

Top tips to help children build good relationships with animals

How to foster empathy, kindness and responsibility.



Positive interactions

Young children need to be taught how to engage in safe and positive relationships with animals.

How:

- Show children how to interact safely and respectfully with animals – quiet voices, gentle hands and slow movements.
- Teach children to ‘read’ animal body language and other forms of communication.
- Show children how to engage in mutually enjoyable activities with animals. E.g. playing fetch with a dog.

Understanding animal needs

Encourage children to learn how to take care and responsibility for an animal.

How:

- Give children age appropriate responsibility/care ‘jobs’.
- Make animal enrichment items for different animals.
- Explore the SPCA Kids’ Portal together.
- Read SPCA’s Kind Matters Newsletter together.



Learn by example

Children watch, learn from and copy those around them. Model patience, empathy, compassion and understanding towards human and non-human animals.

How:

- Always model positive interactions with others. Listen and respond to their needs, likes and dislikes accordingly.
- Be a responsible animal guardian. You are a role model.
- Regularly remind your child to treat all people, animals and plants with respect and kindness.

Build connection

Support children to better understand and identify with animal needs and emotions.

How:

- Through conversation support children to identify and describe their own feelings and emotions, and those of others.
- Use dramatic play, storybooks, visual arts, music and visualisation to explore feelings and emotions.
- Ask children to consider things from different perspectives and to ‘put themselves in someone else’s shoes’.



Repetition

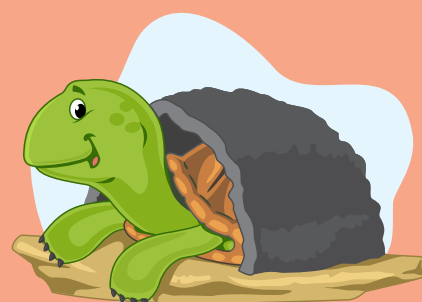
Children learn through repetition and ongoing meaningful learning experiences.

How:

- Read the same storybooks and play the same games with positive animal welfare and social-emotional content over and over again.
- Support, reinforce and build connection between education setting and home. Encourage children to share their knowledge and experiences, build upon this at home.

Create a safe space

- Children must be actively supervised by a responsible adult when around an animal. This is to ensure the safety of both child and animal.
- Animals need a safe space where they can have alone time and rest away from children.
- If you need support, please contact your local vet clinic for advice.



For more information about animal care and adoptions check out www.spcan.z