

Period 2. Positive Self-image Support

Independence, Safety, Self-confidence, Self-expression

Every child should have a sense of her/himself as an individual who does not need to constantly conform to his/her environment for her/his existence. The children should have the courage to create their own space and be active doers in their own lives, instead of passive observers.

The idea is to give children the feeling of having inner boundaries that they can establish for themselves. The aim is also to make children understand that they are in control of how they behave. There is a great deal of emphasis on each individual.

- 1) Take notice of each child with a warm greeting at the beginning and end of the day.
 - By doing so we show that we care for each child. Warm greetings give the feeling of security and the teacher's desire to make the child a priority..
 - By hearing warm greetings the children also get used to looking others in the eyes and to expect a positive day.
- 2) Enable every child in discussions, narratives and storytelling.
 - It is important to practise being the center of attention.
 - It is even more important to learn the art of listening to others. Doing this is good practise for focusing, and improves the children's ability to express themselves.
- 3) Draw pictures of oneself as an individual, as part of a family, as part of a friendship, as part of society.
 - To become aware of oneself as a member of society is an important part of the development of every child's self-awareness.
 - If a child is unsecure about what others think of them, it can be good to ask questions like: "Does she sometimes help you to...Do they do... with you". These questions can be followed by interpreting the child's answer: "Then she or he cares for you, then you are important to your family."
 - Each child is given an opportunity to be heard and be the center of attention, although acknowledging and interacting with others is given a lot of emphasis.
 - If the daily routine does not allow time for individually chatting with each child, it would be a good idea to organize "How are you doing: rounds in small groups. In a supportive and safe atmosphere each child may tell the teacher and the other children important things in her/his life without fear of being diminished by others.
 - The morning circles are also natural opportunities to be acknowledged and heard by all or part of the group, but in many cases there is not enough time for each child, and good interaction skills are needed for each child to have some space and courage to be heard.
 - Each child may have an opportunity to take a turn being 'the star of the day'. This means that a child has written together, with her/his parents, some important things about her/himself on a cardboard star (such as family, favorite food, hobbies etc.) The star is introduced in the morning circle, and the child may tell these important issues to the others and choose a song or game for the group.
 - Children's birthdays are also celebrated with rituals made by the group.
 - Children can produce "The Book about Me/Us". It is a collection of self-made papers by each person, which are then put together in a book. All the children write/draw something about themselves and what it is that makes

them the great people they are. This offers an opportunity to discuss the differences between people and how everyone is great just the way s/he is.

- 4) Conversation about how the children feel: When do you feel good and in what situations? When do you feel bad and what can be done to prevent that?
 - To take responsibility for your feelings and react properly to your feelings is a complicated task that most often goes on until adulthood.
 - To know in what situations the children feel good is an opportunity for the teacher to combine projects with conditions that the children enjoy.

- 5) Say positive things about oneself and others.
 - To be able to say positive things about others, preferably while looking at them, makes both the child speaking as well as the one being complimented feel good.
 - Teachers can help children remember to say positive things to themselves regularly, something that they feel they deserve. "I am doing well, I can see progress when I concentrate". This gives children a deeper sense of having control of their emotions and feelings.

- 6) Show the children how they feel in a positive situation.
 - One good and simple way is to help children create a positive self-image is to take notice of them and tell them when they do well. Just by telling them, "I can see that you are really focused". This must come with "a warm friendly voice".
 - Another effective way is simply to take a little mirror for the child to look at her/himself: "Look, this is how happy you are when you focus on learning."
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- 7) Give a lot of attention to the child her/himself, not clothes or other "accessories".
 - Choose carefully what words are used to praise a child, and praise the child for doing something instead of what they have done, "You have really been doing your best, that's why your drawing is so good".
 - Girls in particular are in need of being seen by pulling their hair away from their face and folding their sleeves so their hands can stand out. This is done to increase their awareness of themselves.

- 8) Give everyone visible individual space.
 - In physical exercises as well as in dancing, marking a spot for everyone that is their space teaches the children to create their own space.
 - Having their own place can also help children cope with otherwise chaotic moments, like when they are dressing to go outdoors. If everyone has their own private space while dressing, we can create a more helpful environment in which conflicts are less likely to occur.

- 9) Working with families by inviting parents and/or grandparents to visit the school.
 - The time before visits offers a great opportunity for the children to talk about their families and get positive feedback on their family lives. This is also an opportunity to create boundaries between families and school, and for parents to meet and get to know each other.
 - To recall these gatherings later on is also a good opportunity to point out that the family is an important part of the children's lives and that it's important for the teachers to know their families.

- Consider the possibility of regular gatherings with other child groups. In our pilot, we met once in a week with 120 children in 'Pal Classes' and in 'Music Box' sessions. The 'Music Box' is a communal event organized with other classes each Friday. There are songs, games and sometimes little drama plays about issues dealt with in the 'Pal Classes'. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to join in these events.

To use appropriate compliments that emphasise the elements each child is focusing on is the most effective way to achieve success. Here are ideas to compliment children during the second period:

Independence – “You did this yourself!”

Self-confidence – “You can do it!”

Safety – “Now we will practice...”

Self-expression – “Can you repeat that using nice words?”



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