

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 16 of 16: Time to say goodbye

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage the generalisation of the social thinking the children have learnt in the session. Children rely on our commitment to consolidate these skills by modelling them, and emphasising the language and the ideas used in the lesson. We urge parents, guardians and teachers to use the session topics and ideas as continuing themes each week.

Here are a few practical ideas to teach children how to develop greeting and 'farewelling' skills. Children can develop these, but it takes perseverance, time, and the consistent guidance of adults.

Be the best role model you can

Be conscious to model greetings and farewells in the company of your children when you're with family, friends and strangers. Your child may not pick up on these skills as fast as you wish, but the more they see how it's done and what it means to others, the sooner they'll begin to do it.

Acceptance

There's always a reason for why a child struggles to do something. Whether it's developmental delay, trauma or fear based or their personality style, children respond best when they feel you understand what they're facing. Encourage every bit of progress, no matter how small. Encouragement is the foundation for teaching your child new, progressive ways.

Early learning

Many children find it easier to greet and farewell a puppet or favourite doll, than a real person in the beginning – this makes for a perfect start!

Gestures are a legitimate way to greet and farewell

If words don't come easily to your child, teach them how to smile and wave, or smile and give a thumbs up as a friendly alternative to speaking. For some, this is an achievable goal to begin with while they are finding confidence to strengthen their verbal skills.

Gently, gently

Never launch into telling your child to greet or farewell someone when they're feeling anxious or uncomfortable. This can intensify a shy child's naturally cautious nature and is likely to place more pressure on them than they can manage. Like with any skill, it is more useful to teach it privately and away from the stress provoking expectations of others

Practice makes perfect



The safest place to sharpen your child's greeting and goodbye skills is at home with family members. Make a start by expecting everyone to use them. As you see their confidence grow, expect these skills to be used more widely. Before entering well-chosen situations, remind your child to greet the person as prepared. Afterwards, praise them for their best effort. It's useful to ask them how they felt they went. Remember, new skills take time and it is helpful to focus on the positive small steps made rather than focusing on areas they are still struggling with.

Set goals to greet and farewell

Once your child has rehearsed the skills and feels more confident about applying them, it's time to set a goal. For example, you might decide that they greet or farewell one child from their class each morning or afternoon as you walk with them to/from school. Begin with small and achievable goals and progressively widening the goals. This gradual process of reinforcing a desired behaviour is called 'training to proficiency', and can be used to reshape all sorts of behaviours. As an incentive for your child to continue using these skills, create a token reward chart and reward them for applying this into their life. Use it over several weeks until the skill is embedded.

The secret signal

Prompt your child to remember the steps to greet and farewell by using an agreed secretly agreed signal. It may be as simple as saying, "Lauren, have you got a tissue?" Alternatively, you might lightly squeeze their hand or ruffle their hair as a prompt that means, "remember to greet or say goodbye to this person." When they respond positively by using their skills, commend them! Good instruction and praise in the company of patience, is the most valuable behaviour shaping tool.

Go people-watching

A perfect idea is to head off on a people-watching adventure! First, decide on a place to go. Cafés located in busy shopping complexes are useful as there's always a lot of activity. Perhaps order a milkshake for your child and a coffee for yourself and sit together at a table near the counter. Take out a small sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. Write 'friendly greetings' on one side and 'friendly goodbyes' on the other. Keep a tally of people's personal style by recording a word or a phrase that made the interaction friendly. Discuss how people present themselves: the words they use, voice tone, patience, eye contact, body language, whether or not they smiled and how they gained attention. Watching people is enlightening! It provides direct modelling and the basis for a very real discussion.

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au