

TIPS FOR PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MASTERY AND SUCCESS FOR YOUNG REFUGEE CHILDREN

When we build relationships and set up our programs and environment to support refugee children's mastery and success, their new-found confidence can lead to decreased anxiety, frustration, anger and upset, and a greater sense of control and hopefulness for the future.

It can also trigger an improved ability to learn and focus, to engage in play, to relate to others, and to generally manage feelings and behaviours. To build feelings of success and mastery in your program:

Provide children with opportunities to:

- Make choices and/or make their own decisions.
- Think and act independently.
- Exercise and participate in physical activity.
- Build self-awareness, self-confidence/self-esteem.
- Take age-appropriate risks (i.e., facing fears with support; taking baby steps).
- Express themselves through physical, art and sensory activities.
- Play with toys that are easy to master, with little likelihood of failure (for example, puzzles designed for a younger age, toy cars or animals).

Focus on the positives.

- Genuinely acknowledge children for their accomplishments and efforts, and use positive language in your program.
- Start by asking children to demonstrate the behaviour you would like to see rather than telling them to stop what they're doing. For example, demonstrate walking and say, "Please walk" rather than "Stop running."
- Emphasize difference and similarities. For example, talk about "Yoshan likes to... and Maya likes to..."
- Build on each child's strengths.
- Let them know that you are confident in their ability to manage their feelings and behaviours.



Help them build problem-solving skills and a positive outlook.

- Help children reframe difficulty. Acknowledge setbacks, then gently redirect their attention toward next steps. For example: “Oh no. It looks like you fell when you were balancing.” You might give the child a quick hug, then move on and acknowledge what they did accomplish. “But look how far you were able to balance. You got so much farther today than yesterday!”
- Help children understand that there are people in their family and community who are there to help them, and that it’s okay to ask for help! Model the phrase “Help me” as you respond to their cues for help.
- Help them focus on what they have rather than on what they’ve lost or don’t have.
- Foster a growth mindset by creating a program culture that celebrates change and growth, acknowledging how we can all learn and get better every day.
- Don’t rush to the rescue when things don’t go as planned. Obviously, you need to step in immediately if the child is at risk of harming themselves or others, but if everyone is safe, make sure to give the child space to think through a solution when things go wrong. Then you can genuinely praise them for coming up with a solution or coach them to come up with a solution.

