



Early Edition

A publication of ACSI Eastern Canada - Early Education Division

Issues



Updates



Program Resources



ACSI News



From the Editor's Desk:



...Ethical Decisions

As privately run operations, we are subject to not only our own code of ethics but also to those that license our operations so that we can be fully recognized with full educational authority in the province of Ontario. Although we may sometimes not agree fully with what we are asked to do, we need to decide how to implement the required regulations without diluting our faith based ethics and integrity. In reflecting on this challenge that we occasionally face, I came upon excerpts from an article posted on the Australian government website that will give you some guidelines as you strategize in your response to compliance issues that may be of concern to you. To view the full document, visit www.wa.gov.au/opssc/

Ethical Decision Making: (Western Australia Govt.)

In our daily work activities we are faced with issues that may include an ethical dimension. When we are considering a decision or course of action, either individually or as a team, it can be useful to ask questions that assist us to analyze the situation, and focus on possible moral and ethical outcomes. Ethical decision making models provide a framework to consider the facts, ethical principles...legal and policy framework and possible solutions to issues you are addressing. The SPIRAL model is one type of ethical decision making model. It is used to analyze the ethical issues present in a hypothetical situation.

THE SPIRAL MODEL

Ethical decision-making...can be challenging. It must find ways of reconciling the conflicting tensions between justice for all, respect for individual rights and cultural differences, and contributing to the overall well-being of our society. The steps as outlined in the following S.P.I.R.A.L. model can assist in systematically addressing these issues in a logical fashion to arrive at a decision.

- S**pecify key factors and ethical problem to be solved.
Link these to your ethical principles;
- P**inciples: list the key principles, legal and policy parameters that impact the decision needed;
- I**dentify options that are actually available to use;
- R**eview options to consider likely ethical outcomes;
- A**ction: act effectively and with resolution based on a clear and precise action plan;
- L**earn what you can from the results by evaluation them against your action plan.

As you go through this process of ethical decision making, always apply a moral test to the situation and ask the following of yourself:

- Will anyone or my centre, be harmed by this action and if so, can I minimize the negative result?
- How would I feel if my decision became public?
- What would a member of the public (or even my own organization, think of my decision?

A really simple and easy test that I sometimes use is to add the word Grandma at the end of the sentence and if you are comfortable in that context, then it is probably all right ☺

Anxieties and Fears



As we receive new children during this school year, we are aware of various levels of anxieties and fears faced by both children and parents. Our role and responsibility is to understand how we can facilitate the transition so that it is a positive and rewarding time together. An article on this topic that was reviewed by [D'Arcy Lyness, PhD](#) in

November 2007 still holds true today. She writes the following commentary:

Everyone, from the youngest child to the oldest adult, experiences anxieties and fears at one time or another. Feeling anxious in a particularly uncomfortable situation never feels very good. However, with kids, such feelings are not only normal, they're also necessary. Experiencing and dealing with anxieties can prepare young people to handle the unsettling experiences and challenging situations of life.

Anxieties and Fears Are Normal

Anxiety is defined as "apprehension without apparent cause." It usually occurs when there's no immediate threat to a person's safety or well being, but the threat feels real. They make someone want to escape the situation — fast. The heart beats quickly, the body might begin to perspire, and "butterflies" in the stomach soon follow. Having fears or anxieties about certain things can also be helpful because it makes kids behave in a safe way. The nature of anxieties and fears change as kids grow and develop:

1. Babies experience stranger anxiety, clinging to parents when confronted by people they don't recognize.
2. Toddlers around 10 to 18 months old experience separation anxiety, becoming emotionally distressed when one or both parents leave.
3. Kids ages 4 through 6 have anxiety about things that aren't based in reality, such as fears of monsters and ghosts.

As kids grow, one fear may disappear or replace another. For example, a child who couldn't sleep with the light off at age 5 may enjoy a ghost story at a slumber party years later. And some fears may extend only to one particular kind of stimulus. In other words, a child may want to pet a lion at the zoo but wouldn't dream of going near the neighbor's dog.

Signs of Anxiety: Typical childhood fears change with age. They include fear of strangers, heights, darkness, animals, blood, insects and being left alone. Kids often learn to fear a specific object or situation after having an unpleasant experience. Separation anxiety is common when young children are starting a new school and when parents are also anxious themselves. If anxious feelings persist, they can take a toll on a child's sense of well being. The anxiety associated with social avoidance can have long-term effects. For example, a child with fear of being rejected can fail to learn important social skills, causing social isolation. It is important for parents to recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of their own children's anxieties so that fears don't get in the way of everyday life. Some signs that a child may be anxious about something may include:

- becoming clingy, impulsive, or distracted
- nervous movements, such as temporary twitches
- problems getting to sleep and/or staying asleep longer than usual
- sweaty hands, accelerated breathing
- nausea, headaches, stomach-aches

Work with parents to help them recognize the fears, its reality and how it is affecting behavior. Offer some strategies by using positive comments, redirection towards other activities so that you do not cater to the fears. It takes time but you need to be consistent.



Early Assessment

During the formative years of learning, it is always so important to try and developed more individualized programs for the young children in our care. These are the years when habits are being developed as well as specific learning strategies that may facilitate a potential learning challenge. Your individualized program may include elements of play therapy, behavioral intervention, early literacy and numeracy and basic life skills.

Play Therapy: this strategy employs a high level of interactive activities with which to engage children. Especially designed for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or delayed communication, play therapy brings the adult into the play experience of the child and establishes a foundation for effective communication.

Behavioural Intervention: strives to teach and increase specific behaviours and reduce or eliminate inappropriate or non-adaptive ones. The goal is to break skills down into small manageable steps and gradually introduce new ones until the skill is mastered. Children with developmental delays usually do not learn spontaneously so they need to be taught the skills explicitly.

Key features of such a programme include:

- Clear, written programme overview and structure
- Specific individual goals selected by the teacher with the parent and consultant
- An abundance of positive reinforcement and praise

Social Skill Development Strategies: children of any age can suffer significant emotional and educational detriment if appropriate play, problem solving and communication skills are not developed. Strategies need to include meaningful discussion, modelling, charts, pictures, stories and games along with many opportunities to apply these skills in a relevant way.

Parents can learn to support the schooling experience by encouraging further practice and praise of any new skills learned. Some common social skills to target should include:

- Taking turns
- Asking for help
- Giving help when asked
- Staying on task
- Winning and losing
- Asking to play and participate and
- Sharing.

Early Literacy and Numeracy: these skills are often seen by the parents as those belonging only to the teacher and school, however research shows that the foundation of language and numeracy are developed well before the child goes to childcare. The following are skills that are to be revisited once the child enters a formal learning environment:

Literacy: pre-reading skills

- Learning to read
- Pre-writing skills
- Learning to write
- Understanding stories with comprehension

Numeracy: patterning

- Colours and shapes
- Counting
- Symbols/words/materials

Selective activities will provide positive reinforcement to the above skills.

Life Skills: developing essential life skills that promote independence is very important and enables young children to feel a great sense of pride and satisfaction of achievement. These include such basic skills at toileting, eating, dressing, personal hygiene, personal safety and organization skills.

THE NO-PUSH METHOD FOR DEVELOPING CREATIVITY



We live in a culture where only the best is good enough. It's easy to see why children are inclined to give up before they start on a creative project. It's not easy to encourage a child while still being realistic about their ability. They don't have to be very old before they can tell when you are giving false praise. It's better to emphasize the things that are going well and the ways he or she is improving. When children are frustrated with their efforts, be sympathetic, let them know that everyone has difficulties and that they need time and practice to learn how to do new things.

Often children equate being able to finish a project quickly with being good at it. Speed becomes the measure of success so we are dealing with quite a challenge in keeping our children enthusiastic and willing to take the risk of learning new creative skills. We need to find ways to emphasize the joy of doing a creative activity and to help them see that improving skills is a lifelong process. The number one way to do this is to model it. If we can let go of perfectionism and just enjoy our own creative process, children will notice and feel more comfortable trying new things. We also need to give children opportunities to be creative without concern for the product. Look for process-oriented projects and, when you are helping children make a specific object, keep things open-ended and leave room for their own creative touches.

A good way to teach this is to have children pick a favorite story he or she has written, then help them see how to make the story clearer and interesting; it can then be made into a little book. Don't be surprised if they basically just add to the story. Just encourage their newfound enjoyment in writing. It is also important that children be given time to use their imagination in what seems to us to be non-productive ways. They need to spend hours pretending and daydreaming.

(taken from " Exploring Women's Creativity © 1999 Judy Anne Breneman")

"Enthusiasm is excitement with inspiration, motivation and a pinch of creativity"

Bo Bennett