

# INVITATIONS FOR LEARNING

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## Tips that lead to successful experiences :

- Provide duplicate materials so children don't have to share
- Learn about their world (especially about what they like and don't like)
- Avoid making judgements ("quiet" does not necessarily mean "better")
- Let children decorate their own walls (this says to children this is your space.)

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## *"I Can't"*

L. L. Topin wrote something that I constantly think about when I am working with children who take me to the end of my rope. "When a child is placed in failure experiences he/she will do anything to avoid it. Even if that means getting hurt or hurting. Failure adds so much stress to the brain." This statement guides my curriculum and environmental support for children. It reminds me to look at the experiences a child is having and make sure that failure opportunities are removed. If a child is afraid of failure, he/she may say, "I can't" and avoid trying.

Observe children who often say:

"I can't"

"I'm no good at painting"

"I'm a jerk"

"Nobody likes me"

"I never get to win"

"Shut up stupid"

"I hate all of you"

These negative statements might reflect a child who is feeling like a failure. It is easier for a child, who is feeling like a failure, to use negative thinking.

Adults, who work with children, do not wake up in the morning saying, "I plan on causing failure today!" Sometimes there are environmental and curriculum experiences that promote these feelings unconsciously.

# Causes of feeling failure:

- **Competition** - “Lets see who can pick up the fastest”.  
What if a child is slow at it, or decides that picking up is not what he/she is good at. Does this give the message that children who are not as fast at picking up are failures at it?
- **Standing in line** - This invites children to push the child in front of them. When they push and get in trouble they often are punished for something they did not cause.
- **Waiting my turn** - This is a skill that is very difficult for young children. The longer the waiting time, the more challenging behaviors occur.
- **Asking children to share** - Young children don't recognize that other children have the same needs as they have. I worry more about children who do not take items from other children than children who do.
- **Expecting them to act like a little adult** -  
Asking children to adjust to behaviors that are more “adult like” causes many feelings of failure when they cannot live up to the expectations.