

10 Ways to Slow Down in Early Childhood Education



Small Shifts for Big Impact



Created by Amy Chiu
TheWorkOfPlay.com

Protect How Time Is Used

Leave space that isn't rushed, scheduled, or directed.

Try...

- *Skipping a planned activity if the group is deeply engaged elsewhere.
- *Letting children enjoy savoring food and social time with friends during meals.
- *Letting children linger in a moment of discovery.
- *Noticing when a child is watching rather than doing – and honoring that as participation.



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Observe Before You Intervene

Pause. Watch. Let children show you what they need.

Allow children to invite you into their play or ask for help before intervening (unless danger or harm is imminent.)

Waiting to intervene doesn't mean you're lazy, but *intentional*. You're not 'checked out,' but carefully observing for the right moment to make an impact.



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Follow the Child's Lead

Curiosity is the curriculum.

We are here to nurture and protect children's natural curiosity, not to diminish it with too many adult demands and curriculum that makes no sense to them.

Our daily observations and conversations with children will reveal what is meaningful to them. Start there.



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Simplify Transitions

Fewer steps. Calmer pace. Predictable flow.

Examine your daily schedule and consider removing or modifying a few transitions, especially those that take a long time and rarely feel successful.

Ask yourself, does this transition support *connection*, or only instruction?

Every transition interrupts flow.



Go Deep, Not Wide

One meaningful experience beats ten surface ones. Meaningful experiences take root while superficial ones fall away.

Don't be afraid of repetition, it's how anyone gains mastery.

Keep the focus on the *process* of learning.

Trust that learning is happening even when it's not 'visible' and neatly packaged.



Create Calm Environments

Soft light and neutral colors. Natural elements.
Organized materials. More invitation, less
overwhelm.

When energy is high, go outside!
Nature is the ideal calm environment.



Linger in Routines

Morning greetings and chit-chat, washing hands, changing clothes, mealtimes, cleaning up – these are wonderful teaching moments.

Magda Gerber taught that daily routines are moments for connection, not just tasks to complete.

When we slow down, we say:
“You are worth my full attention.”



Make Space for Reflection

With children: Reflect on what happened that day. Discuss favorite activities and challenges. Remember the moments that surprised, inspired, or made you think.

With yourself: Notice what felt rushed or connected. What energized you? What drained you? What might you try differently tomorrow?

With your team: Share observations, insights, and small wins. Ask questions. Celebrate growth. Build a culture where slowing down to reflect is part of the work.



Trust the Process of Play

It doesn't have to look academic to be learning.

Play is fundamental to early learning, and provides protection from stress.

We don't need to enrich play.
Play is enough, but we have to believe this to protect it.



Model Your Own Slowness

Breathe. Move slowly. Get down low to join children at their level. Speak gently with intention, not to fill silence.

Let children feel your calm because you have embodied it.



**Pace is a choice – and choosing
slow protects connection.**



**Slow creates space for trust,
presence, and real growth.**



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