GUI105- The Role of Risk in Early Childhood - Handout

Welcome to GUI105

In this course, participants will learn why physical, social, emotional, and cognitive risks are important for early childhood development. Participants will learn the benefits of risks, misconceptions about risks, and recommended practices for encouraging young children to take appropriate, healthy risks.

Course Objectives:

By taking notes on the handout and successfully answering assessment questions, participants will meet the following objectives as a result of taking this course:

- Define risk and risk-reward tradeoff
- Identify recommended practices for encouraging young children to take appropriate risks
- Differentiate between physical, social-emotional, and cognitive risks
- Identify ways in which attachment and temperament affect a child’s willingness to take risks
- Identify steps in the risk-assessment process
- Identify recommended practices for ensuring that young children with special needs have opportunities to take appropriate risks

References:


Course Notes

Use the space provided to record important information from this section of the course.

The Role of Risk in Early Childhood
Understanding Risk

Risk Defined

Define *risk:*

Unnecessary Risks

What is the *risk-reward tradeoff?*

What role does *risk management* play in the early childhood environment?

Many Risks for Children Are Social-Emotional
Benefits of Risk-Taking

Appropriate Risks Build Skills and Abilities

Risks Promote Self-Confidence

Risks Improve Emotional Coping Skills
Risks Promote Decision-Making Skills and Understanding Consequences

How does risk-taking help prepare a child for professional success later in life?

What is grit and what does it have to do with risk-taking?

What Does Risk Look Like in ECE?

Physical Risks

Social-Emotional Risks
Cognitive Risks

Theories of Child Development and Risk-Taking

Attachment and Risk-Taking

Temperament and Risk-Taking

Activity Level

Fear Response

Anger/Frustration

Attention Control
Impulsivity

Positive/Negative Emotionality

Promoting Appropriate Risks

Risk Self-Assessment

Here are a few questions to start your reflection on your own relationship with risk.

- How often do you try new hobbies or activities?
- Do you like to travel to unfamiliar locations?
- Are you excited to try new restaurants or new foods?
- How often do you make new friends?
- How quickly do you make decisions?
- How often do you worry or feel fear?
- Does your worry or fear stop you from making decisions?
- Are you comfortable stepping out of your comfort zone?
- If you were a contestant on Jeopardy, would you bet all, half, or none of your winnings on the Final Jeopardy question?

Environmental Risk Assessment

The steps of assessing risk are:

1.

2.
Tips for Managing Risk in the Learning Environment

Consider the Children

Enhance the Environment

Risk Taking and Children with Special Needs

Perceptions and Misconceptions
Planning Risks for Individuals with Special Needs

Some possible risk-taking scenarios that teachers could establish for young children with special needs include:

- Self-feeding and dressing
- Obtaining out-of-reach objects
- Navigating different parts of the room or playground
- Using different tools for painting, sculpting, building, etc.
- Communicating wants and needs to others
- Entering into play scenarios
- Introducing self to new people

Communicating with Families

Explaining Your Approach to Risk
Try This!
Teach Children to Assess Risk

The next step in the process of incorporating risk-taking is to teach children about risk-taking using the same risk assessment steps. Let’s take a look at how this conversation might flow.

1. Identify the risk – Mikayla, I notice that you are attempting to use the overhead bars. They are high off the ground but I am here to help you if you need me.
2. Identify the potential dangers and the possible benefits of engaging in the risk – The bars are high, and you might fall, but I think if we work together, you can learn how to do it. How would it make you feel to make it to the other side of the bars?
3. Think through the scenario – What do you notice about how Julius is moving from bar to bar? Would you like me to hold you or just stand nearby until you need me? Do you think it would be easier to hold on with or without your mittens?
4. Evaluate the outcome of the scenario – You made it two bars – that’s excellent for a first try. Anytime we try something new, we have to make lots of tries before we do it perfectly. If you try again, what could you do differently? Would you like to try it again without your mittens on? How did you feel when you fell?

This line of questioning can help children think through the task, make observations about the environment, and adapt their behaviors to achieve success. It plants an internal script into the minds of children that they will use when facing challenges in the future.