

Serena Wieder, Ph.D.

Developing Abstract Thinking

Building Bridges Between Developmental Levels

- Follow child's lead, build on his or her ideas
- Challenge child to create new ideas in pretend play
- Heighten affect and engagement
- Practice and expand rapid back and forth interactions and conversations (gesturally and verbally)
- Carry on logical conversations all the time- while driving, at meals, during baths, etc. - Content does not have to be realistic
- Encourage abstract thinking:
 - *ask why questions*
 - *ask for opinions*
 - *compare and contrast different points of view*
 - *ask child to put himself in someone else's shoes or predict someone else's feelings or behavior, e.g., "What will Daddy say, do..."*
 - *reflect on ideas and feelings - come back to experiences again later; use "comic strip" drawings to revisit sequence of "story"*
 - *don't ask questions you know the child knows the answer to*
 - *don't tell child which dimensions to use*
 - *use visualization - "picture yourself", "picture situation"*
 - *avoid rote, fragmented, academic questions*
- Encourage understanding of fantasy-reality
 - *child will use toys as real objects for himself as if real (try to go down toy slide, put feet in toy pool, try on dolls clothes)*
 - *child may prefer to start with role play and puppets*
 - *child will use toys and dress up in pretend fashion- toy or costume is elevated to level of an "idea"*
 - *child will use symbolic solutions for problems and fears*
 - *child will find safety to experiment with themes of aggression and power – expand into full range of emotions*
 - *recognize fears and avoidance of certain feelings, themes and characters*
- During play and conversations get beginning, middle, and end of story or idea - identify problem to be solved, motives, and feelings - Accept all feelings and encourage empathy
- Select books to read that have themes, motives, and problems to solve - discuss alternative outcomes, feelings
- Be creative

