

"In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."

Fred Rogers



Welcome!

Connection/ Reciprocity

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This quote can be tied into reflection.

Silent Line Up

- Your Task: Line up in order of your birthdays (month and day) without talking.
**This may require you to use gestures and other non-verbal cues.
- Once the line-up is complete, have everyone say their birthdays to see how accurate they were.



Memory Lane

Think back to their favorite childhood memory related to play or learning.

How has this memory influenced your choice to work in early childhood education?

Share with your group.



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This is an alternate icebreaker perhaps if you have a smaller group or based on your group's dynamic.

Let's Get Started!

We see it in **unexpected places**

We experience it at **unexpected times**

We see it in other's interactions but **not always in our own**

What do you think "it" is?

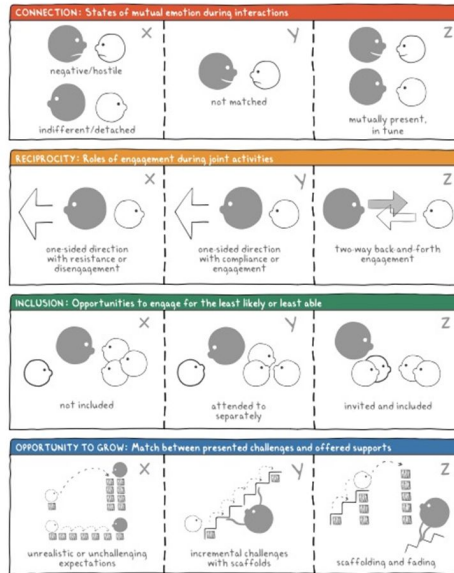


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- Ask participants to think about the statement on the slide and write one word on a post-it that they feel fits.
- Before the group starts, remind them to think with an **"EIM mindset."** * Have participants bring their post-its to the front. Read the different ideas aloud to the group.
- All ideas should be welcomed, as they can further the conversation as a whole group or in small groups.
- The "actual" word in this statement is **Connection**, but many words can work here. A deep conversation can be had regarding why it is so important to notice and self-reflect.
- Remind participants why this work is continuing for a second year. The goal is for them to become experts at self-reflection, which is why facilitators enter the classrooms to observe and point out those amazing, yet simple and ordinary moments in their days.
- Why does it matter to step back and look at these ordinary, mundane moments? Why does finding the child's need and the adult's capacity matter?
- It matters specifically when thinking about the quality of early childhood environments.
- This is about how connection is defined and identified, but more importantly, how it is grown. Connection can certainly be grown through intentional reflection and noticing.

SIMPLE INTERACTIONS TOOL

Noticing and Appreciating Human Interactions Across Developmental Contexts



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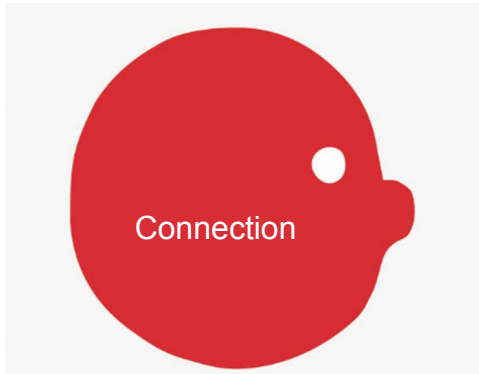
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Remind participants of the tool and that now that they have it hanging in their classrooms (or should) it is something we encourage them to use throughout their days. A way to reflect on all of the many interactions that happen throughout their days.

The Plan For Today...



States of mutual emotion
during interactions



Roles of engagement during joint
activities



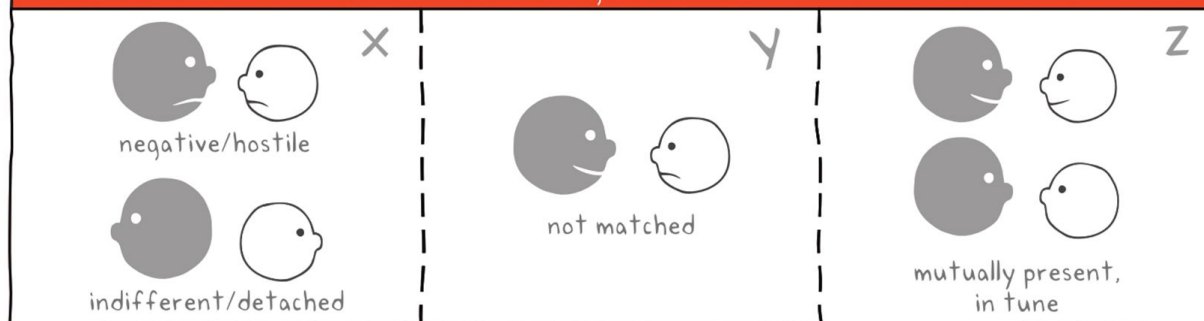
Share the plan for today: review the **Connection** dimension and dive deeper into **reciprocity**.

Let the participants know that today will be a day of many conversations and opportunities to work together.

Explain that since they have already been introduced to each dimension, the goal now is to take it a step further by working together within those dimensions.

This will help everyone develop a better working knowledge of each dimension and allow them to recognize when they are truly immersed in them.

CONNECTION: States of mutual emotion during interactions



- Assign each table a specific mode (X, Y, or Z).
- Ask participants to think independently about a time they found themselves in their assigned mode. They can reflect on a specific, actual interaction or a more general experience—the choice is theirs.
- Prompt them to consider:
 - How did they feel in this mode?
 - What did they do to change if they did not want to stay in that mode?
 - What did they do to stay in or maintain that mode?

The Dimension of Connection

- Explain that when you see people together, whether 1-on-1 or in a group, you can sense if they are connected and really "with" each other.
- Note that in this dimension, children and adults appear in tune, aware of one another, and fully present, whether they are listening, talking, or working together.



Powerful Interactions and Connections?



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Have the group look at both of the pictures on the slide.

Ask the participants what they notice about the pictures, focusing specifically on the positive aspects.

After a few responses, shift the focus to the interactions and connections that happen within these environments.

Direct the conversation toward the idea that even though an environment may look organized and well-maintained with new materials, connection and relationships are dependent on the teachers and the intentional connections they make.

Emphasize that no matter the materials or the space, if there are no connections, the rest of it doesn't matter.

Note: This is a good time to refer back to the "toothpaste article" that everyone should have read.

Remember...

“Resources and environmental factors are useful only when they enrich and empower the growth of human interactions between children and adults”

-Dr.
Junlei





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Review/discuss the article that they read for connection – slides 16 & 17

Drug Facts

Active Ingredient	Purpose
monofluorophosphate 0.76%	Anti-Cavity Toothpaste

Use: Helps prevent against cavities

Warnings: Keep out of reach of children under 6 years of age. If you accidentally swallow more than used for brushing, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center immediately.

Drug Facts (continued)

pea sized amount in children under 6. Supervise children's brushing until good habits are established. Children under 2 yrs.: ask a dentist

Inactive Ingredients: Sorbitol, Silica, Water, Calcium Hydroxide, Fluoride, PEG 40, Methyl Cellulose, Saccharin, Trisodium Phosphate, FD&C Blue No. 1, Calcium Glycerophosphate

Use the Simple Interaction Tool

Using the SI Tool, work with a partner to try and identify the different modes of connection that are being observed in the naptime video

What Did You Notice?

 negative/hostile	 not matched	 mutually present, in tune

Activity: Pass out the What Did You Notice chart. Ask the partners to work together to complete the chart. They should be looking for moments in the different modes of connection. Have the groups report out. It might be helpful to watch the video more than one time.



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This video and the next can be used if there is time or if there are not many videos from the centers- we can still have them observe connection happening.



Let's Watch Your Amazing Videos!

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?



Add videos recorded from the classrooms after this slide for the participants to watch and discuss.

Interactions



Relationships



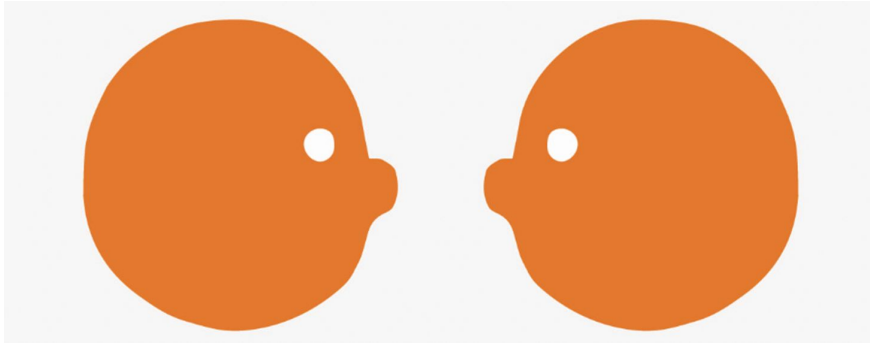
**Learning, growing, resilience,
community**

The next few slides (12-15) will reinforce the power of intentional connection and interactions and the importance of relationship building.

Break Time



Reciprocity



Roles of engagement during joint activities



Remind the group that the session is moving into a deeper look at **Reciprocity**.
Ask participants what they already know about the concept of reciprocity.
Check to see if there are still things they are curious about or questions they have regarding how this dimension works in practice.

Serve and return forms the foundation of
brain architecture upon which all future
development will be built.

Harvard Center on the Developing Child

Brain Building

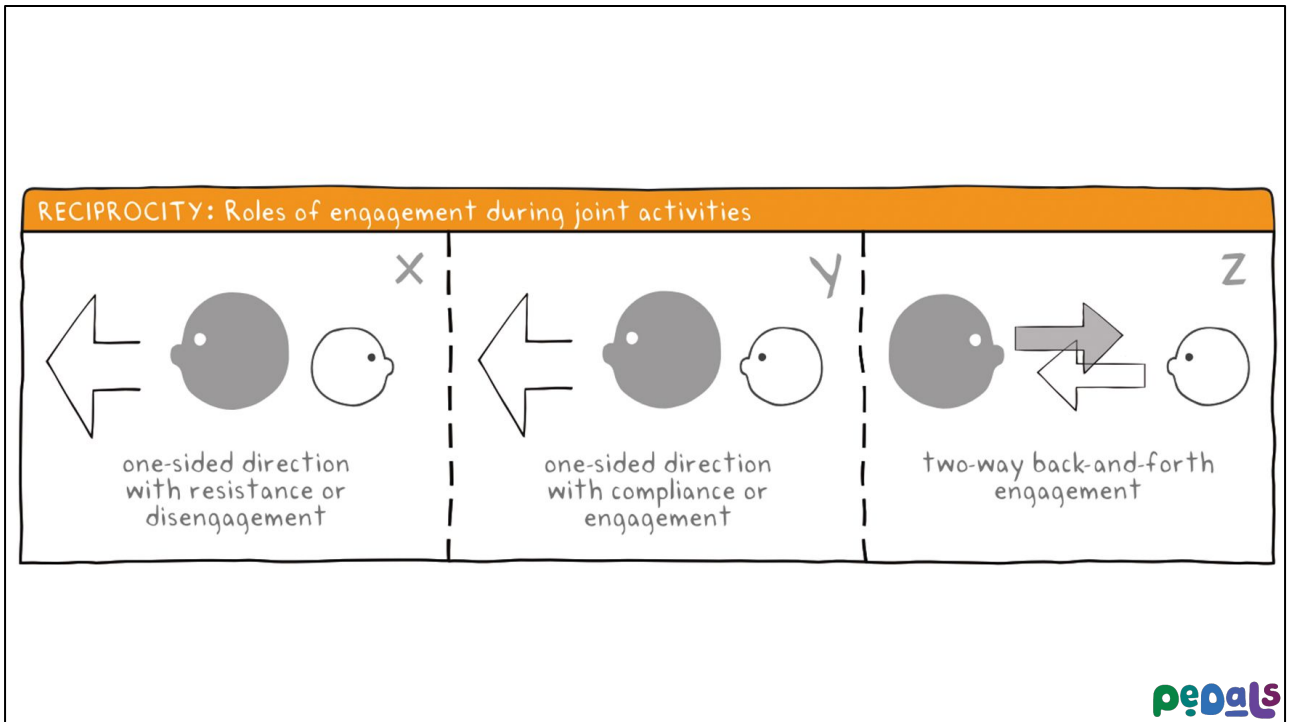


The Importance of Responsive Relationships

- Discuss how responsive relationships are both expected and essential; their absence poses a serious threat to a child's development and well-being.
- Explain that healthy brain architecture depends on a sturdy foundation built by sensory input and stable, responsive relationships with caring adults.
- Highlight the risks: if an adult's responses are unreliable, inappropriate, or absent, the brain's developing architecture may be disrupted, potentially impairing future physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Emphasize the "double whammy" of the persistent absence of **serve and return** interaction:
 - The brain misses out on necessary positive stimulation.
 - The body's stress response is activated, flooding the developing brain with potentially harmful stress hormones.

The Evidence: Building Brains

- Note that while developmental psychology has long shown the importance of contingent, reciprocal interaction for early development, we now have proof of how it "builds brains."
- Mention that recent studies using brain imaging and new technologies now document the direct impact of nurturing, supportive interaction and "sensitive caregiving" on both brain function and structure.



Introduce the dimension to the group.

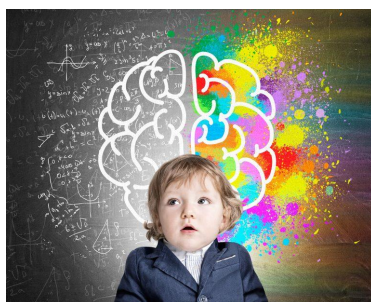
Optional Activity/Conversation: * Have participants look at the slide and determine which mode they individually feel most comfortable in.

- After a few minutes, transition into a group discussion using the following prompts:
 - Do you feel more comfortable in one mode versus another?
 - Why do you think that is?

Depending on how the discussion flows, consider touching on topics like temperament, upbringing, or how people are wired based on their life experiences. For example, some individuals may have grown up with the idea that children should simply comply with what adults say (Mode Y), which influences their current comfort level.

Play

The most important interactions you have with a child can happen through play. By engaging in playful Serve and Return with a child, you can literally help build stronger connections in the brain.



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Start by asking the group if they knew that some of the most important interactions they have with a child happen through play.

Explain that by engaging in playful **serve and return**, they are literally helping to build stronger connections in the child's brain.

Remind them that these strong neural connections are the foundation for all of a child's future learning, behavior, and health.

Introduce the Mini Parenting Master Class from UNICEF, featuring Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff.

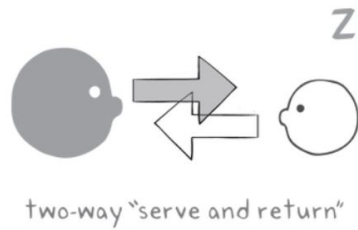
Note that he explains the importance of serve and return interactions—like play—and emphasizes how easy they are to do, especially with practice!



Mention that although this video was originally designed for parents, it perfectly explains the importance of **serve and return** interactions. Emphasize the video's message: these interactions—like play—are essential for development and are easy to do, especially with intentional practice!

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?



Work with a partner for 10 minutes. We will meet back to discuss this as a large group.

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A Highlight from Brazelton Touchpoints Center's **Learning to Listen Series**



Video Observation: Ordinary Moments

- Have the teachers watch the very quick video clip.
- Ask the group: "What is it that you notice about these kinds of moments?"
- After gathering responses, go a bit deeper with the following explanation:
 - Note that while the moment seems quite ordinary or mundane—simply feeding a child—that is exactly what makes it extraordinary.
 - Provide some background: This video was filmed in an orphanage where the staff manages a massive workload and many children. Typically, mealtime is run like a "well-oiled machine" to feed as many children as possible in a short timeframe.
 - These teachers do not have the training, time, or institutional support to create these types of moments like one might at home or in a typical childcare center.
- Transition to the next slide, which shows this same quick moment in slow motion to allow for an even closer look at the interaction.



A Highlight from Brazelton Touchpoints Center's **Learning to Listen Series**



Play the video again, this time in slow motion. Note that at the end of the clip, Junlei Li will provide a brief commentary.

Ask participants to focus their attention specifically on the pair on the left side of the screen.

Encourage them to notice the specific order in which the interactions are happening between the adult and the child.

After the video, share Junlei Li's explanation of what is happening and why it is so interesting.

Facilitate a discussion about what the participants heard and whether they noticed the specific details he pointed out during their observation.

Developmental
Needs (of child)

+

Capacity of Adult
To provide *matching*
developmental experiences

=

Developmental Relationship



Formally recapping what Dr. Junlei Li Said in the video.

1. Every child has developmental needs (feeding, sleeping etc.) While those are very important, the need for interaction is still there and some might argue just as important for development
2. What children need are adults who have the capacity to provide not only those “required” needs like feeding and rest but also ones that notice and participate in those very important interactions.
3. When we do that we are providing these children with valuable developmental relationships that will build these children into well rounded, successful people.



A Highlight from Brazelton Touchpoints Center's **Learning to Listen Series**



- **Before the video:** Let the participants know that there are many moments to be observed in this clip. Ask them to look specifically for moments of **reciprocity**.
- Encourage them to identify and write down:
 - What exactly is happening in those moments?
 - Who initiated the "serve"?
 - Who ended the interaction?

Post-Video Discussion: The Context

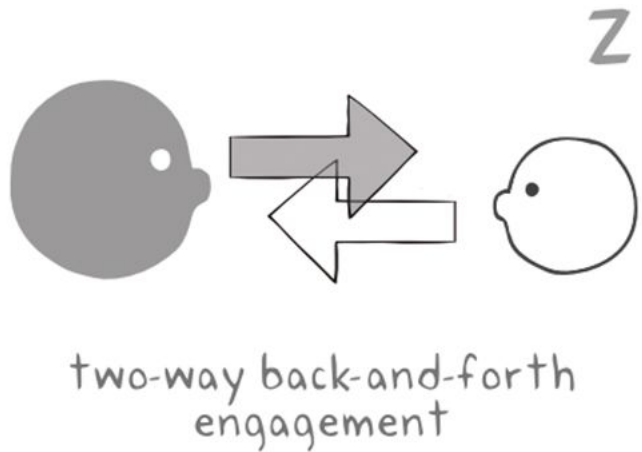
- **The Vests:** Point out that the children are wearing vests as part of a study on the **"Word Gap."** Each vest contains a recorder to track how many words are spoken to the child or by the child. This is based on research indicating that children exposed to less vocabulary may begin speaking later.
- **The "Physical" Conversation:** After the group discussion, highlight that if one were to only listen to the audio with their eyes closed, they would miss a significant portion of the interaction.
 - While there may be a limited number of "conversational turns" if measured strictly by sound, many of these children are very young.
 - Emphasize that their "conversation" is often more physical than it is verbal.

Activity: Dimensional Analysis (If time allows)

- Divide the room into four groups and assign each group one specific dimension to focus on.
- Play the video again and ask each group to identify and share moments that align with their assigned dimension.

Reciprocity

How might you scaffold reciprocity between two children?



This should be a think, pair, share type of activity. Let the participants know that they are putting two of the dimensions together here. They are thinking about what they have already learned about reciprocity and even a little bit about Opportunity to Grow.

Early Learning Guidelines & Reciprocity

- Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) is a New York State child development resource for educators of children ages birth through 8
- There are 5 domains: 1.) Approaches to Learning, 2.) Physical Well-Being, Health and Motor Development, 3.) Social and Emotional Development, 4.) Communication, Language and Literacy, 5.) Cognitive Development
- The Guidelines provide information about developmental milestones and specific instructional, environmental, and family engagement supports you can use to support young children's development



Inform participants that today's session will not only dive deeper into the **Simple Interactions Tool** but will also involve discussing and utilizing the **Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs)** together.

Assessment Ask for a show of hands:

- "Who has heard of the ELGs before?"
- "Is anyone currently using them in their practice?"
- ** This is a great way to gauge the room and identify who might need more in-depth support with these tools in the future.

Explain that the ELGs are essential for planning activities and lessons. By understanding specific milestones, educators are better equipped to support children, especially those who may not be hitting those milestones quite yet.

Show the group a physical copy of the **ELG book**.

** If a significant number of participants have not used the book before, pass it around so everyone has a chance to look through it and become familiar with the format.

What counts cannot always be counted, What can be counted does not always count.

- Attributed to Albert Einstein



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Suggest that the focus should perhaps move away from the sheer quantity of adult-to-child talk and toward the essential components of that communication. This means not stressing too much over a set number of words spoken per day. Instead, the focus should be on finding time, even if brief, for high-quality, loving interactions. These are the moments seen on the classroom floor, at the changing table, or during snack time.

Large Group Conversation Ask for participant feedback using the following prompts:

- What does a brief, high-quality interaction look like?
- Remind them that they saw examples of this in the previous videos.
- What are the elements that make up the interactions we want surrounding children throughout their days?

The Four Dimensions Highlight the key elements: Connection, Reciprocity, Inclusion, and Opportunity to Grow.

- **Important Reminder:** These are not boxes to be checked off. They are the underlying strands that make an interaction truly work.