

Vignette 4. Benji

Benji is 25 months old. He is an active, exuberant boy. He races into the center everyday with a big smile and rushes up to grab whatever is out on the tables. His mother Vivian, comes in behind him, often fusses at him and drags him by his arm over to the cubies to hang his coat and put away anything she has brought from home. She rarely has anything to say to the caregivers and will leave without saying good bye, though she usually looks at Benji absorbed in play, as she goes. Benji is always clean and usually has on carefully pressed clothes. In the afternoon when Vivian picks him up, she always checks the menu or asks about lunch and often comments on the presence or lack of meat. Vivian, has never been heard to ask Benji about his day but will frequently tell him that he has gotten dirty.

Benji is on the go all day and does not sit except for a brief time at lunch, snack and nap time. Benji's use of language is minimal and he uses single words to express his needs. While his mood is usually positive, Benji uses fleeting eye contact and stays with one activity for only a short time. Efforts to engage him in exploration of objects and more extended play usually are not successful and he will melt down into a tantrum if he is held back from continuous activity. He does fall asleep quickly when he is asked to lie down for a nap and typically he sleeps longer than most children in the classroom.

Vivian has begun to tell Benji that he is to use the toilet. She has not approached Claire, the lead teacher in the classroom but her comments have been loud enough now, for two days, that Claire knows she needs to plan a strategy for this situation with Benji and Vivian. Claire knows that Benji is not ready to use the toilet. He drinks a great deal during the day and his diapers are almost always wet. His bowel movements are irregular and his ability to focus and tolerate frustration is limited.

Question 1: What questions do you have about this situation?

Question 2: What do you think that Benji is experiencing?

Question 3: What do you think Vivian is feeling?

Question 4: What do you think Claire is feeling? What do you do when you feel this way?

Question 5: What strategies would you use to develop a partnership with Vivian in this situation? What do you think the social emotional issues are for Benji at this age?