



Self Guided Learning Package

**Responsible Children: A Better Future**

PsCTas



PsCTas is a program of Lady Gowrie Tasmania. The Australian Government through the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), funds the Professional Support Coordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

## Self Guided Learning Packages

Welcome to the \***Community Child Care Victoria**, Self-Guided Learning Package.

Self-Guided Learning Packages offer an alternative to attending training sessions and can be completed at your convenience in your own time. They are also a valuable resource for Directors/Coordinators wishing to undertake staff training in-house. This series of Learning Packages aims to develop skills and knowledge which will be valuable to you in providing quality child care programs.

### **Self-help Questions**

Throughout the Package there are self-help questions. These are designed to enable the reader to reflect on the learning which has taken place and to encourage further exploration of the topic if questions remain unanswered.

### **Support and Assistance**

PsCTas is available to support you/your staff while working through the package. Should you require assistance with any of the tasks within the package, or further information on the topic, please contact PsCTas:

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## Responsible children: a better future

You have chosen to complete the **Responsible Children: a Better Future** Self-Guided Learning Package. The aim of this package is to raise the awareness of, and develop skills in, empowering children to develop high levels of positive self esteem and positive interactions with others. Positive self esteem in young children and adults helps to promote a harmonious and productive living and learning environment where children and adults share mutual trust and respect.

Successful completion and assessment of this package contributes to the following competencies from the nationally accredited Community Services Training Package:

### **CHCFC3C Foster and enhance children's social, emotional and psychological development**

4.4 Appropriate, supportive and effective communication between children is acknowledged and encouraged

The following learning outcomes are addressed:

- Identify and acknowledge positive interactions between children
- Identify strategies to encourage positive and peaceful interactions between children

## Introduction

In children's services there is the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and social responsibility in children. Fairness, negotiation, conflict resolution, respect for the rights of other children and caring for others are attributes that staff can support children to develop based on a strong sense of self. This package will look at strategies in supporting children to interact positively with each other, build friendships and provide peaceful solutions to issues.

It is important for young children to learn to work and play in an environment that promotes positive interactions and respect for all. Children will develop and learn skills of socialisation as they mature and as they receive positive role models from the adults who care for them.

Developing social skills in young children begins with helping children to feel encouraged, supported and respected. Children need to feel emotionally safe in their environment and to have predictable and reliable adults who are responsive to their needs and stage of development.

Children need to be nurtured, accepted and have a strong sense of belonging in order to explore their environment and to learn how to deal with the conflicts and challenges they face along the way.

This package will consider a range of issues related to:

- Sharing in children's lives
- Developing children's self esteem and sense of belonging
- Encouraging children to accept diversity
- Developing and promoting positive interactions and friendships
- Encouraging children to support each other
- Peaceful problem solving

## **Sharing in children's lives and developing children's self esteem and sense of belonging**

### **Starting with the adult**

An important aspect of helping children to develop a sense of responsibility is for adults to recognise that most of the energy and work in promoting those skills starts with the adult themselves. The adult being able to reflect upon and consider ones own attitudes, behaviours and social skills is a good place to start before concentrating and focussing upon the children's social skills.

As adults we do not always think back to our own values, the ways we were brought up or parented, we often just keep doing or saying things that were done or said to us as we grew up.

Working with children and helping them to develop positive self esteem and a sense of belonging requires the adults to think carefully about the things we say to children and how we redirect their inappropriate behaviours, the words we choose to use and our general attitude about children.

A major responsibility in working with children is for the adult to demonstrate skills which promote trust and respect consistently for all children in the program. This requires the adult to be positive, respectful in both words and actions and to encourage children. Starting with ourselves before we concentrate upon the child is the first major responsibility the adult has in working to promote a positive environment for children.

### **Self Help Questions 1**

A. What do you think most helps children to feel good about themselves?

B. How often do you hear yourself saying, “Don’t”, “No”, or raising your voice? In what situations does this happen?

C. What are the things about young children’s behaviour that triggers an emotional or negative response from you? What do you do to contain your reaction?

### **The importance of relationship**

Building relationships with children provides a basis by which children will be responsive to adults and to others. Building the relationship between the adult and the child requires the adult to be aware of a number of key elements.

The adult needs to:

- Be reliable
- Model respect
- Demonstrate trust
- Acknowledge feelings and needs
- Encourage
- Emphasise the positive elements of the child
- Be calm and relaxed

## Self Help Questions 2

A. Work through the key elements for building a successful relationship with a child below. List some practical examples of how you could demonstrate each key element and the challenges you may face in doing so.

<b>Key Element</b>	<b>Practical Examples</b>	<b>Challenges that May be Faced</b>
<b>Be reliable</b>		
<b>Model respect</b>		
<b>Demonstrate trust</b>		
<b>Acknowledge feelings and needs</b>		
<b>Encourage</b>		
<b>Emphasise the positive elements of the child</b>		
<b>Be calm and relaxed</b>		

<p>B. What do you consider to be the main aspects of promoting a positive relationship with a child?</p>		

**A sense of belonging**

Children need to actively participate in an environment and to feel an important part of the program. Alongside promoting positive interactions and relationships between children and staff, providing opportunities for children to develop a sense of ownership and belonging is an important element within the program.

There are many ordinary every day experiences that can promote a sense of belonging and empowerment to children. These can be as simple as greeting and farewelling children at either end of the day. Acknowledging the child as being an individual is an important aspect of promoting a sense of belonging.

Allowing for children to have real choices during the day, providing opportunities for them to make small decisions about themselves, what they wish to play with, who they want to play with, when they wish to rest or eat morning tea are all strategies we can use that are practical and do not cause undue disruption to a program.

Being one of ten, fifteen or twenty five children means that each child needs opportunities to feel some level of belonging. Providing special places for their belongings and as much personal space as the environment allows is also important. Children need to feel that the room or play space is “theirs” and that they have some say in when and what they will do. This also then provides practice for children in decision making, problem solving and learning how to interact with others and behave responsibly.

**Self Help Questions 3**

A. List five examples of how you could promote a sense of belonging in the environment.

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B. List five examples of decision-making and choices that children could make in the environment.

C. In what ways could you set up a room to promote and encourage personal space?

### **Encouraging children to accept diversity and developing and promoting positive interactions and friendships**

Once a child is feeling emotionally safe and secure within an environment and has established trusting relationships with staff, the child is able to also consider interactions with other children.

Depending upon the age of a child, interactions and relationships will generally develop naturally.

Children over the age of three, particularly, will show an interest in other children and at times may initiate some play or interaction with another child. Friendship itself may not develop as in the primary years, as young children in their early childhood years interact in different ways and their relationships with adults are still the focus. However, providing an environment that promotes acceptance of each other and tolerance for all children begins as early as the baby's room.

The environment and the way it is set up plays a significant role in helping children to accept diversity and to accept others in the environment. In addition, the way an adult speaks to others, talks about difference or interacts with children or adults who may be different from themselves or others is a powerful and important part of helping children to accept diversity and acceptance of each other.

Diversity is simply a reflection within any community that all people share similarities and differences. Difference provides a positive aspect in which all of us can bring a unique element into a community in which we either work or live.

Many people fear difference or have not experienced a diverse range of people or culture or abilities. Some people carry values or prejudices or preconceived ideas about diversity that they grew up with and have not had an opportunity to re-visit or re-think.

Professionals working with young children must carefully consider their own prejudices or experiences. Adults must endeavour to convey a positive attitude to all children and to actively promote diversity as a positive and productive aspect of any community.

#### Self Help Questions 4

A. Think about the messages you grew up with regarding people or things that were different from your own family or culture. List some of these and reflect upon what prejudices you may currently hold. (We all hold prejudices so don't worry if you find some!!)

B. How might you re-visit these messages from your own childhood and what messages do you think could shift in your thinking to be more accepting of diversity.

C. Acceptance of diversity does not require you to be an expert on everything and everyone. How might you simply demonstrate diversity within an environment of young children?

D. Keeping in mind that children in the early childhood years will not approach or engage in friendship as older children or adults do, what types of play experiences might you provide to promote opportunities for children to be working or playing alongside each other without necessarily having to play 'with' each other.

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## **Encouraging children to support each other**

### **Peaceful problem solving**

In order for children to accept and encourage each other, the environment needs to model support and encouragement for all children and staff. Modelling by the adults is one of the most effective and powerful strategies in which young children have the opportunity to observe and imitate.

The language adults use with children is therefore very important in reflecting and acknowledging the needs, feelings and thoughts of each other.

### **Reflective Listening**

One of the ways in which this can be modelled by the adult is through a technique known as "Reflective Listening". This acknowledges how a child feels he/she is recognised and respected and helps a young child to view their feelings and responses as valid.

Reflective listening does not allow or encourage children to express feelings in inappropriate ways but rather acknowledges things such as "I know it is sad for you when Mummy has to leave" or "I know you feel frustrated at the moment because it is time to pack up".

This acknowledgment enables a young child to see that they are in fact able to feel things, even negative feelings and that words can be used to express feelings. This over time, helps a child to use language (words) rather than kicking or hurting another. As a child matures, they in turn are then more likely to express their needs or thoughts to others and thus, help to encourage and help each other.

### **Encouragement**

Encouragement itself is a very important part of helping children to support each other. Children hearing adults use encouraging phrases, such as, "I can see you really tried hard today with that", or "I really liked it when you....." These phrases help children to see that they can encourage each other and in so doing, support each other.

Support for young children may not involve deep level thinking such as support through a crisis, or understanding the impact of separating parents etc. but the support may simply be to acknowledge each other, respect each other's space, express feelings in appropriate ways rather than hurting each other and to grow in awareness that all of us, children and adults need encouraging and support.

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### Self Help Questions 5

A. List five ways in which you could model encouragement to a child.

B. Think about reflective listening. Try to practice this technique with people you live with or work with. A strategy that may help is to start your response with, "It seems like you are feeling...."

C. What types of play could you set up to encourage children to play alongside each other and to interact in supportive ways without necessarily all having to play exactly the same way with exactly the same thing.

### A peaceful environment

Promoting a peaceful environment is not just about interactions between 'staff and children' and 'children and children'. It is also about:

- Interactions between staff and staff
- Interactions between staff and parents
- An environment that is calm and relaxing
- An environment that is flexible with routines
- An environment that provides opportunity for children to play alone and have personal space

- An environment that views each child as an individual and attempts to meet each individual need
- A calm quiet manner of interaction between staff and children
- An unhurried pace to the day
- The way materials and experiences/activities are set up also helps to promote a peaceful environment
- Minimising competition between children
- Avoiding games that have winners and losers
- Creative play with dress ups and dramatic play experiences
- Cosy corners and cubby houses where children can feel a little on their own
- Collage, pasting and painting that allows children to create what they want, not having to “make” something that has been designed or prescribed by the adult

### Self Help Questions 6

For each of the following points, provide examples of how you could plan and encourage for a peaceful environment.

	<b>Strategies for planning and encouraging a peaceful environment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interactions - staff and staff</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interactions - staff and parents</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interactions - staff and children</b></li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The environment</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Routines</b></li> </ul>	

**Summary**

Promoting responsible children does not begin with a focus on the child. It begins with the adults and the environment which provide the basis for support, encouragement and modelling of appropriate ways of expressing feelings and supporting each other.

Empowering children, helping them to interact positively with each other and to acknowledge and respect each other is a direct result of the way in which the adults interact and set up an environment.

In order for children to learn about responsibility, positive interactions and support, they need adults to model responsibility, respect, trust and reliability. The environment needs to offer a safety and consistency which emphasises creativity, choices, and opportunities for playing alongside others as well as having some personal space.

Children are more likely to develop responsibility toward themselves and others if they feel safe are supported and encouraged in an environment that promotes diversity, acceptance and self esteem.

**Responsible children begins with responsible adults!**

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## References and Resources

Dau, Elizabeth (Editor) 2001 The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) Pearson Education NSW

Greenman, Jim (1998) Places for Childhoods Making Quality Happen in the Real World Exchange Press USA

Greenman, Jim & Stonehouse, Anne (1997) Prime Times A Handbook for Excellence in Infant and Toddler Programs Longman South Melbourne

Harrison, Jeanette (1996) Understanding Children (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ACER Australia

## ASSESSMENT TASK

Using the information from the package, your service and the self help questions, complete the following task and return it to the In-service Training Team.

1. Provide four examples of what you would define as positive interactions between children.

2. Identify two strategies you can use to encourage children to use supportive language with each other.

3. Provide four examples of how you could acknowledge positive interactions between children.

4. Consider how a peaceful and positive environment can be promoted for children, and between children using the headings listed below

**The program, experiences/activities – please provide 4 examples**

P S C T a S

**The environment routines** – please provide 4 examples

5. Develop a hand-out that could be used for parents or staff that would provide practical ideas of how to use encouraging language for children. *(use another page if required)*



## Self-Guided Learning Package

# Responsible children: a better future

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Address you would like your Statement of Attainment sent to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Approximate time taken to complete this package: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick one

- I completed the assessment task as an individual  
 I completed the assessment task as a member of a group

Name of group (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please attach this page to your Assessment Task when you send it to  
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