



What Kind of Environment Would You Prefer?

Module: II
Topic: Environments
Type: Mixer/Ice Breaker
Group Size: Pairs or Small Groups
Time: 15 – 20 minutes

Purpose:

To help participants begin to reflect on their own environmental preferences and how it affects the way they feel about themselves and others.

What you will need:

Participant Materials	Trainer Materials	Equipment
<p>The following handouts: :: What Kind of Environment Would You Prefer?</p>		

Directions:

1. Say to participants: "Consider for a moment that you are "older" and now unable to live independently. Your family is considering a number of retirement homes or assisted living centers, and needs your input on what kind of environment you would prefer."
2. Read over the questions on the handout, "What Kind of Environment Would You Prefer", and then take five minutes to write down your responses to several of these questions you feel strongly about.
3. After writing your responses, take some time and share with one or two other people your thoughts and feelings.
4. After participants have had five minutes to discuss their responses, bring the group back together and ask for volunteers to share some of their preferences.
5. Suggest that some of the characteristics of living environments for older people apply equally strongly to the environments we create for the care and nurturance of young children. There is already quite a bit that we can understand about good environmental design from investigating our own preferences.
6. Point out that these are equally valuable questions to ask when we face planning an environment for very young children. Children may well spend up to 12,000 hours in child care. The quality of the children's experience in care is greatly influenced by the environment. Jim Greenman suggests that when we institutionalize the environment we diminish the "poetry of everyday life": sunlight beaming through a window, smells of bread baking, a favorite blanket, Debussy playing softly in the background, an arrangement of flowers. All of these give daily life its fullness and sensuality. The richness of the environment is very important in any group setting, and deserves our special attention.
7. Suggest to participants that as we begin to study important concepts in setting up appropriate environments for infants and toddlers, we should keep this discussion in mind. In designing an environment that meets the child's needs for safety, health, security, comfort and learning, we are also preserving the "poetry of everyday life."

PITC ACTIVITIES

Variations:

- :: 1304.21 (a)(1)(iii) Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition.
- :: 1304.53 (b)(1)(iv) Accessible, inviting and attractive to children

Links to Head Start Program Performance Standards:

- :: 1304.21(a)(1)(iii)
- :: 1304.53(b)(1)(iv)

Activity Developed by:

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Adapted from *The Golden Rule for Child Care: Treating Children as We Want Them to Treat Us* by Anne Stonehouse.

Included as a training activity in the *Expanding Quality in Infant-Toddler Care Through Teaching & Learning* training manual.

Source Material:

Stonehouse, A. (1994) *The Golden Rule for Child Care: Treating Children as We Want Them to Treat Us*. Child Care Information Exchange, 11/94, 86-90.

Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Colorado Department of Education, Early Childhood Initiatives/Prevention Initiatives. *Expanding Quality in Infant-Toddler Care Through Teaching and Learning*, Unpublished.





What Kind of Environment Would You Prefer?

The children in child care today are the adults of tomorrow who will determine what provision to make for us, collectively and individually, in our old age. The way they will care for us will be heavily influenced by the provisions we are making for them while they are young. Do you view that as a threat or a promise? Our children's services should be of such a standard that we view it as a promise, that we find it reassuring rather than disturbing.

Anne Stonehouse

Imagine for a moment that you are "older" and now unable to live independently. Your family is considering a number of retirement homes, and need your input on what kind of environment you prefer. Please consider the following questions.

1. Which of your possessions or furnishings would you like to have in this environment, or will you be comfortable with the industrial beds and chairs some homes provide?
2. Would you want any elements of nature to be included in your environment? If so, describe what you would like to see?
3. What type of sounds do you want to be surrounded by? What types of sounds do you prefer not to hear?
4. How do you want this environment to smell?
5. Will you need any privacy, or do you enjoy being in the company of others all the time?

6. Do you need any variety in the type of spaces you can move around in, for instance, would you like a separate dining room, outside courtyard, recreation area etc.?

7. What type of lighting do you prefer?

8. How would you want the walls and floors to be decorated?

9. What sanitation procedures would you want the staff to follow everyday?

Any other comments or suggestions?