

Developmental Observation Topic Plan

How I Respond to Others' Emotions

(How the emotions of others influence what I do and how I feel)

(Forming Close, Secure Relationships)



What parents will be observing



- how children of different ages respond to others' emotions (other children, parent, other adults)
- how others' emotions influence children's own feelings, emotions, and activities



Environment



Put out a generally interesting environment using objects and activities that parents have enjoyed during past sessions. Be sure to include objects and activities appropriate to the range of ages in your group. Some suggestions are:

- infant materials that are fun to look at and listen to, that they or their parents can activate; soft books; floor mats where infants can practice moving; some scarves for playing peek-a-boo
- homemade puppet box with puppets or cardboard box to climb into, with holes cut out for playing peek-a-boo
- large motor area with slide, rocking boat, or climber
- book area for quiet time with parent



Note to facilitator: Prepare, but do not put out right away, a new, unfamiliar toy that moves and makes noise (for example, a robot, a wind-up toy, an electronic toy - this should be something that is unfamiliar to the children, noise, and maybe a little bit scary).



Opening Discussion



A. Hello Song (with names of each child and parent)

Hello (child's name), Hello (parent's name), How are you? How are you?
We're so glad to see you! We're so glad to see you! Come and play! Come and play!



Note to facilitator: As children become familiar with the song, they will begin to show their recognition. You will see them become still. They will start waiting to hear their name, and some will show smiles and other signs of pleasure when they hear it - be sure and point this out to the parents!



Opening Discussion



B. Introducing the Developmental Observation Topic

1. Providing information on the DOT

Today we are going to talk about children's responses to emotions expressed by others, especially their parents or other caregivers they are very familiar with. One thing we all know about young children is how we can get them to laugh by laughing, or how if we cry they may cry, too! As little humans, children are very tuned in to the emotions of others. **What we may not think as much about, however, is how the way we SHOW emotions in a particular situation can influence how children themselves respond. How YOU will make a difference in how your CHILD responds.** For example, if you are very at ease and visiting a close friend, your child may soon leave your side and approach your friend. But if you are not at ease, or if you are anxious or fearful, your child will likely be anxious and fearful as well, and may stay close by our side. The emotions that YOU show help them decide how THEY should feel.

How do they know how you feel? By what your face is showing and by what they hear in your voice! This is important because what YOU do has a big influence on whether your child will be willing to explore new situations, including new objects and new people. While we all know that children have their own temperament, with some more shy and some more out-going, within that range your OWN display emotions can make a big difference!



Children are also influenced by the emotions of others. While they may look to you when they are uncertain how to act, they also are affected by emotions expressed by other children and other adults. For example, if they hear another child cry, what are they likely to do? If they hear a friendly voice and see a smile, are they more likely to warm up to a new adult? What happens if they hear an angry voice?

2. Sharing what we already know

Ask parents to share some things they have already observed in their children in relation to how children respond to other people's emotions. Some possible conversation starters are:





- **What have you observed about this already?**
- **Other suggestions for questions to get this discussion going**
 - How does your child respond to positive and negative emotions in others?
 - What happens if it is YOU showing the emotion?
 - What happens if someone else is showing the emotion?
 - What does your child do if another adult shows a positive emotion? a negative emotion?



Opening Discussion



3. Summarizing the main points

-  Children are highly tuned-in to the emotions of others, whether they are positive or negative ones
-  Depending on their age, they respond in different ways
-  Children's behavior may be differ depending on how YOU respond to the situation - they take their cues from you and other familiar people
-  They especially look to you when the situation is new or when they haven't experienced anything like it before - they learn how to respond from you! When the emotion that they observe is unpleasant or negative, they look to you to see how you respond, or seek you out for comfort.

C. Describing the Environment

Today's environment is a general play environment except that we will bring out, at different points, some new, unfamiliar objects. Be sure to look at the chart as a reminder of things to try. At some point we will bring out a new toy that moves and makes noise. (Describe this to the parents so they will know what to expect).

D. Suggesting Things to Try

Today we are going to ask you to try showing some specific emotions and watching to see what your child does.

- One of these experiments will be to see if you can get your child to laugh, by laughing and enjoying yourself!
- The 2nd experiment will be to do what is called a "still-face," where you are momentarily stop smiling at and interacting with your child, and watch to see what happens.
- A 3rd experiment will be a new, slightly scary, unfamiliar toy. For example, a pop-up Jack-in-the-Box often startles children. We will bring out a new, slightly scary surprise toy sometime during the play. Watch especially for how children of different ages respond to this. Your child may turn to you to see how you are responding. If you show interest in it, s/he is likely to do the same. But if you show a "fear-face," your child may have nothing to do with it! (You will want to end this experiment by showing an interest in the object and having fun with it - so that your child does not go away still feeling fearful!).



Note to facilitator: As a reminder to parents, put these "things to try" on a chart tablet so parents can see it - show parents where it is.



Opening Discussion



E. Making Predictions

You will be watching to see how your child responds to all of these "experiments". And of course, remember that children of different ages are likely to respond different, as are children with different temperaments.

What do you think YOUR child will do?

How will s/he respond to these different experiments?

What will happen when you:

- laugh?
- look fearful with a new, slightly scary object?
- do a "still-face"?
- look interested in a new, slightly scary object?



Parent-Child Observation Time



As you interact with each dyad,

- briefly comment to parents about emotions you have seen the child express, particularly when you notice that s/he may be responding to another person's emotions
- as parents try the "things to try," talk to them about their observations. How were their child's emotions influenced by the emotions that they saw and heard in their parents? How were they influenced by the emotions they saw and heard in other children?



Note to facilitator: For the 3^d "experiment," activate the new, slightly scary toy about mid-way through the observation time, put it down, and move away. If children look at YOU instead of at their parent, make a quick "laugh-face" and show interest in the toy, but try to stay out of the interaction.



Transitions



A. From Activity to Snack

You could use crackers or cookies with faces on them, or laminated "place-mats" with different facial expressions. While infants and toddlers will not yet be able to relate to these pictures, their parents could make faces that match their place-mats, and see what happens.

B. From Snack to Songs & Games

Use bubbles or parachute to entice children from the snack table back to the central rug area. Or simply start singing the songs and games.

The main idea is to make the activity appealing for children so that they will WANT to transition. (Make sure the parents know that this is a "transition;" it's OK to stay at the snack table until their children are interested in coming over.)



Parent-Child Songs & Games



Sing/say 1 or 2 favorite songs/nursery rhymes. Include one that can incorporate facial expressions, pretend cry or laugh, so parents can demonstrate the expression(s).

Sample song lyrics are on the next page.



Closing Discussion



A. Reviewing Predictions

- How did your child respond to the "experiments?" (review each experiment)
- Did s/he do what you thought s/he would do?
- Were you able to change your child's emotions by what you did?

B. Main Points

Young children instinctively laugh and cry at appropriate times. They are also very much affected by the emotions of others. When someone else laughs, it is infectious - it's as if they think, "Hey, something funny is happening here," and they laugh, too! When someone cries, they seem to think, "Hey, maybe something is wrong here and I'd better cry, too." When they are in situations where they are not sure they are safe and secure, they are likely to look to others to help them out. If others seem not to be afraid, they will think, "Hey, no need for ME to be afraid." But if others look afraid, they are likely to be afraid themselves. So when they are uncertain, they often look at others for cues as to how THEY should feel. They "mirror" others' emotions - that's one way they learn what they should feel in certain situations.

Parents and other familiar caregivers can have a big influence on how children feel and respond to situations by the emotions that THEY express. So we can help children by demonstrating the emotions that we want our child to feel in certain situations!

C. Carry-Over to Home

Are there situations at home or in the community that you can think of where your child looks to you for what emotions s/he should feel (examples: at the play-ground, looking to you to see if it is OK to respond to another child or the child's parent; at the grocery store, looking at you to see how you are responding to an adult who speaks to your child in a friendly way).

- Are there things you thought of today that you might be able to use at home?
- Are there ways that you thought of to help your child respond to new situations?

D. Good-Bye Song

Be sure and use the same goodbye song each time so that it becomes a familiar routine. Call attention to how children begin to respond not only to their own names, but also how the older children are begin to know one another's names. Even in music activities you can see children's interest in other children emerging!



Sample Parent-Child Songs & Games



Note: The words in parenthesis are not part of the lyrics.

“This Little Piggy”



This little piggy went to market

(Wiggle baby's big toe)

This little piggy stayed home

(Wiggle baby's second toe)

This little piggy had roast beef

(Wiggle baby's third toe)

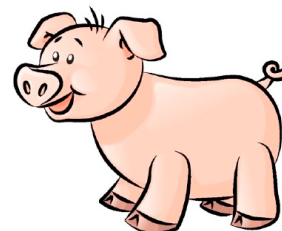
This little piggy had none

(Wiggle baby's fourth toe)

This little piggy cried "wee, wee, wee"

All the way home.

(Wiggle baby's little toe)



The Flea

(From “Music for Very Little People” by John Feierabend, p. 38)

On my toe there is a flea,

(“climb” fingers up, tap top of head)

Now he’s climbing on my knee,

Past my tummy, past my nose,

On my head where my hair grows.

On my head there is a flea,

Now he’s climbing down on me,

Past my tummy, past my knee,

On my toe TAKE THAT YOU FLEA!

(tickle foot)

