

8. The importance of reflection

Reflective pedagogy is particularly important for those working with babies and toddlers but despite its demonstrated value, it remains rare in practice.

“Children’s emotional experiences [...] are intimately bound up with the emotions of practitioners and how practitioners manage these. Professional reflection is one way attention can be given to work interactions.”

(Elfer et al, 2018)



“Emotion and emotional experience are central to interactions in nurseries.”

(Elfer et al, 2018)

Think about your experience and whether you agree with this statement.



The importance of reflection

What the research tells us

Relating to a baby or a toddler can be a source of joy and delight for educators, but the level of intimacy required may also be challenging; containing a young child's dependency is emotionally demanding ^(1,2,3,4).

- Reflective spaces offer educators opportunities to examine and interrogate their own practice and connect with their own emotional experiences and responses ⁽²⁾.
- Work Discussion (WD) groups are an example of reflective spaces that were introduced in one study for educators working with two-year-olds. Impacts include measurable child gains across multiple areas of development, improved relationships

with parents, and educator reports of deeper child understanding and stronger team empathy ^(1,3,4).

- Building on this, Guard (2023) used 'Video Interaction Dialogue' to promote opportunities for educators to 'slow down' their practice with babies. Video footage of interactions with babies was slowed down to allow deeper reflection on practice and to tune into babies' 'hidden voice'.

Find out more:

1. Elfer (2012), 2. Elfer (2017), 3. Elfer et al. (2018a), 4. Elfer et al. (2018b), 5. Elfer (2023)
6. Guard (2023a)

Download The Froebel Partnership's **Reflection with Guidance** tool for developing practice at bit.ly/ReflectionWithGuidance



Both educators, and young children they work with, benefit when settings create and prioritise time and space for professional reflection.

