

The Role & Value of Risk-Taking in the Early Years

Ensuring that the children in our care are learning in a safe environment is one of the most important tasks we are required to do as early educators and we do not take this task lightly. With that being said, there are numerous challenges and risks that we encounter on a daily basis which require prompt and thoughtful response. Unfortunately, many times when it comes to children, our response is often our intervention on behalf of the child's safety. It is our own (parents, teachers, adults) disposition towards risk, and our perspective that is in control at the time, and there is seemingly little or no consideration of the child's thought, perspective or potential. The excerpt below is something to consider:

“Keeping children safe is paramount to the work we do every minute when we are with children. We must always stop or prevent situation that threaten children's well-being. But when we do intervene on behalf of children's safety, we can do it with the understanding that life has many challenges and risks, and children deserve experiences and tools to learn to negotiate on their own. The saying, “With few risks there are few rewards” is very true. Learning involves risk. Relationships involve risk. Feeling competent and confident in the world requires meeting a challenge and working to overcome it.”

~ Curtis, D., & Carter, M. (2003). Designs for living and learning: Transforming early childhood environments. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

For many children, the child care setting is the place that they first encounter many of these risks and challenges. Our staff often encourage risk-taking because we have seen first hand the rewards that come as a result of overcoming the challenge and we want to encourage all our child care families and parents to do the same. Activities ranging from learning how to feed yourself and how to use scissors to going swimming with your friends without your parents around are all potentially risky. However all these scenarios require the opportunity to take the risk, so that your child may succeed, and with time and practice learn to master the skills necessary to complete the task—something we are proud to say we offer.