

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

What do we  
mean by  
communicating  
with others

We use our communication skills as tools to interact with other people. Children need to be able to use both verbal and non-verbal communication including speech, gesture, facial expression and body language in order to communicate with others. Children learn these skills in a variety of social contexts.

Why is it  
important

Learning how to talk to and listen to others and how to engage in conversation helps to build and strengthen our relationships with others. Being able to communicate with others also facilitates learning and the exchange of information with others.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

### Communicating non-verbally

Children benefit from understanding that we can communicate with others both verbally (through speech) and non-verbally. Different types of non-verbal communication, such as eye-contact, facial expressions and gestures, can be used in different situations. Practicing non-verbal communication in groups and in pairs helps children understand and learn how to use non-verbal communication in appropriate ways.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use non-verbal communication
- Discuss how to use non-verbal communication in different situations

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Act out gestures that can give us information without saying a word. Wave to say hello, shake your head no, give a thumbs up to say 'Brilliant job!' Have children guess the gesture's meaning. *"See, I didn't have to use words for you to know what I meant!"*
- Welcome to our house, quiet mouse! Have children practice greeting others without saying a word by walking around the room giving high fives, smiling and waving to their friends very quietly!
- Share a smile! Encourage children to share a smile and then ask them how it makes them feel. *"Can you share a smile with someone to make them feel happy today? How does sharing a smile make you feel?"*

#### Tip

Throughout the day, encourage children to look at others when speaking to them (if they feel comfortable doing so) and to listen carefully when others are speaking.

#### Tip

Praise children when they use smiles, nods or eye contact during interactions and conversations with others. It can be useful for children to practice these skills in pairs.

#### Tip

Encourage children to use a brave voice, smile and make themselves big when talking to others.

### Engaging in conversation

Children learn the rules of conversation (turn taking, active listening, responding to questions, eye contact) through warm, engaging interactions. These interactions can take place naturally throughout the day (e.g. when role playing, working on a task, during circle time).

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Encourage interesting conversations among children as a whole group, smaller groups or pairs
- Give children lots of opportunities to practice conversation during everyday activities such as arts and crafts projects

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Shop Talk! Engage children in shop role play which supports lots of back-and-forth interactions. Help to extend their conversation and direct them back to talking child-to-child. *“Why don’t you ask your customer how expensive this is?”*
- Book club! When reading a book to children, have them pair up and ask each other questions about the story, taking turns to listen carefully to each other’s answer. *“Who was your favourite character?”* Children can expand the conversation by asking follow-up questions, for example: *“Why are they your favourite character?”*

#### Tip

Encourage children to engage in conversation with each other during everyday activities, for example, when playing pretend games with friends or describing the world around them. Support children to listen carefully to each other and take turns when speaking.

### Listening

Active listening is an important part of good communication. It involves showing you are listening, giving the speaker your attention, and hearing what they are saying before speaking. Demonstrating active listening skills when engaging with children is an essential first step. It also helps to provide opportunities for children to practice active listening with a variety of other people (not just the adults around them) on a regular basis.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to listen carefully
- Use role-play activities to provide opportunities to develop listening skills in serve and return conversations
- Use physical activities to reinforce listening skills. Ask children to listen to instructions to move in a certain way, then show you they have listened carefully by making those movements

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Simon Says! When playing 'Simon Says' have children show they are listening carefully by asking them to shout the action back to you as well as moving: *"Simon Says CLAP!" "CLAP!" "Simon Says JUMP!" "JUMP!"* Children can take turns giving and receiving directions.
- Nature Noises! When playing or walking outside, have children listen carefully and point out the noises in nature! *"Eyes watching! Ears listening! Voice quiet! Body calm!"*
- One talking, all listening! To practice listening in group conversations, children can try using a 'One talking, All listening' stick/ball/object. When one child holds the stick and talks, the other children must listen carefully until it's their turn.

#### Tip

**Show children what active listening looks like, by facing the person who is speaking, maintaining good eye contact, nodding to show you are understanding what they are saying, and smiling!**

### Greeting others and introducing yourself

Learning how to greet others and introduce yourself can help children to feel more confident in initiating social interactions. Children benefit from discussions and activities about introducing themselves and greeting others in a variety of situations.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to greet others and introduce ourselves
- Have children role play greeting each other and introducing themselves
- Remind children how to greet others through the use of songs, books and poems

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When greeting a child with big smiles, eye contact and *“Good morning!”*, model how you would introduce yourself: *“I’m [name], I’m [age]. What’s your name? How old are you?”*
- To welcome children, go around the group and have children say their own name, warmly supporting children who feel a little less confident. After a child has introduced themselves, the whole group can chant: *“Hello [name], it’s nice to see you today! YAY!”*
- Children can pick a new or special friend to introduce themselves to. *“Hi, my name is [name]. What’s your name?”* adding *“What would you like to play today?”*

#### Tip

**Don’t worry if some children feel uncomfortable using eye contact when introducing themselves - children can be friendly in lots of different ways!**

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

### Using polite language

Another important aspect of good communication skills is the use of polite language to express gratitude ("Thank you"), make requests ("Please can I..."), solve conflict situations, greet others and give compliments ("I like the way you...").

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use polite language in everyday conversations with children
- Display picture cards on the wall which demonstrate children using polite language as a reminder of how to use polite language in everyday scenarios
- Role-play activities to help children practice using polite language

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Set-up a role-play situation which involves a bus driver taking children to school. Children practice saying "thank you" to express their gratitude as they get off the bus.
- Please pass game! Children see how quickly they can pass a beanbag around the circle. Before their neighbour passes it to them, children say "Please pass the beanbag" in a respectful voice and afterwards say "Thank you!" As children become familiar with the game, introduce new objects and words "Please pass the big, blue teddy."
- Have a puppet act out asking for a snack using polite language "Please may I have a banana?" Support each child to practice asking for a snack of their choice using polite language with lots of praise for a job politely done!