

CONNECT TO THE CLASSROOM

Stranger Anxiety

In this part of the module, you learned that stranger anxiety is an anxious or wary response to new people that children develop when they're about eight months old. This reaction reflects the baby's growing attachment relationships and awareness that what is new may not be safe.

When a child shows anxiety around strangers:

- let the child warm up gradually and decide when he or she is ready to approach or talk with the new person
- reassure the child by smiling, introducing the stranger, and telling the child why the person is there

Some early childhood programs have frequent visitors such as college students, trainees, researchers, therapists or consultants, or parents touring the center. Other programs may not have frequent visitors.

Think about times when children in your classroom have shown stranger anxiety as you reflect on the following questions.

1 How do you introduce or acknowledge new people in your classroom? Do you stop and introduce the person, using their name and explaining why they are in the room?

2 Do you prepare visitors in any way for how and when to approach children so the children will be most comfortable?

3 Do you let the children decide when to approach the new person and provide reassurance to those who are anxious?

4 What changes (if any) do you plan to make in your classroom after reflecting on this part of the course module?

5 How can you explain to parents what stranger anxiety means and how to respect and respond to it?