
Attachment and its Impact on Exploration and Participation in Active Play

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the podcast episode, “Attachment and Exploration,” from the Center for Inclusive Child Care. 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 the ways that secure attachment impacts an infant or toddlers’ confidence in exploring and participating in gross motor tasks.
- ◆ Determine ways that educators can provide individualized support during gross motor activities and exploration to infants and toddlers who have experienced trauma.
- ◆ Develop a plan to develop a secure attachment with infants and toddlers to support them to take risks and explore in active and gross motor experiences.

Activity

- ◆ Listen to the podcast.
- ◆ After listening, use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children who have experienced trauma to feel safe and secure when exploring gross motor activities.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support gross motor skills.

**The way that children can go and explore, and play is supported by the...
quality of the relationships they have.**

Dr. Mary Harrison

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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

- ◆ This podcast highlights the importance of a secure attachment to a caregiver and the ways in which it frees children to feel confident and secure in exploring new experiences or challenges. Some children who have experienced trauma may not have a secure attachment to a caregiver or adult, resulting in hesitancy to explore and persist through challenges. Gross motor tasks often come with moments of uncertainty, challenges, and risk-taking.
 - Reflect upon a time when you felt uncertain during a challenge or risk. Who did you turn to for support? How did their support encourage you and increase your confidence?
 - How may infants and toddlers who have experienced trauma benefit from a secure attachment to a caregiver or an adult? How might this impact their sense of safety, confidence, security?

- ◆ Observe the infants and toddlers in your care during gross motor activities and active play. Identify the children who may be demonstrating signs of trauma or an insecure attachment.
 - Do some children observe the scenario rather than jump in, take risks, and explore? What nonverbal communication or behavior demonstrates the need for additional support?
 - Consider the ways in which you can individualize support for the infants and toddlers in your care. How might their temperament and unique needs determine your supports?

- ◆ A secure attachment can come from anyone – a primary caregiver, teacher, sibling, etc. Once you've identified the children who will benefit from your secure attachment, develop a plan to support your infants and toddlers to take risks and explore during gross motor experiences and active play.
 - Consider the child's temperament and unique needs. How do they react to something new? How do they react to difficult tasks? When engaging in a gross motor experience, how will their temperament inform your response and support? How does the child respond to your reactions?
 - Determine the appropriate supports. Does the child benefit from a hand to hold or moral support (e.g., cheering as an infant cruises in a new environment)? Does the child know you are there to catch them if they fall?
 - Check in regularly to determine if the supports or needs of the child have changed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting young children's gross motor skills:

- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Street in Communities
- ◆ **PDF:** Creating Feelings of Strength & Confidence
- ◆ **Link:** https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Trauma_CreatingFeelingsStrengthConfidence.pdf
- ◆ **Description:** Gross motor activities can support children to feel confident, strong, and resilient. This PDF provides gross motor activities for children to engage in.

- ◆ **Source:** Harvard University: Center on the Developing Child
- ◆ **PDF:** Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence
- ◆ **Link:** <https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Enhancing-and-Practicing-Executive-Function-Skills-with-Children-from-Infancy-to-Adolescence-1.pdf>
- ◆ **Description:** Toxic stress and trauma can impact the development of executive function skills. This PDF provides gross motor activities for children to practice enhancing their executive function skills.