

**PROMOTING
RESPECT
IN
INFANTS**

(2 Training hours)

Lifetech Instructional Services
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Promoting Respect in Infants

(First Lessons in Respect)

A newborn is a totally self-centered being; their needs are entirely those that will guarantee their physical survival. They must learn the “higher” emotions---love, sympathy and kindness, respect, generosity, and consideration for others---from their parents, teachers and the other adults with whom they most consistently spends their time. So whether they learn to treat others with kindness and respect or to be self-focused and selfish is largely determined by the examples they see.

Siblings as Rivals

If there is an older child in the family, you’re no doubt worried about sibling rivalry and how it will manifest itself. The infant is unlikely to feel any need to compete, but older children can be vulnerable to jealousy, resentment, and acting out. By respecting all the children and their feelings as you manage early sibling conflicts, you may be able to ameliorate later difficulties.

The closer the baby is in age to siblings or other children, the more problems you are likely to encounter. Because newborns spend so much time sleeping, young siblings (under age two and a half) may hardly seem to notice the baby’s presence until the infant becomes mobile. A sibling between two and a half and four years of age may feel resentment from the start, especially if they are the first child. Children over four years old generally cope better, largely because their interests are focused less narrowly on their parents.

A crawling, walking, exploring baby requires a high level of parental attention and when they are with daycare providers they require a high level also. In addition, the baby’s natural inquisitiveness leads them into an older sibling’s things. They may share an older sibling’s room, depriving the older child of privacy and even access to the room during nap times. In short, the mobile baby can be a huge pain to their sibling.

In regards to parents, parents need to understand that older children don’t automatically love their new siblings and that some degree of jealousy and resentment is normal. In the day care setting the other children may not like the new child. Your role is to make the change as easy as possible for the older child or children, respecting their needs and providing the extra doses of love and reassurance that older children need most.

Other Adults

A baby's interest initially centers on their primary caregiver and then gradually widens to include other adults who are routinely present. By around six months, babies begin to display increasing sociability. They like attention and love to perform. Even shy babies learn that their smiles and babbling delight adults and win more attention.

But you may also notice that when a stranger appears, the baby who is so gregarious with the people they know is suddenly hesitant. They don't smile instantly but looks to you for guidance. If you react well to this unknown person, the child is likely to become their usual sociable self. But if you show hesitation, they may reach for you and perhaps whimper. All babies experience stranger anxiety to some degree and may progress to crying or withdrawing at the sight of an unknown person.

Comfortable Meetings

You can help the infant and the adults get through a bout of stranger anxiety with minimal upset by preparing the grown-ups before they meet the child and then stage-managing the meeting.

- **Tell other people in advance**---before they come or when they arrive at your home or at a daycare home---that child is going through a fear of strangers phase. Inform the other person of the best way to greet the baby. If the baby is inclined to cry around strangers, don't take them to the door unless the person is well known to the child.
- **Introduce the new person gradually.** The new person should come into the baby's presence quietly and acknowledge the baby with a smile and a soft word or two. If the person or a stranger rushes forward, touches, or talks excitedly, the baby is likely to withdraw or start crying.
- **Behave normally.** Talk with the person, which may also be another caregiver. Let the baby observe your reactions and give them time to size up this strange person.
- **Encourage the guest to make gradual overtures** as the baby becomes more assured--gently voiced comments and small gestures. The baby may warm up to your overtures or maintain a guarded attitude, but you will have avoided a scene and done your best for the comfort of both the other person and the infant.

Variations on this technique work well whenever you introduce any new person--- babysitter, nanny, or daycare provider, for instance, into your home or daycare setting. If possible, arrange one or several meetings at which you are present. Let the baby become accustomed to the caregiver; then leave them alone together for short periods, increasing the length of time you are out of sight as the baby becomes more comfortable.

In addition, when the baby is dropped off in someone else's home or at the daycare, this process of gradual introduction also allows the baby to adjust to the new surroundings. It may seem time-consuming, but the results should be worth your efforts. You will demonstrate your concern for the new caregiver's feelings. You'll also help the baby learn that the stranger is a friend and that you can be trusted to return every time you leave.

You can't control every situation. If another caregiver approaches you in the room and the baby bursts into tears, your only recourse is to explain the baby's reaction and make it clear that the other person has done nothing to cause the problem. Also, remember that the baby's anxiety is genuine and normal. Don't scold or become upset with the child. If the other caregiver overreacts to what is really a very minor embarrassment, the baby may become confirmed in their suspicion of strangers, and you will have difficulty with later teaching of good meeting-and greeting manners.

Playgroups and Other Children

Organized classes for babies under one year are often too structured and can be stifling for a baby, whose primary interest is exploring their environment in their own way and at their own pace. But informal, unstructured playgroups with children of similar age can be stimulating for babies and parents alike. A baby is introduced to the concept of a group activity, and they see teachers or other adults interacting in a positive social situation. Probably more important, mothers, fathers, and caregivers can share information, wisdom, and concerns.

Until they are about three years old, children don't interact with peers. Babies may be interested in other babies in the same way they are curious about a new toy or their own reflections in a mirror, but parents and also teachers shouldn't be fooled into thinking that deliberate play is taking place. You cannot begin to teach concepts such as fairness, selflessness, and sharing to a baby in the first year. Not until the teacher or a parent bonds of love and trust with a child are firmly cemented will any youngster become genuinely interested in their peers.

When you start a group or join an existing group, it's important to clarify the etiquette ground rules for all members. The following guidelines won't interfere with the informality of the group, but they will help make the time together more rewarding for everyone:

- **Never leave infants unsupervised.** Ideally, supervision means one adult per child, and no fewer than one adult for every three or four children. Be wary if older children are part of the group. *Never leave infants alone with preschool children of any age.*
- **Clearly establish the rules about handling the babies.** Except in emergencies, it's better not to pick up or hold someone else's baby unless you are asked to. Conversely, it's inconsiderate to hand off you're baby to someone else unless the person clearly welcomes the responsibility.
- **Discuss discipline.** Caregivers, teachers and parents may have very different ideas about what to do when babies smack, poke, push and pull at other infants. Members of the playgroup need to discuss discipline honestly and arrive at mutually agreeable rules. Usually no more is required than distracting the offending infant's attention to something else or moving them. Discipline for toddlers can be a thornier problem, and as children grow older, your group will need to revise rules for everyone. (discussion on this topic can be found on our training program "Promoting Respect in Toddlers").
- **Avoid comparing and competing.** Everyone suffers if members relentlessly compare their babies' achievements. This is really a matter of individual etiquette, but the group can make its general feelings known regarding excessive boastfulness and competitiveness.
- **Observe arrival and departure times.** This is particularly important if you gather in other daycare homes or outside functions. It is never acceptable to leave after the predetermined time, unless you're invited to stay or approved by other authorities. On field trips, be sure to depart on time as other activities may be scheduled to follow yours.
- **Be clear about who provides refreshments, if any.** Coffee and cookies are sufficient for the adults; perhaps juice for any toddlers in the group. But since most informal playgroups meet for an hour or two at most, refreshments are not really necessary.
- **Clean up.** Whether in a home or school, clean up spills and messes immediately and don't leave anything behind. This is a special concern with dirty diapers and items such as disposable bottle liners, wipe-ups and baby food containers.

Child-Care Etiquette Issues (For Parents)

The majority of parents today are employed, most outside the home. Despite greatly improved conditions including extensions of paid and unpaid maternal and paternal leave, employed parents will sooner or later find themselves facing the day-care decision.

Your baby will form attachments to their outside caretakers, and they will profoundly influence their development and help shape their understanding of personal and social interactions. Child-rearing guides can provide helpful information about how to conduct your search and select the child-care situation that best suits you and your baby.

Once you have decided on your child-care provider, some specific etiquette concerns arise, influenced in part by the type of care and the provider you select.

At-Home Care

Paid at-home care (professional nanny, full-time babysitter or daycare provider) is usually the most expensive arrangement but is generally advantageous to the baby because it involves one-on-one attention in the baby's home environment. When hiring and employing an at-home provider, you should:

- **Spell out your expectations and requirements in detail and stick to the job description you've created.** This not only is a matter of good etiquette but is absolutely essential for the happiness and security of your child and child-care employee alike.
- **Be clear about working hours and abide by them.** An occasional late arrival from work may be okay if you call and warn the caretaker. But consistently expecting your care taker to stay after working hours or not notifying her when you will be late is inexcusable.
- **Give advance notice whenever the caretaker will not be needed.** In all fairness, you should probably pay the provider for any unscheduled time off.
- **Never require your employee to work when she is ill.** It's smart to have a backup plan for times when your at-home provider simply cannot work. If you must stay at home, notify your own employer immediately.

- **Define boundaries for live-in providers.** This applies to both time and territory. Agreed-on days off and holidays must be honored. The caretaker's private quarters and personal property should be sacrosanct. A live-in-child-minder will be part of your household, so think very carefully about your house rules. The age and experience of your live-in employee may also be a factor, especially if you find yourself in a de facto parental role with a younger caretaker. It is all too easy to take unintended advantage of an employee. Before you lay down too many rules---or too few---you should put yourself in the live-in employee's shoes for a while.
- **Reimburse your caretaker's out-of-pocket expenses immediately.** Better still, be sure to provide adequate funds for any shopping that you expect your at-home provider to do for you.

Group Day Care

Group day care offers professional care to a number of children--usually from ages one to five, although some accept younger babies. Though not as costly as at-home care, group centers are rarely capable of intensive personal attention, and there may be concerns related to the presence of older children, the spread of illnesses, and the lack of scheduling flexibility. If your employer offers on-site day care, this can be a wonderful option because it includes ready access to your child during the workday.

- **Be sure that you understand and accept all the policies and rules of the group-care center.** Don't expect the center to make exceptions for you and your child.
- **Carefully observe the center's hours of operation.** Whether commercial or not-for-profit enterprises, all good day care centers are run as businesses. Parents who abuse the center's drop off and pick-up times may soon find themselves without day care. Plan ahead and arrange your backup.
- **Don't hesitate to inform the center's management if you suspect a problem.** Such as, an incompetent child-care worker or a danger in the physical environment. Well run centers will appreciate your information because the problem, if left unattended, can affect their reputation and bottom line. You may choose to keep your child at home until the problem is resolved. If nothing is done within a reasonable time, remove your child entirely and report the situation to appropriate authorities, such as, licensing board.

- **Always keep a sick child at home.** Out of consideration for the other children, inform the management of the nature of your child's illness and do not return your child to the center until the possibility of contagion has passed. Also tell the center if your child has been exposed to illness, even though your baby may seem perfectly healthy.

Home Day Care

Home day care is provided by an individual (often a mother with small children of her own) who minds several children in her home. Home care may be the least costly option, offers a domestic setting, and in the best circumstances provides more individualized attention and flexible scheduling than group care. The etiquette issues here are much the same as with a day-care center. Adhere strictly to drop-off and pickup times, keeping in mind that the provider probably has other family to care for. Do not take a sick baby or one who has been exposed to a contagious condition to day care.

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RESPECTING PROPERTY

It will be some time before the baby has any sense of "yours," "mine," or "ours." Right now, all things exist for their entertainment and exploration. Teachers or caregivers, on the other hand, have a finely tuned understanding of property and ownership, and even in the first year, you can begin laying the groundwork for later lessons in respect for property---the child's and everyone else's.

Things get broken because a baby's innate curiosity is a true force of nature. If the mobile baby is confined to the crib or playpen often or for long periods in order to prevent damage to the classroom, they will endure terrible frustration and boredom, and quite possibly their self-confidence, creativity and developing independence will suffer.

If the baby is scolded, told that they are "bad" for touching this thing and that, and hears "no" all the time, he may eventually conform to the judgment and assume that they are really bad.

Protecting Possessions

How you handle property issues will be determined by concern for the baby's safety and development. But you will also be adding more building blocks to etiquette principles by balancing their need to explore with limits on what and whose property they can get into.

- **Look at your home daycare or school from the baby's perspective and anticipate their interests.** Remove and store items that are a threat to their safety or are easily broken or damaged.
- **Protect items that you can't or don't want to store by putting them literally out of the baby's reach.** Be warned: Even before an infant can walk unassisted, they can climb and may be capable of stacking up books, pillows and the like in order to get what they want.
- **Knobs and switches on electrical equipment or electronics are very tempting for the exploring baby.** If knobs are easily detached, keep them in a convenient place until needed. You can also put strong tape over knobs, switches, and openings to VCR, DVD and CD, although tape itself will probably catch the little one's eye. Once they have a degree of fine motor control, they will try to get the tape off--and you may find mashed banana in your VCR. Investing in well-constructed, latched or lockable, closet-style cabinetry for delicate equipment and remote controls may be one of your wiser expenditures.

Off-Limits

Some places and things must be declared off-limits. Hook-and-eye latches and door gates will let you secure rooms that you don't want the baby to venture into alone--the bathroom, other classrooms or office. Then start teaching the child that some places are off-limits to them. Each time you go into the bathroom with them, show them the latch and explain that this room is entered only with the caregivers or other caregivers. They won't understand the reason for the restriction, but they will begin to sense that this place is somehow different from their play areas.

An especially difficult property issue involves things that belong to other children. A toddler is developing a sense of ownership, especially in relation to "mine." A baby who takes their things is a real threat, and the other child's feelings of infringement are valid. After all, you are teaching the older child to respect other people's belongings; they have a right to expect the same for their own possessions. A caregiver or teacher who repeatedly excuses an infant's behavior or demands that an older child give in is just tossing gas on the fires of the toddlers rivalry.

Putting Away

You can begin teaching respect for property by initiating "putting away" routines during the baby's first year.

- **Let the infant watch you clean-up routines** such as putting the toys back on the shelves or books back on the bookshelves. When they are older, allow them to help with these chores. Even before they can walk, they'll enjoy being held up to putting toys or books on the shelves after playtime.
- **Incorporate a little putting-away time in their naptime ritual when they begin playing with toys.** Praise them when they hand you an object and later when they actually takes items to the toy basket or shelf. By allowing them to participate in small ways, you are impressing on them that things have their places and that neatness has a role in their life and yours. It won't be a big impression, but it's a necessary beginning.

IN CONCLUSION

The messes a baby creates each day can seem overwhelming, and some caregivers or teachers are tempted to let the chaos rule. But living in perpetual mess becomes dispiriting. Instead of giving up, make some strategic adjustments. You can forget many of the finer points of housekeeping for some time and still maintain a livable classroom or home. Ask yourself what you need to do to keep your classroom, home or school safe for the baby and maintain a sense of order. (Contact Lifetech for additional booklets on safety).

If you try to clean up after the exploring infant as they go through the day, you may inhibit normal inquisitiveness and learning. Instead, why not straighten the mess a couple of times every day--during the baby's nap and after they get picked up. Putting certain areas of your classroom or other places off-limits protects the baby and also creates havens for you. By making your own classroom or other rooms a child-free zone, for instance, you enable yourself to retreat to an oasis of order at day's end.

PROMOTING RESPECT in INFANTS (2 Training Hours) TEST

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following questions carefully and **CIRCLE** your best answer.

1. The farther apart the baby is in age to siblings the more problems you are likely to encounter?

True or False

2. You can help an infant get through stranger anxiety by?

- A. tell other people in advance
- B. introduce the new person gradually
- C. encourage the guest to make gradual overtures
- D. all of the above

3. Children don't interact with peers, until they are about two years old?

True or False

4. In the first year, you can begin laying the ground work for later lessons in respect for property?

True or False

5. It's normal for older children not to automatically love their new younger siblings?

True or False

6. Important etiquette ground rules when starting a playgroup may include?

- A. discuss discipline
- B. always compare and compete
- C. clean up
- D. both A and C
- E. all of the above

7. Structured play groups for babies under one year old can be stifling?

True or False

8. Generally a paid at home day care or professional nanny is the least expensive to care for a baby?

True or False

OVER→

9. At what age do babies begin to display increasing sociability?

- A. 3 months
- B. 4 months
- C. 5 months
- D. 6 months

10. What are the usual ages a group daycare offers professional care?

- A. infant to five years of age
- B. one to five years of age
- C. infant to six years of age
- D. one to six years of age

11. You can begin teaching respect for property by initiating “putting away” routines during the baby’s second year?

True or False

12. In a home daycare, it is safe to have a sick child at your daycare if you feel they’re not contagious?

True or False

FILL OUT YOUR INFORMATION BELOW AND SEND YOUR COMPLETED TEST TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

INCLUDE YOUR CHECK or MONEY ORDER for \$ 10.00 (PER TEST)

Once received we will send you a printed certificate of completion.

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