

Be By Myself Spaces

Young children may need quiet time for themselves at different points of the day. A full day of childcare can be stressful and difficult to manage for some young children. A “be-by-myself” space can be set aside in the classroom for a child to use when he or she feels overwhelmed, upset, or tense. This serves as a protected place where children are taught to go to when they need to relax, calm down, or take a break. A teacher can join the child if he or she needs support in calming down or feeling secure.

Considerations:

- Create the “be-by-myself” space within a small, contained area in your classroom (examples: play hut, tent, cushioned space, box, etc.). Children often feel safer in small spaces because they provide a sense of enclosure, privacy, and control over their environment, which can be comforting and help them feel protected. Small spaces can also reduce visual and auditory sensory stimulation, which can be calming for children who are overstimulated.
- You may include items such as pillows, feelings books, hand fidgets, and family photos to help children manage stress while in this space. Be sure this area is visible to teachers.
- View this as a quiet, protected place where a child can choose to go if he or she becomes overwhelmed, upset, or angry. Teachers may also encourage a child to use this space. It is important that this space is not used as a consequence or “time out.”
- Teach children how to use this area ahead of time, creating rules such as “one at a time.” Continue to make this an important part of your classroom by reviewing what it is for, modeling, and making periodic changes to keep it interesting. Ensure that the rules regarding the space are enforced.
- Practice relaxation techniques with children ahead of time, such as blowing up like a balloon, stretching or counting to ten on his or her fingers. Teachers can suggest he or she use these techniques in the be-by-myself space. Place visual reminders of these techniques in the space.