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Coach's Corner



Storytelling

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Have you ever stopped to think about the concept of storytelling? So many of our interactions involve telling each other stories. These stories can be personal anecdotes, funny or interesting things we have heard, warnings or cautionary tales and more. Storytelling is a fascinating piece of the human experience.



History of Storytelling

Storytelling has been a way of communicating and spreading information for as long as humans have been around. The first evidence of storytelling is believed to be drawings in caves from over 30,000 years ago! From there, storytelling evolved into an oral form of passing down memories and traditions and then written word allowed these stories to be passed down with more accuracy.

Today, there are endless ways to tell our stories. In addition to various mediums, technology has given us the ability to reach larger audiences. Storytelling does not have to mean publishing a blog post, writing a book, or creating a piece of art or photography. Just sharing our lives on social media creates a digital storybook of our lives.

But under the surface, storytelling plays many critical roles in our lives. It is more than just sharing our thoughts or memories. Storytelling can aid in building resiliency and forming community.

Resilience

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), resilience is defined as, “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.” During time, we build up resilience throughout the things we experience in our lives. This looks different for everyone. Author and Facebook CEO, Sheryl Samberg writes that resilience, “isn’t a fixed personality trait; we’re not born with a set amount of it.” This means that throughout our lives we have opportunities to strengthen our ability to be resilient as we encounter adversity.

Storytelling can help set the stage for learning self-reflection. It can help us to better understand our emotions and develop sensitivity to the emotions of those around us. It is also a way to connect. Sharing our lived experiences helps to create bonds with other people. Forming supportive relationships is a key factor in resilience. When sharing our stories, we decide what details to include and which to leave out. Sharing difficult memories can be tough, but it can also encourage self-reflection and help support someone who may be dealing with a similar situation.



Community

Storytelling also helps us create communities. It helps us connect with people who have similar interests or who are in similar phases of life. Thanks to technology, we are able to form relationships and communities with people all over the world. These communities could be based on job types, hobbies, raising children, or anything that brings people together! Social media has given us the opportunity to share our stories with a much larger audience and a chance to form relationships with people outside of our physical environment. For many of us, online communities were a way to stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people found support in sharing their struggles of working from home, job loss, homeschooling children, dealing with sick loved ones, etc. during this time. This sharing of experiences provided much-needed connection during a difficult and isolating time.

Storytelling in Early Childhood Education

Knowing that storytelling helps to build resilience and community, we want to encourage this activity in our early childhood environments. When it comes to children, there are many ways to incorporate this into our days. Below are some simple storytelling ideas!

- When children draw pictures, encourage them to tell a story about their picture. Rather than asking “what is this a picture of?” consider asking the child to tell you about their drawing. You can extend the activity further by writing down what the child tells you or even recording them to share with their family.
- The dramatic play area is a great place to encourage storytelling. Invite children to create stories to act out. For younger children, help scaffold by building on their ideas.
- For educators working with infants, tell them stories throughout the day. Use self-talk to describe what you are doing during routine times such as diaper changes and feedings.
- Invite children to bring in an item from home but move beyond the idea of traditional show and tell. Ask them to tell a story about the item that they chose to bring in. As always, be mindful of whole group times and invite one or two children each week to bring in a special item.

For administrators and family child care educators, consider how your business practices tell the story of your program. When you are marketing your program, what story are you telling about your program to potential families? In addition, your mission statement and philosophy tell a story about the values of your program.

Storytelling is a valued part of the human experience. It has served many purposes throughout history. One thing is certain, our stories, and in turn our feelings, help us form connections. As our world keeps growing and changing, connection is more important than ever. Relating to others and sharing our experiences is such a gift to pass onto the children in our care.

Professional Development (PD):

- Transitions: Emotions in Motion (DIEEC Live Virtual Course)

to register for any of these workshops visit: www.dieecpd.org

Resources:

- Everyone Can Be a Storyteller- NAEYC
- Storytelling in the First Three Years- Zero to Three
- Building resilience in children through conversational storytelling