Promoting a Sense of Self: Scenarios

As a school-age staff member, you work with diverse children and families. Read each of the scenarios below, reflect on the child’s and family’s sense of self, and address how you would promote a positive sense of self. When you are finished, share your responses with your supervisor, trainer, or coach.

Six-year-old Josie is new to your school-age program, and her home language is not English. She is having some difficulty during morning drop-off and following routines during afternoon meeting, project time, etc. Discuss what actions you might take to address these issues and promote Josie’s sense of self.

Possible Actions:
- Ask Josie’s parents to teach you one of Josie’s favorite songs in her home language.
- Use pictures with words in Josie’s home language for routines at afternoon meeting.
- Label shelves in both English and in Josie’s home language.
- Pair Josie with a “buddy” to help her learn various classroom routines
- Gather ideas from Josie’s family about what soothes her and makes her feel calm.
- Invite Josie’s family to the classroom to share traditions, foods, etc. from their culture.
- Ask Josie and her family what she loves to do and have her “teach” her friends at afternoon meeting (such as tap-dancing, sharing her rock collection, etc.)

Denise is a single mom with an eight-year-old son, Darius, in your classroom. Denise has mentioned at drop-off and pick-up that she just can’t seem to keep up with all the demands of single parenting. She says that “she just can’t seem to get it right.” Reflect on what your response might be in support of this family’s sense of self.

Possible Actions:
- Ask Denise if the two of you can set up a time to meet and discuss possible resources that might be helpful. You could also ask your trainer, coach, or manager for assistance with this conversation.
- Offer positive feedback on something you see Denise doing “right.” Example: “When you drop Darius off, you always give him a big hug. When he wants to show you his latest artwork, lego creation, or cool science website he’s found you always take the time to take a look and comment on his work.”
- Let Denise know that she is not alone; there are other single parents in your classroom. Would she like you to connect her with them?
Ten-year-old Millie insists on constantly being by your side at all times. When she arrives each afternoon she figures out whatever choice area you are working in and picks that one. She gets emotional if that area is full and she cannot be with you. Millie’s father is preparing to deploy, and her parents share that everyone in the family is feeling anxious. What steps can you take to support Millie and her family as well as promote their participation in Millie’s sense of self?

Possible Actions:

- Offer to meet with Millie’s parents and share resources they might be interested in as they prepare for deployment.
- Offer to connect Millie’s parents with other parents who are facing deployment or who have been through a deployment.
- Invite Millie’s parents to visit the program and discuss the upcoming deployment at group time. Ask if Millie would also like to share at large or small group time.
- Create family photo-books or family stories to be displayed in the classroom.
- Pick out some children’s literature that addresses the topic of deployment and read it in a small group. This may create a space to talk about feelings Millie may be experiencing.
- Be consistent with predictable routines between home and school.
- Help Millie find a “buddy” in the program with similar interests so that she can feel connected with other peers in the program. Perhaps help Millie connect with another child experiencing deployment in his/her family.
- Identify Millie’s interest and help her connect with other staff members working on those ideas in different areas of the program.
- Reassure Millie that you care for her even when you are not in the same space. Set up time to connect with her each day, but also work with her family to encourage her participation with various staff members and peers.
- Identify this family’s strengths in support of Millie’s sense of self. For example, “Millie was so excited to show you the mosaic she’s been working on. She really beamed when you talked to her about her careful work.”
- Talk with Millie’s family about ways you can support her communication with her father when he is away (e.g., can you send email messages? Written letters and drawings? Make care packages with other children in the program?)