


# Enabling Environments

## Cheryl Bedding

Enabling Environments

Early Years  
Training Consultancy Support



Cheryl Bedding

[@cherylbedding](#)

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What is an enabling environment?

**Early Years Alliance**  
"An enabling environment is one that is warm, welcoming and nurturing"

**Maria Montessori** wanted classrooms to be a happy, friendly place where children felt at home.

**Reggio Emilia**  
Parents and teachers learn from children who engage with a supportive environment specifically created for them. The environment is the third teacher



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**Early Years Foundation Stage**

"The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. Enabling environments encourage babies and young children to play because they feel relaxed, comfortable and 'at home' in them. When children feel emotionally safe and secure, they are able to explore and find out about the place they are in and the things they can see, touch, manoeuvre or manipulate".



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### Considerations for the environment

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**Physical**  
Indoor, outdoor, safety, aesthetics, resources, layout, furniture, light, space, engaging, stimulating, provocations, purpose and function

**Emotional**  
Welcoming, supportive, encouraging, choice, flexibility, connectedness, compassion, understanding, awareness of needs, approachable,

"When children feel emotionally safe and secure, they are able to explore and find out about the place they are in....."



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### The emotional environment

Social and emotional wellbeing creates the foundations for healthy behaviours and educational attainment (nice.org.uk)



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### Impact of an environment that is not enabling

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Impact on:

- Cognitive development
- Emotional development and well being
- Physical development
- Social development

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)

"Children's emotions are as real as yours. Just because they might get sad over the colour of their cup, does not make their feelings any less real."

- Rebekah Lipp



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**Enabling Environments for everyone**

The role of the early years educator

A willingness to meet the needs of children and a desire to respond sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour.

It involves showing **genuine enthusiasm, warmth and interest** in babies and young children, **enjoying the pleasure** of their success and achievements and offering **care and comfort** in their distress and hurt.

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Are enabling environments compromised due to the Coronavirus?




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**You have a great early learning & childcare setting but for some children it is**

**A strange place**

- think about daily settling in & leaving rituals for each child
- show them what is where - they may need this several times
- Some may hold back, others flit about to explore - each is ok
- routines were linked to their usual setting, so they may need to relearn them

**Unfamiliar children**

- support interactions & have suitable resources to reduce potential issues ...
- social skills were learned with a familiar group, so may need support at first.
- be alert for children missing friends, and patient with questions about this
- some may prefer to be with adults - this is quite ok for now!

**With unknown adults**

- work on relationships & give them time to build trust
- ensure each child knows who is there for them and that the adult is accessible
- go with children's choices as to who they feel best with
- relax on planning & tracking - just play & talk together and children will be learning

**In a different world**

- understand behaviour issues as communicating worry or bewilderment
- be prepared for questions about coronavirus or anything related
- parents may want to talk, so make time if you can
- prioritise self-care and team-care. This is potentially hard and anxious work

Always follow national & local health and care guidance for covid-19

James McTaggart – Educational Psychologist @JamesEdPsych

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### The home learning environment

What does it look like for parents and children?

How can we support parents to create an enabling home learning environment?



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### Reflections

When considering your early years space, keep a focus on the emotional environment, what that means and how are meeting the needs of ALL of the children.

Consider the impact of the current situation on children and families and use this as your starting thought when engaging with them

Develop effective home learning links, supporting parents to understand the importance of positive interactions and play



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