



Comforting Children

A large part of what parents and staff do is build trusting relationships with children. How we respond to their physical, emotional, and verbal cues helps build strong bonds and relationships, letting the children know that we are there for them. There are times when children need comfort; many times this may be manifested by the child wanting or needing to be held. This physical contact can calm and comfort, helping a child to regulate their emotions. This need can happen when they feel tired, nervous in a new environment, or overwhelmed by all that is going on in the setting. It can be overwhelming for parents and teachers when they have a child who seems to only want to be held. What can teachers and other caregivers do to support children who need this comfort while still being able to complete tasks and care for other children?



- I Love You rituals- songs, poems, or chants that involve eye contact, physical touch, and connection. This lets the child have one-on-one time with you and build strong bonds, even when they are not being held
- Establish a routine- this can look like one big hug and then letting them sit next to you during work time or a meal so they still feel closeness and safety without directly relying on being held
- Holding a comfort item- redirect them to holding a stuffed animal or other comfort item so that they can feel the comfort of holding something instead of being held.
- Give a timeframe- this can look like "I can't hold you right now because I need to ____, but I can after I am done," then follow through
- Set a timer- for older children, you can say "I can't hold you right now but I can in ____ minutes" then set a timer, for younger children maybe a visual like a sand timer.
- Sensory table- give them an activity to do that is calming, such as a sand or water play
- Confer with parents what items they enjoy playing with at home and incorporate them in the class
- Develop a goodbye ritual with parents so they settle into a routine and know what to expect
- Sing the child's favorite song while you are completing a task
- If possible, the child can help you with a simple task instead of being held