

GETTING INTO EMOTIONAL SUPPORT WITH JUDY CUEVAS

Teaching with CLASS® Podcast
Season 5 Episode 4
Guest: Judy Cuevas



Welcome to this insightful conversation on emotional support in early education, featuring Judy Cuevas, an experienced early childhood educator and coach. Judy brings over 20 years of expertise in early education and a passion for emotional support that enhances the well-being of both children and educators.

Defining Emotional Support

- + Emotional support is about reflecting and taking care of yourself so you can help others. It's about filling your cup first, so you have the capacity to support others. This involves empathy, understanding, and connecting with children, families, and colleagues.

Why Emotional Support Matters

- + Emotional support is crucial for both children and educators. When we focus on emotional support, we see happier children who are more eager to come to school, and staff members who are more willing to engage in activities that promote success. Emotional support helps everyone feel human, understood, and cared for.

Key Components of Emotional Support in the Classroom

+ For New Teachers

1. **Start with Self-Reflection:** Understand your own emotions and how they affect your interactions.
2. **Observe and Learn:** Pay attention to children's body language, facial expressions, and cues.
3. **Create a Warm Environment:** Make your classroom inviting and safe for children.

+ For Experienced Teachers

1. **Revisit Fundamentals:** Continuously reflect on your body posture, tone of voice, and facial expressions.
2. **Build Strong Relationships:** Engage with children and families to understand their needs and emotions.
3. **Use Empathy:** Show curiosity and empathy in your interactions with children and colleagues.

+ For Expert Teachers

1. **Model Reflective Practice:** Demonstrate self-reflection and empathy in your daily interactions.
2. **Support Self-Regulation:** Create spaces and activities that help children manage their emotions.
3. **Encourage Higher-Order Thinking:** Use open-ended questions to provoke thought and reflection among children and colleagues.

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Creating an Emotionally Supportive Environment

- **Physical Setup:** Design your classroom with multiple areas where children can pause, reflect, and decompress.
- **Outdoor Spaces:** Include outdoor areas that offer similar opportunities for reflection and emotional regulation.
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Building Relationships from Day One

- **Welcome Activities:** Engage children and families with activities that help you understand their emotional state.
- **Continuous Engagement:** Regularly check in with children about their feelings and the reasons behind them.
- **Flexible Responses:** Be prepared to adapt your approach based on children's changing emotions and needs throughout the day.

Final Tips

For Beginners: Approach with curiosity and intention. You don't have to know everything—focus on building a positive climate and understanding children's perspectives.

For Intermediate Educators: Reflect on your practices and maintain empathy and open communication with children and families.

For Experts: Model reflective practices, support self-regulation, and encourage higher-order thinking among your colleagues and students.

Conclusion

Emotional support is a fundamental aspect of early childhood education. By focusing on self-reflection, empathy, and creating a supportive environment, educators can make a significant positive impact on children's emotional well-being and overall development. Start with curiosity, build strong relationships, and continuously reflect and adapt your practices to meet the needs of your students.

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