

Why does my child react like a younger child?

Immature behaviours can look different in different children and you may notice them at specific times. You may see your child:

- Interrupting someone else's games or leaving in the middle of it.
- Overreacting to what seems like a minor thing and taking a long time to calm down
- Not wanting to leave your side.
- Using "baby talk" in front of others or behaving in a 'silly manner'.
- Having trouble with things like putting on a coat or gripping a pencil.

Reasons:

- **Lack of opportunity or experience being with other children** – so less experience of practicing social interactions and may be feeling nervous or not know what to do.
- **Lack of skills in specific areas** – some children have delay in specific areas of their development. For example, they may have the coordination skills of a 7-year-old but the communication skills of a 4-year-old. In challenging situations where they must interact with other children, and they can't understand what they are saying they may act like a younger child because that is the stage, they are able to communicate.
- **Younger than others in the group and recognize they don't have the skills**
- **Create a situation so they can get out of the setting they are uncomfortable in.**
- **Safety** – when we feel uncertain about who we are and how to act we sometimes revert to the stage where we feel safe and this may present as reacting like a younger child and /or needing to be near you for comfort.

How can you help your child?

- ✓ Understand your child's strengths and build on these, as this will increase your child's confidence and self esteem.
- ✓ Talk about going somewhere unfamiliar beforehand so they know what to expect and what to do if they are worried at all.
- ✓ Give them opportunity to play with other children in small groups/ or one to one before larger group interactions to start and provide some structure and for not too long. This will help your child to gain success and confidence in this setting.
- ✓ Allow them to have some time to play in a setting that feels comfortable for them (and not stressful) so they are not under pressure to perform at an age level that they are not developmentally ready to do.