…"bite size" news from your HSB Regional Behavior Specialists



Healthy Social Behaviors Project (HSB)

OH, Behave!

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Are You Mindful of Celebrations?

The holidays can be stressful for children, so it's no surprise that we might see an increase in challenging behaviors in our classrooms around this time of year. Not only are children feeling their fair share of stress during the holiday season, but they are also sensitive to the stress that adults are feeling too. We have to be careful to check our own feelings first, manage our stress levels and plan effectively so that we are able to support children in managing theirs.

There are lots of things that we have to be conscious about during the holiday season. Families celebrate differently; some families do not acknowledge holidays at all. To be inclusive and respectful in our classrooms, we should survey families and learn about the holidays and celebrations that are important to them. Teachers might find that some families have strict cultural views that govern how they celebrate and what they allow their children to celebrate as well. This sometimes requires teachers to get creative with the language and symbols that we use to reference celebrations in our classroom. For example, we might say "costume or dress-up day" instead of Halloween, or "Happy Harvest" instead of Thanksgiving, or use "Winter Celebration" to encompass Christmas, Kwanzaa or Hanukkah. It's also a good idea to include photographs of families celebrating in our classrooms. The sense of belonging that children feel when they see themselves and their families represented in the classroom is an important deterrent for challenging behavior.

We typically think of children feeling happy, surprised and excited around the holidays, but sometimes these emotions become intense and overwhelming and can lead to stress and anxiety for children. We can share some of the same strategies and supports that we use in our classroom with families to help them navigate holiday mayhem at home and support children through these heightened emotions.

It is important to maintain predictable schedules and routines as much as possible to help children know what's happening, understand what's happening next, and manage their behavior. We should also help prepare children for transitions and potential changes in schedules such as school closings and holiday breaks by talking about them often and not waiting until the actual break is upon us. This helps to minimize anxiety and stress by helping children know what to expect and to prepare for the separation from their teacher and peers.

Some children will spend the holiday season away from home by visiting a parent or other distant relatives. We might use a scripted story or have a discussion at large group time about being away from home at holiday time.

We might help families make a memory box or book for those children celebrating holidays for the first time without a loved one they've recently lost or who is away.

Holiday time looks and feels different for every child. We should include children as much as possible in the planning and preparations, but be careful not to overstimulate them. Help families brainstorm ways to include children, allow opportunities for them to make choices, and how to use calming strategies for when those big feelings get to be too much.

Did we miss anything? Log on to Connections and share how you support children's pro-social development during the holidays in your classroom. Not a member yet? Well, what are you waiting for? Join us! By joining Social- Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!





Tip of the Month:

Did you know that allowing a child to fingerpaint creates an opportunity for both sides of the brain to develop and teaches the child how to use them simultaneously?

Since the weather is changing and fall is here, have your children fingerpaint colors they might see during the fall season. This allows for a fun, engaging, and wonderful learning experience!

Connect with us!

Check out Tucker's NC Nest on Pinterest!

Follow OhBehaveTips on twitter!

Join our new online community by clicking here! By joining Social- Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!

Open our latest public resource, a growing library shelf of virtual binders that include archived issues of the HSB newsletter, *OH, Behave!*, a collection of Disaster Response Resources, and a binder of scripted stories for classroom use! Click here.

Ask The Behavior Specialist!



Question: I just recently heard that bullying behavior can be seen in children as young as three years old! I am a teacher in a three year old class and have started watching the children when they are in free play with a different lens. I am trying to be sure this behavior is not happening among the children in my care. Is there anything else I can do to prevent this from happening?

Answer: Thank you for asking this question! It is true that bullying behavior can be seen in the early years and –like you shared– among children as young as three years old! The good news is there are several things a teacher can do to help prevent this unfortunate behavior. Here are some tips:

- Building social and emotional skills and promoting a welcoming classroom can significantly reduce conflict and aggression.
- Model empathy, concern, and care for others. If there are not opportunities for this to organically occur, set-up situations to illustrate these concepts to your class. For example, if a teacher in another class is out sick, you and the children can make a get well card for her. While you work on this class project together, you can explain how this card might make the teacher feel better and know she is missed at school.
- Empower children to stand up for themselves in the event someone attempts to do something they do not like or find comfortable. Every child should know they can hold up a hand in a way that says "stop!" Rehearse with children how to say "No!" or "Stop!" in a way that is impactful. This can be beneficial in a variety of situations.
- Make sure children know that walking away or ignoring someone who is using bullying behavior is not weak.
- Teach children to be calm and confident. Practice what this looks like — head up, smile, and back arched. Let children know they are the ones in charge of their own bodies.
- Never let an instance of bullying-related behavior go ignored! It sends a message that bullying one another is acceptable.
- Teach resiliency, conflict resolution, and friendship skills.
- Use children's books to teach children what to do if they find themselves being bullied. Kids **books** are powerful motivators. (Click the word "*books*" to find a wonderful list of children's books from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) on many topics!)
- P.S. YOU'VE got this!

Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column? Feel free to email it to AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com. We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!

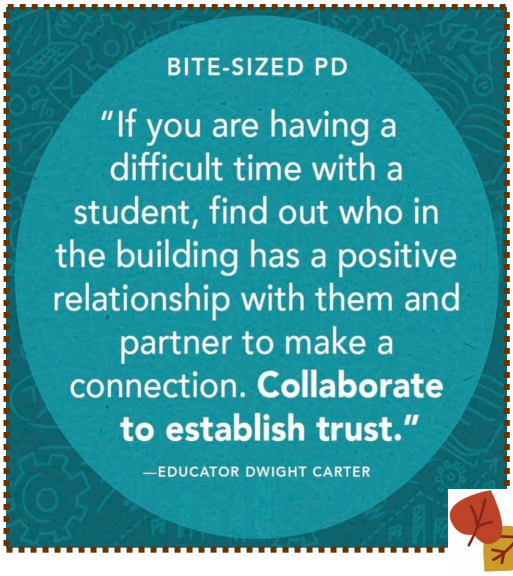
In each issue you will find a new card to help you build your very own "Calming Choices" Card Set for your classroom.

When I am upset, I can…

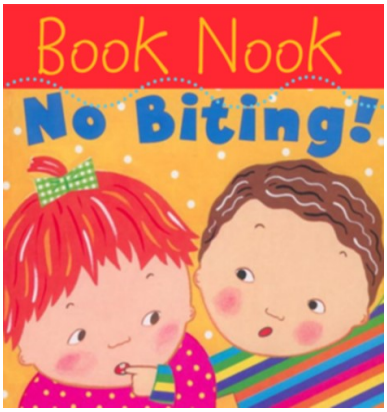
CREATE A NEW GAME TO PLAY



For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.



Social/Emotional Book Nook



No Biting! is a 'Lift-the-Flap' book geared for toddlers to help teach that hitting, pushing, kicking, spitting, and biting people is not okay. As you lift the flaps you'll discover that even though babies sometimes bite, push, and kick they **can** learn a better way to act. The story teaches ways to replace inappropriate behavior with more appropriate skills. The cute pictures and interactive flaps make this book fun for both adults and babies. (Ages 1-3)

Click on this link for activities to do: https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/booknook/BookNook_nobiting.pdf

For more information about the Healthy Social Behaviors Project, contact your regional Behavior Specialist or:

Smokie Brawley
HSB Statewide Project Manager
SBrawley@childcareresourcesinc.org
704-376-6697 x 371