**[Mary Holwell]:** I'm going to take you to another question that I'm very interested in hearing your respond to Andi, and that's in relation to the VEYLDF, the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. So Outcome One in the VEYLDF, children have a strong sense of identity, speaks to the idea that from birth, relationships are integral to the construction of a child's identity. What kind of relationships, do young children need to have with the adults in their lives to support this development? I think that it can build from what you were just talking about there a little bit.

**[Dr Andi Salamon]:** Yes. Yes. And so the first part of my response to that was secure, warm, and respectful relationships. And I think that's where attachment theory can help us as you just described really well, it's from that safe place that the exploring happens. But also I think when relationships are secure and warm, babies are not coming from a state of stress. I think one thing that comes through in my recent research is our physiological responses. So I think, and what ties in with that is knowing about baby's early development and our early development because it does impact on us moving forward into our lives. So what warm relationships do, is create spaces for baby's nervous systems to function in optimal ways. So our nervous systems operate in ways that something happens, and these are our really built-in primitive kind of reflexes. Certainly, when we’re born, but it's that fight or flight.

And so what starts to happen is that if, babies and children and adults are in a state of fight or flight. And I do it like this, I don't know if that's what it feels like. That's what it feels like. It looks like. Then, if that keeps happening and keeps happening and keeps happening, then that shapes their identity. Because as we grow older, it drives us to act in ways that we don't even know about. So it's happening at an unconscious level once it's built into us. And in our house, we call it ‘flipping our lid’. And you can be gone before you even know it. And it's only on reflection that you realize that I've had this physiological response. And sometimes you don't even know, you just know that something else happened.

So yeah, I think it can shape our identities in that way. I think playful and stimulating relationships are really helpful in terms of shaping identities of confidence, by promoting babies curiosities of and engagement with the world. In a way, that's what my PhD came to show that when we have an image of the baby, as confident and capable, we engage with them in ways that challenge and extend them through play. And again, when we do it, it's not a miracle that they then become more confident and capable, but it's because if we repeat it, right? If it's through practice, we know that's how babies learn. Babies learn through repetition. And that's how their brains develop. So when they get more practice in our playful and stimulating interactions, they may get better at doing things. And with that comes a more confident identity because we believe we can do things. And I can see how that certainly shapes us. And it impacts on us moving forward.

And I think coming back to the idea of multiple attachments, I think babies will benefit from having shared relationships. It's like Suzy was saying, when they get to school, we want them to be social and listen and be part of community. But it happens early. Why would we start then, when we could start here? When they see and feel and hear you talking with other people, they see you have a good relationship with their parents or their carers or their families. When they see and feel and hear you, because remember babies are sensory, sharing their care and education within a team they can trust. And they then become more open to being a part of those same relationships. And I think it's also really important. And I note that the question was, and I don't know if that's how you've kind of said it, but it's what I had in writing.

It was about relationships with adults. But I think it's also really important that adults help promote relationships, babies relationships with other babies and with other children. And purposely and actively and intentionally because they're very sharp. They know what's going on. And we're coming to the part where I'm going to break down some of those social, emotional skills. But I think if they are a part of relationships, they learn how to be in relationships. And you can shape their identity as citizens in communities, by helping them learn how to be in healthy relationships with others.

**[Mary Holwell]:** Yeah. I think that's really interesting, Andi. I was pricking my ears up at that idea of, you didn't use these words, but the idea of adults are demonstrating for the children what those relationships need to be like and look like. And it just makes me think about the way people in teams might speak to one another at different points in time. We all have bad days in the workplace. Everybody has days that are challenging, but the way we respond to those challenges sends a message to young children about how they can respond. Even very young children are aware of those changes in tone, the abruptness of a message that we might send and what effect that might have on that child's next attempt at an engagement with an adult in the space. It's not just that the child hears those words or those tones and it might quieten them for a moment, but perhaps it goes on to impact the way that they attempt and engagement with someone else in that team.

Because you've just spoken about how the child is influenced, to engage with other people in the team through the way that one or two primary people might be responding to other people. So it's, really interesting to think about it from that perspective. And I think it opens up a new way of working for people who work in teams to be really thinking about a) the way they're interacting directly with the young children in their spaces, but also the way they are interacting and using gesture and sound with the other adults in the spaces as well. And for those educators who are working solely, for example, family daycare educators who might be at home with just a couple of very young children and perhaps no other adult for several hours across a day. Then the way they deal with challenges or the tone that they use when they're facing a tricky time with the group of children is really important. Because again, that influences the image that the child builds of themselves and their preparedness to engage. But I'd be correct in thinking that's what you were saying to us there?

**[Dr Andi Salamon]:** Yes, absolutely. And it reminds me, and I think also an important thing that you said is how do we deal with the challenges. It's true, sometimes we have bad days and if you might flip your lid or snap, then what happens? It's okay. I think a part of that secure space is knowing it's okay to have big feelings and trusting that you're still okay, but this is just something to fine tune. I remember I used to say to my son, I'd give him warnings for things. And then I could feel it building up in me. And I would say, I am about to scream at you. And the tone in my voice would change. But just even being able to articulate that before I did it, but if I had done it, then coming back to it afterwards. Even when he was little.

**[Mary Holwell]:** Yeah. I think that's really important, it reminds me of a book that educators may be aware of called, I think it's ‘Mind Matters’ or I'm pretty sure it's called Mind Matters. Anyway, it's written for slightly older children, more like eight, nine, 10 year old. And there are several little comic pictures in that. And one of those is a picture of, a pencil drawing of a head with a whole lot of little words coming out of it that say, ‘I can't stand it, I can't stand it, I can't stand it’. And I think [inaudible], about how we manage those ‘I can't stand it’ moments because that trains, for want of a better description, trains sounds a little bit like we're working with not thinking people, but it models for those very young children, ways they can manage some of those ‘I can’t stand it’ moments that they might have themselves because we will all experience them at different points in time.

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