



WORKING WITH YOUNG  
CHILDREN WITH TRAUMA  
- APPLYING PRACTICE  
PRINCIPLE 3 HIGH  
EXPECTATIONS FOR  
EVERY CHILD



## Reflective questions

In an education and care setting, children from 18 months of age up spend part of the day together (multi-age group). One educator suggested that once a week the older children could butter their own toast at morning tea choosing their own topping (Vegemite and jam), spreading it themselves and carrying it on a plate to the table. Another educator replied, *We can't do that because of the toddlers.* A third suggested *Maybe we could get the older children to do it for the younger ones or get the older children to teach the younger ones.* An educator who worked with the toddlers said *I think they can do it themselves.*

1. Does this example demonstrate high expectations for all children? If so, how?

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2. If you were an educator in this service, how would you respond to the comments and the suggestions?

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3. What kinds of support or strategies would help educators to enact high expectations for all children in this group?

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### Notes

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## discussion starter

*Early childhood professionals show high expectations for children by offering rich learning opportunities that motivate and interest every child, and help them to see themselves as learners.*

Reflect on this statement using the following questions.

1. What are *rich learning opportunities*?

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2. How do you help children to see themselves as learners?

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3. How do you motivate and keep every child interested and engaged in learning?

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4. How do you show children and families that you are interested in them as individuals?

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5. Is there more you can do to offer *rich learning opportunities* for every child? If yes, provide some examples.

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## Reflective questions

An educator in an education and care setting talked about expectations:  
*I've had to work really hard to catch myself when I find myself thinking that children from a particular neighbourhood or even a particular family are going to struggle in my program. I know it doesn't help them and it's almost like it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. I get what I expect! I remember last year I had a child from a family whose older child had also attended the centre and when I saw the name on the enrolment list I thought of my previous concerns and the problems I had with the older child before I had even re-met with the family and the second child.*

1. Can you relate to this professional's honest reflection? Do you have similar examples from your own experience?

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2. Why is it sometimes difficult for early childhood professionals to have high expectations for every family?

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3. How can you overcome low expectations? What strategies might help?

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### Notes

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## DISCUSSION STARTER

Using the questions and examples provided in the table, reflect on your current practice. Does it reflect the research on the importance of having high expectations for every child?

Identify the changes you would like to make in response to your own reflections and discussions with others. This table is adapted from VCAA's Early Years Exchange (6), 2010 available at [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au).

RESEARCH EVIDENCE	CURRENT PRACTICE	CHANGING PRACTICE
Each child's development has both unique and universal features	Every child in the 3-5 room is expected to participate in a whole group story session	Think about how you could change this practice to reflect the research evidence so that every child has the opportunity to experience stories in ways that recognise their unique learning needs and styles
Children's sense of self-worth is based on their experiences and especially their interactions with others	Children often select who will be on their team for different purposes. Some children may not be selected until the end of the process	Think about how the children who are selected last would feel about themselves. How could you change this selection strategy so that negative outcomes are avoided?
Effective educators have high expectations of every child and communicate that message to each child every day	Children are expected to complete predetermined craft products that all look the same. Children use pre-designed worksheets every day for literacy and numeracy learning	Think about how these practices convey messages of low expectations – for example, the expectation that children do not have their own ideas. Worksheets often don't require deep engagement in learning, don't demonstrate respect for children's cognitive capacities and may not support differentiated learning. How could you change these types of practices to reflect children's competence as learners in your practice? What adaptations are possible to allow the child to be an active





## Reflective questions

1. What does it mean to have high expectations in a work setting for all professionals? Is there a flow-on effect to families and children?

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2. What are some steps to take to establish a culture of high expectations in an early childhood setting?

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3. How does the notion of a culture of high expectations translate into practices in services such as maternal and child health and playgroups?

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4. Think about the setting where you work. Is it a place where high levels of professional responsibility are promoted?

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5. What are the factors in your setting that promote or hinder the development of high professional responsibility?

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6. From your experience, what are the outcomes for children and families when professionals have high professional responsibility?

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## Reflective questions

Think of the way you work with families and children every day. Use the questions to critically reflect on this practice.

1. How do you understand and address the power differences between yourself as a professional, families and children?

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2. Who is advantaged by the way you work with families and children? And who is disadvantaged?

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3. How could you change your practice to ensure no family or child is disadvantaged?

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4. How do you balance the need to have high expectations for every family and child and to be empathetic and responsive to particular needs a family or child has?

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