

Mr. Nobody

An assessment tool called Mr. Nobody is particularly useful for exploring young children's perceptions of the relationships they have had with significant caregivers in their lives. A series of cards with line drawings of possible family members as well as Mr. Nobody (with his back turned) are spread out in front of the child. The child is asked to choose the people who represent their family and other important caregivers. As you ask a series of questions, the child points to the person fulfilling that need...or Mr. Nobody.

You will need to first ask the child, "Who is in your family?" to make sure to identify significant caregiver relationships. Don't just assume that you know. Remember, it is the child's sense of belonging that is important. You can use silhouettes of adults and youth at different life stages to arrange the relationships in their family, and ask them to point to the person as you ask these questions:

Who did you go to when you were hungry?

Who did you go to when you were hurt?

Who did you go to if you felt sick?

Who did you go to when you wanted a hug?

When you wanted to play a game?

When you wanted someone to listen?

Workers can make up items to explore other areas related to discipline, guidance, protection, and other forms of nurturance.

This can be a powerful exercise for the child. It is important that you acknowledge the voids that the child identifies and affirm the difficulty of not having their needs met.