

Notes on observation exercise

HANDOUT

Notes for observing Interactions in everyday situations and trying something you have learnt in your practice

Observation

Practitioners have found that observing an interaction between an adult and a child in an everyday situation can help their understanding of reciprocity, although there will also be elements of containment and behaviour management. We would like you to have a go at this popular short observation exercise before you come back to Day 2 of the training.

When you carry out the observation it is a good idea to pick somewhere you can observe the interaction between an adult (e.g. parents, grandparents) and their child unobtrusively. Supermarkets are ideal, especially if you sit in the café area!

If you are a health visitor or work in a child clinic, observing the interactions between mothers and their babies at the weighing scales can be very illustrative.

Many people have said that it is interesting to watch a few parent/child interactions for several minutes each, although the time may be shorter in some situations. You will soon spot differences between them and you will see examples of the theories in real life. If you are observing infants look out for the dance of reciprocity, and for older children look for how 'in-tune' their parent is with them as they interact together. You are likely to see examples of containment.

Trying something you have learnt in your practice

Another really helpful way to add to your knowledge base is to try something you learnt during the first day of the training with a family or child in your setting if you work directly with babies or children.

When you try out something you have learnt in your work we will be interested to hear about what happened. If it helps you can write down a short account of your experience

Sharing your learning on Day 2

On Day 2 we have reserved the morning session for you to share what you see when observing an interaction and the learning you have tried out in you practice. For the observation we are particularly interested in how observing the interaction makes you feel, who started or finish the interaction, did the adult respond to the child or did the child have to make several attempts to get the adults attention, did they to get into a smooth turn-taking pattern and who looked away first and how did the other person respond? Look out for the Dance of Reciprocity.

The observation may only take a minute and can be either positive or negative and there are no right or wrong ways to describe it. Just say what you see.

When sharing your thoughts about your practice it can be helpful to share both short and longer interactions with a family or child. Also the work does not have to be a completed piece of work. Practitioners have said that the really valuable thing about this session is having a protected space to reflect and think about their work.

We look forward to hearing your feedback on the second day of the training and hope this is both a helpful and enjoyable experience for you.