
Building Connection to Support Self-Confidence

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the podcast, “Putting Mister Rogers’ ‘Deep and Simple’ to Practice.” The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand that teacher-child connections allow children to feel safe in exploring and taking risks in the classroom.
- ◆ Recognize that teacher-child connections are particularly important for children exposed to trauma or adversity.
- ◆ Appreciate and reflect on specific “deep and simple” interactions with children in your classroom.

Activity

- ◆ Listen to the podcast.
- ◆ After listening to the podcast, use the questions below to guide your reflection on why children exposed to trauma need connection and support to feel connected and safe.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s self-confidence.

We learn and grow best through human relationships—positive and supportive human relationships.... What are we doing to empower, encourage, and enhance the quality of human relationships around the child?

Dr. Junlei Li

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the podcast? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

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- ◆ Inspired by Mr. Rogers, Dr. Li describes “deep and simple” teacher-child interactions as exchanges of connection and reciprocity with the child. This may help the child feel that they belong.

- In what ways do you think these “deep and simple” teacher-child interactions help children feel safe to explore and take risks in the classroom?
- Why may having access to these “deep and simple” teacher-child interactions be particularly beneficial to children experiencing adversity and trauma?

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- ◆ In the podcast, Dr. Li argues that being a “helpful appreciator” (those who identify and appreciate moments of high quality) is an effective way to improve the quality of early education. Apply this idea to your own teaching practice by following these steps:
 - List all children in your classroom that you know (or suspect) may be experiencing some type of trauma or adversity.
 - For each child in the list, recall a specific “deep and simple” interaction you have had with them.
 - What made that interaction “deep and simple”?
 - What feelings come to you when you recall these interactions? How do you think the child felt about that specific interaction?
 - In what ways do you think this “deep and simple” interaction may support that child build self-confidence and trust in you?
 - What did you learn by doing this exercise?

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- ◆ Dr. Li says that to evaluate whether a practice, routine, or strategy is working, we should ask ourselves whether it “encourages, enriches, and empowers the human relationships around the child.”
 - Identify two or three practices, routines, or strategies that you typically use when working with children who are exposed to trauma.
 - For each of them, ask yourself, “Does this practice encourage, enrich, and empower the human relationships around the child?”
 - If yes, keep implementing it!
 - If no, plan how you could improve this practice—and what supports would you need— so that it intentionally enhances relationships around the child? Use the improved practice for a week and reflect on your experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting self-confidence for children exposed to trauma. This includes: (1) how to support children who experience unpreventable adversity and (2) recognizing our responsibility in creating contexts and systems that support children's healthy and positive development.

- ◆ **Source:** Michigan State University Extension
- ◆ **Blog:** Helping Children Build Resiliency Amidst Trauma and Pain
- ◆ **Link:** https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/trauma_proofing_your_kids
- ◆ **Description:** This article describes how to support a child or group of children going through traumatic events. It provides an eight-step guide for teachers and parents to support children develop resiliency and confidence in the context of early adversity and trauma.



- ◆ **Source:** The New York Times
- ◆ **Blog:** I'm Sick of Asking Children to Be Resilient
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/12/opinion/sunday/flint-inequality-race-coronavirus.html>
- ◆ **Description:** This article recognizes our responsibility in building contexts and communities that support children's development, as opposed to asking individual children to cope with preventable adversity and trauma. It also helps us reflect on *who*—typically marginalized communities—we ask to develop resiliency and confidence.