

WORDS THAT ENCOURAGE CONNECTION

As educators of young children, our primary goal should be to make the children feel safe and connected. Some children are very social and outgoing and make connections with others easily.

Many children however are slower to open up to new environments and relationships.

Building relationships takes time, patience and lots of encouragement. There are many things to keep in mind when connecting with young children, such as getting down to their level so that you can look them eye to eye and speaking with a soft and gentle voice. Below is a list of tips.

COMMON SITUATIONS

For reluctant participants:

- Have a puppet or prop for distraction. 'You and your puppet can sit and watch until you feel ready to join in'. Keep checking back in (and if possible have an assistant able to sit with the child and keep them engaged in the class, by noticing - and talking about what is happening,
- Putting language to the activity
- Have them be your helper in some way

For challenging behaviour:

- Changing the focus, distracting to a positive activity
- Being sympathetic and explaining that at the moment we are doing this...

Good action words:

- 'I like the way you - Jump, tip toe quietly etc. 'Show me how you -line up so quietly, listen so well etc'.
- 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the stillest of all'

Good listening words:

- All eyes on 'Jane', if you can hear me put your hands on your head - do a few body parts
- Give your ears a rub to show me you are listening.

A few more ideas:

- Suggest rather than insist they do each activity - rather than saying "everybody dance" say "can you show me how you can dance?" or "show me how a cat might move."
- For those not wanting to join in - urging them to participate is not often successful, but nonchalantly offering a hand at the right time, may bring them along. Giving encouragement to those least confident is important.
- Ask open ended questions, as though you are seeking the answers together. "What would it sound like if we all slowly blew up a pretend balloon?" What would happen if we let the air out of the balloon - fast? Slow?
- Be prepared to adjust your class based on the energy and mood of your class. - don't be afraid to change to another activity if the one you had planned is not working. Take your cues from the children and always have a few extra things planned, for those times when you need to adjust your plan!