

Responsive & Respectful Caregiving

Children need to be cared for in ways that let them know that they are special individuals with their own needs, preferences, and moods. Positive experiences shared with caregivers lead to the development of long lasting positive relationships.

Responsive Care Throughout the Day:

- It's important to get down on the floor to the children's level when interacting with children. The most important teaching happens when adults interact, talk, play and work alongside children.
- Talk to the children and tell them what you are doing.
- Respect children's natural body rhythms. Infants, toddlers and young preschoolers have unique needs for sleep, hunger, thirst, and diapering/toileting. As much as you can, individualize your daily schedule to accommodate children's needs (individualized naps, toileting, feeding schedules etc.)
- Use the children's names to personalize conversation.
- Understand children's capabilities and provide them with opportunities to do something interesting to the world instead of always being done to and for.
- Let children explore the uses of materials. When presenting a new play material, let children figure out what to do with it rather than direct their activities.
- Observe children and know when to step in to help a child who is frustrated, when to praise a child who has discovered a new skill or has solved a problem, and when to ask questions or provide more ideas to expand play.
- Respond to distress promptly and appropriately—distress indicates need. It is never appropriate to ignore children's signals of distress.
- Sing to young children while carrying out daily routines such as diapering, feeding and washing—you don't have to be a great singer. Children learn language through your words.
- A child's activities should be driven by each child's interests and timetable, even if the child spends a lot of time engaging in only one kind of play. Children's major interests often reflect their emerging motor skills.
- Each child should have the opportunity for some time with a warm, responsive caregiver who is truly engaged with them.

When we are caring for children, it is very important to pause and consider how we would like things to be done for us if the roles were reversed. The Golden Rule applies to all ages.

Respectful Care:

- Be gentle when wiping faces, hands, bottoms, etc. Let children see you and tell them what you are doing. Don't wipe faces and noses while standing behind a child. Rather, move to the child's level and let them know what you will be doing. "It looks like your nose is runny. Let me help you clean it up."
- Use a separate washcloth for each child- start with their face, then hands. Do not reuse the washcloth or save for later use in the day.
- Take an extra moment to make face, nose and bottom wiping a more comforting experience. Use a warm, wet washcloth to clean dried nasal drainage; rinse diaper wipes under warm water before wiping a sore bottom,
- Pay attention to the way children look. Change children's clothes promptly if they are wet/soiled in any way (from food, drool, urine etc.); ensure that faces and hair are clear of food, nasal drainage etc.; and look to see that clothing is buttoned, that bottom of pants are rolled up if too long, socks haven't fallen off children etc.
- Check diapers at least hourly by touch, check visually every 2 hours.
- Always clean a child's bottom with a wipe when changing, even if the diaper was only wet.
- When picking up a child, hold the child's body under his/her arms, instead of lifting children by their arms.
- Empower children to practice self care when they are ready. Place steps by sinks to allow children to reach them easily, allow children to prepare for meals by assisting with table setting etc. Children feel respected when they are able to care for themselves, rather than having everything done for them.