

# Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module Series

## Focusing on Relationships



# Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module Series

## Introduction & Understanding Social-Emotional Development

### Focusing on Relationships

Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments

Understanding Behavior

Teaching About Feelings

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Individualized Teaching

Challenging Behavior

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### Adapted from:

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL),  
Vanderbilt University

Pyramid Resources for Infant Toddler Social-Emotional Development, Juniper  
Gardens Children's Project University of Kansas

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# Pyramid Model Infant-Toddler Module: Focusing on Relationships

In Focusing on Relationships, participants will explore the importance and complexities of developing relationships between caregivers, families, and children. Participants should leave understanding that social-emotional development takes place within the context of relationships, so strategies to support development must prioritize building relationships. This training covers topics such as reflecting on participants' past and current relationships, as well as addressing issues related to culture, diversity, race, equity, risk, and protective factors. It is recommended the trainer spend time reflecting on the discussion questions prior to the training to be prepared to share their own experiences and facilitate discussions.

## Learner Objectives

- ▶ Understand how attachments and relationships build over time
- ▶ Learn ways to grow relationships with children and families
- ▶ Learn how the influence of culture and family factors can affect your role as a caregiver

## Agenda

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| I. Setting the Stage: Relationships   | 10 minutes |
| II. Forming & Sustaining Relationships<br>with Young Children and Families:<br>Attachment Relationships | 30 minutes |
| III. Building Relationships with Families   | 30 minutes |
| IV. Understanding Families:<br>Cultural Influences  | 25 minutes |
| V. Understanding Families:<br>Challenges & Strengths  | 20 minutes |
| VI. Wrap-Up & Reflection  | 25 minutes |

## My Notes

## Training Preparation

- ☐ Print participant handouts
- ☐ Review videos
- ☐ Prepare and print certificates of completion
- ☐ Activity: Reflective Inventory—Trainer should complete before training to facilitate discussion with personal examples
- ☐ Activity: Essential Positive Messages—Familiarize your training assistants with the examples so they are prepared to circulate around to groups to provide aid

## Handouts

- ☐ 1 PowerPoint
- ☐ 2 Agenda
- ☐ 3 Reflective Inventory
- ☐ 4 Attachment Relationships
- ☐ 5 Enhancing My Relationships
- ☐ 6 Practice Implementation Checklist
- ☐ 7 Family Engagement Strategies
- ☐ 8 Training Feedback

## Videos

- ☐ Supporting Attachment
- ☐ Infant Caregiver Relationship
- ☐ Family Books

## Materials Needed

### Technology

- ☐ PowerPoint file
- ☐ Video files
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Projector and speakers

### Printables

- ☐ Handouts
- ☐ Certificates of completion
- ☐ Sign-in sheet

### Supplies

- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Snacks and drinks
- ☐ Chart paper/white board and markers
- ☐ Table fidgets/manipulatives

### Other Items

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

# Setting the Stage: Relationships



## Slide 1: Focusing on Relationships

Welcome to the next session in the Pyramid Model Training Series, where we are going to be focusing on relationships.

I am *(name)* and *(give some personal background history relevant to training)*. Here with me are *(introduce rest of team)*.

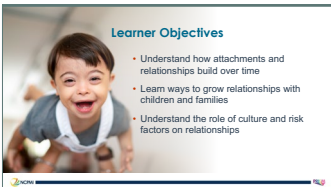
Let's get some logistics out of the way before we begin

- ▶ Breaks:
- ▶ Lunch/Snack:
- ▶ Parking:
- ▶ Restrooms:

You should have a set of materials that includes handouts, slide notes, and other useful information. We'll reference some of these throughout the training, so keep them handy. If you don't have the materials you need, please let us know.

*Depending on how familiar members of the training team are with the participants, it may also be important to have participants do introductions—and include classroom and their role in the classroom, if appropriate.*

*You may want participants to ask questions when they think of them, or have them write questions down to ask at the end of sections.*



## Slide 2: Learner Objectives

We will start off by talking about something at the center of your relationships with the children in your classroom—attachment. We'll also talk about the importance of the relationships between you and the families, as well as discuss the influence of culture and its potential challenges and benefits on those relationships.



## Slide 3: Agenda


You can find our training agenda for today on ***Handout 2***. The agenda shows you the specific topics we'll cover in order to meet our learning objectives.

At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about the training. We look forward to receiving this input, as it will improve the training for others.



**Our Learning Environment**

- What can the trainer do to facilitate a safe learning environment?
- How can other training participants help make the training environment conducive to your learning?
- What are some agreements we can make?



## Slide 4: Our Learning Environment

We'll be spending a lot of time together throughout this training and future trainings. It's helpful to decide together what sorts of agreements are important to the group. Think about what makes a positive learning environment for you. What are those things?

*Pause for responses.*

*If participants don't have suggestions, suggest some of the typical shared agreements listed on the next slide.*

**Possible Shared Agreements**

- Confidentiality
- Take Care of Yourself and Others
- Demonstrate Respect for All
- Right to Pass
- Right to Take Risk
- Assume Positive Intent
- Recognize We Are All Learning



## Slide 5: Possible Shared Agreements

With that in mind, what are some agreements we can make about how our learning environment should look? You can use the agreements on the slide as a guide.

*Pause for responses, then summarize agreements.*

*Post the list of shared agreements the group created and/or review the list of potential shared agreements on this slide to help generate ideas.*

**Warm Up Activity: Partner Discussion**

- What is something you really enjoyed learning about at a past training?
- If you have never been to an early childhood training before today, share something you think you'd enjoy learning more about.



## Slide 6: Warm Up Activity: Partner Discussion

Pair up with a partner and share something you really enjoyed about a past training. It can be something you learned or something about how the training was conducted.

If you have never been to an early childhood training before today, share something you think you'd enjoy learning more about.

*Give about 5 minutes for partner discussion.*

Now that you've had some time to talk, did anything stand out to you or is there anything you'd like to share from this activity?

*Pause for responses, then summarize.*

**What Are Relationships?**

**Relationships...**

- Have emotional connections
- Endure over time
- Have special meaning between people
- Create memories and expectations in the minds of the people involved



## Slide 7: What Are Relationships?

Many of the strategies discussed have emphasized the critical role of relationships in the lives of infants and toddlers. Let's think about the question, "What are relationships?"

What is the difference between interactions and relationships?

*Pause for responses.*

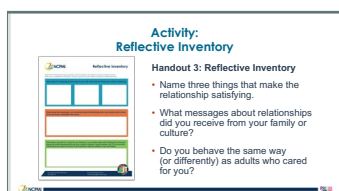
Now, think about a relationship you have and how it developed. It began by interacting and through interactions over a period of time, the relationship was formed. Relationships are more than interactions.

## Relationships:

- ▶ Have emotional connections
- ▶ Endure over time
- ▶ Have special meaning between the two people
- ▶ Create memories and expectations in the minds of the people involved

Repeated similar interactions lead to fairly predictable relationships because the infant or young child begins to know how the other person will respond to him or her. This pattern of responses creates the emotional connection that the infant has to the other person.

Notice in this definition there is no mention of “positive,” “good,” “negative,” or “bad.” Some relationships may be viewed as more positive or more negative; however, in reality most relationships have both positive and negative elements.

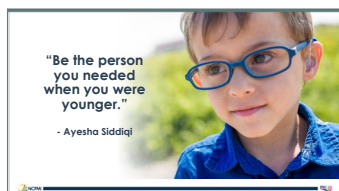


## Slide 8: Activity: Reflective Inventory

When we start to think and talk about relationships with children, it is helpful to reflect on the role that relationships have played in our own lives.

Take out **Handout 3: Reflective Inventory**. This inventory gives you space to reflect on your own relationships. Take a few minutes to fill it out, and then we'll come back and share.

*After a few minutes, ask participants one or two questions from the slide. Be prepared to share your own reflections.*



## Slide 9: Be the person you needed...

Prior relationships create feelings, expectations, and behaviors that we bring to new relationships. If we have a personal history of satisfying and supportive experiences, we are likely to go into new relationships with the expectation that these relationships will be similar. If we have a personal history of emotionally difficult or traumatic experiences, we may find it harder to manage new experiences as adults, particularly stressful ones.

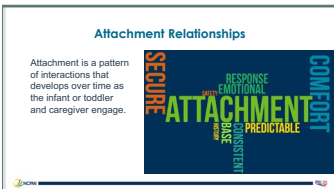
During our childhood, we received all sorts of messages about ourselves. We are likely to send some of those messages to the children we care for, whether we intend to or not. However, we are more able to recognize this if we reflect on how the messages we received in childhood were interpreted by us.

# Forming & Sustaining Relationships with Young Children & Families: Attachment Relationships



## Slide 10: Attachment Relationships

We are now going to talk about a specific aspect of relationships. Think about why a baby cries when his mother leaves the room. Why does a young child seek out a parent for a hug when they get hurt? These and other questions relate to the key interactions that build a relationship between caring adults and young children—the attachment relationship. When we say a child is attached, we’re saying they have developed a strong preference for the most important adult or adults in their life.



## Slide 11: Attachment Relationships

Ask a participant to read the text in the on the slide:

*“Attachment is a pattern of interactions that develops over time as the infant or toddler and caregiver engage.”*

John Bowlby, one of the first writers and researchers to write about attachment, describes the term “attachment” as the emotional bond that develops between a baby and a caregiver.

An infant is biologically inclined to use the caregiver as a provider of comfort. We use the term “secure base” to describe the feeling of safety provided to an infant or toddler by a caregiver. For example, you have probably seen a toddler venture off to try something new, but keep looking back to make sure that you (their secure base) are still there and close by if they need you.

When infants feel threatened, they turn to caregivers for protection and comfort. The caregiver’s consistent, accurate response to the infant’s signal of need—such as crying—helps mold the attachment relationship into a predictable, back and forth pattern of interaction that develops over the first year of life.

Children who develop secure attachments to one or more adults are more likely to develop positive social and emotional skills. They know they can rely on adults to meet their needs, to respond to them, and to comfort them. They feel important and begin to develop a sense of competence and confidence.

Infants who do not experience this type of relationship may feel a lack of control over their environment and struggle to develop positive relationships with others.

Our job as care providers is to form a close and attached relationship with a child as well as to promote parent-child attachment.



## Supporting Attachment



## Slide 12: Supporting Attachment

We are going to watch a video clip showing an interaction that, if repeated over and over in different forms, becomes the pattern of the attachment relationship. Observe what the child is doing and likely feeling and what the mother is doing and likely feeling. Then we'll share observations and comments about the video.

*Play Supporting Attachment (1:19 min)*

What is the child doing?

*Possible responses include...Tries to take wrapper off her snack*

What is the child likely feeling?

*Possible responses include...Confident; proud of herself (says "yeah" at one point); persistent; determined*

What is the mother doing?

*Possible responses include...Starts to take the wrapper off, then asks her child if she can do the rest; encourages her child ("almost" and "keep trying"); offers to help but waits, observes, allows child to figure it out herself; supports child by talking through what she is doing; helps her be successful by holding the wrapper back so she can pull the snack out; celebrates her success*

What is the mother likely feeling?

*Possible responses include...Proud of her daughter; anxious or excited to help, but pulling back to allow her daughter the chance to do it*

How might this interaction support an attachment relationship?

*Possible responses include...The child likely feels safe, supported, and encouraged by her mother. The mother stays close to support her daughter but does not take over. This lets the child know she is there for support while she helps her daughter feel competent and capable.*

## Activity:

## Attachment Relationships



## Handout 4: Attachment Relationships

What could the professional do to promote the infant-caregiver relationship?

## Slide 13: Activity: Attachment Relationships

Find **Handout 4: Attachment Relationships** in your folder. Pair up with another person and briefly discuss the vignettes on the handout. These vignettes describe interactions between caregivers, parents, and toddlers. Think about the vignettes from your professional role in supporting the infant-caregiver relationship. What could the professional do to promote infant-caregiver relationships?

*Give 5-10 minutes for partners to discuss.*

*Possible responses include...Put away her papers, watch, ask the dad how he knows how to play with his daughter so well; allow dad to talk about what he is doing and why, then base her response on his thoughts and follow his lead about what he is doing; talk for the baby about all the positive moments in this interaction and tell dad what a pleasure it is to watch him (a great way to support dad's competence and confidence)*

In the second vignette, an infant care teacher is trying to calm a baby. What can the teacher do to build an attachment with the child?

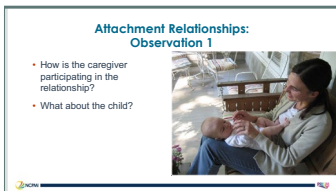
*Possible responses include...Think about what this baby is learning about relationships as a result of her care towards him; recognize the value of her attempts to comfort him and keep him safe, even if she cannot consistently ease the pain in his tummy; use a sling to keep him against her body while she also provides care for other children; murmur to him that she understands that he hurts and that she wants him to feel better; monitor her own emotional reaction to having trouble comforting him and to the tension that a crying baby evokes. She can talk with his parents and find out what they do to soothe him.*

*Affirm responses and share ideas not mentioned.*

In the last vignette, the teacher must decide how to support a timid toddler. What ideas did your group come up with to help this teacher use her relationship with the child to support learning and exploration?

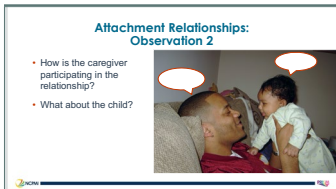
*Possible responses include...Maintain eye contact, smile, show interest in what the toddler is doing; use words and facial expressions to convey that the situation is safe; move closer to the toddler to be available to support her, comment on what the toddler is seeing, or ask questions about what the toddler is interested in*

*Affirm responses and share ideas not mentioned.*



## Slide 14: Attachment Relationships: Observation 1

Babies are biologically programmed to develop attachments to others. We're going to look at three photo slides. You'll be using your observation skills to describe what you see the baby or toddler doing that tells us that the caregiver or child is inviting or participating in a relationship. Be as specific as possible about the behavioral cues that the adult, infant, or toddler is demonstrating.



## Slide 15: Attachment Relationships: Observation 2

What cues do you see the caregiver and infant displaying in this picture?

*Possible responses include...Baby is smiling, looking at caregiver, leaning forward; caregiver is smiling, looking at infant, holding infant at eye level.*

*Affirm responses and share ideas not mentioned.*

If the baby had a speech bubble above her head what would it say?

*Click ppt forward to reveal speech bubbles. Pause for responses.*

How about the dad—if he had a speech bubble over his head what would it say?

*Pause for responses.*

Attachment Relationships:  
Observation 3

- How is the caregiver participating in the relationship?
- What about the child?

**Slide 16: Attachment Relationships: Observation 3**

There are several relationships in this photo, so let's focus on the relationship that the caregivers are facilitating—the relationship between the two children.

What are the caregivers doing to facilitate the relationship between the children?

*Possible responses include...Holding the children at eye level with each other; caregivers are watching the children, smiling to let the children know it is okay to get to know each other*

What cues is the baby in the hat giving to show he is ready for the relationship?

*Possible responses include...Smiling, watching other child, reaching hand out*

What do you think the speech bubble above the baby in dark blue might say?

*Click ppt forward to reveal speech bubbles.*

What would the speech bubble say above the baby who is facing us?

*Pause for responses.*

How about speech bubbles for the moms?

*Pause for responses.*

Attachment Relationships:  
Observation 4**Slide 17: Attachment Relationships: Observation 4**

You are going to watch a video clip of an interaction between a caregiver and an infant.

As you watch, identify the specific behaviors of the caregiver and the baby.

*Prior to sharing the video, please state the following:*

In this training, we will be watching videos from classrooms of teachers that are being coached and are working on action plans designed to strengthen their use of Pyramid Model practices. We use these to illustrate practices for our reflection and discussion. The videos you see might not illustrate teachers at fidelity of Pyramid Model practice implementation. We are so grateful to the teachers who have allowed us to use videos from their classrooms for this purpose.

*Play Infant Caregiver Relationship (1:27 min)*

What specific behaviors did you notice in that clip? How do you think the baby and caregiver felt during these interactions? Some of the behaviors and potential feelings are the same; the caregiver uses their behaviors and feelings to help the baby feel secure and safe. What do you think this baby will learn about the world, relationships, and herself if these kinds of interactions continue?

*Possible responses include...These kinds of interactions help infants and toddlers learn that the world is a safe place and that people protect and care for them. They learn relationships are caring and people in relationships are interested and responsive to their interest and needs. They also learn that they are interesting, effective at communicating, and worth receiving good care and attention.*

*Affirm responses and share ideas not mentioned.*

**Activity:**  
**What Do Your Relationships Look Like?**

- Imagine someone is taking pictures of your interactions with children throughout the day...
- What kinds of interactions would be captured?
- What strengths would be identified?
- How many moments of these types of interactions make up the day for the infants and toddlers in your care?
- How might you increase joyful interactions like these in your care setting?

## Slide 18: Activity: What Do Your Relationships Look Like?

We're going to shift to what your own caregiver-child relationships look like. Let's get into small groups and reflect on and discuss the questions on the slide.

What kind of interactions would be captured if someone took photos of you at work? Would the care-giving look nurturing? Would you be smiling and seem to be enjoying working with infants and toddlers? Would you look stressed, worried, or bored?

Would the pictures be capturing moments like those we just saw?

How many moments of these types of interactions make up the day for the infants and toddlers in your care?

What percentage of the day is made up of these types of interactions in your setting?

How do you increase joyful interactions like this in the child's home and in your care?

*Give 5-10 minutes for groups to discuss.*

Let's come back together as a group and share some of what you discussed.

What were some of the responses or insights you had while going through these questions?

*Give time for groups to respond.*

Think about what memories and expectations you are creating for children and families in your care. What will children and families believe about relationships because of their relationships with you?

*Pause for responses.*

**Strategies to Build a Secure Relationship with a Very Young Child 1**

- Attempt to understand the child's behaviors, communication, and needs
- Acknowledge and respond to a child as soon as possible
- Use natural opportunities to be physically close and affectionate (holding, rocking, sitting near)



## Slide 19: Strategies to Build a Secure Relationship with a Very Young Child 1

There are some specific key strategies you can use to help form relationships with infants and toddlers—for example, taking advantage of one-on-one routines such as diapering or bottle feeding to talk, to engage in warm responsive interactions, and to engage in joint activities together. What are some other key strategies you've identified so far today, in the video and in discussions, to help form relationships?

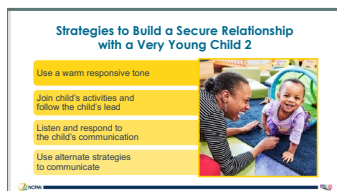
*Pause for responses.*

Here are some specific ideas for you:

Attempt to understand the child's behaviors, communication and needs through **listening and observing**. This includes taking time to observe how a child is interacting with their environment, including how the child interacts with adults and other children.

**Acknowledge and respond** to a child as soon as possible. This includes responding to a child's needs quickly, as well as welcoming a child who has just entered the area of the room you are in.

Use natural opportunities to be physically close and affectionate, **staying at the child's level** as much as possible. Being at a child's level creates more opportunities for eye contact, sharing hugs, rocking, etc.



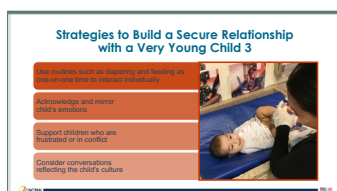
## Slide 20: Strategies to Build a Secure Relationship with a Very Young Child 2

Use a **warm, responsive tone** in communications and interactions.

**Follow the child's lead** by matching your attention to what the child is paying attention to. For example, the child is having fun crawling through a tunnel, so the caregiver joins the activity by waiting for the child on the other side.

**Listen and respond** to the child's attempts to communicate, both verbally and through body language, such as gestures or expressions.

**Use alternative strategies** to communicate with children who are non-verbal, language-delayed, or are dual language learners. Those strategies are most often visual cues, like easy to understand gestures or pictures.



## Slide 21: Strategies to Build a Secure Relationship with a Very Young Child 3

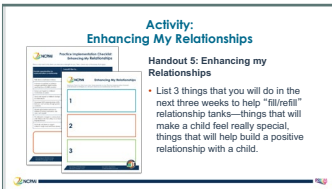
Use routines such as diapering and feeding as **one-on-one time to interact** individually.

**Acknowledge and mirror the child's emotions**—both positive emotions, such as excitement, and more difficult emotions, such as anger and frustration. There are so many ways to do this in the classroom. You can ask questions about emotions being expressed, provide a label for what the child is feeling, and point out a child's feelings to their peers. This will show the child you understand, while at the same time, teaching that child and the other children in the classroom how to recognize and understand emotions. You can also share your own feelings and emotions with the children in your room—in age- and situation-appropriate ways. Even infants who don't yet understand the words you are saying can benefit from your labeling their feelings. Infants as young as five months old can tell the difference between the vocal expressions of different emotions.

When a child is frustrated or having a conflict, help the child identify the feeling and problem solve. This **shows the child you care** and are there to support her. For example, you might say, "You are upset and frustrated. Let's take some deep belly breaths." Or you might say, "You want that toy and Sarah is using it right now. Can we find something else until she is done?"

With toddlers, consider **conversations reflecting the child's culture**, such as family structure, food preferences, religious traditions, or native language. For example, you might say "You have two sisters and a new baby brother at your house," or you might comment "I heard Abuela is coming to pick you up today. Are you excited?"





## Slide 22: Activity: Enhancing My Relationships

Take out ***Handout 5: Enhancing My Relationships***. First, fill out the Practice Implementation Checklist on Communication & Building Relationships by placing stars next to items you feel are your strengths. Then place “x”s in boxes that reflect where you would like to enhance or strengthen your practices.

Then, flip the handout over and think about a specific child in your classroom. Using ideas from the checklist, come up with three examples of ways you’d like to enhance your relationship with that child.

## Building Relationships with Families



## Slide 23: Building Relationships with Families

We cannot truly know and understand each young child in our care unless we know and understand each child’s family. While effective family-caregiver relationships take time to develop, strong relationships are key to promoting young children’s healthy social-emotional development.

To support social-emotional development, we engage with families and children by building positive and goal-oriented relationships. The foundation of family-teacher relationships are built upon mutual respect for the roles and strengths each have to offer.



## Slide 24: Activity: Building a New Relationship

We are going to do an exercise in building relationships. Find a partner you don’t know, or don’t know well. Find a way to get to know your partner, or if you already know your partner, find a way to get to know them better. As you are building that relationship, think about how you started that conversation and write down highlights of what you talked about.

*Give partners about 5 minutes to get to know each other.*

Okay, how did you get to know your partner? How did you start the conversation? What kind of questions did you or your partner ask? What did you learn?

*Pause for responses.*

Often when people are getting to know each other, they start by finding out what they have in common. Usually when we try to get to know someone, we introduce ourselves and our role, and we ask questions to learn about the other person and their strengths. There are many ways we can use this experience to think about how we build relationships with families. One thing you have in common with families is the child in your care. Both you and the child’s family want what is best for the child. As your relationship grows with a family, learn more about the family (e.g., family members, job, school) including their culture (e.g., language, foods, traditions, values).

**Positive, Goal-Oriented Relationships Advance Family and Child Outcomes**

"Positive goal-oriented relationships are based on mutual respect and trust and are developed over time, through a series of interactions between staff and families. Successful relationships focus on families' strengths and a shared commitment to the child's well-being and success."

**Slide 25: Positive, Goal-Oriented Relationships Advance Family and Child Outcomes**

Positive, goal-oriented relationships develop over time through interactions among families, family members, and infant and toddler teachers. These relationships:

- ▶ are fueled by the families' passion for their children
- ▶ are based on mutual respect and trust
- ▶ affirm and celebrate the families' cultures and languages
- ▶ provide opportunities for two-way communications
- ▶ include authentic interactions that are meaningful to those who participate in them
- ▶ often require an awareness of one's personal biases and how those biases can affect mutual respect and trust

When relationships focus on shared goals for infants and toddlers, staff and families can experience the support that comes from knowing that they all are on the same team.

**Supporting the Family-Child Relationship**

- A child's first and primary teacher is the family
- Supporting and enhancing the family-child relationship is one of the most important roles caregivers have
- Caring for infants and toddlers is caring for the family

**Slide 26: Supporting the Family-Child Relationship**

How does building a healthy relationship with families help you have a more secure relationship with their children?

Family-caregiver communication about the child is a means of linking the home and child care environments. Seeking and sharing information contributes to greater knowledge about the child and therefore influences sensitive caretaking practices. One study found that when mother and caregiver reported more frequent communication about the child and the child's experiences, the caregiver's interactions with the child were observed to be more sensitive, supportive, and stimulating (Owen, Ware & Barfoot, 2000).

Because most of us are trained to focus on children, we may not necessarily think about the importance of healthy family-caregiver relationships.

Often caregivers feel they have little control over what happens in the home environments of children they work with. However, building a relationship with the child's family can go a long way to enhancing the parent-child relationship.

Babies can't survive on their own so they depend on the adults around them to care for them. When we provide care for infants and toddlers, we must think about how we engage with families who are the child's primary caregivers and first teachers.

Sometimes building a trusting relationship with a parent or family member can be challenging. For example, many of us use drop-off and pick-up times as our primary times to connect with families. However, those times are often harried and stressful with parents or family members wanting to get to work or home. They are also times when children express strong feelings about beginning or ending a long day.

Sometimes in-person contact with families can be limited for health reasons (e.g., in the case of the pandemic). Making an extra effort to build trusting relationships

with families is critical even if in-person contact and drop-off and pick-up is not an option. Use strategies via phone, zoom, text, or social media, for example, to build relationships with families.

Children observe the adults around them as they engage in interactions and relationships. Observing family members and caregivers engaging in a trusting relationship, working together, and communicating effectively helps children feel more secure in their relationship with that caregiver.

#### Celebrating Families in the Classroom

- Photos of each family group in your classroom (names of family members labelled)
- Family celebration board (new baby, family event, family vacation)
- Acknowledgement of family events in home-classroom communication
- Photo of child's family in their cubby
- Families invited to join group for play, routines, or sharing with the children

### Slide 27: Celebrating Families in the Classroom

An important way to build relationships with families is to show them how they are valued by acknowledging them in images in the classroom and by having them join activities when they can. Here are a few ideas of strategies that you might use. Make sure you know who is in each child's family (as they define their family) and that you can pronounce everyone's name. As you learn about family celebrations and major events, ask them to share with photos or allow you to share with a posting on the bulletin board. This strengthens your relationship with the family and fosters family relationships with each other. Having images of the families of the children enrolled in your class is much more valuable than stock images of families. Infants and toddlers will be interested in photographs of their families and family events.

#### Family Books!



### Slide 28: Family Books

Watch this video of several toddlers and an older child look at their family books in this family child care classroom. Think about the ways that these build relationships with families and help children in their development of their identity and relationships with others.

*Play Family Books (1:33 min)*

*Show the video and then ask the participants these questions:*

- ▶ How does this strategy strengthen a relationship with the family?
- ▶ How might it help the teacher understand the unique culture of the family?
- ▶ How might these be helpful to the children in the classroom?
- ▶ What strategies have you used to strengthen relationships with families?

*Give time for responses.*

### Strategies for Building Relationships with Families

- Communicate daily with families and let families choose their preferred ways to give and receive information (e.g., build a ritual at drop-off or pick-up)
- Greet family members, invite conversation, listen, and follow up
- Have regularly scheduled times for face-to-face meetings
- Respect families' views and child-rearing beliefs
- Seek family evaluations of the program and of your care

## Slide 29: Strategies for Building Relationships with Families

I heard many of the strategies we see here from those who just shared their experiences.

- ▶ **Communicate daily** with families and offer multiple ways to share information—build a ritual at drop-off or pick-up. Ask families their preferred mechanism for receiving ongoing information about their child and program events. Offer choices including text message, email, phone call, communication book, and other options specific to your program.
- ▶ **Greet parents** when they enter the classroom and help them feel welcome.
- ▶ **Invite conversation**, listen, and follow up.
- ▶ **Have regularly scheduled times for face-to-face meetings**, but offer alternatives for those who need them.
- ▶ **Respect families' views** and child-rearing beliefs, and reinforce their role as the expert in raising and caring for their child. Ask families to complete a child-rearing or child routine survey. Your survey should include information about the child's temperament, home language, family routines, religious and holiday traditions, as well as routines related to toileting, feeding, and sleeping. You can use this information to provide families with specific social-emotional resources and to help the child adjust to your environment.
- ▶ **Seek evaluations and feedback** from families about your care and the program.

### Strategies for Building Relationships with Families (Continued)

- Seek families' knowledge
- Ask families questions
- Ask families to help
- Get to know family members
- Share something personal
- Share observations about their child



## Slide 30: Strategies for Building Relationships with Families (Continued)

It's so critical to form trusting relationships with families. When families and caregivers form a trusting relationship, infants and toddlers feel more secure in their care, the care can be more attuned to the needs of the child, and the quality of the care in all settings can be higher and more consistent.

- ▶ **Seek families' knowledge of their child's strengths, needs, and interests.** Families can bring something from home, that is unique to their family, for the children to play with; or as a class create an "All About Me and My Family" showcase highlighting one student each week.
- ▶ **Ask families to help.** Create opportunities to invite families into the classroom. For example, you can host a monthly snack and story time. Families can bring their child's favorite family or cultural food and book to read during story time.
- ▶ **Get to know family members as individuals** outside of their role as caregiver. Ask about their work or what they are doing over the weekend. Additionally, you can share something personal about yourself.
- ▶ **Share observations about their child.** Provide families with positive updates using their preferred mode of communication.

## Understanding Families: Cultural Influences



### Slide 31: Cultural Influences

To successfully form relationships, it is especially important for caregivers to have an awareness and understanding of how culture is a significant factor in both how families raise their children and how caregivers provide care for them.

Cultural differences in families' beliefs and practices affect:

- ▶ how young children behave
- ▶ how young children adjust to care settings and other early childhood programs
- ▶ how families care for their children
- ▶ how young children respond to caregivers
- ▶ how caregivers and families communicate with each other
- ▶ what a problem solving process might look like

How do you define culture and what does it mean to you?

*Pause for responses.*

Culture can be defined as a system of shared values, beliefs, and attitudes that shape or influence perceptions and behaviors.

How do you see culture in your early care and learning settings?

*Pause for responses.*

How might culture influence family beliefs? Staff beliefs?

*Pause for responses.*

What about a culture's influence on child behaviors?

Do staff in your programs come from backgrounds that are the same as or different from those of the families you serve? Are there cultural differences between staff members? Between families?

*Pause for responses.*

Early childhood care settings provide a unique environment in which adults and children alike can learn about and honor differences in values, beliefs, and perceptions. How does this take place in your setting? For example, what happens when caregivers disagree about how holidays should be celebrated with toddlers? How does your program handle differences between a family's and teacher's ideas about discipline?

*Pause for responses.*



## How Culture Influences Caregiver Behavior

- Individual and culturally based beliefs, values, and perceptions affect caregiver attitudes about behavior
- Infants and toddlers don't come to care knowing what behaviors are appropriate in group care settings



## Slide 32: How Culture Influences Caregiver Behavior

Everyone brings specific values, beliefs, and assumptions about child rearing and child development to their work with infants and toddlers.

There are individual and culturally-based beliefs that affect our perceptions and assumptions about behavior (e.g., children should be seen and not heard or children should sit quietly at the meal table).

As educators, we must understand and be responsive to each child's unique culture (1) to understand and promote the development of the child and (2) to establish reciprocal relationships with families.

Studies show that families and teachers often have differences in their expectations about children's behavior (which are largely based on family members' and caregivers' own cultural and family experiences). Behavioral expectations are developed in the context of culture, family, and community. For example, a parent may carry an infant most of the time and a caregiver may want to place the infant on the floor.

Recognizing and acknowledging another person's point of view and reaching a shared solution is critical in providing high-quality care to infants and toddlers. In the next slide, you will see some examples of differences in groups of families' expectations for their children's development.

## Age Expectations for Feeding Milestones

Mean Age in Months

Task	Caucasian	Puerto Rican	Filipino
Eat Solid Food	8.2 <sup>a</sup>	10.1 <sup>c,d</sup>	6.77 <sup>b</sup>
Training Cup	12.0 <sup>a</sup>	17.1 <sup>c,d</sup>	21.9 <sup>c,d</sup>
Utensils	17.7 <sup>a</sup>	26.5 <sup>c,d</sup>	32.4 <sup>c,d</sup>
Finger Food	8.9	9.4	9.5
Wean (breast or bottle)	16.8 <sup>a</sup>	18.2 <sup>a</sup>	36.2 <sup>c,d</sup>

## Slide 33: Age Expectations for Feeding Milestones

This slide highlights the findings from research studies (cited on the slides) in differences in developmental expectations between various cultural groups based on their cultural beliefs.

Take a look at some of the milestones where you see letters besides the numbers. The letters denote those milestones where there was a statistically significant difference and the population there was a difference with. Note that, of course, not all Caucasian, Puerto Rican, and Filipino families share these beliefs about age level expectations. We know there is great variation within each group; however, this study demonstrates how in certain areas, across different ethnic groups, there can be very different developmental expectations for children based on individual cultures.

Let's take a look at the "Utensils" category. In this study, Caucasian families expected children to start using utensils around 17.7 months. Puerto Rican families expected toddlers to use utensils around 26.5 months and Filipino families expected toddlers to start using utensils around 32.4 months of age. It would not be surprising if some families questioned your program's expectations of emphasis on independence during mealtimes if their expectations were different than the programs.

*If participants are curious about specifics, the superscript tells you the group(s) where the significant difference was found. For example, for eating solid foods, Puerto Rican was significantly different from both Caucasian and Filipino, but Caucasian and Filipino were not significantly different from each other.*

**Implicit Bias**

- We all have them!
- They are unconscious
- They are attitudes and stereotypes that influence our perceptions and actions
- They influence how we identify family strengths and build relationships.

**Slide 34: Implicit Bias**

It is important in our discussion on building relationships with families to also think about the influence of our biases and how they affect our relationships with families. Everyone has implicit biases. They are unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that are formed through our experiences and what we have been taught or observed. Unconscious beliefs or stereotypes influence how we behave, how we make decisions, and our judgements of others. These biases can influence how we view families, how we identify or notice their strengths, and our ability to build strong relationships.

**Reflect on Your Implicit Bias**

- Take a moment...
- Reflect on a time you had a negative impression of another person.
- What influenced that impression?
- Can you identify any unconscious biases that you explicitly work to not be influenced by?

**Slide 35: Reflect on Your Implicit Biases**

We all have biases. They are not something we like to talk about. You might have a memory from your childhood where a family member or peer said something that fostered a stereotype or negative impression of someone—maybe because of their race, ethnicity, ability, age, or faith. Take a moment and privately reflect on that time. What implicit or unconscious biases do you have?

*Pause for reflection.*

**Cultural Influences: Large Group Discussion**

- How might differing cultural expectations among you and other caregivers and/or families impact your work with children and their social-emotional development?
- As a caregiver, can you think of any examples where you had differing values, beliefs and ideas about how to care for an infant?

**Slide 36: Cultural Influences: Large Group Discussion**

How might differing cultural expectations among you and other caregivers or families impact your work with infants and toddlers, and their social-emotional development?

*The presenter should be prepared to share their own example before asking participants to share.*

As a caregiver, can you think of any examples where you had differing values, beliefs, and ideas about how to care for an infant?

*Pause for responses.*

A caregiver or family may view the child as challenging if they do not display behaviors that match with their expectations about behavior or development.

Different expectations among caregivers or families may cause these families to judge each other. This can strain the relationships and ultimately impact the quality of care and support children and families receive.

Very young children and their families may be treated differently if their behavior and expectations don't align with the caregivers' expectations. For example, we may avoid a parent or act more reserved around someone who dresses differently or looks different, ultimately impacting the relationship. When behavior expectations between your program and the family are different, cultural disconnects can lead to behavior challenges, as well as disagreements between families and care providers.

Children and families may demonstrate behavioral reactions (e.g., showing frustration, being withdrawn or exhibiting acting-out behaviors, etc.) to things they are uncomfortable with. For example:

- ▶ If infants are fed on a schedule instead of on-demand
- ▶ If they are pushed to nap when they are not ready or stay up when they are ready to sleep

**Cultural Influences: Partner Discussion**

- According to your cultural/family beliefs and values, toddlers should complete potty learning by 32 months. The family of a young child you care for expects their child to complete potty learning at 20 months.
- What can you do to best understand and support this child and family?

**Slide 37: Cultural Influences: Partner Discussion**

Let's talk about some scenarios that may sound familiar to you. Discuss in pairs the question you see on the screen.

*Give about 5 minutes to discuss.*

What ideas did you come up with to support this child and family?

*Affirm responses, then share ideas not mentioned.*

Can you share examples from your own work of when you had cultural differences with families?

*Pause for responses.*

Can you share examples from your own work of when you had cultural differences with other caregivers?

*Pause for responses.*

Think about how those differences may have impacted relationship-building. What might you do (or have done) to address these differences?

*Pause for responses.*

Now that we've shared some of our own experiences, we're going to hear a story about cultural influences in the classroom.

**Strategies for Supporting Cultural Influences**

- Visit families' homes and communities
- Support children's home languages
- Develop cultural competency
- Share picture books where children in the stories come from around the world or diverse cultures
- Ask families to share a special lullaby or song from their culture
- Ensure photos and pictures in the center reflect the race and ethnicity of families served

**Slide 38: Strategies for Supporting Cultural Influences**

Here are a few specific strategies to support cultural influences in your program. Some may work better with your program design than others, so take some time to look at the list and think about what you could incorporate, if you aren't already.

**Visit Families' Homes and Communities**

- ▶ Caregivers can gain an understanding of the strengths children and families bring with them to the child care program or setting.
- ▶ Support children's home languages: the earliest experiences of young children shape their growth and development, including language and communication skills. All young children need support for the development of their home or primary language. Infants and toddlers may also feel more emotionally secure when they hear their home language in a child care setting.

### Training in Cultural Competency

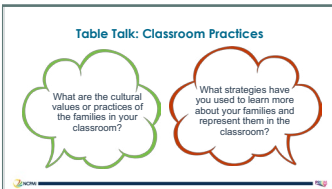
- ▶ Acquiring information can be a first step in increasing caregiver sensitivity. In order to develop the skills necessary to work with a diverse population, it is important that caregivers of all backgrounds receive meaningful training in cultural competency. Cultural competency requires a set of skills including (but not limited to) knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures, diverse parenting practices, family values and customs, and dual language acquisition processes.

### Diversity in Materials

- ▶ Share picture books where children in the stories come from around the world or diverse cultures. It is important that children “see” themselves represented in the media in the classrooms and programs (i.e., books, posters, videos, etc.).

### Let Families Help

- ▶ Ask families to share a special lullaby or song from their culture.



### Slide 39: Table Talk: Classroom Practices

At you table, each participant will discuss these two questions with your table mates.

What are the cultural values or practices of the families in your classroom?

What strategies have you used to learn more about your families and represent them in the classroom?

*Provide groups with 15 minutes to discuss.*

*When the table discussions end, ask if any participant wants to share a strategy that was discussed at their table with the larger group.*

## Understanding Families: Challenges & Strengths

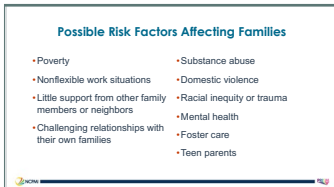


### Slide 40: Understanding Families: Challenges & Strengths

As we consider how we can work with families and equip them to support their child's development, we should also consider the strengths and the challenges that families experience. It is important to be aware of and have a deep understanding of the factors that can affect young children and their families, in order to best support them.

Family strengths—such as having involved grandparents or extended family, living in a supportive community, being bilingual, or having services that support children with special needs—are important to acknowledge and value. Families also experience challenges. Poverty, racism, neighborhood violence, foster care or child protective service involvement, substance use, and depression and mental health challenges are all examples of experiences that can pose potential risks to child development.

Knowledge of these and other factors helps create a deeper understanding of young children's lives. This knowledge is critical to your ability to help children learn and develop well.



## Slide 41: Possible Risk Factors Affecting Families

Children's early social and emotional development depends on a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, and the community. These influences affect development in a number of ways.

**Risk factors** are obstacles to healthy development, but **protective factors** are those things that offset risk and help young children become resilient so they can bounce back from challenges that arise.

For example, one influence on an infant's or toddler's social-emotional development is the general level of stress a family experiences and the family's capacity to adapt to that stress. Conditions, such as poverty and community violence, create inequitable circumstances and stress that impact a families' health and well-being. Additionally, their ability to provide consistent and responsive care can be adversely impacted. Having strong, supportive relationships can help families cope and grow in challenging times.

Think about the influences on a young child's development within the first 3 years and the effect these influences could have.

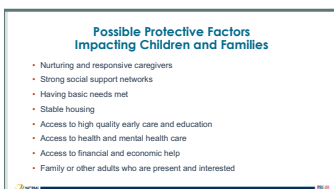
What are some early childhood influences or possible risk and protective (or positive) factors that come to your mind?

*Pause for responses, then summarize.*

What are some possible effects of these influences, that is, both risk and protective factors?

*Pause for responses, then summarize.*

The items on this list are just some of the risk factors. On the next slide we'll also focus on the positive or protective influences as well. It's important to understand the variety of factors that impact children's social-emotional development. Understanding family experiences can help to best respond to young children's developmental needs (Gilliam et al., 2016).



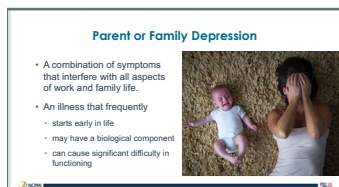
## Slide 42: Possible Protective Factors Impacting Children and Families

The items on this list are just some examples of experiences that have a protective influence on young children's social-emotional development. In other words, these experiences positively impact a child's social-emotional development and help buffer the impact of risk factors or difficult experiences that children and families may have.

- ▶ Nurturing and responsive caregivers
- ▶ Strong social support networks



- ▶ Having basic needs met
- ▶ Stable housing
- ▶ Access to high-quality early care and education
- ▶ Access to high-quality medical and mental health care
- ▶ Access to financial and economic help
- ▶ Family or other adults who are present and interested



### Slide 43: Parental or Family Depression

There is one influence that we should pay very close attention to as we think about factors that strongly impact very young children's social-emotional development—parental depression.

Depression is:

- ▶ a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, enjoy life, and parent
- ▶ an illness that frequently starts early in life, that may have a biological component and that can cause significant difficulty in functioning
- ▶ a common but sometimes invisible condition that responds to prevention and treatment

Depression is a common condition that affects people of all backgrounds, classes, and ethnicities. Approximately 15.6 million children live with a depressed parent (NRC & IOM, 2009).

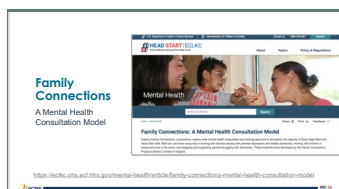


### Slide 44: Depression Can Impact Child Development

While not always true, parents who are experiencing depression have more difficulty responding sensitively to their children due to the symptoms of depression. Parental depression can impact a child's development in several ways:

- ▶ The negative effects of maternal depression on children's health and development can start during pregnancy. Research on untreated prenatal depression finds links to poor birth outcomes, including low birth weight, prematurity, and obstetric complications.
- ▶ Parents who are experiencing depression may lack the energy to carry out consistent routines and to have fun with their children.
- ▶ For example, 3-year-old children whose mothers were depressed in their infancy perform more poorly on cognitive and behavioral tasks.
- ▶ "The impact of depression in mothers has also been linked with health and safety concerns. Mothers experiencing depression are less likely to breastfeed, follow the back-to-sleep guidelines, and engage in age-appropriate safety practices, such as car seats and socket covers. Parents experiencing depression are also less likely to be able to follow health advice for their young children" (Knitzer, Theberge, & Johnson, 2008).

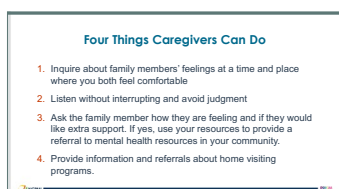
The goal of understanding information about depression is not to help you become clinicians, but to raise your awareness about the signs, symptoms, prevalence, and impact of depression on young children's social-emotional development. It is also important to note that parental depression may likely impact a caregiver's ability to form a close relationship with the parent. Knowing some basic facts about depression and its symptoms is useful in thinking about how to best support families and their young children.



## Slide 45: Family Connections

Here is a terrific resource to help teachers and families better understand depression and effectively talk about it.

Family Connections was a project funded by the Office of Head Start as an Innovation and Improvement Project to strengthen the capacity of Early Head Start and Head Start staff in dealing with parental depression and related adversities. You can find out more about it on their website.



## Slide 46: Four Things Caregivers Can Do

When it comes to mental health, many people are unsure of how to respond or what to say. People may be afraid to say the wrong thing. There are strategies for what you can do if you believe a parent or family member may be suffering from depression:

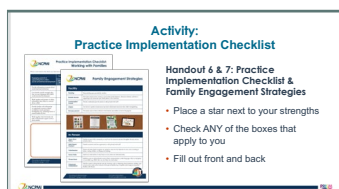
- ▶ Inquire about the family member's feelings at a time and place where you both feel comfortable
- ▶ Listen without interrupting and avoid judgment
- ▶ Ask the family member how they are feeling and if they would like extra support. If yes, use your resources to provide a referral in your community.
- ▶ Provide information and referrals about local home visiting programs.

## Wrap-Up & Reflection



## Slide 47: Wrap-Up & Reflection

Now, you're going to have time to reflect on your own classroom practices that support relationships with families.



## Slide 48: Practice Implementation Checklist

Take out **Handout 6**, which is a practice implementation checklist that covers engaging and communicating with families. You also might like to reference **Handout 7**, which has some specific strategies or tools for engaging families. It might help remind you of things you are doing, or give you ideas about things you might like to do to engage families.

*Give about 5 minutes for participants to complete.*

How can we as teachers and programs engage with each family to ensure that we are supporting the whole family?

How can we as teachers and programs ensure that we are working together to support the child's development?

*Leave time for the group to respond. Remind participants that these checklists can be used during coaching, action planning, or self-reflection after this session.*



## Slide 49: Essential Positive Messages

During this training, we have been discussing how social-emotional wellness develops within the context of relationships. We've talked about how we use ourselves to help infants and toddlers develop close, secure relationships, and how to manage significant developmental shifts. We've talked about how important our support is to families.

Now we're going to take a personal look at what we want for young children, and at the messages we want to be sure we are sending to them. Let's step back to your relationship with the children in your room.

Each of us, or each group, will create one statement that communicates how valuable children are to you and how committed you are to them. Then, write down three ways that you might put the statement into practice.

For example, you might create the statement, "I want you to know that we care about you and that people can be counted on and trusted to keep you safe."

The three practices to communicate the statement could be:

- ▶ Respond to your discomfort as quickly as possible
- ▶ Stay close to assure you that I am nearby if you need me
- ▶ Smile often and have fun with you

This is a time to reflect and pull together thoughts from everything we've gone over thus far, so let's take a few minutes to complete this activity.

*Circulate around the room while individuals or groups work, giving positive feedback.*

*Ask each group or individual to share.*

*If you notice groups need support getting started, you can use the Sample Essential Positive Messages & Action Statements, below, to help generate ideas. This list is intended to help you facilitate small group discussions, but is not meant to be read in its entirety.*

## Sample Essential Positive Messages and Action Statements

**I want you to learn that your needs will be met so you can feel free to relax, explore, and learn from the environment.** I will:

- ▶ Respond to your discomfort as quickly as possible
- ▶ Speak to you in a soothing voice to let you know I am coming
- ▶ Stay close to assure you I am nearby if you need me

**I want you to know that you can communicate your needs effectively.** I will:

- ▶ Observe you carefully to read your cues
- ▶ Respond to you by mirroring your sounds and words
- ▶ Understand your behavior has meaning

**I want you to learn to gradually and eventually build your own skills to soothe, comfort, and regulate yourself.** I will:

- ▶ Learn and try many ways to try to soothe you
- ▶ Refrain from ignoring or dismissing your feelings
- ▶ Stay calm to help you feel calm

**I want you to know that relationships are positive and people can be counted on and trusted to keep you safe.** I will:

- ▶ Keep you safe
- ▶ Have fun with you
- ▶ Smile often

**I want you to gradually learn to understand your own feelings and express them appropriately.** I will:

- ▶ Identify my own feelings
- ▶ Work to match my facial expressions to my words and tone of voice
- ▶ Talk about emotions and use a variety of feeling words

**I want you to treat others with kindness and respect.** I will:

- ▶ Hold you, pat your back, and hug you
- ▶ Speak to you at eye level
- ▶ Tell you what to do instead of what not to do

### Major Messages to Take Home

- It is within families that children learn to experience and communicate emotion.
- Early social-emotional wellness develops within the context of relationships.
- Caregivers are critically important to social-emotional development of infants and toddlers.
- Caregivers who use a variety of strategies will be better able to form close relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families.

## Slide 50: Major Messages to Take Home

Today we've taken time to focus on relationships. We started with a discussion about attachment and your relationships with the children you care for. Then we moved on to your relationships with families. We discussed the impact of culture as well as risk and protective factors on relationships. Because early social-emotional wellness and skills develop within the context of relationships, it is essential that caregivers are prepared with a variety of strategies to strengthen relationships. We hope this training has provided you with some new ideas you can use, and perhaps has given you some thoughts or ideas you'd like to discuss with your coach, other team members, or your supervisor.

### Thank You

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H2000170003. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



## Slide 51: Thank You

Thank you for attending, and I look forward to seeing you next time, where we will discuss *(share information about next training)*.