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

OH, Behave!

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Honoring All Traditions Creatively in Your Early Childhood Classroom



Tip of the Month:

Do you know about the "Penny Transfer Technique"?

You can use this strategy to intentionally build or strengthen your relationship with children and families during the holidays.

More on page 2!

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.

As early childhood educators, it is our responsibility to understand, respect, and honor each child in our classroom without bias. Many programs have families enrolled with a variety of different backgrounds and experiences.

Acknowledging or celebrating holidays in early childhood programs can bring pleasure to many families, staff, and children and can be useful in building connections between school and families. However, holidays also pose a range of challenges to ensuring that all children, families, and staff feel respected and to children learning about diversity of families. Whether or not to include any holidays in your curriculum, and what activities to use if you do, requires thoughtful decision making.

In addressing families, often the question of the holiday season is whether or not to participate in festivities. Here are a few questions to help you to create a plan:

What are the holidays or traditions recognized by the families of the children in my care?

- How do they recognize, mark and celebrate these days?
- What values are important to them?
- Are there families that do not recognize specific holidays or who choose not to celebrate holidays in general?
- One potential approach to consider is to focus on the underlying values rather than on the holidays themselves. Rather than focusing on Christmas and what is generally associated with the holiday, your program may choose to focus on the values of Christmas, such as joy, peace, goodwill and generosity.

The holidays are also a great time to teach students about giving. You might have students decide upon a community service project, like:

- Collecting pennies for a local cause, like toys for a children's hospital.
- Holding a class-wide or school-wide food drive
- Making holiday cards or crafts for residents of a nursing home

When it comes down to it, celebrating the holidays is all about traditions. This is a great time for your children to share their family traditions with one another, whether they are related to the holidays or not. Here are some different ways to honor children's traditions and help them learn about others:

- Invite students' family members to speak to the class about their family traditions (holiday or not holiday related)
- Make a class book – each child creates one page about his or her family traditions (could be done at home or school)
- Have children interview family members about traditions they celebrated as children.

A good relationship with families is based on ongoing communication and grounded in good intention and authentically seeking to understand, helps you navigate the bumps in the road. The important thing is that you are willing to embark on the journey in an effort to respect the dignity of each child in your care.



Ask The Behavior Specialist!

Question: I am a four-year-old teacher. I have noticed many of the children in my class seem to be much more anxious since the onset of COVID changing our world as we knew it. I want to add something extra to my curriculum in the new year. Something that will help children relax and find joy again. But, I am stuck as to what to do. Any suggestions?

Answer: How about integrating some mindfulness activities into your day? Mindfulness is about slowing down and remaining in the moment. It means taking one's time and focusing in a more relaxed manner, rather than rushing or stressing. It could definitely help the young children in your class to not be as anxious or worry as much. Mindfulness supports the healthy social and emotional development of children. It fosters non-judgmental love, and acceptance and awareness of feelings and emotions. Below are two activities that would be great to begin with as you introduce this concept to the children:

- Deep belly breathing is a great way to learn to calm down. To teach children to truly breathe deeply, ask them to lay on the floor face-up. Place a stuffed animal on their belly. Tell them to breathe in while noticing as the stuffed friend moves up and down. The stuffed animal will only move up and down if they breathe deeply. Once a child experiences the sensation of a deep breath, they will be able to do it correctly so that it relaxes their body. Remember, practice and rehearse! Tip: Co-regulate by modeling how to use deep breathing to calm down when you are upset.
- Cotton ball breathing is another activity that is fun and teaches children how to calm their body and their brain. Have a child sit on the floor or at a table. Give them a cotton ball (or anything lightweight) and ask them to place it on the table or in the palm of their hand. Have them to gently blow the cotton ball so that it slowly moves across the table or their palm. If it falls off or they blow too hard, just try again. This is a wonderful way to teach a child how to control their breathing. It is also a good way to teach self-control.

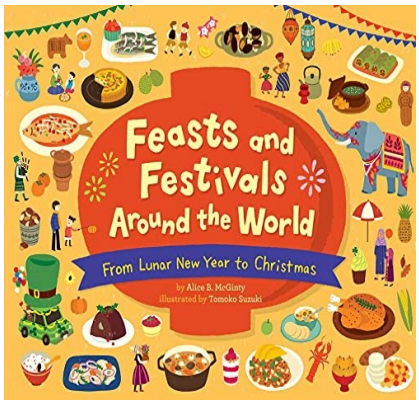
Our team's twitter account is offering mindfulness tips this week! Follow us at @ohbehavetips to learn more!

Check out this NCPMI video on deep breathing here.

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!



Social/Emotional Book Nook



At first glance, one might think this book is too advanced to read to preschoolers. However, this book crosses the span of a year's four seasons and talks about how 12 different countries observe a traditional holiday. Each holiday is described as a way to give thanks, honor loved ones, and come together as a community. It features a short rhyming introduction to the festival on the left page. The right page is a more detailed and interesting description of the ways in which the people of each country celebrate. Across the two-pages is a colorful array of the artifacts, people, and foods one would expect to see in that country during their holiday season. The author conveys just enough information to give kids a good sense of how the holiday is celebrated. Even looking at the pages together is a wonderful way to introduce young children to the different ways people celebrate all year long. Primarily recommended for ages 4 years and older, there is a lot for younger ages to enjoy as well. Written by Alice B. McGinty with illustrator Tomoko Suzuki.

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…

WRAP UP IN A BLANKET



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

…More on the "Penny Transfer Technique from page 1:

You can start by placing a set number of pennies in one pocket either at the beginning of each day or week. Each time you have a positive interaction with that child or family or learn something new about their culture, transfer one penny to the other pocket. By the end of the day or week, try to have all of the pennies in the opposite pocket. This is a great strategy for connecting with children and families who may have different beliefs and/or celebrate the holidays differently.

Note—you don't have to use pennies! Think about what is already on hand such as pom pom balls, square pieces of construction paper, small pieces of sponges, counting bears, etc.

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

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