

Connection Before Correction

'Connection before correction' is a phrase that is gaining increasing popularity in the early years space. It encourages educators to first focus on building a strong connection with children, before trying to correct, direct, or provide feedback on their behaviour.

Benefits to drawing upon connection when supporting behaviour:

- Reduces chance of stress response that may arise from corrections or redirections.
- Increases strength and security of a relationship between a child and educator.
- Creates a safe space for co-regulation to occur.
- Allows educators to be attuned to children's experiences, feelings, thoughts and cues and in turn, responsive to the child.
- Enhances a sense of belonging and attachment.
- Supports children to move from being reactive, to being receptive.
- Supports children to learn best as they feel connected.
- Children are more likely to be responsive to positive guidance of their behaviour.

How can educators proactively connect with children?

- Show a genuine interest in the children.
- Praise positive interactions and efforts. For example, "I saw how kind you were to your friend who was sad", "You should be proud of how you solved that problem", or "I can see that you just packed up your belongings, that is great, what is next?"
- Provide and allow opportunities for children to make decisions and choices.
- Role model different ways to connect and engage with others.
- Provide a balance of help/support, allowing children attempt tasks independently.
- Support children to connect with their peers, educators, and environment.

How can educators connect with children during dysregulation?

In moments of dysregulation, it is important to prioritise safety and reduce language. After a child's moment of dysregulation or after an incident has occurred, there are many ways to connect with children.

- Validate children's feelings. For example, "I can see that something has happened to upset you."
- Praise their attempt to communicate. For example, "Thank you for telling me."
- Reflect back the language or message being given. For example, "You are telling me you are angry and want to hit him" or "You are telling me that you are mad because someone took your toy."
- Collaborate and work together for a solution. For example, "It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to hit others. What else could we do next time?", "How can we solve this problem together?", or "Should we try and fix this together?"

How can educators connect with children during micro-moments?

Micro-moments hold a lot of power in supporting a sense of connection with children. They are the small, frequent opportunities to strengthen connections with children.

- Be completely present with children during activities, routines and play.
- Provide focus and attention by listening to what they are saying and respond genuinely to what they are sharing
- Share in the children's delights with them. For example, "Wow I can see that rainbow! Thank you for showing me. It is beautiful and so special!"
- Routines can provide opportunities for brief moments of genuine connection (e.g. a special morning greeting or handshake, or chatting while face-to-face while supporting with dressing).

References

Nelsen, J. (2011). *Positive Discipline*. Ballantine Books.

Siegel, D. J., & Tina Payne Bryson. (2012). *The whole-brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's development, survive everyday parenting struggles, and help your family thrive*. Scribe Publications.



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