

Session 2.3

Professional love

This session explores the sometimes difficult area of the key person approach of love and caring in a professional capacity.



Video - Professional love

“The work of early childhood professionals involves not only ‘care and education’ but ‘love, care and education’”

(Page and Nutbrown 2008:183)

The role of the key person and the developing relationships you have with children can bring up complexities in terms of professional love. In this session we will talk about the importance of unconditional positive regard, parental concerns about key person relationships, the complexities of

professional love and the need for supervision and reflection. Unconditional positive regard; the basic acceptance and support of the child regardless of what they do and say. Doesn't mean that unacceptable behaviour is not challenged, it means that however we react to the child they always feel 'fundamentally loveable' and accepted for who they are. It may be that their behaviour is not acceptable but that doesn't mean that they are thought of less of or rejected.

Task 1



Professional love - video clip 1



Professional love - video clip 4



Professional love - video clip 2



Professional love - video clip 5



Professional love - video clip 3

In the following three video clips you will see practitioners interacting in relationships with their key children. Ask practitioners to note:

- What evidence do you see of 'professional love' and 'unconditional positive regard'?



Professional love - video clip 1

- Rose shows positive unconditional regard for Ethan when he is very distressed and she doesn't know why he is upset. She doesn't forget about Jack, one of her other key children, during this time talking to him affectionately and letting him know she cares for him too.



Professional love - video clip 2

- Darrel sits near the slide, her presence allows the girls to feel safe and secure as they play, enjoying her gentle encouragement. We can see evidence of loving relationships between Darrel and each of the girls as they run to have a cuddle with her.



Professional love - video clip 3

- Clare shows a really close loving relationship with Ava, she knows her well and laughs and plays with her, she knows that Ava doesn't like her nose being wiped and let's ava do it for herself. Clare and Ava are very close but ava still loves her mum and brings her into their conversation saying "mum's my friend" as they are having a cuddle and Clare affirms this saying "yes and you're mums friend too".



Professional love - video clip 4

- Felicity to Teya and Harry about keeping safe in the classroom after Teya has just tumped off some furniture. Felicity calmly shows her concern for their safety and that she would be sad if either of them hurt themselves. She doesn't shout and lets Teya show her solution for keeping safe while still climbing over the furniture.



Professional love - video clip 5

- Julie and Rose talk about their feelings when children move on to another room within the nursery.

Reflection

- Having heard Rose and Julie talk about their feelings, take some time to reflect on your own experiences
- Being in a warm loving environment is beneficial for us all. What impact does it have on your emotional well-being when you watch or are around children and adults who display loving relationships?

Possible thoughts might be: happy, relaxed, at home, less stressed, able to have fun, able to focus (as oppose to an environment where relationships are less caring and more distant towards each other: uneasy, stressful, tired, cross, irritated, unhappy, sad)

- What have you felt when your key children have left or moved on?

Possible thoughts might be: Sad, missing child, tearful, distressed, all that work and now they've gone, envious of new key persons relationship, left behind, proud, achievement, relieved(!), pleased to see them taking the next step

- Are there times when you've found it more difficult to treat all of your key children with unconditional positive regard? Why do you think this was?

Possible thoughts might be: I was feeling stressed, I didn't like what they were doing, I felt they were winding me up, I don't agree with that sort of behaviour

NOTE : Responses to this question need to be discussed sensitively to come to a better understanding of why the practitioner was struggling with unconditional positive regard and what strategies can help in the future.

Further reflection

- What access do you have to professional supervision and reflection on your role as a key person?
- What further support would help you – to safeguard your wellbeing as well as improve your practice?
- How do you support parents to understand the particular nature of the key person role?
- If you are a manager, how do you handle the complexities of the key person approach in your setting?
- How do you ensure that you are providing a warm, nurturing environment for children and adults alike?

Action to be taken

In what ways can we improve support for practitioners to be able to cope well, with the complexities of relationships with children and their families?

What provision/support system could be put in place to support the complexities of relationships between you, the child and their family?

Could these kinds of issues be discussed in personal supervision sessions?