

The Adults' Role in Bush Connections

If you've been asked to support the Bush Connections program, here are some simple tips:

1. Sit down and get comfortable – on the ground, in the sand or on a low chair

Why?

- Adults appear less threatening and more approachable when they're at the child's level
- When you sit down, your body relaxes
- A calm, settled adult helps regulate a dysregulated child

2. There are no rules *only* limits

Why?

- Children choose to use all of the materials *in just about all* of the ways they want to
- Instead of a list of **dos and don'ts**, we apply a limit if a child makes a choice that impacts or could potentially harm: themselves, another child, the resources, the adult. e.g:
 - When a group of bigger boys started digging up the lawn with the spades, I applied this limit:
"You're working hard at digging but the grass isn't for digging up. You can move over to the fence where there's no lawn".

3. Avoid asking questions of the child

Why?

- Play is the natural language of the child. Toys and materials are their words
- When children lead their own play, they process the observations and experiences from their lives that they have no words to express, through their body. Having to answer adults' questions takes them out of their bodies and into their heads.

4. Practice reframing questions as affirmations and observations.

Why?

- Simple comments and affirmations let the child know you're there as witness to their efforts. This helps calm a dysregulated child and builds their focus and their sense of self from the inside e.g.
 - "That was really hard for you but you kept trying"
 - "You've found just what you need to do that job"
 - "You seem really happy with what you've done"

5. The play is child-centred and child-led – its Children's business. Let them decide!

Why?

- When children direct their own play, they find the toys and materials they need to make sense of their world. Play can be their expression of deeply-held feelings.
- When children play symbolically, they'll use materials in very different ways. Sometimes we can 'read' the meaning behind their play and we don't necessarily need to know. What's most important is the expression of those deeply held feelings.
- Toys and materials aren't named unless the child names them first
E.g "Oh you've chosen **that one**" rather than "you've chosen **that truck**"