



# The TOOLBOX

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS



## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

**TOOL:** Prevention

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Early childhood educators and childcare professionals (0-5 year)

**TOOL INTENDED FOR:** Professionals

### DESIGN

Caroline Couture  
Claire Baudry  
Charlyne Nobert



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**TOOL INTENDED FOR:** Professionals

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– Details: E.g. Teachers, early childhood educators, psychoeducators, special education technicians, any other early childhood professionals.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

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– Early childhood educators and childcare professionals (working with 0-5-year-olds).

**NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS**

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- Adult-child bond
- Positive adult-child relationships
- Need for reassurance and warm connections
- Behaviours: opposition, withdrawal of the child, crying

**SPECIFIC GOALS**

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- To understand the importance of teacher-child relationships.
- To understand the potential impact of the pandemic on teacher-child relationships.
- To develop basic strategies for developing and maintaining positive teacher-child relationships.

**DESIGN**

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## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC – FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

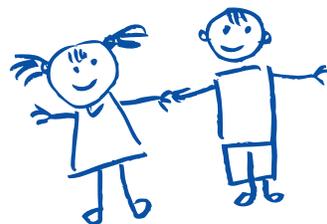
Developing positive relationships is an essential practice in early childhood settings, as it contributes to children's overall development. This is especially true during the current pandemic. By maintaining positive relationships with teachers, children will be able to develop a sense of security and trust in their environment and the adults in their lives. Children will then have the confidence to explore their environment; this will foster their learning and greater autonomy. In the medium to long term, positive relationships promote children's cooperation, motivation and success at school (1).

However, the current situation is causing many disruptions in children's routines. Above all, it's important to remember that certain children are more sensitive to the situation than others. It's important to be aware of this and **respect each individual's pace and fears**.

In this context, it's essential to develop quality relationships with children. To do so, teachers should **be responsive to the needs expressed by children** through their behaviours. They should try **to interpret the meaning of** and adjust to children's behaviour within a reasonable period of time (2).

In addition, to promote toddlers' well-being, teachers should also try **to be predictable and consistent** in the way they respond to their demands. The more children know what to expect, the greater their sense of security; this will allow them to focus on exploring their environment and various learning.

The warmth of child-teacher contact is ultimately just as important. Children may seek **positive physical contact** more often than usual in the uncertain context of the pandemic. Adults should therefore welcome and kindly respond to these requests for comfort.





## POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

### **Try to display a positive, warm, respectful attitude and active listening (4)**

- Maintain eye contact with children
- Use humour, praise good behaviour, smile
- Greet children by mentioning their names when they arrive
- Whenever possible, allow children to correct mistakes. In these situations, provide support and help them with the task. They will realize they can trust you and will be able to learn many things.

**Help children manage their emotions and put them into words.** For example, if a child is crying their heart out because their stuffed animal broke, you could say, "Your favourite stuffed animal broke and you're sad. You feel bad." This strategy will allow the child to feel understood and safe with the adult. In addition, it will allow them to learn to recognize the emotion experienced and, eventually, be able to name it themselves. You also need to be available for children in order to help them better cope with this emotion (1).

**If a greater effort is needed with certain children with whom the relationship is more difficult to develop, allow time for individualized attention with them.** During this time, simply be there for them and help them with an activity that interests them, without necessarily focusing on teaching (2).

**Take the time to listen to children when they speak to you and have a chat with them.** If they are too young to speak and make sounds, respond to their sounds by talking and interacting with them (2).

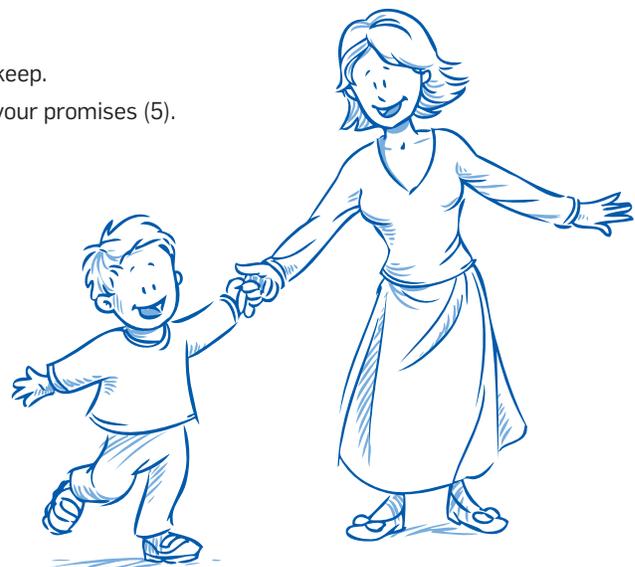
**If possible, allow individual play time with each child in the group.** Everyone will thus be entitled to quality time (2).

**In order to build a positive relationship with children, it's important to develop a relationship of trust with parents.** The little ones will sense the quality of the relationship with their parents and will thus be more inclined to trust the adult (5).

- Talk to the children about their parents during the day
- Don't say anything negative about a parent in front of children
- Etc.

Make sure you don't make promises that you won't be able to keep.

If you give your word, it's important to be consistent and keep your promises (5).



## STRATEGIES WHEN USING PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

**Physical contact is particularly important in early childhood; it's therefore important not to neglect it.** Be sure to follow the health guidelines regarding hand washing and wear masks and visors during contact, but don't neglect children's emotional needs. Take time to speak individually with the children, smile, make eye contact, etc.

**If children are trying to withdraw a bit, respect their needs.** Let them process the situation and begin to trust you. They will gradually come to you. Normalize the situation. At first glance, an adult dressed in protective equipment may appear threatening and unsettling to children. It's important not to minimize this potential fear.

**Maintain a gentle, calm tone to soothe the children.**

**Put your protective gear in front of the children and talk to them at the same time.** It will then be easier for them to realize that you're the same person with or without the equipment.

**Try to personalize interaction as much as possible by greeting the children by their first name, making eye contact with all children individually and smiling at them.**

**Be responsive to children's educational needs, particularly in this context.** Provide them with a variety of activities that suit their interests. Be sure to offer programming based on the children's favourite activities. For example, little Antoine really loves to play with building blocks, so try to let him play this game during the day. Focus learning around this game.

**Suggest that parents bring a significant toy from home that can accompany the child during the day.**





## REFERENCES

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