

A Child's Creed of Needs

Early childhood educators are striving in countless ways and means to assess the needs of young children in today's society. These needs fall into many categories such as physical, social, emotional, and intellectual. They cover various areas of development such as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. We sometimes become so complex in our technical jargon, however, that we lose sight of the simplistic, everyday needs of the young children with whom we live. The following list is offered as a brief reminder of some of the needs of all young children whatever their sex, race, or status in society may be. This list by no means covers all the needs of our youth, but it does include some of the very essential elements which contribute to the wholesome development of all young children. It is therefore being offered to each individual who communicates with, or influences in some way, the life of any young child.

Let us all remember that young children need:

You -- parents, teachers, and/or friends to serve as models and as aides in helping them to develop the desirable characteristics which will make their lives happy and rewarding experiences.

Opportunity -- to explore and fulfill their curiosities and to develop their abilities to their utmost potential.

Understanding -- of their developmental patterns, limitations, strengths, weaknesses, and individual needs and desires.

Nurture -- for their creative ideas and for the outward expression of their innermost feelings and thoughts.

Group participation -- which permits the development of growth producing social relationships with children of their own age group.

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Confidence -- that they can successfully solve the situations and problems which are of importance to them in their daily lives.

Health -- that radiates an inner glow of physical, social, mental, and emotional well-being. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a goal worth striving for in the lives of all young children.

Initiative -- to enter into a situation and strive for fulfillment of needs whether as a group leader, a follower, or as an individual.

Love -- for themselves as individual human beings. This individuality includes the child's appearance, racial identity, behavior, language, grooming habits, manners, life situation, etc. -- everything that makes the child the person that he or she is.

Discipline -- that is fair, just, and consistent. Young children need guidelines and acceptable limits within which they are free to make decisions also. Discipline needs to be tempered with much love and understanding and then administered in a firm and consistent manner.

Respect -- for themselves and for the roles which they play in their families, their schools, and their communities.

Encouragement -- to express themselves openly and freely whether it be through creative activities in a school setting or as a contributing member of a family or social group.

Nourishment -- for their bodies and their minds. We, as adults, are responsible for providing this nourishment; hence, we must also accept the responsibility for the quality, the quantity, and the timing of nourishment received by the child.

One can readily see by compiling the initial letters of each identified need that they spell "YOUNG CHILDREN." These small individuals are tremendously important to us as parents, as early childhood educators, and as members of our society. Many times we influence the lives of young children without being fully aware of the extent of the impression which we leave upon their lives. May these simple verses serve as an inspiration and a reminder to all who read them that the opportunity of guiding young children through their early years is a rare privilege not to be taken lightly nor to be abused.