



Supporting children begins with supporting relationships

As early childhood educators and early intervention practitioners it is important that we are aware of how to build positive relationships with the children and families we serve. However, sometimes we are unsure of how to build, foster and maintain high quality relationships that impact the lives of the children we encounter each day.

The interactions educators have with children and families set the for the educational and support provided to the children in our care. Often early childhood educators and practitioners act as the first line of contact for children with disabilities in the early care setting. Educators and practitioners should understand that supportive relationships are the foundation of emotional well-being for children and families (Delahooke, 2017).

Educators and practitioners must be able to work alongside families during an initial diagnosis of a disability. Families and caregivers may experience multiple feelings during the process. Early educators and early intervention practitioners can act as a buffer by offering high quality resources about a specific disability and assist in locating community resources, such as a Parent Training and Information Center: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>

Early childhood educators and early intervention practitioners should be aware of family and caregiver perceptions. This means becoming aware of how what we say and do may impact the family or caregivers emotional functioning and perception of the child and understanding of the child's disability, their hopes, and dreams for their child's future. Each family and caregiver like each child, is unique in how their child's difference is understood and processed emotionally (Delahooke, 2017).

“Relationships are like a tapestry, formed from the thread of interactions through one’s life.”

- Delahooke





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Tips for Success

1

Meet the family or caregiver first: If possible, find a quiet space to get to learn more about the family and their roles. Learn about some of the child's likes, dislikes, and routine. In the age of technology, we can use Zoom, Skype or other conferencing platforms to hold meetings.

2

Observe the child in the natural setting. The natural setting or natural environment is described as, is any place where the child and family live, learn, and play

3

Discover how the child uses relationships to feel safe, engage in play and experiences connections with others. Understand key members of the child's team in school, home, and community.

4

Awareness of interactions with families and caregivers.

5

Establish a trusting relationship with child and family. This is done through reflection of one's beliefs of inclusions, equity, and diversity of the family system.

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