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

OH, Behave!

Volume 17, Issue 5

November 2023



Navigating Superhero Play Safely in your Classroom

Children use play to experience and figure out the world around them, and children naturally engage in super hero or war play. Generally, it is because they are fascinated by the powers the superheroes possess. Most children have very little control over their own environment; therefore, it is easy to see why this type of play is so appealing to children and occurs naturally regardless of the policy of the child care program. By pretending to have these superpowers, it can make children feel powerful and they feel that they are in control of their own world.

There is no right or wrong answer whether this type of play should be allowed in child care settings. However, when making this decision it is important to weigh the concerns of superhero play with how it benefits children.

Here are some things to consider when addressing superhero or war play:

When superhero or war play is happening, there are concerns from adults that do need to be addressed:

- Safety - that children will be physically out of control, hurt themselves or others, or become scared as they engage in play.
- Results - this type of play teaches children that violence and force can be used to get what they want, even if used for a good outcome.

Do these concerns outweigh the benefits that this type of play provides children? Superhero and war play can:

- Help children cope with their emotions and fears.
- Help children communicate their thoughts and feelings.
- Allow children from military and first responder families to see their families in their play and helps to process situations they may encounter with their families.
- Allow children to see all types of family interests and hobbies such as hunting, sport shooting, etc.
- Encourage cooperation and group play.
- Help children understand abstract concepts such as good/bad, right/wrong.

Here are some tips for teachers to support positive superhero play:

- Establish rules right from the start. These rules may need to be discussed several times before and during their play.
- Respond accordingly by interrupting the play to stop aggressive behavior and talk about it afterwards.
- Make sure there is enough space for safe play. Outdoor spaces may work better than indoor.
- Talk to the children about real life heroes, both male and female, and focus on their positive characteristics such as kindness and helpfulness. You can ask a local firefighter or police officer to visit your preschool classroom.
- Use this play as an opportunity to build problem solving skills. When there is an issue, remind them about following directions and being safe.

It is important to realize that whatever the teacher chooses about allowing this type of play, it is a choice the teacher makes for the classroom. The choice sends a message about what the teacher considers important and how the teacher views the voice of their children. Teachers should take great pains to allow for children to follow their interest while guiding all children to respect the wishes of others.

Still undecided about whether or not to allow super hero play in your classroom? Check out this video!



Tip of the Month:

If allowing superhero play in the classroom, be sure one of the rules is to respect others if they decline to play. This type of play teaches children to read the emotions of others.



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Check out Tucker's NC Nest on Pinterest!

Follow OhBehaveTips on X (formerly, 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: Help! I have a class of 12 boys and only three girls this year. To say the classroom has a lot of boy energy is an understatement! I am looking for some ways to get the boys more interested in other center areas. As of now, they migrate to the block area which we limit to only three children at a time. If they are not in blocks, they seem to want to spend most of their time with table toys such as dinosaurs or Legos. That still leaves half the boys in the class trying to find something appealing. How can I "boy-up" my classroom?

Answer: How about creating a fitness center in your classroom? If you prefer to keep it more contained within your classroom you could turn the dramatic play center into a fitness center. Here are some suggestions for items you may want to put into the fitness center:

Be sure to consistently supervise this area of play!

- Mats
- Mirrors
- Sweat bands, arm bands, sweat/tracksuits (ask parents to donate gently used ones or check your local Goodwill store).
- Hand towels
- Water bottles
- Bean bags with a bucket for tossing.
- Headphones/music
- Hoops
- Balance beams
- Steps for aerobics
- Sit-n-spin
- Jump ropes
- Convert a children's bike into a child size stationary bike
- Balance ball
- Mock treadmill
- Create dumb bells with various sizes of water bottles weighted with water, sand, rice, beans, etc.
- Make bar bells with two liter bottles and connect with a broom handle or wooden dowel. Make several with varying weight limits.

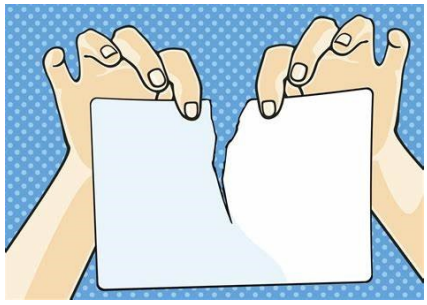


Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column? Feel free to email it to AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com. We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!

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…

RIP PAPER INTO PIECES

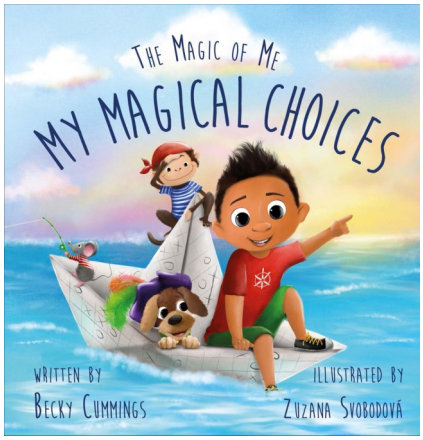


For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

"A child whose behavior pushes you away is a child who needs connection before anything else."

-Kelly Barlett
Encouraging Words for Kids

Social/Emotional Book Nook



Author, Becky Cummings, captures the interest of children with her fun rhyming story which talks about making the choice to have a good day. No more, "I can't, I don't know, or I'm not!" This social and emotional book helps teach children they can choose to be positive, responsible, calm, confident, fun, a good sport, forgiving, generous and more! Most appropriate for ages three to eight, teachers and parents will love that this story's message urges children to take it upon themselves to take positive actions towards a goal!

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

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