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SELF-LEARNING RESOURCES FOR INFORMAL CHILDMINDERS

CıM learner's e-book

SELF-STUDY GUIDE

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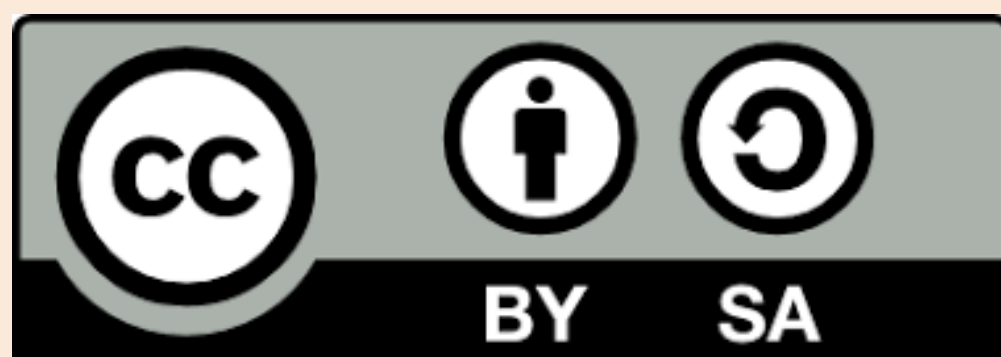
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

• CHILDMINDING - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES •

Childminder definitions

- "A childminder cares for a small group of children of mixed ages in a "home from home" setting. Children are welcomed as individuals, they are offered affection and respect and their developmental and recreational needs are met."

- "Childminders offer a flexible service, tailored to each child, thereby helping parents and guardians to balance their work and family commitments. A childminder negotiates and agrees her/his terms with parents."

- "The child's welfare must be the prime consideration of the childminder. Childminders have sole responsibility at all times for the health, safety, and well-being of each child entrusted to their care."

(Office of the Minister for Children, 2006-2010)

Requirements

Suitability of the person: The Childminder must be a person aged 18 or over who is genuinely interested in caring for children and is of a suitable character to do so.

Wellbeing of the Child: The Childminder must have a commitment to providing quality childcare which ensures that the wellbeing and development of the child is paramount.

Physical Environment: The Childminder's home should provide a secure and happy environment where the health, safety and welfare of the child is assured and the developmental needs of the child are met.

Health & Safety: The Childminder must provide evidence that adequate health and safety procedures are in place.

Suitability of the person

A childminder should:

- be genuinely **interested in caring for children** and have suitable characteristics to do so.
- have the ability to **communicate effectively** and respectfully with children.
- be **suitable to gain sole care of children**.
- be free of a criminal conviction or of a pending investigation that may deem them unsuitable.
- be in **good health**.
- be **aged 18 years or over**.
- provide **references to the parents** that will attest to her/his good character and suitability to be a Childminder e.g. past employer, parent of a previously minded child or General Practitioner.
- respect the **confidentiality** of the children and their families.
- be willing to undertake **accredited training in first aid**.
- be willing to take part in **childcare training**.

Wellbeing of the child

A childminder should:

- have an **understanding of children's rights and needs**.
- recognise and respect the children's **individuality**.
- recognise the **importance of play and learning** in the structure of a child's day by **sharing in play and providing appropriate environments for play**.
- put in place a **procedure for recording relevant information** in relation to the child and to ensure that parents are made aware of this procedure.
- respect **parents as the primary carer** and educators of the child.
- ensure that there is structured quality **communication time with parents** to discuss their child's progress.
- provide a **healthy, balanced, nutritional diet** for each child and be aware of any special requirements

Physical environment (1/2)

The childminder's home should:

- provide a **secure and happy environment** in which the health, safety, and welfare of the child are assured and in which the developmental needs of the child can be met.
- be of **sound and stable structure** and should be **fit for the purpose of childminding**.
- both indoors and outdoors should be kept in a **good state of repair** and in a **clean and hygienic condition**.
- have **access to a telephone** within the home. It is also recommended that the Childminder has a contact person to call upon in the event of an emergency.
- the exit doors, gates and perimeter of the home should be **secure**.
- children should have **adequate space to play** and there should be adequate floor space.

Physical environment (2/2)

The childminder's home should:

- be **clean** and not a source of infections.
- particular **attention** should be paid to all **indoor areas**, including kitchen, bathrooms, play area, sleeping area, stairs and any other areas to which minded children have regular access.
- special attention should also be paid to the following **outdoor areas** (where applicable), particularly where there are additional features: front garden, back garden, sandpit area, water hazards, driveways, garage, garden, etc.

Health and safety

The childminder should:

- Provide evidence that adequate health and safety procedures are in place.
- Ensure that good hygiene practices adhere
- Have appropriate insurance cover for minded children in the Childminder's own home and while travelling in the Childminder's car.
- Ensure the safety of children in her/his care at all times.
- Be trained in First Aid for children; an up-to-date accredited First Aid Certificate should be prominently displayed and a properly equipped
- First Aid Kit for children should be in place.
- Have in place and observe Fire Safety and Emergency Procedures e.g. an evacuation plan, firefighting blankets/equipment and smoke alarms should be in place
- Ensure that animals/pets on the premises do not put the health, safety or welfare of the children at risk
- Inform parents of any accident, injury or incident involving the child

Childminder pros & cons

Pros:

- Small ratios make it is easier to notice and meet children's individual needs.
- Inclusive childminding settings mean no segregation: which enables childminders to cater for mixed ages, genders, ethnicities, special education needs, etc.
- Relationships: children develop a sense of security and confidence through growing relationships with their childminder.
- By providing a stimulating, playful environment both indoors and outdoors, childminders may entice learning.
- Childminders may be more flexible and able to provide choice in hours of care.
- Provide a family-friendly environment.
- Be integrated as part of the Community.
- Cater for experiential learning in real contexts.

Childminder pros & cons

Cons:

- Parents must organise someone else to mind their child/children if the childminder is ill or on leave.
- The childminder may also be minding their own children as well as others. It is important that no preferential treatment is given.
- May need to facilitate time to drive to the minders house.
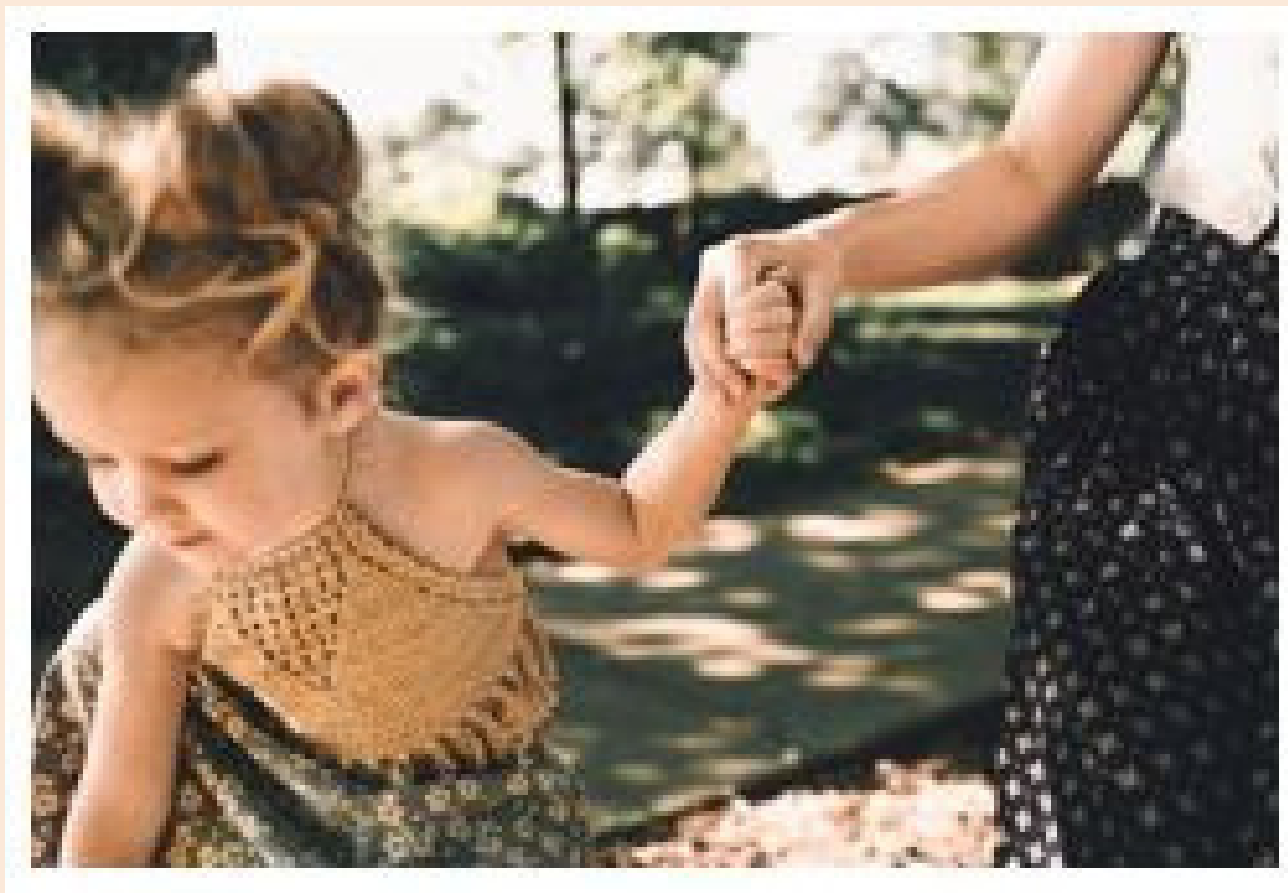
Reflection questions

- Could you explain, in your own words, what a childminder is?
- Could you give three reasons for choosing to become a childminder?
- What are my strengths? How could I improve them?
- What are my weaknesses? How could I overcome them?

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CHAPTER 1

WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

• ATTITUDES AND APPROACH •

Environmental influences

• The environmental influences during early childhood (0-6 years) are significant in influencing one's life. Experiences of this period are known to either enhance or inhibit realization of a child's potential.

• This is also the fastest period of growth and development in all aspects. All the critical windows of opportunity are open during this period. These are the years when the children are able to learn and acquire certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes very quickly with minimal effort.

• Childminders need to use this period in order to maximize children's holistic development through provision of the needs, and therefore giving them the power to unlock their potential in life.

• First years are the period when the brain is most malleable and also highly impressionable. Environmental influences, especially the care provided to the children had the greatest impact on the brain. During this years, it is very easy to mould the character of children by inculcating social norms, values, and habits as well as regulation and control of emotions.

What brain research tells us

• The brain is 2 ½ times more active from 0-3 than it will ever be again in a lifetime.
• The human brain develops as it wires. It wires as it experiences the world (learns).
• Relationships play a major role in the wiring of intelligence.
• There are critical windows of opportunities which produce optimal learning.
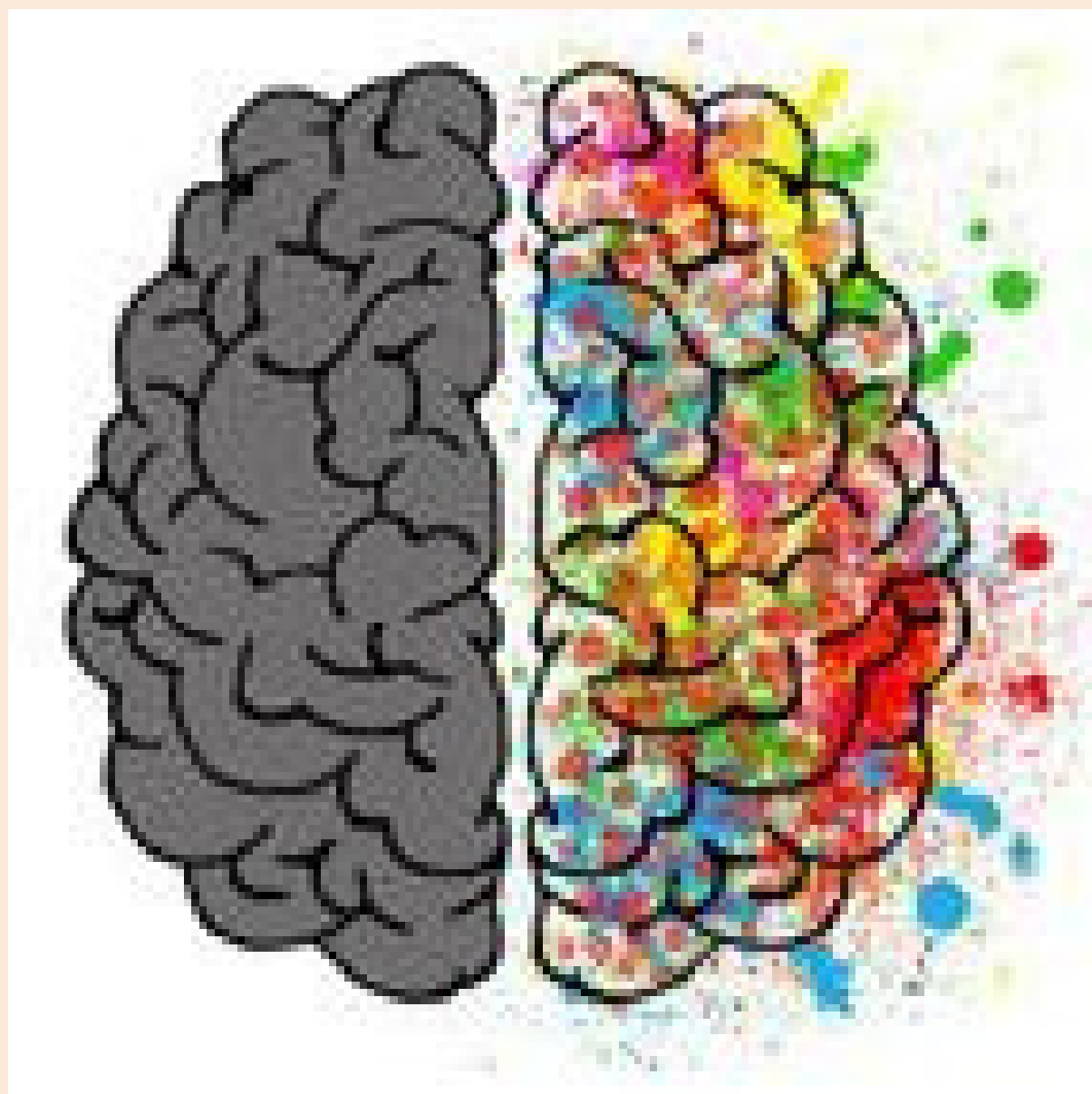
Windows of Opportunity

6 to 12 months old	Speech and emotional development, natural sounds of other languages
12 to 18 months old	Brain very receptive and responsive, neurological connections for skill and potential
18 to 24 months old	Body control, motor skills, aware of other people's feelings
2 to 3 years old	Brain patterns that will guide a child's development have been mostly established

Children's needs

The young of every species have basic needs that must be met for them to develop and mature. Children are no exception.

For children, these essential needs include warm, caring, and responsive adults.

The basic needs of children must be provided for them to grow into healthy functional and effective human beings. When basic needs are not met, they contribute to reduced productivity, self-fulfilment and motivation at all levels, including enrolment in pre-school.

Hierarchy of needs

The five basic needs identified by Maslow's theory are:

- Physiological needs
- Safety needs
- Belonging and love needs
- Self-esteem needs
- Self-actualization needs
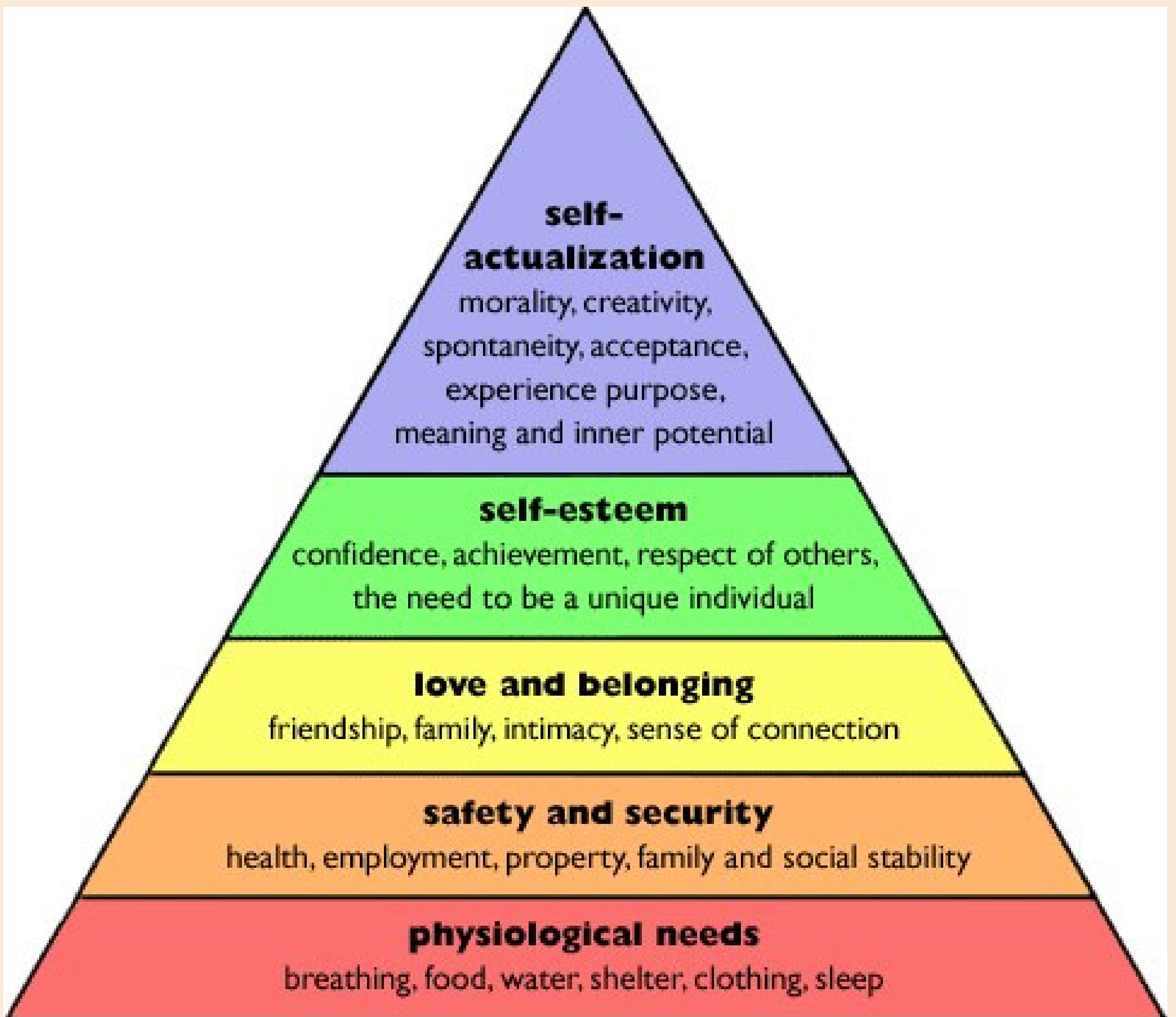
Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Physiological needs

Physiological needs deal with the maintenance of the human body. This lowest category includes the most basic needs that are vital to survival, such as the need for water, air, food, and sleep. Maslow believed that these needs are the most instinctive needs because all needs become secondary until these needs are met. If we need water, then little else matters until we have something to drink.

Examples of physiological needs: air, food, water, shelter, warmth, sleep, etc.

Safety needs

Safety and security needs are about keeping us safe from harm. These needs include shelter, job security, health, and safe environments. If a person does not feel safe in an environment, they will seek to find safety before they attempt to meet any higher-level needs. These security needs are important for survival, but they are not as important as the basic physiological needs.

Examples of safety and security needs: safety, shelter, security, law & order, employment, health, stability.

Belonging and love needs

Belonging and love needs advance our tribal nature. These are the needs for belonging, love, affection as well as for relationships with family and friends and companionship. These needs are met through pleasing and fulfilling relationships with others. A pleasing and fulfilling relationship would imply acceptance by others. Having satisfied their basic physiological and security needs, people can seek relationships from which their need for love and belonging can be met.

Examples of belonging and love needs: Belongingness, love, affection, intimacy, family, friends, relationships, etc.

Self-esteem needs

After the more basic needs have been satisfied, esteem needs become important to an individual. Once an individual has satisfactorily met their need for love and belonging, they can begin to develop positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Esteem needs are for a higher position within a group and act to foster pride in their work and in themselves as individuals.

Examples of self-esteem needs: respect, achievement, confidence, recognition, and accomplishment.

Self-actualization needs

This level of need pertains to what a person's full potential is and realizing that potential. "What a man can be, he must be" is the basis of the perceived need for self-actualization. Maslow describes this as the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming.

Examples of self-actualizing needs: realising personal potential, self-fulfillment, pursue talent, personal growth, peak experiences, creativity, etc.

Childminder and basic needs

The Childminder's home should provide a secure and happy environment in which the health, safety, and welfare of the child are assured and in which the developmental needs of the child can be met:

• Stable living environment
• Proper nutrition
• Consistent boundaries
• Physical exercise
• Love and support

The Role of the Childminder

• Provide an enabling environment to support child-initiated learning through play.
• Provide uninterrupted time for exploration and play in the environment.
• Act as guides, listeners, and problem-posers for children through verbal and nonverbal interaction
• Observe children's responses, and watch and listen for children's ideas may come through gestures, body movements, facial expressions, sounds, or words.
• Help children form and prolong secure attachments
• Help children with positive identity formation
• Include family child-rearing practices as part of care
• Treat children differently at different points along their developmental trajectory
• Engage in responsive practice
• Use a reflective curriculum process

Qualities of a good learner 1/2

- Passion for knowledge

- Focused on the subject matter at hand

- Perseveres

- Understands the importance of practice, practice, practice

- Actively participates

- Always tries

- Analyse new information and contrast it with what they already know.

- Begins with being present–physically, mentally

- Knows how he/she learns best

- Responsive

- Loves what he/she is learning

- Creative — able to challenge assumed knowledge

- open to taking risks, exploring, playing

- It's more about the process than the product

- Open-minded

- Willing to work hard

Qualities of a good learner 2/2

- Never stops learning
- Very curious
- Competent
- Focused
- Peaceful
- Involved
- Cheerful
- Co-operative
- Resourceful

- Confident
- Aware
- Secure
- Attentive
- Curious
- Exploring
- Interested
- Inner directed
- Initiating

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UNIT 2

THE ENVIRONMENT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

Home safety

"Home is a place to relax, play and enjoy spending time with family. Of course, accidents happen, and there will be minor scrapes and bruises along the way, especially as children grow and discover new things. And that's OK. The problem is the more serious injuries that are often completely preventable".

(*Safe children worldwide 2016*)

• Home is the most common place for children to be injured.
• You must know where your children are at all times.
• To reduce the risk of injury in the home you must remove any potential dangers and use age appropriate, safe equipment.
• Safety products should be adapted to your specific needs.

Department of Health & Human Services of the State Government of Victoria, Australia (2017)

Particular attention

Indoor areas:

• Kitchen
• Bathrooms
• Play area
• Sleeping area
• Stairs
• Any other areas to which minded children have regular access.

Outdoor areas:

• Front garden
• Back garden
• Sandpit area
• Water hazards
• Driveways
• Garage
• Garden shed etc.

Possible hazards

- Batteries
- Burns and scalds
- Carbon monoxide
- Choking and strangulation
- Falls
- Fire
- Guns
- Liquid laundry packets
- Medication
- Poison
- Sleep safety and suffocation
- Toy safety
- TV and furniture tip-overs
- Water and drowning

Preventing accidents and injuries at home 1/3

Preventing falls at home

- Safety guards across entries to stairs and balconies
- Lock windows

Preventing burns and scalds

- Keep your children away from fire and hot surfaces
- Keep hot drinks away

Preventing house fires

- Working smoke alarms

Preventing poisoning

- Removing potential poisons
- Storing chemicals and medicines up high in a locked cupboard or cabinet
- Putting a child-safety latch on the doors of cupboards where you keep household poisons

Preventing Strangulation and suffocation
- Keep stuffed toys, cushions and piles of clothing out of cots and prams.
- Wrap blinds cords in cleats attached to the wall at least 1.6 m above the floor.
- Tie knots in plastic bags, and keep them away from children.

Water safety
- 100% supervision whenever your child is around water.

Promoting home safety
- Get a licensed electrician to install safety switches, which cut power off quickly to avoid electrocution.
- Get a licensed electrician to do any repairs.
- Replace electrical appliances and cords if they're worn.
- Use powerpoint covers.

Preventing accidents and injuries at home 3/3

Promoting safety around glass
- Install safety glass in windows and doors or apply shatter-resistant film to windows and doors of older homes.
- Put stickers on glass

END
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UNIT 3

PROGRAMMING AND MANAGING THE HOME ACTIVITIES

The Importance of Play for Children

• Play is a key element of childhood
• Children play from birth
• Play is unique for each child, as it is a representation of their experience's and feelings
• Play supports children holistic development, and encourages exploring, thinking, identity, belonging, well-being and communication
• Play is how children express their emotions, and explore feelings
• Children will naturally play, play doesn't have an end – it is about the process
• Play should be supported through natural materials, and materials which are relevant and meaningful for the child

Play is more than just fun

• Children are competent and confident, and will lead their own learning. The role of the adult is to facilitate the play, and create relevant learning opportunities.

• Children will naturally play, during their play, they use their imagination, creativity. Play becomes a reflection of the child's world and experiences, it is a form of expression.

• Play does not have an end goal. Children engage in play as it is a natural element of childhood. Play is fun. Play does not have to be with any object, in play, a stick can be anything. Play is the child's world.

• Play supports the child's well-being. Through play, children can express their emotions, explore feelings, and roles.

• Through play, children are sharing their stories, stories of their world, how they see it. There is no wrong way to play.

• Children have a right to play.

Play supports children

Play supports children to:

• Build confidence
• Lead their own learning
• Develop an understanding of emotions
• Explore their environment
• Build relationships

(*Raising Children Network, 2016*)

Types of play (1/3)

Types of play by age

Functional or manipulation game (0-2 years)

Repeating again and again an action for the pleasure of obtaining an immediate result

Symbolic Play (2 – 7 years)

Simulate situations, objects and characters that are not present at the time of play

Types of play (2/3)

Types of play by age

• Rules play (7- 12 years)

Co-operative play and play with rules

• Constructive play (0- 12)

Experiment with materials and construct objects - becomes more complex as children grow

Types of play (3/3)

Types of play by structure:

• Unstructured / Natural play is the best type of play for children

• Structured: organized and happens at a fixed time or in a set space, and is often led by an adult

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UNIT 4

INTERCULTURAL AND ANTI-BIAS APPROACH

Respectful routines

Routines are important because they give children a sense of security and control over their environment. Children learn what to expect at various times in the day and as they begin to participate in these routines, they will experience a sense of control and satisfaction at being able to perform part of or all of the tasks associated with the routine.

Each child is part of a family, where there are values, beliefs and customs. Each family will have their own beliefs. It is important when working with families, we respect the culture, and background which the child is from. The culture within the family will provide a sense of identity for the child. In creating a positive identity for each child, we need to be mindful of our own values, customs and beliefs too.

Communicating routines

• Allow each routine sufficient time. Routines should not be rushed. Caring for a distressed toddler may take more time.

• Communicate positively about routines through visual displays in your care space, including photos. Share your ideas and swap anecdotes about the babies and toddlers with their parents.

• Make sure that written plans for children's learning reflect a wide range of activities and include how they learn from involvement in routines as much as from suitable play activities.

• Routines should be communicated, verbally and visually with children to allow the child to understand what is happening next.

• Through communicating the routine with the child, you are helping them to become confident and competent. The child will also be supported in making the transition between activities e.g. dinner time to playtime.

Food cultures

• Young children's food and eating patterns should be managed with respect and sensitivity.

• Culture may impact on frequency, quantity, type, and mannerisms associated with eating e.g. eating with hands.

• As well as the type of food, even the way in which it is served can create problems: some children are used to eating with their hands or to using a single plate in the centre of the table, or to not separating foods into different courses.

Religious and traditional needs

• Another important aspect concerns specific diets for religious or traditional needs. The most frequent case is the exclusion of pork or the request for a vegetarian diet.

• A great deal of sensitivity is needed to encourage children to accept foods that differ from those of others in their age group.

Care Routines

• The moment of changing children is also a delicate one, since it implies contact with the child and their body.

• Children from other cultures may be wearing amulets, necklaces or traditional jewellery that can sometimes lead to doubts concerning their safety (as in the case of cords tied around the waist or neck), or their health (in case these are dirty).

Clothing

• While changing a child, it is possible to observe the specific nature of their clothing and this is not always to be attributed to cultural differences: children may be dressed in clothing that is too heavy or too lightweight, or unsuitable for ambient temperatures.

• The solution to getting around these problems is always to communicate with the family.

Sleep Routines

• Regarding sleep routines, some interesting issues have emerged concerning intercultural relations.

• This has to do with an intensive symbiosis with the mother found in other cultures, and which makes it difficult to get some children to sleep.

• The location, and strategies for sleeping will differ between cultures. It is important to be aware of the individual child's routine.

Suggestions for Sleep

• Using recordings of traditional lullabies in their mother's language, which the children are used to and recognise.

• Provide clothing from parent for the infant to relate to the maternal smell.

• Photos of the family may also provide some comfort for the child.

*all should be removed from the sleeping area, once the child is settled

Physical care routines

• A relaxed changing time will offer personal communication with very young children, exchanging smiles, happy glances, sounds and chat. By doing this you will be creating the building blocks for the give- and-take of later conversations with recognizable words.

• As children become more able to take part in their own care, you can show how pleased you are with their growing skills. Create time for them to help in dressing or feeding themselves. Children get personal satisfaction from being involved with day-to-day activities, and self-care also offers excellent practice for developing fine motor skills.

• You can also promote children's development by showing you notice their personal preferences in care routines.

• Children's toileting routines will differ between cultures. Such differences may include the age of the child, location of toileting, and suitable aids.

Partnership with Parents

Parents know their child best. It is important to work in partnership with parents in developing responsive and respectful routines for each individual child.

Other Cultural Considerations:
- Discipline
- How families show affection
- Eye contact
- Toilet training
- Acceptance of, meaning of and response to crying
- Dress and hair care
- Illness and remedies

Culturally diverse environment

Creating a culturally diverse environment is important in meeting the needs, interests, and abilities of all children, and parents. Childminders must support the beliefs and values of each child through a diverse environment. This can be achieved through a range of ways.

The key element of a respectful and inclusive environment is that it is relevant and meaningful to each child, .e.g. celebrating Christmas as it is relevant for the children or celebrating birthdays with cake, as it is relevant for the child.

Creating an inclusive environment

• Respect names, how they are pronounced and spelled.

• Talk with the children, and develop activities around the ways in which people are the same as well as different.

• Explore appropriate terms when talking about difference. Some terms used in society are not appropriate (e.g. the term 'Black' is preferable to the term 'coloured').

• Use books and images that challenge stereotypes (e.g. a female carpenter, doctor).

• Intervene to eliminate any notions of superiority or inferiority.

• Adults need to lead by example, showing respect for various cultures, needs and abilities within the group, and also in the community.

Celebrating all festivals equally

• Festivals are a great way for children, parents and childminders to celebrate their beliefs and share their culture and religion with others.

• You can celebrate festivals or events such as Christmas, Diwali and Hanukkah at your home, providing many activities based around the celebration for all children to access.

• It is important that childminders use the celebrations to talk about the meaning behind it and talk about the different religions.

• Many children will enjoy activities to celebrate different religions but do not understand why they are doing it.

• This is vital in fully promoting an inclusive environment and enabling children to respect and learn about a range of religions.

Families

• Parents are fundamental in supporting the development and culturally diverse needs of all children.

• Parents are usually the ones who decide which religion their child will follow and embed their culture and beliefs into their learning.

• Ensuring a strong partnership with parents can support the childminder incorrectly meeting these needs while the child is under his care.

• Parents can help childminders by offering an in-depth knowledge of their religion and culture.

• Parenting across cultures can sometimes be challenging, especially when the values and expectations of one culture are different to those from another.

• This can make it difficult for families to feel a sense of belonging to any community.

*Do not assume any child's cultural identity without discussion with the parents.

Cultural identity 1/3

When parents and carers find a way of parenting that feels right for them, it helps the whole family to develop a cultural identity and a sense of belonging.

This is particularly important for children, because a sense of belonging and a strong cultural identity supports their mental health and wellbeing.

Be open to different types of families:

• Families from culturally diverse backgrounds can also be unique in their composition.

• Families can be small or large, may or may not be biologically related and may include several generations.

• When childminders are able to include all families, it helps families to feel more welcome in the childminding service.

Work to develop positive relationships with families:

• Relationships help people understand each other and work together.

• Developing positive relationships can help build a sense of belonging and inclusion.

• A positive relationship with a childminder also means a family is likely to be more comfortable about approaching childminders. Families are an important source of information and insight about their children and the hopes or concerns they might hold for them.

Be thoughtful about communication:

• When spoken or written language is a barrier, interpreters material can help educators and families communicate with one another.

• Ask questions to ensure families understand what has been said. It can be helpful to provide additional time to listen to families and allow them to ask questions too.

• It is helpful to be mindful of the messages your environment sends about diversity.

Cultural identity 3/3

Mutual respect for diversity:

• Childminders can encourage a positive environment by inviting diversity into the house. For example, providing a range of opportunities for children and their families to share their personal stories creates an atmosphere of cultural respect and acknowledgement of diversity.

• When childminders respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners.

Ideas

Some ideas that might assist childminders to support culturally diverse families include:

• Family photos to embrace individual identity
• Encourage the parents to share their culture e.g. food, packaging or background with the childminder to integrate into the day.
• Using key words and phrases from the child's first language. E.g. hello, toilet, food, key family members.
• Visual prompts may help a child and also the parent e.g. coats, toilet.
• Use technology for translation with the parents where necessary.

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UNIT 5

End of E-learner's book!