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ECE 2405

March 17th, 2024

Children's Views and Opinions

Ethics is a big part of the Early Childhood Education system but, some issues can come from it like the views and opinions of children being dismissed. Often, children's voices are overlooked or pushed aside, either intentionally or unintentionally, by parents, caregivers, or society. What will be explored is the ethical dimensions arguing that validating children's views and opinions is not only an ethical right when children are learning or at play but, it can also be crucial for their psychological development and overall well-being.

When it comes to raising children, we need to approach it thoughtfully and consider different perspectives. Some key principles that can be explored should guide how we care for and make decisions about children. One important principle is basing our choices on multiple sources of information, not just a single assessment. This means considering diverse viewpoints, including those of the children themselves. Parents shouldn't make decisions by what they think but rather seek out a range of input. Another guiding principle is being transparent with families about the purpose and nature of any assessments we do. This shows a commitment to working collaboratively to support the well-being of children. Families deserve to understand what's happening and why.

Overall, the ethical considerations around parenting require nuance and balance. We need to draw on various sources, involve those most impacted, and communicate openly. Only then can we make well-informed decisions that truly prioritize the best interests of children? Dismissive parenting is a style where parents don't respond well to their children's emotions, opinions, and experiences. It means parents fail to recognize and respect their children's independence and ability to decide about things that affect them. This can happen in different ways, from ignoring what children say to making their feelings and views seem unimportant. There are harmful effects of dismissing children's emotions. Constantly invalidating a child's feelings can lead to problems like low self-confidence, trouble managing emotions, and issues forming close relationships. The long-term impact on mental health and relationships highlights the need to address dismissive parenting behaviors.

Principle P-2.8 in the code of ethics goes to emphasizes keeping child assessment information private and only sharing it when necessary. This is particularly important in cases of dismissive parenting. Parents failing to acknowledge and validate their children's experiences can prevent open communication. This makes it harder for children, caregivers, and others involved in the child's well-being to share crucial information. Maintaining confidentiality and only sharing information when needed helps ensure the child's best interests are protected. At the core of this issue is an important ethical consideration - the moral obligation to respect children as independent individuals with inherent rights and the ability to make their own choices. Dismissing children's views not only undermines their self-worth and dignity but also perpetuates a power dynamic that marginalizes their voices. Principle P-2.9 emphasizes the importance of informing families about incidents involving their child and potential risks, underscoring the need for transparency and accountability in protecting children's well-being.

Validation is crucial for building strong relationships between parents and children, as well as promoting emotional well-being. Studies show that acknowledging and understanding children's feelings and opinions helps them develop emotional intelligence and resilience. When caregivers empathize with children's experiences, it fosters a secure attachment, which is the basis for healthy social and emotional growth. Acknowledging how children feel and what they think is important, according to psychological research. Studies show that when children feel heard and validated, they are more likely to have positive social behaviors and higher self-esteem and confidence. Validation also helps protect children from developing issues like anxiety and depression, by making them feel accepted and understood.

Open communication and active listening to children's views can help validate their opinions in everyday interactions. Caregivers can validate children's emotions by acknowledging their feelings, showing empathy, and avoiding judgment or criticism. This fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Creating an environment that values different opinions and encourages children to express themselves is crucial for building their confidence and self-expression. By involving children in decisions that affect them, caregivers show they respect their independence and ability to make choices. Principle P-2.7, which involves informing families about child assessments and involving them in decisions, highlights the importance of collaborative parenting that prioritizes children's voices.

Despite the ethical and psychological arguments for validating children's perspectives, some may question the practicality or need for such validation. Valid concerns about overindulgence or entitlement from excessive validation can be addressed through balanced parenting that combines validation with appropriate boundaries and guidance. Parenting can sometimes involve misconceptions about the role of validation. Some may think it undermines parental authority or leads to being overly permissive. However, validation isn't about agreeing with everything a child says. It's about acknowledging and respecting their perspectives. Validation strengthens the parent-child bond and builds trust. This lays the foundation for effective discipline and guidance. Principle P-1.6 in the NAEYC Code of Ethics emphasizes the importance of using multiple information sources, not just a single assessment when making decisions. This approach ensures that children's perspectives are considered along with other information sources. This leads to more comprehensive and well-rounded decision-making that better captures children's needs and experiences.

It's important to take children's perspectives seriously. Respecting children as independent individuals with rights helps uphold values like dignity and fairness. Incorporating diverse views, including those of children, improves decision-making and creates environments that benefit everyone involved. As we navigate the complexities of raising children, let's keep in mind the principles outlined in child development research. By taking a child-centered approach that values their perspectives and opinions, we can build trusting, empathetic relationships. Validating children's views is not just the right thing to do - it's crucial for creating a world where every child's voice is heard and respected.

Works Cited

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*Position Statement: Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment*. Endorsed by the Association for Childhood Education International and Southern Early Childhood Association Adopted by the National Association for Family Child Care, 2015.