

A Strong Child Me, Myself and I

Focuses on

→ Realisation of own individuality

Including:

- Growing awareness of self
- Realising s/he is separate and different from others
- Recognising personal characteristics and preferences
- Finding out what s/he can do



"...babies being handled all over, talked to, and gazed at are not only being (made aware) of the human world outside themselves, they are (becoming aware) that they themselves exist"

Schaffer (1992)

SureStart

Development matters



Young babies become aware of themselves as separate from others, learning also that they have influence *upon* and are influenced *by* others.



Babies develop an understanding and awareness of themselves, which is influenced by their family, culture, other people and the environment.



Young children learn they have similarities and differences that connect them to, and distinguish them from, others.



Children show their particular characteristics, preferences and interests and demonstrate these in all they do.

Effective practice

- Adults who respond to and build on babies' actions, expressions and gestures.
- Playfully helping babies to recognise that they are separate and different from others; e.g. adult pointing to own and baby's nose, eyes, fingers, toes.
- Recognising, accepting and understanding that carrying, sucking or playing with something such as a dummy that they have brought from home helps young children as they move between home and a new setting.
- Practitioners who support and encourage all children enable them to gain confidence and to try new things.

Me, Myself and I

Look, listen, note

- Note how young babies begin to explore their bodies' movements and the environment in individual ways.
- Note how babies use the opportunities you provide, to develop, show and communicate their preferences and decisions.
- Note how, with your support and encouragement, young children begin to make decisions and develop preferences, thereby beginning to establish their autonomy.
- Note how children explore, play, socialise, and make sense of their experiences.

Play and practical support

- Playfully imitate young babies, giving full eye contact, interacting with them and their play-things, watching the ways they use them and showing them new things to do.
- Provide a variety of mirrors in different places to help babies explore what they look like and who they are.
- Value young children's comfort objects and show them that you understand that they meet their emotional needs.
- Let children make decisions about how and where to display their paintings or allow them to select which toys to play with or who to sit with.



Planning and resourcing

- Plan to devote uninterrupted time to babies when you can be attentive and fully focussed.
- Encourage parents/the local community to contribute cultural artefacts, such as cooking materials, to your setting to ensure that it is inclusive and respectful of many cultures.
- Plan activities to allow children to show what they can do, for instance, feeding the fish, putting their own coat on their hook, choosing their clothes, washing themselves.
- Plan for decisions to be made by children. This helps them develop a sense of being valued members of the community and helps them increase their independence and sense of control.

Meeting diverse needs

- Some babies who are blind or deaf or who have severe learning difficulties need constant reminders that you are there, and that they are valued.
- Providing materials and resources to help children accept and be proud of their culture.
- Describing to a baby who is blind what s/he looks like, for example “you’ve lovely blue eyes” while gently stroking his/her eye lids; gesturing and touching to show a deaf baby his/her face, as you look together in a mirror, helps to encourage an awareness of self.
- It is important to encourage parents and children to accept a child who looks physically different from others.



Challenges and dilemmas

- How to reflect, in a meaningful way wider racial and ethnic diversity in an all white setting; e.g. telling stories and using pictures with positive images of people from different races.
- Recognising and accepting that a two year old's tantrum is often part of a struggle for independence.
- The need to respond warmly to all children, whatever your personal feelings.
- How to accept into your setting objects which are important to children, but not always to your own taste.

Case study

Through regular observations of Lamumba, who is two, practitioners at his playgroup notice that he mainly plays with the ‘small world’ toys such as trains, dinosaurs and people. Whilst the adults recognise his need to be involved in this safe and repetitious play, after a while they help him to explore new things. By planning activities in which his favourite playthings are integrated into other areas for example, putting the dinosaurs into the sand and the trains with large construction bricks, Lamumba is enabled to explore and enjoy a wider range of experiences.