

Developmental Understanding of Infants and Young Children's Well-Being

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Case Example

Jake is charismatic and so smart. He came into Preschool with quite a few struggles [including] potty accidents (#2) almost daily, social challenges with peers in almost every interaction (taking toys, knocking down/breaking peers' creations, hitting), and ignoring adults/teachers in the classroom, and refusal to do what the group was doing.

Also, transitions were hard. Mom had informed staff that he was diagnosed with adjustment disorder last year. We also learned that Mom has some significant mental health struggles. In October Jake's dad also came back into his life and he started spending time with him and his "new siblings". Behaviors at school would increase before and after time with Dad.

During the beginning of the school year, anytime they needed to talk to him about behavior, or something that happened with a peer, he would [retreat to] under the table or in a corner. He would throw toys, hit, spit, kick, and scream. This was all [provoked] by them asking "Jake, what happened? Or, "can we talk about it?"

Trying to process what happened was nearly impossible. They could ask him questions like how do you feel? what could we do instead? how can I help you? and they were met with silence. During a moment of distress, he bit a staff and drew blood, after she had asked him to give a toy back to a peer.

Staff worked so hard to model and teach social skills through the Pyramid Model to help him be successful with peer play. Jake learned that he could trust the staff as they would listen to him—even when he made a red choice. Staff were still with him and not mad, they still loved him. In December staff started to see a shift in his behavior and responses to them. He didn't try to hide or run, he was seeking attention in a positive way, they could talk about a problem, solve it and move on. He also began to seek hugs from them. This was HUGE! He had never ever sought out hugs. He started to solve problems with friends most of the time and will ask staff for help if he needs it.

During all these challenging behaviors staff made sure that Jake knew that they loved him and cared for him. They greeted him with smiles and positive words every day. They moved on after a tough behavior and loved him up when he was sad or struggling. He knew that their



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classroom was safe. Staff were constant with our love and guidance, but they also held him accountable for his actions and behavior with consistent expectations and structure.

During this year, Jake's mom had another mental health crisis and Jake was staying with Aunt and Grandma for several weeks. During this time, they expected it to be challenging for him, AND he was coming to school happy and had little to no problems in class. Staff shared "we don't think any of his growth would have happened if we hadn't formed that necessary relationship with him this year."

