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



OH, Behave!

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Returning to Routine After the Holidays

As schools are re-opening, visiting relatives are going back home and families are returning to work, children might experience a mix of emotions, including separation anxiety in those first few days of returning to school. Most children will need some added support getting back into the daily routine after the holiday break.

At drop-off, children might require a little extra time to transition into the classroom for a while. Calmly reassuring children and providing extra time to say goodbye is key.

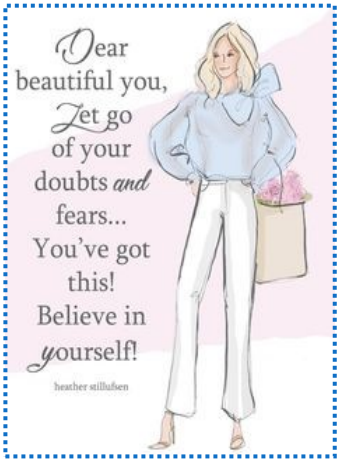
The holidays are largely unstructured; teachers need to be intentional about re-connecting and re-teaching the classroom rules and expectations. Teachers should not expect children to simply fall right back into the classroom routine. Just as we prepare children for the break *from* the routine, we prepare them for the return *to* the structured routine. Be prepared to have to re-teach classroom expectations and routines to help children get back on track.

In the spirit of the new year, some teachers might be tempted to incorporate a fresh start by re-arranging the classroom or changing for something new and exciting. It is actually more beneficial that children return to a familiar learning space until they have re-adapted to being back in school. Returning to the same environment they left might ease the transition back into school. When it comes to materials, teachers might want to also make sure some familiar favorites are available right away.

Teachers may need to modify the daily routine just slightly, to better accommodate children's needs. Being careful not to eliminate any part of the daily routine, it might be necessary to increase or shorten time spent in certain activities. Initially, teachers can shorten their circle time by a few moments as sitting through that structured activity may be challenging at first and extend free play to allow children time to re-adjust to the structure of large group time, engage with their environment and re-learn the routines.

Rely on your visual supports like your classroom rules or promises, visual schedule and feelings chart to help children who become overwhelmed with the transition back to school. Help children to name those feelings as they experience them and validate them by helping children to understand why they are experiencing that emotion. We can help them understand feeling tired, overwhelmed, or just missing their parents, for example. Be patient and acknowledge those big emotions that children are feeling.

Making a few adjustments and being patient and supportive can help children to quickly recover from the break, re-learn routines and successfully take on the new year.



Tip of the Month:

For the first few weeks back to school, amp up sensory activities, do more brain breaks, promote the use of the cozy corner and use your Calming Cards! This will help ease children back into the school day and help settle anxiety!

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 am a teacher in a three-year-old class. Every morning, one of the boys comes in angry. I will notice his mood changing as the morning goes on and he gets involved playing with his friends. When I comment how happy I am to see he is having a good day or that I am glad he isn't angry anymore, he frowns. It is almost like he temporarily forgot he was angry and goes back to feeling that way. Sometimes he will stop playing and go sit alone with his arms folded over and a huge scowl on his face. I have talked with his mom and she doesn't understand what could be causing this behavior either. Any suggestions? What can I do?

Answer: It is important that we teach children their feelings and emotions can change throughout the day. Perhaps something has given him the idea that if he comes to school angry then he must remain angry all day. One idea to help him understand that it is ok for his feelings to change is to use a feelings check-in. The feelings check-in captures how someone feels at the moment. For example, the chart should be near the entrance to the classroom and each child/adult "checks-in" with how they feel at that time. Be sure and remind each child./adult to re-check their feelings and emotions as the day goes on. This not only allows for emotions to be labeled, but it also shows that your feelings can –and do– change. Someone that came in upset might now be happy, which is perfectly understandable. The check-in chart can be as creative or as simple as you desire (see below right for some examples). Be sure to have some way for each child/adult to be identified when they check-in. Identification can be a photo that moves on Velcro dots or magnets. If used with younger children, be sure it is something that can be easily maneuvered.

Also, read books that talk about emotions and feelings, and have these available in the book area of your classroom. Discuss how the characters might feel and what they are doing to express their feelings. Sing feeling songs such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" and, as children learn new feeling words, change the song lyrics to reflect their new emotion vocabulary. Use stuffed animals and puppets to "act out" different feelings. Ask children how they feel and let them tell you. Give children the chance to open up and talk.

Other than providing the perfect chance to label feelings, here are some other benefits of using a "Feelings Check-in" activity in the classroom. Children learn: Self-Awareness, Social Empathy, Self-Regulation, and Positive Relationship Building Skills.

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.

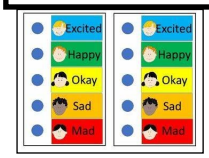
When I am upset, I can…

TAKE SOME TIME AWAY

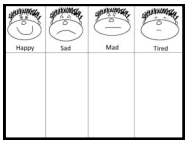


For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

Some Examples of Feeling Check-In Charts



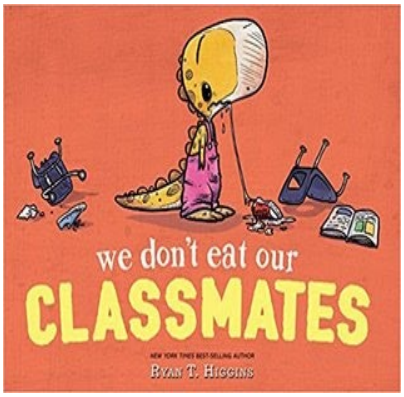








Social/Emotional Book Nook



It's the first day of school for Penelope Rex, and she can't wait to meet her classmates. But it's hard to make human friends when they're so delicious! That is, until Penelope (a T-Rex Dinosaur) gets a taste of her own medicine and finds she may not be at the top of the food chain after all! Readers will gobble up this hilarious new story from award-winning author-illustrator Ryan T. Higgins! Ideal for children ages 3 to 5 and adults of all ages!

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



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