

Everyday Interactions Matter: Reflective Questions for Educators



Below are some ideas for reflective questions for each area of the Simple Interactions Tool. Some of the questions lend themselves to in-person discussion, and others work well for homework or journaling. These are a starting point—please adapt them to fit your circumstances and your inspiration!



Introductory Questions

- Tell about one of your earliest experiences that led you to want to be in the field of childcare/education.
- Who is someone that has influenced your work in early learning (a teacher, an author, a colleague, supervisor...)
- What is the most challenging part of your current job?
- Which element of the Simple Interactions Tool calls to you initially?
- Which element might be a challenge for you?

Connection

- When do you feel most connected at work?
- When do you feel most able to “tune in” to the children in your care?
- In what ways do you encourage connection in your own interactions at work?
- Take a close look at the Z area of the Simple Interactions Tool.
- How do you know when you are connecting in a mutually present way?
- How can connection look different for people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds?
- Be aware of yourself making a connection to a child, a family member of a child, or a colleague. Pay close attention to your verbal and nonverbal communication. As you observe both the other person and you (Donald Schoen calls this reflecting in action), see if you can tune into your own actions. Notice yourself making decisions about what to do next (move closer or further away, get quieter, use humor, say something to break the ice, avoid conflict, etc). Come to our next session prepared to share what you learned.

- Observe someone else making a connection (two adults, or an adult and a child). Take notes on what you notice - both the smallest gestures and the larger, more visible efforts to connect.
- Find one way to connect with someone (a child, colleague, friend, stranger, anyone!) In your journal response, share a brief description of the interaction. Focus on those involved, what the interaction looked like, and how it made you feel.

Reciprocity

- In your teaching practice, when do you spend time in the X area of reciprocity? The Y area? Z? Are there ways that you could turn an X or Y experience into a Z experience?
- What have you learned about yourself when it comes to serve and return interactions? Are you typically a listener? A talker? How do you show you are listening? How do you use your body language or gestures to engage?
- As a child, what did you learn from your family about how to engage in reciprocity? How has that changed for you as an adult?
- How might you scaffold reciprocity between two children?
- How do you “keep the conversation going” in a balanced way with others (children, colleagues) in your work?
- Journal about 3 examples of reciprocity that you observed this week.

Everyday Interactions Matter: Reflective Questions for Educators



Opportunity To Grow

- Share an example of when you use scaffolding and fading in your teaching practice. How do you know when to fade?
- Where do the interactions you share with children fall—in the X, Y, or Z portion of the Simple Interactions Tool?
- What sorts of tools could you use to shift toward more Z interactions? What kinds of support would you need from your professional learning community?
- What skills do you use to stay in the Z area of opportunities to grow?
- Journal about when you experienced an opportunity to grow. Journal about when you gave someone else an opportunity to grow.
- Pick an age group (infant, toddler, preschool, school age) and share examples of opportunities to grow in one or two of the following areas of child development: emotional, social, cognitive, language, sensory, and/or physical.
- Reflect on a recent opportunity for professional growth that you experienced. It can be a formal training, a reading, a conversation with a colleague or family, or an interaction with a child. Briefly describe the experience, write down who you might share this growth with (a colleague, a director, an interested friend), and describe how you think it might impact your work with children and families.

Inclusion/Belonging

- Think about the communities you are part of (your neighborhood, your work, your church, your biological or chosen family, friends...). In the communities where you most feel a sense of belonging, what does that feel like? Share one word.
- Think about the communities you are a part of. Reflect on how you came to be part of those different communities--did you seek them out or was your "membership" less intentional? How did the sense of belonging develop for you in those different settings?
- What are some strategies you already use in your classroom or program to provide a sense of belonging for children in your care?
- Think of two things your program could do to create a greater opportunity for families and children to feel a sense of belonging.
- What does inclusion mean when we think about our everyday interactions? How does inclusion play out in the smallest moments of your day?
- In what ways can our interactions encourage equity? Journal at least two examples of when you felt you truly belonged. Pay attention to the feelings at that time as well as the benefits that come from belonging.

