest of the staff team. Try to list at least 3 strategies.



Talk to the children about these ideas and then answer the following questions:



1. How did you communicate your ideas to the children?



2. How did the children respond to your ideas?



3. Did you make any changes to your original strategies after consulting with the children?



Appendices

Interest Inventory

Ask children to complete the inventory it will give you a good insight as to the children’s needs and interest and may help you with programming, also a good tool to start discussion groups with the children.

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

1. What I like best about After School ...

2. What I like least about After School ...

3. What interests/hobbies I like best ...

4. What activities I least like ...

5. The things I like to do when I get home ...

6. My three favourite games/toys are ...

What I enjoy best about each of them ...

7. My favourite foods are ...

8. My favourite music is ...

Leadership – Life Skills

When you *guide* rather than *control* the children you act as a *LEADER*. (I refer to Louise Porter's concept in her book entitled 'Young Children's Behaviour'.)

You give the children more responsibilities, and allow them a voice in the decisions that need to be made at the centre.

In the DVD, 'Taking a different approach to Behaviour Management', we mention the donation of \$100 and the process the children went through to decide what to purchase. This decision making process takes up considerable time on behalf of the children but it is not time wasted, it is time spent on guiding the children, building their self esteem, developing negotiation skills, learning how to come to a consensus, communicating with others in a rational manner etc. Children begin to realise that there is a process to go through if you want to achieve a good outcome – it is not a "free for all".

This is the start of *LEADERSHIP*. You are giving the children the opportunity to develop "*Life Skills*" and "*Problem Solving Skills*". These are skills that are invaluable now and later in their adult life.

This way of working may take staff and children some time to get used to, so be patient. Try not to expect too much at your first meeting.

Developing Life Skills

You may try to introduce other activities that will encourage the development of life skills such as:

- Co-operation games and working as a team rather than competition;
- Asking the children for their input into the lay out of the centre by changing the furniture around, working out what works where and what's practical and what is safe. This will include discussion of Occupational Safety & Health issues such as lifting items the correct way. Remember never to ask children or staff to lift or move large items – this is best done by professional movers. You could draw up a plan for the centre and move the item of furniture around on the plan. This will encourage children to think laterally and develop problem solving skills.

Setting the Ground Rules in Out of School Care

It is important to start the meeting off on a positive note by setting the ground rules. This sets the tone on a professional footing for the children attending the centre. Please remember that group meetings and discussions or debating groups are ways of building team spirit. While children are engrossed in lively stimulating activities such as a meeting, their leisure time is spent more constructively and negative behaviour is at a minimum.

Group Meeting

1. Call a group meeting.
2. Meetings should be an integral part of the centre's program, and held on a regular basis.
3. Small group meetings work best for you as well as the children – 1:13 or 1:10 ratio.
4. Keep meeting time to a minimum of 10 – 15 minutes at most. You can always call a second meeting later on in the afternoon for further discussion.
5. You could start a meeting by introducing the topic while afternoon tea is being served. Remember to ensure the topic is one that will meet most of the children's interests.

Example Meeting to Establish the Centre Rules

1. Staff need to have a brief outline of the rules needed and present them at the meeting.
2. Ask the children to help in developing the rules further. When children participate in the development of the rules and boundaries they tend to stick by them and encourage other children to do the same. OSHCQA Principle 2.3
3. Limit rules to 8 or 10, and write them in the positive.
4. When the rules have been developed to the satisfaction of both staff and children, they need to be presented to all the stakeholders, displayed in a prominent position at the centre, and feedback invited.
5. Review the rules on a regular basis (at least once a term or more often if they are not being adhered to).
6. Staff to ensure all new families enrolled in the service are made familiar with the rules and boundaries of the centre. OSHCQA Principle 8.3

Further Group Meetings with staff and children

In small groups ask children for their input into:

Programming	Issues that occur
Excursions suggestions	Evaluation of the program
Future plans for the centre	Rules review
Problem solving	Boundaries review
Equipment ideas	Suggestions for afternoon tea
Centre layout	<i>The topics can go on and on ...</i>

Benefits of meeting

The long term benefits of holding group meetings and asking children to participate will be enormous. Children start to feel good about taking part in meetings and a valued member of the team, and this helps to raise their self esteem. Staff should be good role models and encourage everyone to have their say and not be 'put down' by the rest of the group. Children learn how to take their turn and respect others opinions and listen to new ideas. It may take a little time for this to occur but with the staff's guidance and the children's growing sense of "belonging" to the group, the children will begin to actually look forward to the next group meeting.

Activities

Co-operation and Group Development

How many on a square? (A problem solving game)

This problem solving game helps the children develop their skills in working as a team. The children have to work out a strategy, so group discussion takes place, also leadership skills will start to be developed.

Aim: To find out how many children can fit onto a square of wood or paper.

Materials: Piece of plywood or piece of paper taped to the ground measuring 60 cms x 60 cms.

Rules of Game:

1. Children must have both feet on the square OR one foot on the square and one foot in the air.
2. Children must "hold" their position for at least five to ten seconds before they can be counted.

***Staff to be on hand to ensure the children's safety.**

Lateral Thinking

String Thing

1. Children in small groups
2. Each group is given one metre and a half of string
3. Each group has to come up with a list of ideas for ways the string could be used

Some ideas we have come up with:

Belt
Dog lead
Hair ribbon
Lasso

You may need to give the children a few ideas just to get them started. This kind of exercise encourages children to think more laterally.

***Staff to be on hand to ensure the children's safety.**

More Lateral Thinking Activities

Alternative Use

Ask children to list as many alternative uses for an empty tin can that they can think of.

or

Ask children to list as many alternative uses for a blanket.

Association

Name all the things that you can think of that are red.

or

Name all the things that you can think of that make a musical sound.

Creative Writing – Two Lines

Ask the children to come up with a title for a story and write the first two lines.

There are no restrictions on subject and the more unconventional or outrageous the better.

End of a Story

Alternatively ask the children to write the last three lines of a story they have thought of.

Both of these activities will be quick and in most cases hilarious when read out loud, and will capture the child's imagination. In some cases the children will develop the story further and may extend their concept into a play or concert.

History in a Shoe Box

History in a shoe box to be opened in 100 years from now.

Give the children a shoe box and ask them to place items in the box that will inform future generations about children's life style, activities and fashion who were living in the early 21st Century.

You will need magazines for cutting out pictures.

Respect yourself ...
feel good about
who you are; and
what you do;
and others will
respect you.

**We are into
SHARING
and
CARING
at this centre**

We take turns in discussion groups

**This is a
NO PUT DOWN
ZONE**

Positive Words

kind

please

pardon

nice

hello

thoughtful

caring

friendly

careful

cheerful

beautiful

helpful

thank you

love

great

sorry

sharing

special

fantastic

yes

like

“The use of positive encouraging conversations will start to change children’s behaviour and negative behaviour will be a thing of the past.”

References

Other learning guides in this series:

Effective Communication Learning Guide by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2006

Encouraging Parent Involvement Learning Guide by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2006

Other relevant resources:

Taking a different approach to Behaviour Management DVD/Video resource & training package by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2007

Young Children's Behaviour by Louise Porter, published by MacLennan & Petty, NSW 1999

Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance – Quality Practices Guide, by National Childcare Accreditation Council 2003

Lets Discuss – Effective Communication resource sheet by Christine Cross & Sandy Morton Consultancy, published by PSCWA 2006

Learning Guide Feedback Form

Your feedback will help us to improve our learning materials so they are more useful to you. Please rate the following criteria on a sliding scale of 1 (good) to 5 (poor) by circling the appropriate number.

	Good				Poor				
clear language	1	2	3	4	5	language unclear			
easily understood	1	2	3	4	5	confusing/difficult			
relevant	1	2	3	4	5	not relevant			
exercises useful	1	2	3	4	5	exercises of no use			

Please add any other comments you wish to add about the learning guide:



Name (optional): _____

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