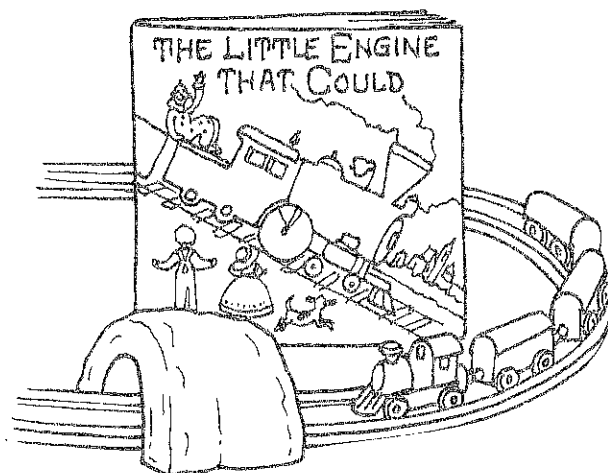


I Can't Do It!

Building confidence



Contents

	Page
Introduction	56 – 57
Activity 1 Easy marks	58
Activity 2 Higher and higher	59
Activity 3 Look what I can do	60
Activity 4 I think I can	61
Activity 5 I can make it work	62
Activity 6 I can look after you	63
Activity 7 I play, you play	64
Activity 8 Snip it and post it	65
Activity 9 I can cook	66
Activity 10 Throw and catch	67
Activity 11 With love from me to you	68
Activity 12 How do you feel?	69
Advice and tips	70

Topic 4: Introduction

Introduction

Feeling less confident and unable to tackle new things are perfectly natural parts of everyday life, and many children cope well when they feel lacking in confidence – they have a ‘can do’ attitude. But for some children, confidence and self-esteem are so low that they may refuse to even try and may resort to tears, withdrawal or even tantrums. How children understand and express their emotions and adapt to their new life depends on many factors including their:

- developmental stage
- position in their family and the attention they are used to
- relationship with key people in their life
- the response they get from others
- learning strategies for managing their emotions
- opportunities to communicate their feelings of self-esteem
- the models they get of adults and other children managing strange feelings without getting out of control.

Gaining self-esteem and confidence is difficult, particularly if this has been eroded by early failure, lack of response or ‘learned helplessness’, where a baby or child is over-protected or not given the freedom to ‘have a go’. In these cases it is important for practitioners and parents to work together to restore the confidence which is normally present in early childhood.

Children need to learn how to take charge of their feelings, and to recognise:

- making mistakes is part of everyday life, and is not failure
- learning something new usually needs several attempts and some concentration
- everyone has strengths and also things they find difficult, and we all feel insecure and less confident sometimes.

Topic 4: Introduction

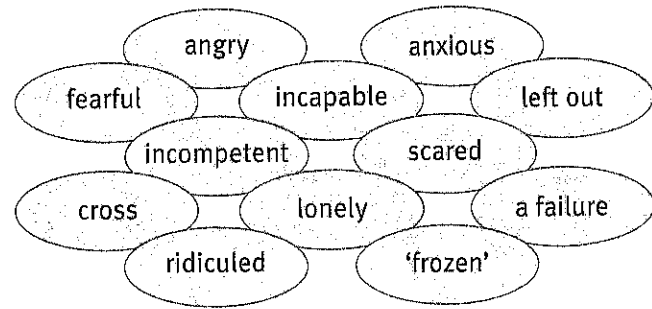
What you might see and what the child might be feeling

Every child and every set of circumstances is unique, but young children are far more likely to show us how they are feeling long before they are able to understand what they are feeling or tell us.

A child may express their lack of confidence in many different ways, some very obvious, others less so. Some of these signs and behaviours might be:

- crying, sulking or refusing to try an activity
- extreme stillness
- relapse in toilet training
- hiding or turning away from contact
- throwing things or tantrums
- violence to other children and adults.

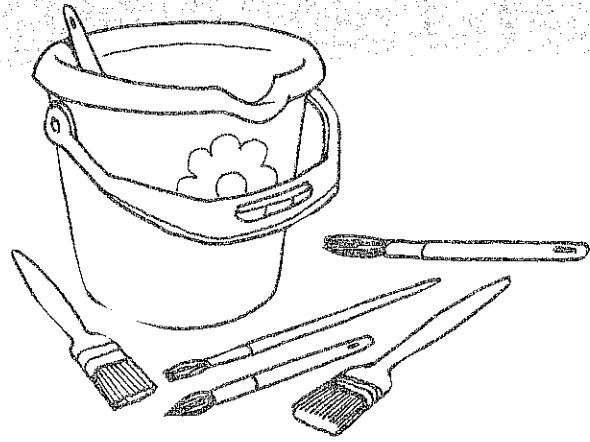
A child might be feeling any or all of these:



Practitioners should be mindful of any changes in a child's behaviour, observe the child carefully and discuss the child's needs together, taking note of what others in the team have observed or heard.

Easy marks

Making marks that disappear



What you need

- Decorating paintbrushes
- Seaside buckets or plastic boxes of water

What you do

1. This activity helps children to become confident about mark making, as the marks can be erased easily or left to disappear on their own. Start with just water.
2. Go outside with your buckets and brushes and see what you can paint.
3. You can use water on outdoor furniture, on the walls and doors, on climbing apparatus and on the ground. As you paint together, talk about how the water changes the colours of the things you are painting.
4. Watch the marks as they dry and disappear. Try making some letter-like marks or writing your name and then watching it disappear. Talk about the fun of making marks that don't matter. You can make them as big and sloppy as you like. Encourage the child to make really big arm and body movements as they work, reaching to the top of walls and doors, and making big circles and lines. Use plenty of praise for effort.
5. Tip the rest of the water out and sit together to watch it spread out and disappear.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch for anything you can notice and praise – shapes, movements and design, or just having a go. Help them to relax by suggesting that you make really big arm movements and shapes.
- Get involved yourself. Modelling confidence is very important, and children love it if you get involved.
- Offer this activity as a permanent feature of your setting, it's a great confidence builder for all children, and helps with hand control for writing later.

More ideas

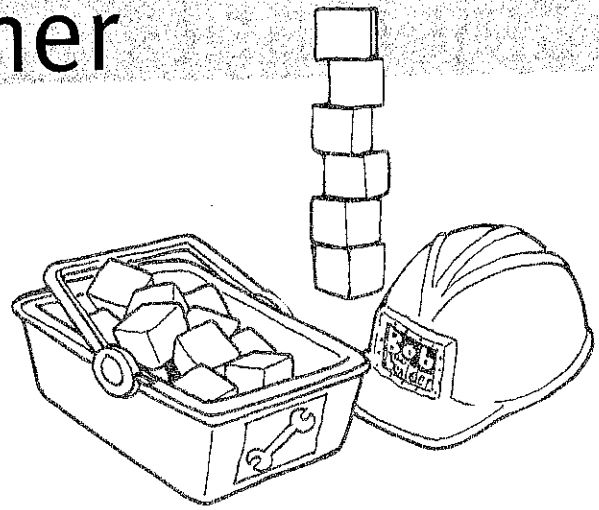
- Put a bit of washing up liquid in the water for bubbly painting, or add some food colouring.
- Put bubbly water in washing up bowls or bigger containers and offer the children small brooms so they can paint on an even bigger scale.
- Put up a big blackboard outside for water painting or use small blackboards and cotton buds.

Specially for babies

- Make some pat mats from zip lock bags with coloured water or cellulose paste mixed with food colouring inside. Let the babies pat these bags with dry or wet hands.
- Mix some soapy foam or use non-allergenic shaving foam in shallow dishes for patting and poking.
- Help them make marks in finger paint or custard.

Higher and higher

Building towers



What you need

- Big building blocks
- A child's hard hat
- An adult hard hat (if possible)
- A camera

What you do

1. Bricks are meant to be built and knocked over. Use this game to help a child understand that they have control over the structures they make, and that knocking them down can be good fun too.
2. Sit together with the bricks, wearing hard hats to get in the mood, and build towers and structures.
3. Talk about the towers you are building, counting the bricks and knocking your own towers down, or inviting the child to knock down your towers. Ask them if they can build a tower and knock it down themselves.
4. Build some very tall towers together, count '1, 2, 3, GO!' and let the child knock them down.
5. It may take some time before the child will build a tower and let you knock it down! Be patient as they gain confidence in building and demolishing.
6. Play the game with all sorts of bricks and towers indoors and outside.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch the child's face as they build the towers and knock them down again. Are they anxious? Do they get over-excited as you count and knock them down? Do they ask you to do it? Are they happy to build it up again? Praise their efforts.
- Show your enjoyment as the bricks come tumbling down. Talk as you build and demolish – say that you are going to build the highest tower you can, so you can make a big crash.

More ideas

- Use smaller bricks and knock them down with toy bulldozers and diggers.
- Use Duplo, Stickle Bricks and other construction sets to make structures that can be knocked down deliberately. This will strengthen their confidence in trying different sorts of towers and not getting upset when they fall.
- Make dough balls and pile these up before knocking them down or squishing them.

Specially for babies

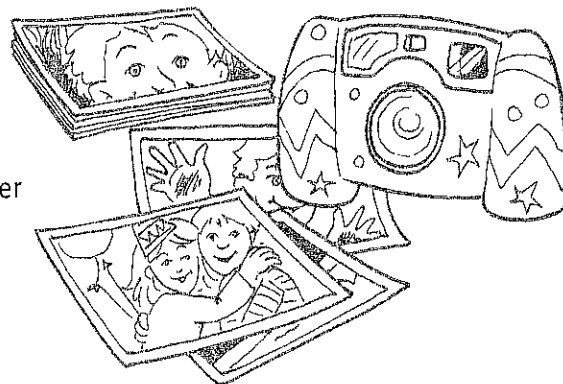
- Sit with a baby and pile up soft bricks on a flat floor, taking turns to put one on top of another and enjoying the falling down. Praise their efforts in building and demolishing!
- Stick construction pieces, such as Duplo or Stickle Bricks together for them to pull apart again.

Look what I can do

A photo book

What you need

- Child's digital camera
- Pieces of card or stiff paper
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- A piece of ribbon or string
- Hole punch



What you do

1. Talk with the child and suggest that you make a 'can-do' photo book with pictures of all the things they can do. They could tell you the things they can do and you could make a simple list. Add to this with things you know the child can do. If they are feeling very lacking in confidence, they may need help from you. Walk around your setting reminding them of the things they like to do and do well, but don't go on too long.
2. Collect the things you need to make the book.
3. Talk about the camera and how it works. Decide who will take the photos. The child could photograph the resources and equipment or you could photograph them doing things. Let them decide, they may not want you to take pictures of them.
4. Take the photos or help them to. Try to look at the outdoor area as well as indoors, physical activities, friends, favourite places, personal qualities.
5. Print the photos and look at them together as you stick them on small sheets of card.
6. Help the child to punch holes in each card and thread the ribbon through to tie it.
7. Decorate the cover together and write the child's name on it.
8. Don't forget to show the book to the child's parents and the other children.

More ideas

- If you do something new, such as passing your driving test, getting a new qualification, learning to swim, cooking a new recipe, talk about it with the children – how you had to practise and how pleased and proud you are now you can do it.
- Make an achievement tree or wall for the whole group, and add a leaf or brick with a photo when a child learns to do something new.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Take special note of the things the child feels really confident about – the first things they say they can do. These will be useful starting points if difficulties arise in the future.
- As you work, talk about the things the child likes doing, things you like doing, and things that are hard to do. Recognise that everyone finds some things hard to do, and that practice is important, because you don't always get it right first time.

Specially for babies

- Remember to give babies plenty of time to practise new skills. Praise them when they keep trying, talk about what they are doing, and make positive comments when they achieve something new.
- Talk to parents about their baby's achievements, and give praise for new skills learned.

I think I can

Using stories to build confidence

What you need

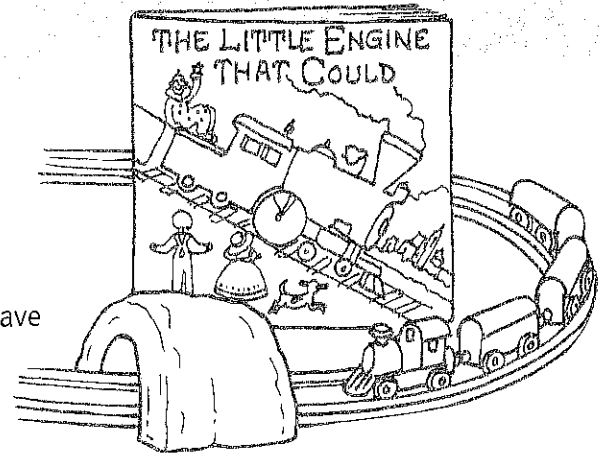
- A story from the resources section or one you already have
- A familiar puppet or soft toy

What you do

1. There are lots of stories about being persistent and trying again. Choose one from your own setting or buy a few titles to keep handy for these times.
2. Don't worry if the story isn't an exact match with the activity the child is finding difficult, in some ways it will make it easier to discuss. Stories with animal characters are often more successful than ones about other children.
3. Read the story together and talk about how the character in the story felt and how they overcame their problem, who helped them and what they did.
4. Now introduce the soft toy or puppet. Tell the child their name and say that they have a problem too. At this point you could choose to talk about another problem or the one the child is currently facing – for example, 'Do you know, Malcolm said he wasn't very good at drawing, and so he wouldn't try, and he got very upset when his friends were drawing and he wanted to do it too. How can we help him?'
5. Encourage the child to think of ways to help the toy, and this will help them to think about strategies for themselves, so next time they face the problem, they can think about the toy or puppet, they may even like to hold it to help them feel more confident.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Listen carefully to the child's comments and suggestions, take these seriously, and use them to help you understand what the child is feeling.
- If the child uses one of the strategies later, praise them for remembering what to do.
- When the difficult challenge happens again, gently remind them of the story or the character, and perhaps put the book or toy where the child can see them as they work or play.



More ideas

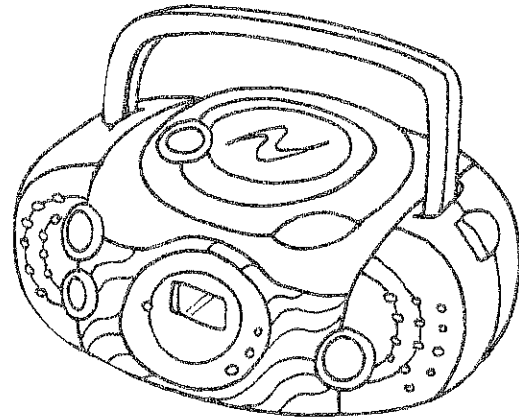
- Use a wooden train set to retell the story, making up a tune or chanting 'I think I can, I think I can' as the train goes over the track.
- Circle time is a good time to raise children's worries, concerns and difficulties. Give the children plenty of time to volunteer themselves, but don't force them or name them to others.

Specially for babies

- If babies feel less confident, they will usually respond if you give them some more of your time. Watch them carefully and give plenty of encouragement.
- When a baby shows signs of insecurity and lack of confidence, talk to their parents or carers and try to find out if anything has happened at home to trigger the worry.

I can make it work

Technology that works



What you need

- A children's CD player
- Some CDs of quiet music or stories
- A quiet place to listen
- A big cushion or bean bag

What you do

1. Sit with the child in a quiet, comfortable place and look at the CD player together. Show them how it works.
2. Let them have a turn at pressing the buttons and turning the knobs. Give them plenty of praise for having a go. You could take a photo to show their parents how clever they are!
3. Try some different CDs and let the child choose which one they want to listen to. Sit comfortably together and listen to some quiet music or a story. You could fetch a teddy or soft toy to share the quiet time with you.
4. Let the child stop the machine when they want to talk or change the CD. Don't make them listen for longer than they want. It's working the machine and being in control that's important – this improves confidence and self-esteem.
5. Stop when they have had enough. Don't forget to let them tell other adults and children what they have done. Prompt them if they need support in doing this.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch the child's level of confidence in different activities. They may be very confident with handling equipment, but not so good at telling people what they can do. They may be good at talking but not very good at listening. Make sure you know each child well, and can use their strengths to help you support them in overcoming their difficulties. This will build self-esteem and confidence.

More ideas

- Make up a song together about the things the child is good at. You could sing 'Matthew can work the CD player, the CD player, the CD player, Matthew can work the CD player, I saw him this afternoon' (to the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush).
- Encourage children to be as independent as possible in your setting – getting things out, clearing up, using tools, mixing paint, making their own creations etc.

Specially for babies

- Find some simple toys with buttons to press, knobs to turn, flaps to lift. If they light up, or make music or sounds, they will be even better and more exciting.
- Let babies explore independently as much as you can, while still keeping them safe. Praise them for doing things themselves and tell their parents about it.

I can look after you!

Caring for someone else

What you need

- A baby doll in pyjamas
- Doll's clothes to fit
- A doll's pushchair or pram
- A doll's blanket
- A shopping bag or basket



What you do

1. It's a good idea to invest in some dolls with a range of clothes that fit! They will be very useful resources for all sorts of language activities and games, as well as reinforcing care of babies and younger children as children get involved in free domestic play. You could do this activity in the home corner.
2. Start with the doll or teddy in its night clothes, and ask the child to help you get the baby ready to go for a walk outside. You may suggest the baby needs a bath before you go!
3. Let the child help to collect the things you need and put some water and bubbles in the bath. Help the child to bath the baby (if they need help), talking through what they are doing and praising how carefully they are looking after it.
4. Dry and dress the baby together, still talking about what you are doing and emphasising the care the child is taking as they look after the baby. Give plenty of praise.
5. When the baby is ready, put it in the pram or pushchair while you clear up. Then take the baby out for a walk together.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Try to resist helping too much! Talking through what you are doing together will help them. Using descriptive language and a bit of prediction will help if they are finding it difficult – 'You are holding the baby very carefully. Are you going to hold her head so she doesn't fall off your knee?' or 'You are doing this so well. Have you remembered to dry her legs? It will be easier to get the clothes on if she is dry all over.' 'Would you like me to hold the towel while you get the baby out of the bath? Babies are very slippery.' 'Don't forget to strap her in the pushchair so she doesn't fall out.'

More ideas

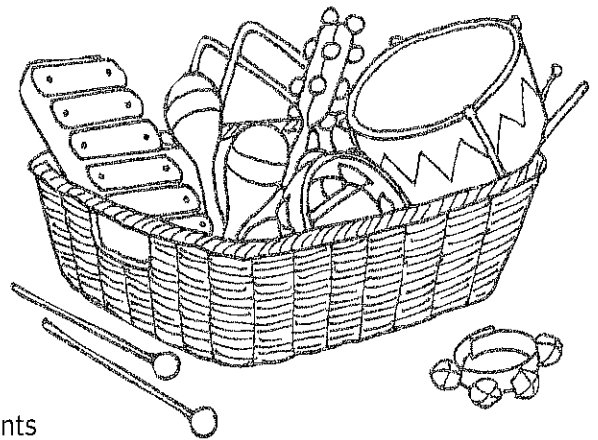
- Look in a mail order catalogue or on the internet for pictures of baby things and make a scrapbook.
- Cut out pictures of babies in magazines and talk about what babies need and do.
- Sing lullabies to dolls and teddies as you rock them gently and quietly.

Specially for babies

- Even young babies love baby doll play. Let them help you to bath a baby doll in lots of bubbly water. Then put the baby to bed in a blanket or cot.
- Look at books and stories about babies.

I play you play

Simple musical instruments



What you need

- A basket of simple musical instruments – shakers, rattles, bells, tambourines – at least two of each

What you do

1. Look at the music basket together, exploring all the instruments and the sounds each one makes. Talk about their names and which ones you like best.
2. Choose an instrument each and have a go at playing together. Don't worry if the timing is a bit strange!
3. Now suggest that you play 'i play, you play'. Explain that the child can play their instrument and you will copy them.
4. Let the child choose an instrument and you find the same sort.
5. When you are both ready, the child plays a short rhythm, which you copy. Try to follow them, you are aiming to build success and confidence. Praise their efforts.
6. Carry on doing this for about four repeats, then ask the child if they would like you to be the leader. If they do, repeat the same game.
7. You could ask some more children to join you, and let the first child show them what to do.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch how confidently they take the lead with the instruments. Help or prompt them if they are uncertain, or demonstrate by being the leader first if that's what they want.
- Use your judgement about whether to invite more children to join the activity, the first child may find it difficult.
- If they enjoy the activity, try using music or rhythm to help them at other times.

More ideas

- Read some stories about bands, such as 'The Happy Hedgehog Band' (Candlewick Press).
- Get a copy of 'The Handy Band' by Sue Nicholls (A&C Black) – it has hundreds of ideas for music for under fives.
- Let the children play their own music by providing a basket of instruments for free play. (Outside in a tent is a good idea!)

Specially for babies

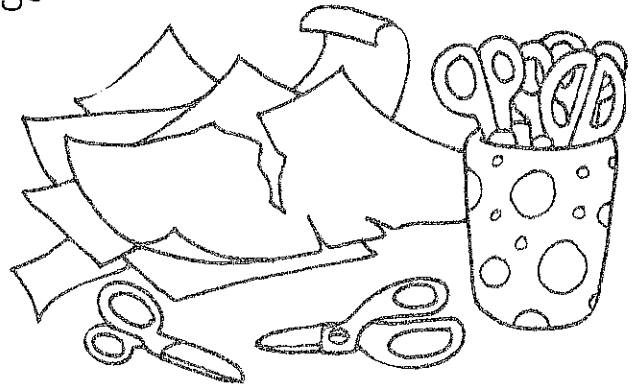
- Share simple musical instruments with babies – help them to shake, tap and rattle instruments as you hold them.
- Find some baby sized bell bracelets for wrists and ankles, or hang some bells on ribbons for babies to kick and pat with feet and hands (watch carefully so babies don't get tangled in the strings).

Snip it, and post it

Cutting and handling small things

What you need

- Paper (recycled paper is ideal)
- Round ended scissors
- A cardboard box or plastic container with a lid
- Crayons or pens



What you do

1. This activity will help children who are having difficulty with fine motor control. It is unstructured and has no 'wrong way' to do it. The snipping activity is not about cutting out, just about the skill of cutting. Make sure the scissors are sharp enough to cut paper – if they aren't, get some new ones!
2. Make a slot in the top of the box or container. It should be wide enough to slip in a bit of snipped paper but narrow enough to present some challenge to the child.
3. Cut the paper into strips about 2cm (3/4") wide.
4. Sit with the child and share this simple snipping activity, which involves snipping the strips into bits and posting the bits through the slot in the top of the box.
5. Hold your hand over theirs to help them with the snipping if they need it – however, most children can do this activity unaided.
6. You could make marks on some of the snipped bits if you want to, but the activity is usually satisfying in itself.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch the child and how they use the scissors. It's not easy to spot left handers at this age, but you could start by always giving children the scissors in their right hand. If they consistently swap them to their left hand, they may be developing a preference.
- Many children love this activity and will spend long periods of time just snipping. It develops confidence, hand control and concentration. Give praise for all these.

More ideas

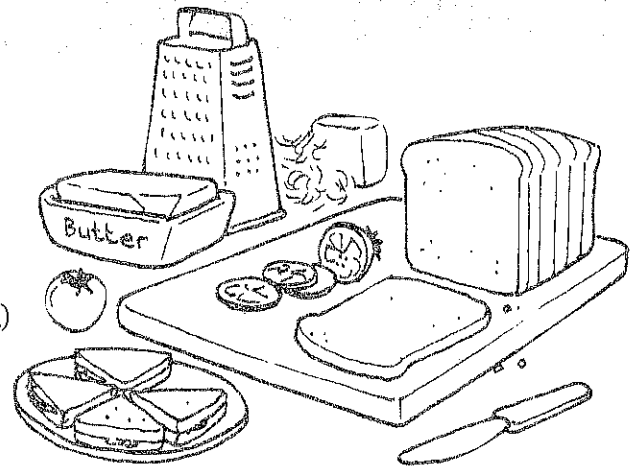
- Make some more different sized and shaped holes to post paper snippings through.
- Try the activity with autumn leaves, collected from your outdoor area or the park. This will give a quite different snipping sensation.
- Offer some thick needles and wool to thread the snipped pieces, adding beads or pasta tubes.

Specially for babies

- Offer different sorts of papers to babies for scrunching, tearing and squeezing. This will strengthen their hands and fingers so they are ready for more complex skills.
- Try posting screwed up paper into toy post boxes or small empty containers.

I can cook!

Simple food making



What you need

- Sliced brown bread, cut in halves (straight or diagonal)
- Soft margarine or butter
- Plates
- Jam, Marmite, honey or other spread
- Blunt ended knives (butter knives are ideal)

What you do

1. Simple food preparation is a great confidence booster, specially when you can make your own food and some to share. Try to involve those children who lack confidence in preparing snacks and picnics for the other children. They will really enjoy making this contribution to the group and you will be able to watch how their abilities are growing.
2. Making sandwiches is an activity which even very young children can do independently. They just need safe knives and soft butter, some fillings to choose from and someone to offer their sandwiches to!
3. Stay around in case they need help, but try to just talk them through any difficulties without taking over.
4. When the sandwiches are done, you may want to cut them into quarters before serving them to other children indoors or at an outdoor picnic. Make sure you give the chefs the praise they deserve and let them take the sandwiches round.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch for confidence levels, hand control and ability to make choices as they select fillings.
- Give plenty of praise as they work, noticing the skills they are using and giving clear commendation such as 'That's very good spreading,' or 'Is that your favourite filling? I like jam too.' or 'You have arranged your sandwiches very carefully on the plate.'
- Make sure the chefs also help with the clearing up. This is good practice in independence too.

More ideas

- As their skills increase, try making french bread pizzas, cutting up vegetables for soup, making toast, chopping fresh vegetables to eat with yogurt dip, or making new sandwich fillings such as chopping hard-boiled egg, slicing tomatoes, making hummous or grating cheese.

Specially for babies

- Build babies' confidence with food by offering finger food whenever you can. Start early with pasta shapes, raisins or small pieces of cooked vegetables.
- Play tea parties with plastic tea sets and water, tiny sandwiches and little cheese squares. Invite a teddy or doll to join you as you snack.

Throw and catch

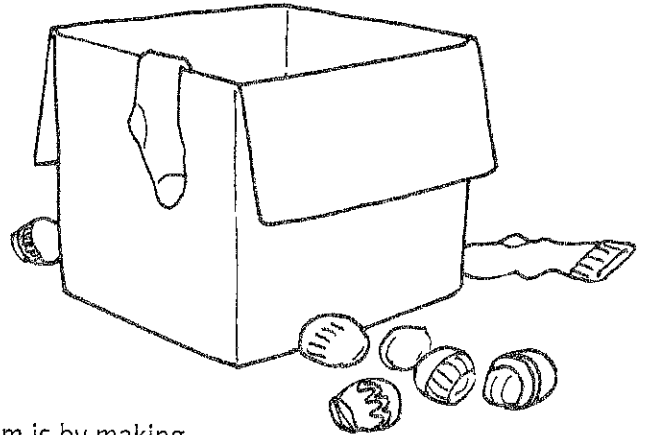
Building physical confidence

What you need

- A cardboard box or bucket
- Lots of rolled up pairs of socks

What you do

1. Another way to promote confidence and self-esteem is by making physical activities manageable for small hands.
2. Collect the things you need and invite the child to join you in a throwing game.
3. Share out the rolled up socks between you and ask the child where they think you should put the box or bucket. Follow their lead – they may put it miles away and have to move it, but resist the temptation to tell them before they have tried!
4. Take turns to throw the socks into the box or bucket. Don't make it a competition, just a shared activity. Talk as you play, commenting on the way the child is throwing, asking them if they want to move the box nearer or further away, praising their successes and sympathising when they miss.
5. When you have used up all the socks, tip them all out and play again, but this time, put the box or bucket on its side.



Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Watch for the development of a preferred hand for throwing.
- Try to be a supportive partner, not an aggressive competitor! Your role is to support and extend confidence and competence.
- Be tactful when making suggestions about throwing style or where to put the box or bucket.
- If the child finds things difficult in the future, remind them of their successes in this game and other activities from this book. Talk openly about how some things are easier to do than others, and that everyone has things they are good at.

More ideas

- Try fishing plastic balls out of a bowl of water with tweezers or tongs.
- Put the pairs of socks in some water, and then use them to throw against a wall for 'Splat Shot', or drop them from the climbing frame into a bucket or a chalk circle on the ground.

Specially for babies

- Play passing games and giving games, where the child can fetch things from a basket and give them to you.
- Dropping objects into a box or bowl gives practice with letting go – this is a skill in itself.

With love from me to you

Messages, letters and cards

What you need

- Paper and card of different shapes, sizes and colours
- Envelopes
- Scissors, sticky tape and glue sticks
- Magazines and catalogues
- Pencils, crayons, pens



What you do

1. Sending messages, letters, pictures and cards is a great way to build confidence and approach others.
2. You could offer this activity to the whole group and sit with the less confident child as they work.
3. Look through the things that are available – less confident children often find it difficult to start an activity and this is why they tend to flit from one to another or sit without doing anything.
4. Don't be in too much of a hurry to start. Take time to talk about who they want to send a message to, what sort of things that person likes, which of the resources they are going to use.
5. Once they are getting started, just watch what happens, offering help if they need it, but not taking over. Reflect back what they are doing in a quiet 'running commentary' as they work, praising what they are doing and making gentle suggestions if they seem to get stuck.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Just being there is really important to less confident children, and is often all they need – a nod, smile or a few words are often all it needs to keep them going and concentrating.
- Observe and note creative ideas, strengths and skills. This is often a good opportunity to do a long observation of one or two children as you give support and guidance or just your presence.
- Sometimes make something too, but be careful that children don't just try to make the same as you. You may need to use your judgement about joining in or standing back.

More ideas

- Try to offer free choice and independence to all the children as you make cards, letters and messages. Have a post box. Don't all make the same Mother's Day or Christmas cards. Provide a wide range of materials and be there to discuss with them what they would like to make. This will give all the children more confidence.

Specially for babies

- Offer babies stickers and other self-adhesive objects to stick on paper or in little books. Let them wrap things in paper for gifts, explore envelopes, wrapping paper and gift bags. Praise their efforts at sticking, wrapping, folding and scrunching paper and receive gifts gracefully!

How do you feel?

Exploring feelings

What you need

- Paper plates
- Short garden sticks or straws
- Magazines
- Scissors and glue sticks

What you do

1. This simple mask/puppet making activity is easy and good fun. You may want to find some of the pictures in advance, so you have a wide range of expressions. Adverts, and 'Mother and Toddler' magazines will give you lots of faces of babies and children.
2. Start by looking at the magazines together, looking particularly at faces and expressions. Tear some of these pages out of the magazines, choosing pictures that are big enough to see the expressions well. Add your previously prepared ones if you need them.
3. When you have a good collection of different faces, spread them out on the table or floor and talk about each, discussing the names of the expressions – happy, sad, cross, friendly, scared etc.
4. Now help the child to cut out the faces and stick them on the paper plates. Attach a stick to each and your face masks are ready to use
5. Play with the child, putting masks in front of your faces and saying – 'How do I feel now?' or 'I'm going to get really cross now!'. Reading expressions is an important skill for all children, less confident ones may need more practice.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

- Note whether the child can recognise expressions in photos. Some less confident children are not very good at reading expressions and may need more help with recognising the features of faces in different photos.
- Watch them as they play at putting on the expressions. Can they choose a face for the feeling? Can they copy the expression with their own face? Can they recognise which face you are making?



More ideas

- Use the masks in group time to make up stories.
- Use them at Circle time or group times. Children can choose one to describe how they are feeling.
- Look for more photos to add to your collection, or ask the older children to draw some with felt pens or crayons.

Specially for babies

- Use the faces with babies, but be careful not to frighten them!
- Make some simple black and white 'smiling face' puppets using paper plates and black felt pens. Young babies respond well to black and white patterns and faces. Use these faces to attract their attention and help them with tracking from one side to another.

Topic 4: Advice and tips

Advice

Some tips for practitioners:

- Watch for the triggers – they may be different for different children.
- Note which activities seem particularly stressful to the child – this is often a clue, particularly if it's the same thing every time – using scissors, going outside, group times, making things.
- Make an effort to find out the things the child can do – you will need to know as part of your plan.
- React calmly, sit with the child and see if you can help – if not, remove the child from the activity or the activity from the child by getting them involved in something they do enjoy and can do.

Some tips to share with parents:

Parents can help their child to deal with lack of confidence by:

- showing understanding, and trying not to be impatient
- acknowledging the child's feelings, and perhaps remembering times when they were less confident
- acknowledging the child's feelings by saying, 'I know you think you can't do this, and don't want to try, but I will help you' etc.
- keeping their expectations reasonable
- trying not to show disappointment or frustration when their child says 'I can't'
- praising their child for the things they do with confidence, even if they seem very simple
- noticing any successes and praising these appropriately
- remembering how difficult it was to do new things when they were children
- making time at the end of every day to talk about the day gives the child the chance to tell them the things they have enjoyed and done well
- keeping in mind that, with their parents' help and support, most children will regain their sense of self-esteem and a 'have a go' attitude.

Try to be a good role model. Children look to the most important people in their life and try to imitate their behaviour.

Throw and catch

Building physical confidence

What you need

A cardboard box or bucket
Lots of rolled up pairs of socks

What you do

1. Another way to promote confidence and self-esteem is by making physical activities manageable for small hands.
2. Collect the things you need and invite the child to join you in a throwing game.
3. Share out the rolled up socks between you and ask the child where they think you should put the box or bucket. Follow their lead – they may put it miles away and have to move it, but resist the temptation to tell them before they have tried!
4. Take turns to throw the socks into the box or bucket. Don't make it a competition, just a shared activity. Talk as you play, commenting on the way the child is throwing, asking them if they want to move the box nearer or further away, praising their success and sympathising when they miss.
5. When you have used up all the socks, tip them all out and play again, but this time, put the box or bucket on its side.

Being there – playing, watching, listening, talking

Watch for the development of a preferred hand for throwing.

Try to be a supportive partner, not an aggressive competitor! Your role is to support and extend confidence and competence.

Be tactful when making suggestions about throwing style or where to put the box or bucket.

If the child finds things difficult in the future, remind them of their success in this game and other activities. Talk openly about how some things are easier to do than others and that everyone has things that they are good at.

More ideas

Try fishing balls out of a bowl with tweezers or tongs

Put the socks in some water and use them to throw against a wall for 'Splat Shot', or drop them from a climbing frame into a bucket.

Worry Rock

The "worry rock" gives children an outlet for talking about their worries, problems and frustrations. In addition, it encourages them to think about what they can do to solve their own problems.

You will need:

- Rocks (let each child find their own rock from a choice on the table or from a nature walk. It should be small enough to fit into their pocket.) Alternatively a coloured glass bead from the Atelier area could be used

Group size:

- 4-6 children seated round a table or in a circle

Activity:

1. Begin the activity by telling the children that sometimes you get worried. Explain that you may be worried about something that has happened (give example) or something that is about to happen (give example.) Talk about the fact that when you feel worried sometimes you feel a bit sick or sometimes you get a flutter in your tummy area.
2. Talk about the fact that you sometimes also get frustrated. Compare how this feeling is different to worry (ie start to feel cross because you just can't do something / sort something out) Discuss with the children what being frustrated feels like
3. Let the children suggest what they do when they feel worried or frustrated. Who do they talk to about it? Brainstorm ways to solve the problem
4. Explain that sometimes we get worried or frustrated but we might not be ready to talk to someone else about it or the person we want to talk to is not there. A "worry rock" is the perfect solution as you can carry it in your pocket or put it in your drawer. At times when you feel worried or frustrated you can hold it and tell it what you are bothered about.
5. Have each child choose a worry rock and give it a name
6. Encourage the children to put their worry rock in their pocket or drawer. When they look worried or frustrated encourage them to use their worry rock
7. Be aware that worry rocks can get lost if they are used on a regular basis. Always have an extra store ready so that, when this happens, a child can choose a spare.