

# Toddlers as Teachers

## Story One

Tenaya (twenty months) is sitting in a high chair with her lunchbox on the table beside her. Tyler-Jackson (twenty-seven months) opens Tenaya's lunchbox and offers her raisins. She shakes her head. He offers her yoghurt. She nods and reaches out with both hands.

Tyler-Jackson struggles but takes off the foil top and puts it on the high chair tray. He then walks towards the cupboard, saying, "Soon, soon."

"Tyler, do you want a spoon?" He nods and points to Tenaya. I give Tyler the spoon and say, "Did you give Tenaya her yoghurt and open it for her?" He nods, walks towards Tenaya and says, "No figas" (fingers), takes the yoghurt off the tray, gives the spoon to Tenaya, and then puts the yoghurt back on the tray and says "Soon, soon."

### Short-term review

- taking responsibility for others;
- met the needs of another before his own;
- followed a sequence of events: opened the lunchbox, offered choices, opened the yoghurt, and got a spoon.

### What next?

- Allow older children to assist Tyler and Tyler to assist them.
- Encourage Tyler to follow requests and offer plenty of reinforcement for any efforts.

## Story Two

Tenaya walks over to Sean in the high chair and "gabbles" at him. She then gives him his lunchbox, opens it, and takes out the raisins. Sean holds out his hands. Tenaya says, "Raisins?" Tenaya opens the box and takes out three raisins and puts them on the tray in front of Sean. (She has some difficulty, but she succeeds.)

When Sean has taken the three raisins, she gives him more, puts the box of raisins back in Sean's lunchbox, and pulls out the sandwiches wrapped in plastic wrap.

She rips open the plastic wrap. She separates one sandwich and gives it to him.

### Short-term review

- Tenaya is responding to the needs of another.
- She selects items for Sean and gives more when he is finished.
- She problem-solves by ripping the plastic wrap.

### What next?

- Encourage this interdependency by allowing Tenaya to assist others and by encouraging others to assist her.
- Acknowledge all acts of kindness among babies and toddlers.
- Include games with choices.

### **What's happening here?**

These two assessments, three weeks apart, record occasions when two children (aged twenty-seven and twenty months) assist others with lunch. On the first occasion, Tyler-Jackson assists Tenaya. Then, three weeks later, Tenaya assists Sean.

### **What aspects of reciprocal and responsive relationships does this assessment exemplify?**

Each of these assessments is about learning as a joint activity: to be a helper, it is necessary to have someone willing to be helped and a situation in which helping is appropriate. Learning is distributed across other people, places, and things. Assessment includes and reflects that surrounding support.

### **How might this documented assessment contribute to developing reciprocal and responsive relationships?**

In this centre, everyday routines like eating lunch are valued as opportunities for children to learn with each other. The assessments document these learning opportunities.

The teacher comments on kindness, a valued goal for babies and toddlers in this centre and one that is linked to the value of joint activity. It is also linked with evidence that acts of kindness are a feature of the learning of babies and toddlers. The teacher puts on public record that “acts of kindness” among babies and toddlers ought to be acknowledged.

### **What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?**

Even very young children are encouraged to take responsibility for helping the younger children. In these two cases, the teacher stands back to allow the child to take the responsibility but monitors the process and provides assistance when necessary.