

# Chapter 7

## Playspaces: Educators, Parents and Toddlers

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### 7.1 Introduction

The content of this chapter is based on the Attachment Matters Project (Dolby 2007; Dolby et al. 2008)<sup>1</sup> that has pioneered a method of working to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. In this project clinicians and educators in an early childhood centre have worked together for 10 years to develop new understandings of how teacher-child relationships and interactions can support children's learning and social competence with peers. The approach involves choosing a practical issue in early childhood education and care (ECEC), often a concern raised by educators. Small-scale research is conducted to understand the issue better. The findings are then used to develop a concrete procedure that educators and parents put into practice step-by-step. Each step is filmed and shared and discussed with parents and educators. This discussion is itself filmed and the ideas that emerge are incorporated into what is produced. The outcome of this collaborative approach is the production of a practical, well-tested procedure with a dedicated package of training resources that have come directly from practice with input from educators and families.

Our approach is consistent with White's emphasis (Chap. 16, this volume) in pursuing a new direction for research and practice in early childhood settings that "signals a shift away from top-down approaches ... towards a pedagogy of compassion, care and advocacy" (p. x). It is also in line with Tronick and Beeghly's (2011) view "that a more intense focus on the life of infants and parents *as it is lived* is warranted" (p. 116) to emotionally support very young children at home.

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<sup>1</sup>The Attachment Matters Project was located at the KU James Cahill Preschool, operated by KU Children's Services, a not-for-profit children's service in Australia. The project ran for 10 years between 2001 and 2011.

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We would say the same intense focus on the life of infants and toddlers and educators *as it is lived* is warranted to emotionally support young children in child care.

Our work also highlights educators' own need for support. Child care staff work in a field that involves intense emotional relationships, but often do not have the same support or supervision as clinical psychologists or other professionals. Menzies-Lyth (1989) points out that rather than supporting practitioners in the emotional tasks they face, organisations may develop ways of protecting staff from feeling too much. Similarly, Elfer (Chap. 8, this volume) argues that unless staff are given the support to process the painful as well as joyful aspects of close relationships with very young children, they will almost inevitably retreat into distant styles of interacting.

In this chapter, we focus on a particular concern—the day-to-day experience of toddlers and their families when they arrive at child care—and present the collaborative research and practical procedures undertaken and developed through the Attachment Matters Project to address this issue. First we outline the preschool context, which was characterised by a structure called Playspaces® (Dolby 2007; Dolby et al. 2004, 2011) that was intended to make the children's morning reunion with staff very predictable and had been in place at this centre for 4 years. Next, we present our observations and analysis of children's daily experiences of arriving at child care. The chapter then reports on the morning transition procedure that was designed with input from parents and educators. The Attachment Matters Project is particularly relevant to current thinking in early childhood theory and practice in Australia, recently outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for Australia<sup>2</sup> (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009), that acknowledges the importance of forming secure relationships. In this chapter, we give specific attention to the opportunity, at the beginning of the child care day, to invest in developing secure relationships in child care. We believe that this investment can help children become better connected, more confident in their learning, and less likely to be isolated or show behaviour problems during the rest of the day.

## 7.2 The Playspace® Structure

The Playspace® structure arose from an earlier program of Child Observation Seminars<sup>3</sup> developed by Dolby for child psychiatry trainees and conducted at a child care centre. The trainees came to child care one morning a week for one semester and sat with the children. Infants were filmed at floor level; sometimes the camera was focused on the infants and sometimes footage was taken that tried to capture

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<sup>2</sup> Australia's first national curriculum framework for early childhood education and care services.

<sup>3</sup> Child Observation Seminars have been offered by Dr Robyn Dolby through the teaching program of the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry for the past 14 years.

what the infants saw. The trainees and the early childhood educators then reflected on the footage. Video footage taken at the floor level of 6–18-month-olds showed that when educators were moving around, the infants saw passing feet, which accentuated the distance between infants and the educators.

Playspaces were developed to address this distance and support educators to make a connection with the infants by being at their physical level and in the emotional moment with them. The Playspace structure creates an *external space* where the staff member is physically predictable for the children, and supports an *internal space* or way of thinking within which the educator can think about the children's ease of coming *in and out* to them. Staff received training in attachment theory to become more aware of the attachment-exploration looping first described by John Bowlby (1988) and to guide their observation of children using them as a secure base for exploration and a secure haven for comfort (Ainsworth et al. 1978). They also used the Circle of Security map (Cooper et al. 2009) to guide their observations.

The *external space* is created when the staff sit in their individual Playspaces before the children arrive. The educators each bring an activity that they can share with the children. They sit at the children's level and do not move around. By sitting still they provide a predictable physical presence and are easy for the children to find.

The *internal space* is an internal calm or sense of stillness (within the educator) that allows staff to be receptive to the children's feelings. They have room in their minds to make guesses as to the children's relationship needs and to observe their own internal responses to the children's comings and goings. This internal space provides a *holding environment* for the children (Winnicott 1971).

A *holding environment* was also provided for the educators. A child and family worker (Eilish Hughes) was employed to be onsite each week and each educator had release time (30 min per week) to meet with her. This gave the educators time in the company of someone who was supportive of their understanding of what the children were doing and feeling and the feelings evoked in the educators. Regular opportunities for reflection were offered to educators by reviewing filmed observations of their interactions with the children. (The video footage was taken by Robyn Dolby, Eilish Hughes and the educators themselves). The educator and child and family worker then interpreted the children's emotional communications while looking at the clips together. This involved making guesses as to the children's relationship needs and reflecting on the feelings the children's behaviour evoked in the educator.

Just as the educators were the *hands* to provide relationship support for the children, the child and family worker was the hands of support for the educator. We have found the image of *the hands within the hands* aspect of the Circle of Security (Cooper et al. 2009) to be extremely useful in illustrating the way this support works (Fig. 7.1).

This tiered support assists staff in the process of self-reflection, which in turn enables them to meet the relational needs of the children. The tiered support also assists the staff to reflect with the parents about their child's relational needs.

**Fig. 7.1** Hands supporting hands (Source: Cooper et al. 2009. Retrieved from [www.circleofsecurity.com](http://www.circleofsecurity.com))



In the study centre, Playspaces are in operation for the first hour of the morning when the children arrive (outdoors in summer and indoors in winter); at the end of the day; and when the children are outdoors.

### ***7.2.1 The Educators' Experience of the Playspace Structure***

Educators were interviewed about their reflections on Playspaces. One educator described how she felt when she first began to use the Playspace structure in her practice. At first it didn't feel right, as she explains:

I found it very difficult when I first started doing it because I was always taught that to be there with the children, you have to be where the children are, which isn't the case. The children know where I am. They know if they need me I'm here, sometimes they might not come up to you but they will look at you or they smile at you and you smile back and that's telling them, "I'm here if you need me".

Another educator gave this picture of how Playspaces work as an external space where children know that the staff are available to them.

Playspaces—it's how the children get to know you are available to them. It's surprising how soon the children get to know not only that you're physically available to them as they know the space that you're in but that they also get to know that you're available to them to notice them, to be with them and to spend time with them and to just be.

A third educator describes her experience of Playspaces as an internal space where she is open to the children's feelings.

When I'm in my Playspace I look at the kid's faces, that's my first contact as soon as they walk in the door. I look at their face and their body language. How they are looking when they come in the door gives me a pretty good idea of how they are feeling inside. I'm always getting ready for noticing the children's feelings and I think that's what Playspaces are all about.

The same educator describes how this also becomes a reflective space where she can settle herself to be ready for the children.

Playspaces enable me to be prepared for the children to come in, it's where I get grounded so I feel grounded and ready to receive whatever comes. It helps me feel grounded because I can actually notice so much more just by sitting there and watching the children come in. The Playspace is like my little welcome mat when I come into work, so I just walk into the room and go, "Oh great, I'm here" and I can just sit in this little spot and my day begins. It just calms me down and I forget what has happened in my house this morning! I can offer the children time and no pressure in my Playspace. I'm just allowing them the same thing that I have given myself by sitting in that spot.

The intention behind Placespaces is to support educators to be physically predictable and emotionally available to children. It is also intended to give them a *sanctuary space* or refuge from outside distractions so that they can be in the moment with the children and notice how they come in and out to them and reflect on the children's relationship needs. These quotes and other comments from the educators suggest that their experiences are in keeping with the Playspace objectives.

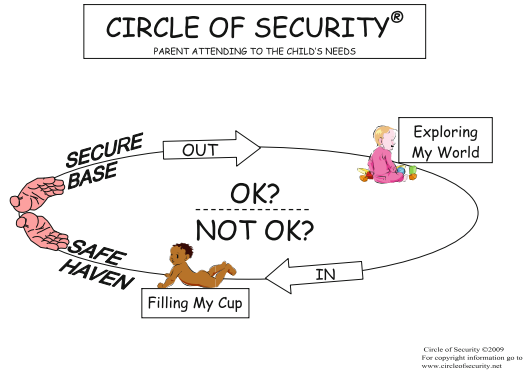
### 7.3 The Filmed Observations of Arrival and Separation at Child Care

Fourteen families and their children were invited to participate in the aspect of the Attachment Matters Project reported here. Separations were filmed as parents brought their children to child care at the start of the day and took them home in the afternoon. Eleven of the children were aged between 2 and 3 years and three children were older (4–5 years).

Filming (by Robyn Dolby) began as each child came through the gate and continued until the parents had left and the children were interacting with their peers. Our aim in filming the morning transition was to see and feel the immediacy of what happened for the child, and to look for the support that children and educators needed in the moment, and the opportunities that followed when this support was given. A researcher who did not know the families (Belinda Friezer) analysed the videotaped interactions, tracking how the children related to the adults (parent and educator) over the transition period.

The analysis was based on attachment theory. John Bowlby (1988) says that what makes children (and all of us) feel safe is a *relational anchor*. Children use their attachment figure as a *secure-base* from which to explore and as a *safe haven* to return to (Ainsworth et al. 1978). This attachment-exploration cycle opens up opportunities for learning (Ainsworth et al. 1978). It is considered to have great educational relevance, because the safer and more comfortable children feel to come in to their educators, the more effective learners they will be when they go out to explore (Cooper et al. 2009; Dolby 2007). The feeling that the educator is gladly *being there*, to come back to, is what makes it possible for children to go out and learn.

**Fig. 7.2** Baby circle of security: OK-not-OK circle (Source: Cooper et al. 2009. Retrieved from [www.circleofsecurity.com](http://www.circleofsecurity.com))



The Circle of Security authors (Cooper et al. 2009) have drawn a map of this attachment-exploration cycle in the shape of a circle and make the children’s relationship needs explicit. We received permission from the Circle of Security authors to use a particular form of their map, the Baby Circle of Security: OK-not-OK Circle, as the key to tracking the children’s experiences in the filmed observations. The map is reproduced above (Fig. 7.2).

This OK-not-OK Circle is a simple version of the Circle of Security roadmap (Cooper et al. 2009). It succinctly summarises the process of relationship support for infants. The adult hands support both halves of the Circle: the words *exploring my world* on the top half refer to the secure base infants need for play and learning; and *filling my cup* on the bottom half refer to the safe haven infants need when they have had enough of exploring and come back in to reconnect. Inside the Circle is an orienting question: is the baby OK or Not OK? as they come in and out to their attachment figure.

The researcher’s role in analysing the videos was to use the OK-not-OK Circle as a roadmap to describe what she saw. She noted when the child signaled for or made contact with either their parent or educator, noting the time on the clip. She recorded what she saw them do or say and made a guess about the child’s relationship need in that moment, whether it was on the top or bottom of the Circle. This procedure of *Seeing and Guessing* was devised by Glen Cooper (Cooper et al. 2005). The researcher used the OK-not-OK question to describe how she perceived that the children were feeling in that moment and to guess whether the adult was *with* or *not with* them in their experience.

### 7.3.1 Making Bids for Connection

The observations showed that as soon as the children came into the centre they immediately looked across at one of the educators. Each of the 14 children made visual bids or signals to make contact with an educator within the first 40 s of

walking through the gate. They did this regardless of how they came in; for example, some children walked in hand-in-hand with their parent; others ran ahead; and other children clung to their parent and were carried in.

Their bid for connection came ahead of linking up with a peer or getting involved in an activity. The video analysis demonstrated that when the children first arrived, the starting point they sought was likely to be connection with an educator. It seemed that they needed to know that they were on a staff member's radar and that this person was available and ready to look after them. When the children looked across at an educator, the researcher guessed that their relationship need was to *Fill my emotional cup*. It followed, therefore, that the educator's task was to welcome the children in (given the positioning of the child on the Circle in Fig. 7.2). It seemed likely that the parents' needs may be similar to the children's: they might be wondering, "What have I got to do, how am I going to manage this situation?"

Many implications arise from the video analysis. For example, instead of focusing on how to engage the children when they arrive at child care, the first task of the educator becomes one of negotiation, where child, parent and educator come together and the child experiences the responsibility for their care shifting from the parent to the educator. The educator takes the lead in this process to invite the parent to bring their child into them. Once they are there the child needs to know that both adults have him/her in mind as they communicate in a relaxed way about the transition, and indicate that the educator is ready to look after him/her.

Our findings and implications were discussed with Glen Cooper (personal communication, October 20, 2010) who, in response, wrote the Two Row-Boats Metaphor (Fig. 7.3).

We continued to reflect on the findings that each child looked to an educator when they came through the gate at the centre. The questions that arose for us, and which were the impetus for the next stage of the project, were:

- How did they know where to look in a large group environment at a very busy time of the day?
- Did they have an expectation that the educator would look back and be pleased to see them?
- Were the children acting from a sense of *felt* connection with the educator?

Guided by our ongoing reflections, we then worked with educators and parents to develop a transition procedure.

### ***7.3.2 The Process of Working with Educators and Parents to Develop the Transition Procedure***

The transition procedure was not intended to teach educators and parents new skills but rather to offer them a new perspective about the children's experience at separation, based on relationships. The morning drop-off was broken down into steps.

### **The Two Row-Boats Metaphor**

Imagine two little row-boats coming up next to each other. And the child steps out of the parent's row-boat and into the teacher's.

The problem for the children is that there is that moment where they have a foot in each boat. And if the boats drift apart they get stuck. Or when the children come in and they are not quite sure whether they are in the school boat or the parent boat then they are stuck. The morning transition is a way to help them to make that step from one boat to the other.

What we want is for the children to know that the parent and the teacher are in charge and they are going to take care of this. The children can need what they need and feel what they feel and be OK. They don't have to act like they are OK when they're not, or feel more than they feel, or take charge themselves.

We would like the children to experience that there is a clear negotiation where the child goes from feeling secure with parent to secure with the teacher and it is pretty seamless.

Glen Cooper (personal communication, October 20, 2010)

**Fig. 7.3** The Two Row-Boats Metaphor

The suggestions and the reasoning behind each step were discussed with parents and educators. The information in each step was intended to highlight to the child that there was an adult available to support them during this time.

We worked with five families with toddlers and educators who knew the families well. Robyn Dolby and Eilish Hughes filmed each step of the transition procedure with each family and educator, and got their feedback (by watching the filmed clips together) on how each step helped them show the children that the educator was ready and available to care for them. Each of these steps is illustrated with comments from these parents and educators.

### **7.3.3 The Transition Procedure Step-by-Step**

On their way to preschool (Step 1), it was suggested to parents that they talk with their child (in their own words) about which staff member they would like to go in and see when they arrive. For example: "Jody will be waiting for us at the sandpit, shall we go and say hi". The intention was to reassure each child that an educator will be available to take care of him/her.

Educators were asked to prepare by reflecting on what relationship question the child may come in with. For example: "Do you see me? Are you OK to look after me?" This was important because the filmed observations suggested that what mattered to the children in the first moment was the contact with the educator, ahead of any interest in the activity that they could join in.



This is a quote from one of the parents after we filmed this step and sat down with the parent and educator and watched the clip together.

On the way to preschool Ethan has always had this disconnect. When he's with me, before we reach the gates of the preschool he's interested in me and we just have a conversation all the way along the street, but then as we reach the preschool gate he'll clam up and won't even answer my questions. He's just absorbing the surroundings trying to work out what is happening; he can be shy. Or sometimes he can be boisterous and wanting to take part in a particular activity. So the idea of actually going in to a teacher is good, to have that one path he follows. The 'Row-Boat' metaphor exactly describes what is happening with Ethan.

Once the children and the parents arrived (Step 2), the suggestion was for parents to bring their child to an educator in their Playspace. Primary caregiving was not practised officially in this centre, although the children showed through their actions that they usually had a preferred consistent carer that they *came into* each morning. We asked the educators for ideas about a welcome for the child that would also include the parent. Their suggestions included:

Hello Sophie, you've come in with your daddy.

Good morning Trisha, you've brought your pillow and your mum.

Hello Max, you've brought parsley from mummy's garden.

They noted that the parent then feels included, "It's about both of us [not only my child]". They appreciated that children can be very aware of whether the educator enjoys the encounter with their parent, and that a genuine greeting to the parent can reassure the child.

The following quote from the director of the centre after we filmed and watched with her and the child's parent illustrated how she welcomed the family.

I believe that everyone who comes through the gate would like to feel as though they have been seen or acknowledged. And the children are all going to have a different way of doing that. In the Playspace, over time you get to work out what is the best way to get that connection happening. How would you see that if you were not sitting down? You would just miss so much of the children's reactions. Sometimes I can feel uncomfortable thinking I am not quite sure what to do with the children who don't connect easily. But then I feel the least I can do is to welcome them in. I've learnt to appreciate that all the children have a need to be seen even though on the outside they might not show their feelings to you. They express their need for connection in a more indirect way.

As the director said, some children do not connect easily and may express their need for connection in a more indirect way. They may come with their own expectations about how available *big people* are. When an educator says, "I'm glad you are here", children's responses may reflect their attachment history, initially expecting a response like the one they get from their mum and dad. Educators who are trained in Playspaces are aware of the importance of giving children a secure message about their availability; "I'm here and you are worth it" (Cassidy 2006). They recognise that children will express their need for connection in different ways. Whichever way the children make contact, the staff understand that the children have learnt these interactions with their primary caregivers.

Therefore, a significant part of the training in using Playspaces helps educators become familiar with children's different internal working models of how close relationships work (Bowlby 1988), and become more aware about their own attachment state of mind when responding to children's relationship needs.

This opportunity for reflection makes a difference in how the educators speak with the children when they first arrive. Their conversation is based on saying what they see the children do and guessing what they need in the way of relationship support (Cooper et al. 2005), as the following excerpt (transcribed from video footage) illustrates.

Sara comes into child care holding on tight to her mum.

**Educator to Sara:** "You are holding on tight. I see you want to be close to mummy right now. You can both sit down here with me."

Sara sinks into her mum for a longer cuddle.

**Educator to Sara:** "I'm glad you're getting filled up with Mum's cuddle. You can keep that cuddle inside you when mummy leaves. I will stay here with you."

This opportunity also supports them in "What to say when saying goodbye" (Step 3). The idea behind this step was that when parents say goodbye, children want to know that they are being handed to someone who can keep them safe. It will reassure children to hear this being negotiated, and their feelings being acknowledged. Here is an example of a negotiation covering the moment just before the parent was about to leave.

**Dad to Jack:** "Jack, I'm leaving now. Judy is here to look after you and keep you safe for me."

**Dad to Judy:** "Judy, will you look after Jack today?"

**Judy to Dad and Jack:** "Yes Jack, I'm pleased I get to keep you safe and play with you till Daddy comes back. I'm always here when you need me."

As we emphasise in our conversations with educators, saying you'll keep a child safe may seem strange to the adult and abstract to the child, but in our experience children seem to respond to it in a way that shows they understand the meaning. What is important is how the adults convey the message, "We can keep you safe", rather than the words they use. Saying this out loud creates very clear expectations, and tells Jack that he is in the minds of two big people who care for him.

We also emphasise that parents can also acknowledge when their child is upset. They can let them know that although saying goodbye is hard to do, they have support and they are not alone. For example:

**Dad to Jack:** "I know you feel sad to say goodbye and you will miss me, I will be thinking about you today. Judy is here to look after you and keep you safe for me."

**Dad to Judy:** "Judy, will you look after Jack today?"

**Judy to Dad and Jack:** "Yes Jack, I am always here when you need me, I'm pleased I'm here to keep you safe and play with you until daddy comes back later."

Examples or suggested scripts were offered when introducing the separation procedure to parents, because talking with children in this way does not come naturally.

The examples enabled parents and educators to find their own words to make it their own. The following comments from educators and parents show how they experienced using this *relational language* with each other at the morning separation. The comments are taken from a parent–teacher night when the transition procedure was shown and discussed within the parent community.

**Educator:** I think at first it does sound funny to say that, “Oh I’ll look after you and keep you safe”, but the more you say it the more comfortable you feel with it and you realise the difference that it makes for the child and how predictable it is for them. When they come in they know we’re here for them and the parents. And you know too, that we’re all here for you. So if you are thinking that feels a bit strange over time it does feel more comfortable.

**Director:** I think it feels more strange for the adults but it doesn’t feel strange for the children. That’s where your mind shift may have to be around that.

**Parent:** The whole thing with the dialogue I found quite awkward at first saying, “They’ll look after you and you’ll be safe”, but it was amazing the difference that it made. Jack went from someone who was quiet, often didn’t want to go and would be upset when I left and he changed to where gradually he became more and more comfortable and it’s gone now the past 6–8 months where I find myself going through the speech and he’s going “Yeah, whatever, can I just play now?” It was absolutely invaluable to see him transform and to see the effect that it had.

This parent also noticed a big difference with the Playspaces.

**Parent:** The Playspaces I found amazing because of all the different ways that it works, seeing him come in and for a while Suzanne was that person that he particularly wanted to go to and ... I saw in some videos that the guys kindly showed me to see him talking and physically moving in between me and Suzanne. He’d start off and he’d be holding on to me, talking to Suzanne and doing a bit of play and as time went on and over the course of 3, 4, 5 min he gradually relaxed more and more and started making eye contact with Suzanne and you could see him, with the benefit of looking at the video, become more and more comfortable to where it was like, the metaphor I was given was coming in on a rowing boat going from one boat to another boat and there’s this transfer between the two and it’s absolutely accurate it really was quite amazing to see it work so smoothly. The contrast is the other place that we go to which is a perfectly good place but it’s the traditional thing of: “Leave your child with us and if they cry don’t worry, they’re fine after you leave”. And you walk away with the sound of your child crying and you have to think to yourself it is going to be fine.

Another parent:

**Parent:** I must admit I had never, you kind of take it for granted that the child knows that the carers are there to look after them because why, why else, do you send the children here if it’s not for the other adults here to look after them, so you kinda think that the kids know that but until such time as you do verbalise it, it

probably doesn't sink in for them. [I think what was helpful] was almost like a combination of the two by having the Playspace and by naming the feeling as you leave as well.

The final step in the transition procedure helped parents to become familiar with what happens after they leave (Step 4). Because staff remain in their Playspace for the first hour of the day it is easy for the children to stay with them and to find them again when they venture out.

**Director:** Playspaces have given us the opportunity to recognise that children have a greater capacity to learn about and explore their world and relationships with each other, if they are able to form a secure connection with the educators who are responsible for their care. This is evident to us each day in our work with the children.

The first hour of the day is dedicated to emotional exchange, rather than the staff directing and teaching the children in a formal program. When the children are with them, the educators are intentional in their practice to link up the children. New parents are introduced to this arrangement through a Parent Invitation evening where the staff and some existing parents describe how the morning unfolds after parents leave. The director uses video clips to show parents the lens that the staff look through to see the children's own play ideas and to indicate where they (the staff) can support the children to develop their play skills and give them a position in the group. They use the structure of Linking from *Marte Meo* (Aarts 2008) to do this. For example, parents may see a video clip that shows a toddler who is non-verbal making an invitation to another child.

Elly points to a bright big ball she has discovered. As she points she vocalises in emphasis and looks over to Sheena who is beside her. She is conveying clearly, "Do you see what I'm looking at?" On the clip you see Elly's educator turn to follow her pointing finger, "Elly you found *the ball*". Elly looks pleased. She keeps pointing and looks at Sheena once more. Then you see the educator turn to Sheena and you hear her say, "Look Sheena, Elly is showing you *the ball*". Sheena looks at the ball and smiles. Then you hear the educator say, "Elly, Sheena *likes* your ball".

By being in the moment in their play, the educator helps the girls to successfully make contact. When she names what she sees Elly doing, she gives Elly words for her actions. Later when Elly can say "Ball" she can make a more predictable social invitation to Sheena. When the educator names what she sees Elly doing she also gives her a position with her peers and helps Elly come to trust her own ideas more. When she lifts up Elly's invitation to Sheena and Sheena's response back to her, the educator makes it easier for the girls to come into each other's play (Aarts 2008).

The video clips allow the parents to *borrow* the educators' eyes to see into the world of their children at child care. They enjoy seeing what their children *can* do, and where the educators are stepping in to assist. Because the information is concrete, it often suggests to them things that they can do at home the same as the educators are doing at child care. A natural partnership is forged.

## 7.4 Concluding Thoughts

The EYLF for Australia highlights secure attachments as the first principle. “Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships” are fundamental to educators’ practice and children’s learning (DEEWR 2009, p. 12). The challenge for educators is how to put this into practice. The approach we have taken in this chapter suggests that an answer can be found by looking at the life of infants and toddlers and educators *as it is lived* in child care.

We studied children’s experiences of arriving at child care and then developed a transition procedure that was designed so that parents and educators could reassure children that the connection that they were seeking from their educators was readily available. This procedure went step-by-step through everyday *lived* interactions to give children the experience of connection, to enable them to feel that there is a plan for “how I can make contact with my teachers so I feel I belong”. This procedure acknowledges the experiences of educators and respects and supports them to be open to the emotional demands and joys that are part of their day-to-day interactions with very young children. The structure of Playspaces is at the heart of this procedure. There is more work to be done to see the transition procedure formally implemented in an infants’ room and to see how educators can use Playspaces with younger children, namely with infants who are not yet mobile.

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