

CURIOSITY INSTEAD OF ASSUMPTIONS

What is this developmental skill?

Curiosity is the willingness to explore a child's thoughts, feelings, and motivations without immediately judging or assuming intent. It is a cornerstone of reflective functioning and healthy relationships.

How does this normally develop?

Children thrive when caregivers approach mistakes and difficult behaviors with openness rather than immediate conclusions. Feeling understood encourages honesty, emotional expression, and problem-solving.

How can neglect interfere?

Children who have experienced neglect often expect adults to misunderstand or criticize them. They may become defensive or withdrawn if they believe caregivers have already decided why they behaved a certain way.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Deny wrongdoing out of fear.
- Shut down during conversations about behavior.
- Become defensive quickly.
- Struggle to explain their actions.
- Expect punishment before being heard.

Parenting Implications

Replace assumptions with wonder. Instead of saying, "You did that on purpose," try, "Help me understand what happened." Curiosity does not excuse inappropriate behavior—it simply helps you understand it before responding.

From Understanding to Attunement

Your child learns to understand themselves when they first experience being understood by you. Curiosity creates safety, and safety creates opportunities for growth.



THE SECURE
FAMILY PROJECT
Helping caregivers understand
attachment, trauma, and neglect.

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