

## Tips for Building Rapport with Children & Youth

- ⇒ **Take your time.** Building rapport isn't always a fast process. If you move too quickly with a child or youth who is not ready to engage, you could actually push them away and make interaction more difficult.
- ⇒ **Introduce yourself by name and explain your role.** "I'm here to talk to you and your parents about having help to take care of you" or "I'm here to help with your medicine".
- ⇒ **Always be genuine in your interactions.** Don't fake it - kids can tell. Try to be relaxed, friendly, and even curious.
- ⇒ **Show an interest in the child or youth as a person.** Ask about things the child or youth cares about – a toy they're holding, the music they're listening to, their hobbies, what they're learning in school, etc.
- ⇒ **Bring something with you to help engage the child** – some stickers, a book, a picture, a toy, etc.
- ⇒ **Use developmentally-appropriate language.** Avoid medical jargon, or any words that can be misunderstood especially by younger children.
- ⇒ **Be truthful** in what you say, even to the youngest children.
- ⇒ **Be sensitive to the child or youth's reactions.** If they seem reluctant to talk to you or approach you, give them some space and time to warm up to you. Try talking to the parents for a few minutes before re-approaching the child.
- ⇒ **Acknowledge the emotions and concerns of children and youth.** Rather than saying "don't be scared" or "everything is okay", say, "it's okay to be scared, but your Mom and I are going to help you" or "I see that you're crying - can you tell me what you're feeling?"
- ⇒ **Ask the parent/guardian for tips** on how to engage with their child and build trust.
- ⇒ **Involve children and youth in discussions and planning for their care.** Incorporate the child's or youth's preferences into the care plan whenever possible. This will help build a partnership. Another way to build a partnership is to assign the child a role in care, such as "Your job is to keep your arm as still as a statue" or for a teen "Let me know if you're having any pain or discomfort". This also helps the child or youth have some degree of control.
- ⇒ **Allow the child or youth to ask questions** about your role and work.

- ⇒ **Be sensitive to the family context.** You may need to take extra time to build trust with the parents and even siblings to gain the trust of the child or youth. Be aware of the parents' anxieties and questions as a way to guide how you build trust and rapport.
  
- ⇒ **Acknowledge the child's efforts.** "Thank you for helping answer my questions about your health", or "I know it was hard to sit still when we changed the tape on your PICC line, but you did very well."
  
- ⇒ **Show respect** for the child's emotions, questions, and concerns.

## References

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