

Developing Ideas About Relationships

Vignette 2

Myra, Haniya, and Tia are all two-year-olds in the same Early Head Start class. Myra comes from a large family with many cousins and family gatherings. Her relationship with her parents is close, warm, and secure. She explores and learns from her environment. Haniya has one brother, and the extended family lives in other states. Her mom works hard at two jobs and is very tired when she is at home. Sometimes, Haniya's mom is so tired she becomes very angry at Haniya and her brother if they make too much noise. Haniya has learned to stay quiet, not interrupt her mom, and play with her toys. Tia's parents are experiencing marital stress, so sometimes they are emotionally available to her and sometimes they are not. Tia has learned to stay close to her parents and make noise, whine, and poke them to get their attention.

Question 1: How might the three girls behave differently in their classroom with regard to

- Their relationships and interactions with peers
- Their relationship with the teacher

Some things to consider: To elicit protection from their primary caregivers, some children learn to avoid adults and focus more on their environment; some learn to stay close to their primary caregivers and find ways to get attention; and some learn that primary caregivers are consistently emotionally available so they are safe to be both close and to explore. One might expect that the children will interact with their teachers in the way that they do with their parents. However, if a secure attachment develops between the child and teacher, then that child may learn to trust that the teacher will be emotionally available to him/her. Then the child will be able to both elicit emotional support from the teacher as needed and feel safe to explore the environment. Research tells us that the children are likely to experience peer relationships in the same way that they experience adult-child relationships because they develop a model about how relationships work. However, when children also learn with their peers and in a caring program, they are more likely to feel secure and able to explore their environment with their peers. A key point here seems to be that young children can develop different kinds of attachment relationships to different caregivers.

Question 2: What could be challenging about each child's expression of emotions (security and exploration)?

Question 3: What are the children's strengths concerning expression of emotions and relationships (security and exploration)?

Question 4: What would you want these children to learn about relationships