

Curious Container Play

Why is curiosity important?

When we are curious, we are eager to explore, discover new things and figure things out. When children are curious, they are much more likely to stay engaged. Curiosity prepares the brain for learning, and education should encourage and nurture this. The aim is to create curiosity about the world, nurture communication, develop joint attention and share joyful experiences with others to build trusting relationships. For children who haven't naturally developed curiosity, it is the adult's responsibility to provide ways to inspire their curiosity so it can flourish.

Which children would benefit from Curious Container Play?

Some children develop curiosity naturally and want to learn about the world around them, and others need encouragement and motivational resources to do this. Curious Container Play would benefit children who may flit from one activity to another, have ridged attention on one activity, or for children who only access the same activities to help calm their nervous system and regulate their emotions.

Where to start

We must always start with the child and what interests them. Practitioners must come alongside the child and show interest in what the child is doing by copying their play, sometimes this will need to be at a distance. Once the child shows enjoyment and interest in sharing an experience with the adult, the adult can start planning ways to develop the child's curiosity.

It is important for the adult to know what motivates the child, and what the child does not like. The adult will present a motivating item in a container: this could be a box, a bag, or even covered with material. The container must be inviting, so that the child will want to discover what is inside and therefore begin to develop curiosity. Remember to try and include ways to engage the child's different senses (for example, a container in their favourite colour, containers that feel different or containers that sound different when you shake them etc.).

The adult will model picking up the container and peeping inside in an exciting manner. The adult may use vocal sounds ("ooo" or "ahhhh"), shake the container and use lots of exaggerated facial expressions to spotlight the container as the most exciting thing in the room. The adult can then present the container to the child, who can then open and explore what is inside **with the adult**.

Reflection

Adults should observe and reflect on their practice and how the child has responded to the Curious Container Play interaction. It is up to the adult to scaffold and adapt their approach, the contents of the container, or their initiation or response within the interaction depending on the child's reaction. The adult will need to ensure they change the container, and its contents after each interaction to ensure it continues to inspire curiosity.

Adults should seek to identify the child's potential play schemas, sensory profile and activities and resources that stimulate them to ensure that what they are presenting will motivate and develop curiosity.

Different containers	Different resources
Clear containers, different shaped containers, containers of different sizes, containers with different openings, containers with interesting opening and closing mechanisms, containers made of different textures (cardboard, felt, tin, wooden etc.), containers with drawers, containers that are colourful or patterned, Christmas crackers	Uncooked rice or pasta, feathers, pom-poms, messy play (jelly, shaving foam), shredded paper, flour, sensory balls, sensory stepping stones, natural resources (leaves, stones, sticks) Pull-along toy, pop-up toys, Slinky, cars, spinners, different resources that can be used with water (e.g. jugs, sieves, funnels, guttering), ramps, resources that can be explored by throwing (e.g. confetti, glitter, pom-poms), ribbons, pulleys Spinning tops (small and large), light spinners, Kaleidoscopes Small world characters, animals, photos of favourite characters, specific books linked to interest, matching games, numbers, alphabet, colours