



Caring Through Crisis



**SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
SAFETY DISASTER TOOLKIT
FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS**

Caring Through Crisis

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INTRODUCTION

Creating a safe social-emotional learning (SEL) environment is foundational for fostering resilience, emotional intelligence, and effective learning in young children, especially within family childcare settings. In moments of stress, such as natural disasters or other emergencies, a safe SEL environment becomes even more critical. The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) has developed a toolkit aimed at equipping family childcare providers with the tools and resources needed to support SEL development and emergency preparedness. This toolkit empowers providers to establish a safe, nurturing environment where children and families feel protected and emotionally supported.



The Benefits of the NAFCC's SEL Safety Disaster Toolkit

Benefits of the NAFCC's SEL Safety Disaster Toolkit

NAFCC's toolkit is designed to support providers in embedding SEL practices into their daily routines, equipping them with strategies to foster both a sense of safety and emotional well-being. The toolkit offers guidance on implementing SEL frameworks, tools to enhance emergency preparedness, and resources to help children and families feel secure in the face of adversity. Here's how the toolkit benefits children and families:

- *Strengthened Resilience: By learning SEL strategies, providers can teach children how to manage stress and adapt to challenges, building resilience and emotional stability.*
- *Enhanced Communication: The toolkit encourages open communication between providers, children, and families, helping everyone to navigate stressful situations together.*
- *Support for Diverse Needs: The toolkit is designed with flexibility in mind, enabling providers to tailor SEL practices to meet the unique needs of each child, including those with diverse backgrounds or special needs.*



Why SEL is Essential in Family Childcare Settings?

Social-emotional learning forms the basis of all interactions, relationships, and learning experiences. SEL helps children develop the skills they need to understand and manage their emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. In family childcare, where environments are more intimate and personalized, providers are uniquely positioned to model and support SEL practices. Creating a safe SEL environment allows children to feel valued, helping them to build resilience and cope with challenging circumstances.

Implementing SEL Frameworks in Family Childcare Classrooms

To create a safe SEL environment, family childcare providers can incorporate elements of these frameworks into their daily routines and classroom interactions. Here are some practical strategies:

- **Establish Consistent Routines:** Children feel secure when they know what to expect. Consistent routines not only build trust but also give children opportunities to practice SEL skills, like turn-taking and cooperation.
- **Teach and Model Emotion Regulation:** Incorporate activities that help children identify and express their feelings, such as “feeling check-ins” where children share how they’re feeling using visuals or words. This helps children build self-awareness and recognize emotions in others.

Why SEL is Essential in Family Childcare Settings?

- **Create a Safe, Calming Space:** Designate a small area in the classroom as a “calm corner” where children can go to self-regulate. Stock it with sensory tools, books about emotions, and comfort items. This space can serve as a retreat during stressful moments.
- **Practice Mindfulness Daily:** Engage children in short, daily mindfulness activities. Breathing exercises, guided imagery, or “mindful listening” sessions can help children build focus and reduce anxiety.
- **Encourage Family Engagement:** Involve families in SEL practices by sharing simple activities and language they can use at home. Hosting family workshops on SEL topics can reinforce a sense of community and continuity between home and childcare.

Key SEL Frameworks for Early Education

- Several established SEL frameworks can guide family childcare providers in creating a supportive environment. These frameworks offer structured approaches for fostering emotional and social skills in young children:
- **The CASEL Framework:** The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework is widely recognized in early childhood education for its five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Family providers can implement these competencies by creating routines that encourage children to identify their emotions, practice self-regulation, and collaborate with peers.

Why SEL is Essential in Family Childcare Settings?

- **Responsive Classroom:** This approach focuses on integrating SEL into everyday learning through routines, language, and interactions. Family childcare providers can use strategies from Responsive Classroom, such as morning meetings, positive reinforcement, and interactive modeling, to help children feel respected and connected.
- **Mindfulness-Based Approaches:** Mindfulness practices encourage children to focus on the present moment, which can help them manage stress and build emotional awareness. Simple mindfulness exercises like breathing activities, sensory explorations, and grounding techniques can be easily integrated into family childcare settings to create a calming atmosphere.

Conclusion

Creating a safe SEL environment within family childcare settings can profoundly impact children's emotional and social well-being. The NAFCC's SEL Safety Toolkit provides family childcare providers with the resources they need to support these critical skills, even in challenging circumstances. By using SEL frameworks like CASEL, the Pyramid Model, and Responsive Classroom, providers can implement strategies that help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. This approach doesn't only benefit the children; it strengthens the entire family community, fostering a resilient, connected, and prepared environment for everyone involved.

Resources:

Social Emotional Learning

Check out these Social Emotional Frameworks you can easily apply in your family childcare learning space. Provided is a short description of each framework, websites, and YouTube link.

The CASEL Framework

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework outlines five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies can be integrated into daily routines to help children identify their emotions, practice self-regulation, and collaborate with peers.

- Website: [What Is the CASEL Framework?](#)
- YouTube Video: [CASEL's SEL Framework](#)

The Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model offers a tiered approach to support social-emotional development and address challenging behavior. It emphasizes nurturing relationships, supportive environments, targeted instruction, and individualized interventions. Implementing this model can help create calm, structured environments that promote emotional safety.

- Website: [Basics - National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#)
- YouTube Video: [Pyramid Model Overview](#)

Resources:

Social Emotional Learning

Responsive Classroom

Responsive Classroom is an approach that integrates SEL into everyday learning through routines, language, and interactions. Strategies such as morning meetings, positive reinforcement, and interactive modeling can help children feel respected and connected.

- Website: [Responsive Classroom](#)
- YouTube Video: [Responsive Classroom Overview](#)

Mindfulness-Based Approaches

Mindfulness practices encourage children to focus on the present moment, helping them manage stress and build emotional awareness. Simple exercises like breathing activities, sensory explorations, and grounding techniques can be easily integrated into family childcare settings to create a calming atmosphere.

- Website: [Mindfulness in Early Childhood Education](#)
- YouTube Video: [Mindfulness for Kids](#)



Resources:

Social Emotional Learning

Responsive Classroom

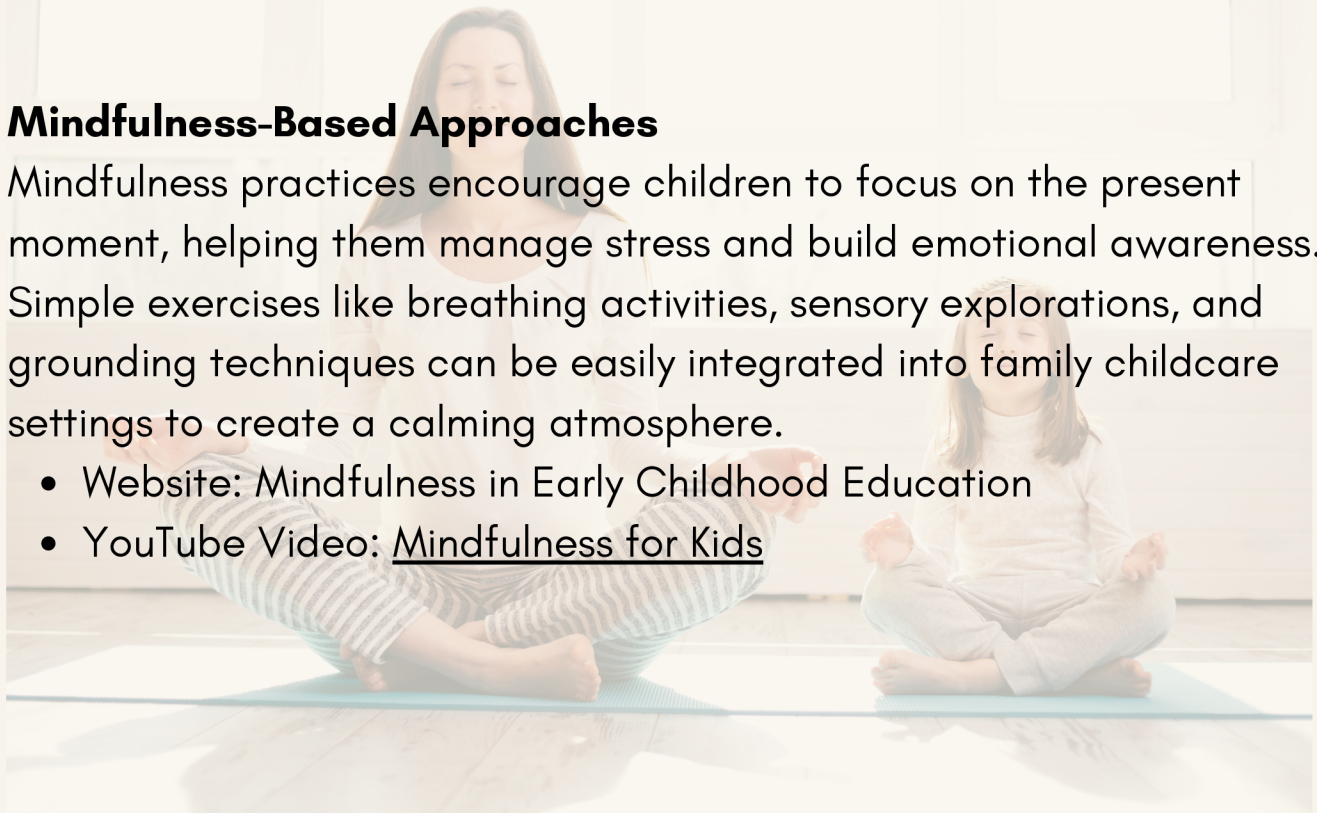
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- Website: [Mindfulness in Early Childhood Education](#)
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Reference

CASEL Framework

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (n.d.). What is the CASEL framework? Retrieved from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>

CASEL. (2018, October 23). CASEL's SEL framework [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikehX9o1Jbl>

Pyramid Model

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (n.d.). Pyramid model overview: Basics.

Retrieved from <https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/>

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (2017, October 20). Pyramid model overview

[Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Qb3DXY_7fU

Responsive Classroom

Responsive Classroom. (n.d.). Responsive classroom approach overview. Retrieved from

<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/>

Responsive Classroom. (2016, March 8). Responsive classroom overview [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iXTtR7IfWU>

Mindfulness-Based Approaches

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2017, March). Mindfulness in early childhood education. Retrieved from

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2017/mindfulness>

Mindful Kids. (2016, June 23). Mindfulness for kids [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf5K3pP2IUQ>

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ACTIVITIES FOR THREE YEAR & FOUR YEAR OLDS

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Three- and four-year-olds are at an exciting stage of development where their social-emotional skills begin to flourish. At this age, children become more aware of their own emotions and those of others, making it an ideal time to foster social-emotional learning (SEL). These foundational skills help children build positive relationships, navigate social situations, and develop a sense of self-confidence.

The identity-safe concept for three- and four-year-olds focuses on creating an environment where children feel valued, respected, and free to express their unique identities. At this developmental stage, children are beginning to notice differences in themselves and others, making it crucial for caregivers and educators to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity. By celebrating each child's cultural background, interests, and abilities, and by providing diverse books, toys, and activities, educators can affirm that every identity is important and respected. This approach not only boosts self-confidence but also helps children develop empathy and appreciation for others, laying the groundwork for positive social interactions and a strong sense of self.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

One of the key aspects of SEL for this age group is teaching emotional awareness and regulation. Three- and four-year-olds are learning to identify and name their emotions, from happiness to frustration. Caregivers and educators can support this by using language to label emotions during everyday interactions, helping children understand and express what they feel in healthy ways.

Empathy and social skills also take center stage at this age. Children begin to notice how their actions affect others and are eager to form friendships. SEL activities such as group games, collaborative art projects, or role-playing scenarios help them practice sharing, turn-taking, and resolving conflicts. Encouraging kindness and acknowledging their efforts to be empathetic fosters a strong sense of community and respect.

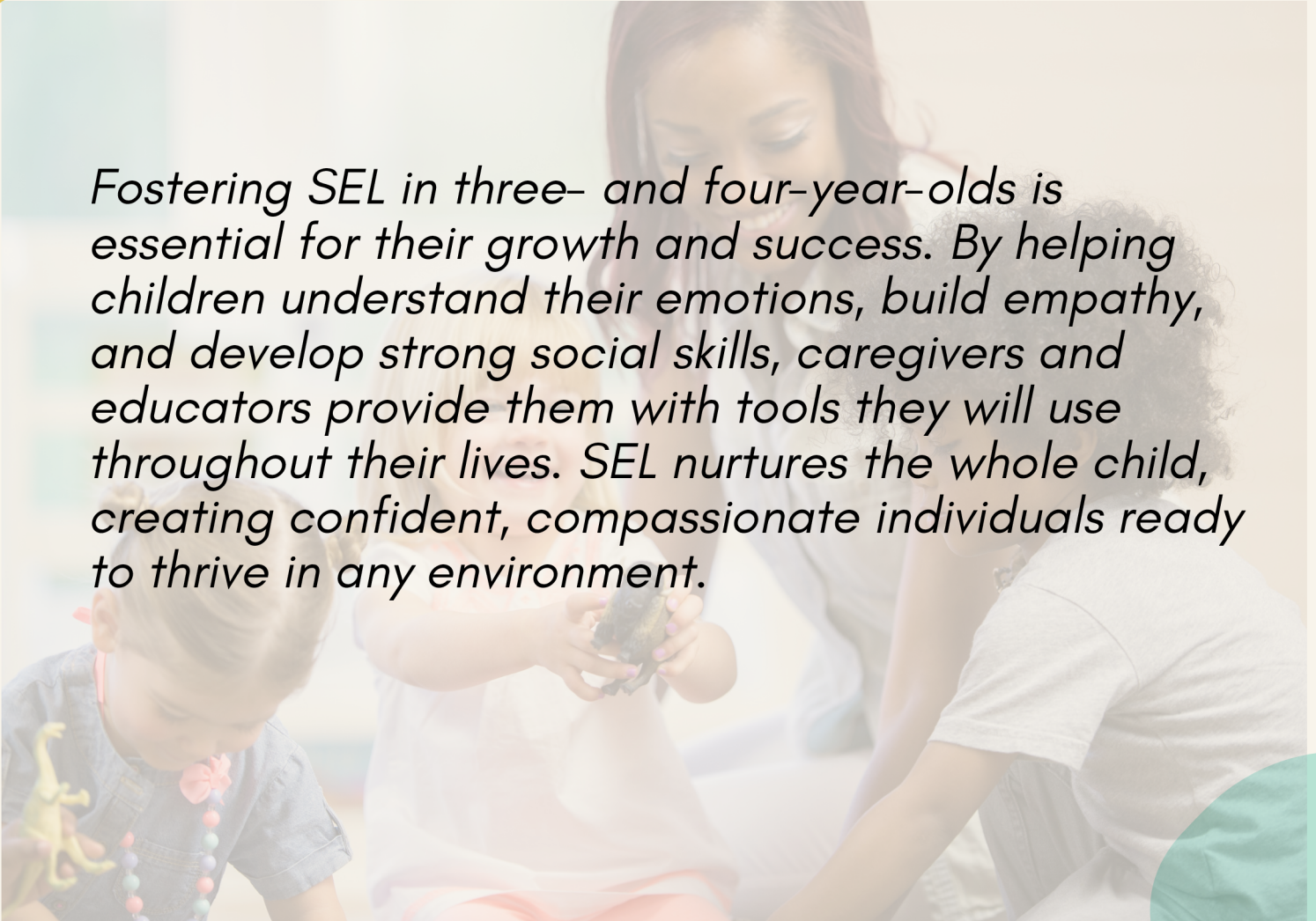
A structured and predictable environment plays a crucial role in supporting SEL for three- and four-year-olds. Consistent routines and clear expectations provide a sense of safety, allowing children to focus on developing their social-emotional skills. When children know what to expect, they are more likely to feel confident and secure, which leads to more positive social interactions.

Integrating SEL into everyday activities can be both fun and impactful. Storytime can introduce themes of friendship and problem-solving, while music and movement activities can encourage cooperation and self-expression. These interactive approaches not only make learning engaging but also help children internalize key SEL concepts.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Fostering SEL in three- and four-year-olds is essential for their growth and success. By helping children understand their emotions, build empathy, and develop strong social skills, caregivers and educators provide them with tools they will use throughout their lives. SEL nurtures the whole child, creating confident, compassionate individuals ready to thrive in any environment.



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ACTIVITIES FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS



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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Color Sorting Muffin Tin (Sorting and Fine Motor Skills)



Materials: Muffin tin Colored pom-poms or small objects (around 1 inch in size, in a variety of colors) Tongs or large tweezers (optional for added fine motor practice)

Instructions:

- Place one pom-pom of each color in separate muffin tin sections as a guide.
- Encourage the child to sort the remaining pom-poms by color, placing each in the correct section.

Benefits: Enhances color recognition, sorting skills, and fine motor control.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Developmental Learning Activities: Enhances sorting, color recognition, and fine motor skills.
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Encourages hands-on exploration and fine motor skill development.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Building Towers with Blocks (Problem-Solving and Motor Skills)



Materials:

Blocks of different shapes and sizes (wooden or plastic)

Instructions:

- Encourage the child to build a tower as high as they can.
- Challenge them to use different shapes and sizes, experimenting with balance and structure.

Benefits: Develops spatial awareness, problem-solving, and hand-eye coordination.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Supports problem-solving and spatial awareness.
- The Environment: Provides safe building materials.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Nature Scavenger Hunt (Outdoor Exploration and Sensory Play)



Materials: A small basket or bag for collecting items
Simple list of outdoor items to find (e.g., leaf, rock, flower)

Instructions:

- Provide a list or describe items for the child to find outside.
- Let them gather small objects like leaves, rocks, and sticks, discussing each item as they find it.

Benefits: Fosters a connection with nature, enhances observation skills, and introduces early science concepts.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Fosters curiosity and appreciation for nature.
- The Environment: Ensures safety outdoors.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Rainbow Rice Sensory Bin (Sensory Play and Color Recognition)



Materials:

Uncooked rice (2-3 cups), Food coloring and vinegar (for coloring the rice, optional), Small containers, spoons, and scoops

Instructions:

- Place materials in a pile.
- Show children how to sort by color, size, or shape.
- Let them practice sorting with gentle guidance.

Benefits: Provides sensory stimulation, fine motor practice, and an introduction to color mixing if using colored rice.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Promotes color recognition and sensory engagement.
- Learning Environment: Provides age-appropriate materials to encourage active learning.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Pasta Necklace (Fine Motor Skills and Creativity)



Materials:

Uncooked pasta with holes (like penne or rigatoni),
Yarn or shoelace, Optional: Food coloring or paint to color the pasta

Instructions:

- If desired, color the pasta using food coloring, then let it dry.
- Show the child how to string the pasta onto the yarn to make a necklace.

Benefits: Strengthens fine motor skills, introduces pattern-making, and allows creative expression..

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Develops fine motor skills and creativity.
- Learning Environment: Provides age-appropriate materials to encourage active learning.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

I Spy Bottles (Observation and Language Development)



Materials: Empty plastic bottle or Jar (16 oz), Small items to put inside (buttons, beads, small toys), Rice or sand to fill the bottle

Instructions:

- Fill the bottle halfway with rice or sand, then add the small items, filling it almost to the top with more rice or sand.
- Seal the lid tightly.
- Encourage the child to shake and rotate the bottle, finding and naming the hidden items.

Benefits: Improves observation skills, vocabulary, and focus.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Enhances observational skills and language.
- Health and Safety: Use safe, non-toxic materials and provide close supervision.

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FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

Letter Hunt (Early Literacy and Letter Recognition)



Materials: Magnetic letters or alphabet cards, Small basket or bag

Instructions:

- Hide the magnetic letters or alphabet cards around a room.
- Ask the child to find specific letters, starting with letters in their name, and place each in the basket.
- As they find each letter, practice saying its sound together.

Benefits: Builds letter recognition, phonics awareness, and early reading skills.

NAFCC Standards

- Developmental Learning Activities: Supports literacy and letter recognition.
- Interactions: Supports positive communication and social interaction.



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SONGS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS



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SONGS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

"The Feelings Song" by Miss Molly

Focus: Teaches children to recognize and express different emotions through catchy tunes and relatable scenarios.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watchv= mZbzDOpylA>

"The Social & Emotional Learning Song" by Scratch Garden

Focus: Covers various aspects of SEL, including empathy, cooperation, and managing emotions, through engaging music and animation.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yaGLes18Ls>



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SONGS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

"Breathe" by Music for Kiddos

Focus: A calming song that introduces deep breathing as a technique for self-regulation, suitable for preschoolers.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watchv=QkHQ0CYwjal>

"I Can Do It" by Patty Shukla

Focus: Encourages confidence and perseverance, teaching children to believe in themselves and their abilities.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4HFZxPbHx0>



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MINDFULNESS SNACKS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS



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SNACKS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

WATERMELON POPS



INGREDIENTS: WATERMELON SLICES AND POPSICLE STICKS.

HOW TO SERVE: CUT WATERMELON INTO TRIANGLE SHAPES, INSERT POPSICLE STICKS FOR EASY HOLDING.

MINDFULNESS TIP: ASK CHILDREN TO DESCRIBE THE JUICINESS AND SWEETNESS AS THEY TAKE EACH BITE.

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SNACKS FOR THREE & FOUR YEAR OLDS

APPLE FACES



INGREDIENTS: THIN APPLE WEDGES, SUNFLOWER BUTTER (OR CREAM CHEESE FOR NUT-FREE), AND RAISINS.

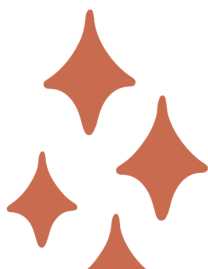
HOW TO SERVE: SPREAD SUNFLOWER BUTTER OR CREAM CHEESE ON AN APPLE WEDGE AND STICK RAISINS ON TOP.

MINDFULNESS TIP: ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO SMELL THE APPLE AND SAVOR ITS SWEETNESS.



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RESOURCES



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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN EARLY LEARNING FAMILY CHILDCARE SPACES



Creating a safe social-emotional learning (SEL) environment is foundational for fostering resilience, emotional intelligence, and effective learning in young children, especially within family childcare settings. In moments of stress, such as natural disasters or other emergencies, a safe SEL environment becomes even more critical.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN EARLY LEARNING FAMILY CHILDCARE SPACES

The Role of Educators in Supporting SEL Frameworks

Family childcare providers play a pivotal role in implementing SEL frameworks, such as those developed by CASEL, the Pyramid Model, and other evidence-based approaches.

These frameworks provide practical strategies for teaching self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills. Educators are not just facilitators of learning; they are role models, guiding children to understand and express their emotions constructively.

By integrating SEL into daily routines, activities, and interactions, educators help children build a foundation of emotional intelligence that will serve them throughout their lives.

Benefits of Prioritizing SEL in Family Childcare

The benefits of prioritizing SEL in family childcare settings are profound and far-reaching:

1. **For Children:** SEL supports emotional regulation, boosts confidence, and enhances social skills. Children learn to manage stress, build relationships, and make thoughtful decisions—all of which are crucial for their academic and personal success.
2. **For Families:** Family childcare providers who emphasize SEL foster stronger partnerships with parents and caregivers. Families benefit from a supportive environment that values their involvement and equips them with tools to reinforce SEL at home.
3. **For Educators:** SEL frameworks create a positive and structured environment that helps educators manage challenges, build meaningful relationships, and feel a greater sense of fulfillment in their roles.
4. **For Communities:** SEL nurtures empathetic, socially responsible individuals who contribute positively to their communities, fostering a culture of kindness and inclusion.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN EARLY LEARNING FAMILY CHILDCARE SPACES

Creating and Sustaining Safe Spaces

To continue fostering SEL in family childcare spaces, educators must remain intentional and proactive in creating environments where children and families feel safe, respected, and valued.

Here are some strategies to sustain and strengthen SEL practices:

- **Model Emotional Awareness:** Children learn by observing the adults around them. Educators who demonstrate emotional regulation, empathy, and positive social interactions provide powerful examples for children to follow.
- **Embed SEL in Everyday Activities:** Incorporate SEL into daily routines, such as morning check-ins, storytime discussions about emotions, and cooperative play that teaches turn-taking and problem-solving.
- **Cultivate Inclusive Practices:** Celebrate diversity and create an environment where all children and families feel represented and respected. Use books, activities, and materials that reflect the varied cultures and experiences of the families in your care.
- **Engage Families in SEL:** Collaborate with families by sharing resources, hosting workshops, and providing updates on their child's social-emotional development. Strong family partnerships reinforce the SEL foundation built in the childcare space.
- **Prioritize Professional Development:** Continuous learning is essential for educators to stay updated on best practices in SEL. Attend workshops, join professional networks, and explore the latest research to deepen your understanding and effectiveness.

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- **Prioritize Professional Development:** Continuous learning is essential for educators to stay updated on best practices in SEL. Attend workshops, join professional networks, and explore the latest research to deepen your understanding and effectiveness.

Conclusion

Social-emotional learning is a cornerstone of high-quality family childcare, laying the foundation for healthy development, strong relationships, and lifelong success. By embracing SEL frameworks, family childcare providers create environment is where children and families feel empowered, supported, and connected.

The intentional integration of SEL practices ensures that family childcare spaces remain places of safety, growth, and joy. Together, we can cultivate the emotional well-being of children and families, shaping a brighter and more compassionate future for our communities.

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In times of disaster, accessing reliable support is crucial for family childcare providers and the families they serve. Below is a list of seven organizations offering disaster relief resources, including the

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

NAFCC provides resources and support to family childcare providers, including guidance on disaster preparedness and recovery.

Website: <https://www.nafcc.org/>

Email: info@nafcc.org

Phone: (202) 796-5700

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA offers assistance programs and resources for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Website: <https://www.fema.gov/>

Disaster Assistance: <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/>

Phone: 1-800-621-3362

Email: Use the contact form on their website.

American Red Cross

Provides emergency assistance, disaster relief, and education within the United States.

Website: <https://www.redcross.org/>

Find Local Chapter: <https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>

Phone: 1-800-733-2767

Email: Use the contact form on their website.



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Salvation Army USA

Offers disaster relief services, including food, shelter, and emotional support.

Website: <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/>

Disaster Services: <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/help-disaster-survivors/>

Phone: 1-800-725-2769

Email: *Use the contact form on their website.*

Save the Children

Focuses on children's needs during emergencies, providing relief and support to children and families.

Website: <https://www.savethechildren.org/>

Emergency Response: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response>

Phone: 1-800-728-3843

Email: supportercare@savechildren.org

Child Care Aware® of America

Provides resources and support for childcare providers, including disaster preparedness and recovery information.

Website: <https://www.childcareaware.org/>

Emergency Preparedness: <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/crisis-and-disaster-resources/>

Phone: 1-800-424-2246

Email: info@childcareaware.org

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)

A coalition of organizations that provide disaster-related services, including support for childcare providers.

Website: <https://www.nvoad.org/>

Phone: 1-703-778-5088