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

OH, Behave!

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Teaching Empathy in Your Classroom

As a preschool teacher you have probably used the phrases "Would you like it if someone did that to you?" or "How would you feel if someone did that to you?'

Building empathy in preschool is crucial to encouraging a positive classroom culture. Children naturally have the capacity for empathy but that doesn't mean they develop it on their own. They learn how to notice, listen and care by watching and observing adults and peers, and they take cues from these people on why empathy is important.

All school adults including teachers, administrators, cooks, bus drivers and others play a role in helping students develop and display empathy.

Developing empathy with children may seem like a daunting task to bring into your preschool classroom, but if you teach and incorporate activities on empathy, the children will be more successful in all areas of their lives in the future!

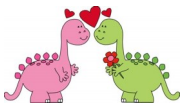
One of the fist ways that children begin to experience empathy is through exposure to a variety of literature. Characters in books can expose children to a range of social situations that they may or may not have experienced themselves. Teachers can guide discussion related to emotions and feelings about the characters or the conflict in the story. Asking open ended questions will allow students to engage in conversation about empathy practices.

Another way a teacher can teach empathy is through modeling. Greet children with a smile and welcoming words. Anticipate and address children's needs and worries. You can have a daily check in where children can identify how they are feeling. A simple board with basic emotions can be posted in your classroom and children can check in using their picture or name on a popsicle stick. Taking a few minutes to check in with a student that may be sad or anger will teach your children that you care about them and want to find ways to help them feel better.

A teacher can also begin by teaching children to recognize their own emotions, not just react to them. This can start by clearly stating your own feelings in front of the children. For example, "I am feeling a little angry right now so I am going to take three deep breaths to calm myself down and then we can talk." As you practice labeling your emotions, begin to describe the feelings you see the children displaying.

Another great way to teach empathy is to give your preschoolers small jobs. Preschoolers usually love performing small tasks. Some jobs - such as feeding the class pet - teach empathy because it is the act of caring for someone else. Afterwards, be sure and praise the child for a job well done.

Empathy is a crucial life skill. A child who consistently experiences empathy gains the ability to have empathy for others.



Tip of the Month:

If you want a compassionate classroom climate, teach empathy!

Empathy is a social skill learned through practice and experience. Empathy helps build social awareness and community.

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.

NEW!

Introducing our **Pyramid Fidelity Tip Section** for those of you having the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) or the Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) completed in your classroom. This section will help you connect the main topic of each issue with indictors on these scales. These assessments support Pyramid Model practices which promote and support children's social-emotional development.

Empathy

Check out TPOT Item 8: Teaching Social Skills and Emotional Competencies (TSC) #3. The examples in the description address children helping one another.

Check out TPITOS Item 3: Teacher Promotes Positive Peer Interactions (PPI) #12. Teacher encourages children to be aware of and care about their peers in the classroom.

Ask The Behavior Specialist!

Question: I've shied away from celebrating Black History Month in the past because I didn't want black history to be something that we take off the shelf in February and then place it back when we are done. I want my classroom to be inclusive and celebrate everyone all year, not just in this month. I have all of these great crafts and activities planned for the children and their families, but how can I make it more meaningful for my preschool children?

Answer: There are many early educators who share in your hesitation to teach about black history; thank you for asking this question. Black History Month is the time we reserve to celebrate the contributions and achievements of African Americans to our world. Empathy, love, humanity, compassion and perseverance are just a few of the tenets of Black History Month and you're right… we want to teach these principles all the time. We can use books and props to guide our conversations and invite families to visit and share special things about their culture. We can use children's natural curiosity and questions to spotlight those things that make us different, and how each of us bring something special to our classroom. Help guide children's thoughts as you explore differences in food, music, art, expression, etc. but remember to remind children of all the ways that we are similar too.

We are more alike than we are different. We can ensure that we are celebrating everyone everyday by making sure that our classroom is inclusive and represents all of our families. We can provide music samples and instruments from all cultures, family photos, ask families to send in emptied grocery containers to infuse families' culture into dramatic play, holiday celebrations, menus from various restaurants, clothing, dolls, bilingual print and multicultural photos throughout the classroom to name a few.

Adopt classroom rituals that promote friendship and acceptance and teach children how to take care of each other.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

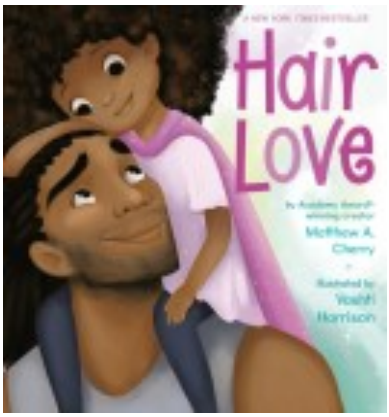
-Martin Luther King, Jr.



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



This beautiful story is about an African-American father and his young daughter, Zuri, and her hair. Although Zuri's dad has long locks himself, he has never had to do his daughter's hair before. Together, Zuri and her dad, Stephen, work through frustration and feeling like it is a hopeless task to finding a way to make it happen! The ending of this touching tale will surprise you. One would think they were getting ready for Zuri to go to school, but wait until you see where they are going! Grab the tissues! You can also view the Oscar-Winning short film made about this story here. Most ideal for children ages 4 years and older.



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…

MAKE A CARD FOR SOMEONE I LOVE



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

Classroom Empathy Activity

The Wrinkled Heart is a popular poem and activity for teaching children how our feelings and behaviors affect others. Ask children if anyone has ever said anything that hurt their heart. Write each of these on a red heart made of construction paper and each time make a fold on (crumple) the heart. Afterwards, unfold the heart and recognize the wrinkles that can't be taken away. Discuss with the children what happens when they say or do certain things, and how it affects other people. As an added piece to this activity, paper or real Band-Aids can be used to find ways to make the hurt feel better. The Band-aids can be placed over the hurtful comments as a way of making it better. While the mean comments can not be taken back (thus, the heart is still wrinkled), the Band-aids help comfort and heal where it hurts.



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



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