

# Expectations for Caregivers

As a participant in the workshop, it would be beneficial for you (the caregiver) to support your child's engagement in the workshop, depending on their age and cognitive abilities. This would mean:

## *PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP, IT'S HELPFUL TO:*

### » **Understand your child's needs and desires today**

- How are they feeling?
- What are they most excited about?
- What are they nervous or scared about?
- Are they ready for new adventures or do they want to stay within their comfort zone in the following workshop session?
- How do they feel amongst other children? Do they want to be more involved with other children or more separated?
- Do they have any toys that they'd like to bring into the space to make them more comfortable and at ease?

### » **Familiarize yourself and the child with the Emotion Cards tool**

- You may ask the facilitator to share a copy with you
- Act out the emotions on the cards that feel relevant to your child's developmental stage (or ask the facilitator to recommend a list). When a child sees their caregiver acting out the shown emotion on a card, it helps them create a connection between that card and the actual emotion. This ensures that when the same cards are used during the workshop, the child is able to relate to them, and so fully engage in the workshop process.

*DURING THE WORKSHOP, IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO:*

- » **Support your child's learning developmental stages**
  - Try not to pre-determine which activity station your child would like to go to - let them choose for themselves
  - If suitable, gently encourage them to go outside of their comfort zone, but let the child ultimately decide
  - Understand that comfort is a key component in their early learning stages and let your child do what feels good to them
- » **Have fun! Be playful and involved with your child as you explore the various activities!**
  - If the child's age and cognitive abilities are at a point at which they can largely do activities by themselves and wish to, feel free to let them do so, and assist as needed or let a workshop facilitator help.
- » **Let the (lead) facilitator know beforehand, or during the session, if your child has any overall accessibility needs that will help them participate in the workshop.**

*THIS WORKSHOP ALSO AIMS TO HELP YOU:*

- » **Understand your child's perspective**
  - For some of the children in this age group, the pandemic may be all they've ever known - their 'normal'
  - Apart from being an opportunity to share stories about the pandemic with others across Canada, this workshop may also be a way to see the world through your child's eyes. You'll see how they're experiencing the pandemic, whether their understanding seems realistic or exaggerated (e.g statements about time being lengthened or shortened: "We went outside last week!" or "I haven't gone outside in TWO years!")
  - Encourage your child to express how they feel, regardless of the reality of the situation. Give your little one the permission to share sadness, happiness, anger, and all the emotions they might have to offer

- Be open to 1st or 3rd person stories
- Be open to fiction and non-fiction stories from your child
- Make space for your child without interruptions: this is their truth

» **Collaborate with your child**

- This workshop is essentially a collaboration between your child and yourself, to create a story together in various forms
- You can co-write the story alongside your child encouraging them to speak out to the best of their abilities about their experiences
- The goal is to guide them and learn what they understand about this pandemic and how they've grown
- The activities are not meant to be prescriptive - feel free to create a story with your child in whatever way best suits both of you

» **Build community with other caregivers**

- There's a lovely opportunity to connect with other caregivers and children who have gone through similar experiences during the pandemic (e.g giving birth during the pandemic)
- It's a chance to share your stories and invite others to join in on the conversation
- Building a sense of found community amongst other caregivers and share tips with one another on raising your children during the pandemic