**Interacting with Child Care Workers**

Every [early childhood assistant](https://andersoncollege.com/programs/early-childcare-assistant/) knows that having effective communication skills is an essential part of the job. This is mainly because they are required to interact with children, parents, and colleagues daily. Of course, it should come as no surprise that the skills required to interact with a child are very different than those required to communicate with an adult. Additionally, an early childhood assistant would not speak to a student’s parents in the same manner that they would speak to a colleague or peer. Here’s a quick guide to the interaction skill-set that every early childhood assistant should have:

**When interacting with Children**

Individuals holding [early childcare assistant diplomas](https://andersoncollege.com/programs/early-childcare-assistant/) understand the importance of using positive reinforcement when interactingting with their students. This means that when a child does something good, like follows the rules or lends a helping hand to his or her peers, a childcare assistant should provide specific praise

Experts know that when communicating with young children, it is always best to advise them on what they should be doing, rather than what they should not be doing. This is again because children respond well to positive encouragement. For instance, if a child is running when he or she should be walking, a skilled childcare assistant might tell him or her to walk instead of saying not to run.

**When Interacting with Colleagues**

Since a certain level of communication is required within any professional environment, having the ability to effectively interact with colleagues and peers is important when pursuing a career in virtually any field. All interaction and communication between colleagues should always be kept professional. Experts know that providing negative feedback can be difficult, however, if this feedback is sandwiched between a few positive observations it might be a lot easier to swallow.

Individuals pursuing [childcare training](https://andersoncollege.com/programs/early-childcare-assistant/) should also consider the fact that, for the most part, they will always be surrounded by children during work hours. This means that a child might be watching and listening to a conversation that is being had between two colleagues. And, since young children are very impressionable, all conversations must be kept respectful.

**When Interacting with Parents**

Any interaction between a childhood assistant and a student’s parents should always come from a place of mutual respect. Early childcare assistants know that it’s important to communicate regularly with their student’s families. This will enable families to keep track of their child’s educational progress and it will also allow the educators and assistants to have access to information about how that child is doing at home. When interacting with a student’s parents, it is important to speak casually and use simple language. This will ensure that there are no miscommunications or misunderstandings.

**Fostering Self-Esteem and Showing Approval; Changes in Children: 12 Months to 10 Years**

How children feel about themselves, their self-worth, is one of our greatest responsibilities and one of our biggest challenges. People who have a positive sense of self feel they have something worthwhile to contribute and a sense of internal worth. They are able to venture out into the world, work toward attaining their goals and welcome life with anticipation and pleasure. This self-concept develops very early in life. From the very beginning, a baby learns from how people respond to her and how people see her. Usually by about 18 months of age, a child has a clear notion that she has a separate and specific identity. As caregivers, we can assist our babies in feeling good about themselves by recognizing the unique qualities that each child possesses. When working with infants, it's important to pay attention to each baby's temperamental pattern so that our expectations for that child truly fit his personality.

Children who have self-confidence have a feeling of internal worth that enables them to welcome challenges and work cooperatively with others. When children don't develop self-confidence, they tend to focus on failure instead of success, problems instead of challenges, and difficulties instead of possibilities. There is no single way to enhance self-esteem, but one way is to show children "unconditional positive regard." Let each child know that we care about him, that we accept and approve of him, no matter what. This isn't always easy, especially when we're correcting a child, setting limits or when a child is misbehaving. But our challenge is to learn how to accept the child as a person, even when we do not accept his behavior.

**Honest Recognition and Praise**

Honest recognition and praise are two ways we can foster positive self-esteem. Honest recognition and sincere praise comes from the heart and draws attention to something specific that the child has done. Sometimes we focus so much on giving children general, non-specific praise such as "Good job!" that it comes to have little meaning for them. Better to be more specific with remarks like "You worked real hard to get all those beads on that string" or "Thank you for helping Janie put on her coat - you're a real friend."

Self-worth is such a private, internal feeling, our comments have the most impact when they deal with who a child is and how he sees himself from the inside. When we praise children, we should do it in a way that heightens their sense of inner satisfaction. Remember that praise is an external source of esteem, which is helpful but not nearly as valuable and effective as internal sources of self-esteem that stem from an internal sense of competence.

**Role of the Family**

When we think about ways to enhance children's self-worth, it is especially important to consider the role of the family. One of our most important jobs as preschool teachers is to communicate with each child's family and, whenever possible, act as an advocate for the child. The more we can help families appreciate the positive steps each child makes in his development, the more we have created a climate which enhances and reinforces self-worth.

**Respect**

Respect is another key component in reinforcing a child's self-worth. There are several ways we can show respect for children. Offer them choices, when appropriate, and then be sure to respect and abide by their decision. If self-confidence is our goal, then showing our own confidence in a child's ability to make decisions will go a long way towards building self-esteem. Another way to show respect towards children is to explain the reasons behind rules or adult decisions. This is the opposite approach to telling children, "Because I said so!" A third way to show respect is to avoid talking about children in front of them unless they are included in the conversation.

**Competence**

Probably the most effective thing we can do to help children feel a sense of self-worth, is to help them achieve competence or an internal sense of mastery or control. Every time a child does something that works out well, the act itself is its own reward. Whether it be standing up for her rights in the trike area or pumping herself on the swing, the child feels competent because of what he or she did, not because of what someone said. Here are some ways to help children gain competence:

* Encourage children to be as independent as possible. Whenever it is reasonable and possible, we should try to focus our energies on providing experiences for children where they are the ones in control.
* Provide many different ways for children to experience success so they have more opportunities for achieving competence and feeling good about themselves.
* Provide opportunities that are challenging but not too difficult or frustrating. Remember that in developing new skills, children need lots of opportunities to practice and try things out over and over.
* Emphasize the value of providing a diverse range of activities and skills for both girls and boys. Avoid reinforcing stereotypical ideas of what is appropriate play.
* Offer many creative activities when children can explore the process of creation as well as the expression of their ideas and feelings.
* Offer children as many opportunities as possible for interacting and playing with other children, and help them to figure out strategies for getting along with them.

**Children with Disabilities**

These suggestions for helping enhance children's self-esteem are especially important when working with children with disabilities. Don't lose sight of all the ways they are like other children. Avoid becoming so concerned for their safety that you end up depriving these children of experiences they might otherwise enjoy and from which they would benefit. The rules for building self-esteem in children with disabilities are not very different from those for the other children in your care. The key is to provide as many opportunities as possible for success and to comment favourably on their success. Focus your comments on real accomplishments and specific competencies in order to help acknowledge and focus on what the children can do, not what they can't.