

# Wondering with Children

The practice of wondering aloud with children is an effective way to become attuned to their thoughts and feelings. Wondering with children involves asking open-ended questions or making “I wonder…” statements to encourage expression of emotions and to help children make the connection between their feelings and their behavior. Wondering helps children expand their emotional vocabulary by introducing new words to describe feelings. It also helps children develop important social skills like critical thinking, conflict resolution, and decision-making. By expressing genuine curiosity about children’s feelings and their perspective, adults build trusting relationships that allow children to feel emotionally safe. Emotional safety is foundational for developing resilience.

## Benefits:

1. Wondering supports children’s ability to label their own feelings and the feelings of others.
2. Children learn to explore the reasons for their behavior and the behavior of others.
3. Children are supported in their development of perspective taking and empathy.

## Examples of Wondering with Children

- “I wonder if you are feeling worried right now.”
  - “I wonder why you are crying.”
  - “I wonder why you are yelling at him.”
- “I wonder what you could do the next time this happens.”

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR WONDERING WITH CHILDREN

1. When children share their feelings, empathize with them and validate their emotions.
2. Ensure that the child feels safe and supported when discussing their feelings by responding without judgment or criticism.
3. Use books to explore different feelings and social situations – “I wonder how the girl in the book is feeling.”
4. Use “I wonder” statements to help children feel connected to their families – “I wonder what mom/dad would want you to do.”
5. Professionals must remember to be in control of their own feelings in order to effectively wonder with children.
6. Children may not verbalize a response to a wondering statement, but the act of wondering can help them internally reflect on what happened.
7. Model emotional awareness by sharing your own feelings and emotions with children – “I feel really frustrated when someone knocks over my blocks. I wonder if you’re feeling frustrated too.”

## Putting it into practice

Waiting is hard for all children. Think of a time that a child was upset when she had to wait her turn. What type of wondering statements could you have made in that situation?

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