

Skills for Building Positive Relationships with Young Children

By Karin Klein. Reprinted from *CEE*, March 2007.

This self-evaluation is an opportunity to review the social development of children. Use this evaluation guide to assess the effectiveness of your relationships with young children.

Attitude/Action	Rarely	Inconsistently	Consistently
<p>Listen and attend—tune in. As you lean forward and make eye contact, ask, “Can you tell me more about what you are saying?”</p>			
<p>Provide genuine love, caring, and compassion. Say, “I am so very glad you are in my class,” or “You are such a good friend to me.”</p>			
<p>Hone your nonverbal skills. Smile, show warmth, make eye contact, and use a gentle tone of voice, a gentle touch, and proximity.</p>			
<p>Convey empathy, which means knowing the feelings of other people, feeling what they feel, and responding compassionately. Say, “I can tell that you are really upset about that now. Let’s go over to the sofa ...”</p>			
<p>Ask reflective and problem-solving questions and definitely provide time for the children to think and answer. Ask, “How do you feel about that?” and “What can you do about it now?”</p>			
<p>Plan a meaningful learning environment. Provide, for example, learning centers, child-initiated activities, unhurried schedules, and adequate time and space.</p>			
<p>Provide an emotionally safe climate in your classroom, an environment free from perceived harm and stress. Give the children predictable schedules, consistency in who their teachers are, soft spaces, and spaces for alone time. Prevent bullying and the intrusion of strangers.</p>			

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<p>Show unconditional acceptance. Say, "I like you just the way you are." Avoid giving preferential treatment, and try seeing the children as God sees them.</p>			
<p>Assign appropriate responsibility, communicating that the children are competent. Say, "I think you can zip your coat if I get it started," or "You can wipe the tables today."</p>			
<p>State expectations in the positive. Say, "We need you to sit in your chair with feet on the floor," or "We walk in the hall."</p>			
<p>Catch the students being or doing good and give them detailed feedback. Say, "I noticed that you saw Monica get in line first and were happy for her. Thank you, Chad."</p>			
<p>Acknowledge and accept feelings before giving redirection. Say, "I can tell that you didn't like putting the play dough away. It's hard to stop doing something you are really enjoying."</p>			
<p>Find opportunities to show the children a new and positive picture of themselves. Say, "See, I knew you were able to find the missing piece! You can be very clever."</p>			
<p>Intervene and help alter the children's fearful, unproductive memories and unhealthy patterns into more productive and positive ones, thereby increasing the likelihood that the children will take the high road in future behaviors.</p>			