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

OH, Behave!

Volume 17, Issue 6

December 2023



From Superhero to Super Friend

In last month's issue of *OH, Behave!*, we talked about how to safely navigate superhero play in the classroom. This kind of imaginative dramatic play helps children to feel a sense of control in their environment and helps children to feel empowered. One way to get your feet wet if you're still feeling a little uneasy about this kind of play, is to introduce "SUPER FRIEND" in your classroom.

"Super Friend" is the ideal superhero as there is no need for a villain; it promotes positive, pro-social behaviors; and, instead of a focus on physical attributes like being strong and tough, it highlights characteristics like kindness, helpfulness and empathy.

To introduce Super Friend, teachers can start with *the I Can Be a Super Friend*! scripted story found here in the NCPMI's resource library: https://challengingbehavior.org/document/i-can-be-a-super-friend/. The story highlights how to be a super friend in common social situations like waiting for a turn or asking to join others who are playing.

All great superheroes are known by their cape. Teachers can provide a Super Friend cape for children to wear. When a super friend is observed, the teacher might make a large group announcement of the friendship skill they just observed, write it down and display it or snap a picture of friends playing together, sharing materials, being helpful or giving compliments and post those throughout the classroom. Superheroes always draw a crowd; it is important to give attention to those behaviors that we want to see more of in the classroom.



The teacher might allow the Super Friend to lead the class onto the playground at outdoor play time in classic superhero style, complete with arms extended, cape soaring in the wind, and maybe even some dramatic sound effects. The key is to help children feel proud of their ability to be a good friend.

The Super Friend could also wear their cape throughout the day as a consistent reminder to continue with friendly behaviors, to notice other children that are using friendly behaviors as well, or to possibly assist peers who might need help solving a social problem in the same way that actual superheroes show up when they are needed. Early friendships are important for developing young children's self-esteem, success in school, and healthy adult adjustment later in life. Young children need support in learning how to interact with other children and develop these friendships. Before introducing Super Friend, we have to first highlight important friendship skills like turn-taking, initiating and maintaining interactions, organizing play, sharing, helping others and showing empathy and awareness of others. To help children form friendships with each other and acquire these important skills, teachers must explicitly teach how to be a friend and provide opportunities for children to practice these new skills.

Teachers can model friendship skills in their own interactions with adults and children and provide materials that lend themselves to cooperative play (instead of competitive play). These items consist of balls, parachutes, blocks, board games, dress-up clothes, etc. As children are interrelating, teachers must watch for these friendly behaviors and provide specific praise and reinforcement to encourage children to continue to use them.

The classroom Super Friend is a great way to consistently reinforce and highlight important friendship skills that ultimately lead to more meaningful interactions, self-regulation strategies, and a positive sense of self.

Check out this Super Friend Certificate here!

Tip of the Month:

You can use other ways to recognize Super Friend behaviors in the classroom! Watch this 2 minute video to learn how this classroom does it!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvUc2oqn7po

Connect with us!

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: ***As a lead teacher in a class of four-year-old children, I am overhearing some children saying "No!" when other children want to play. Even though there is capacity in a center for another child to enter and play, many of the children just seem defeated and will go to a different activity area. How can I teach friendship skills to the children in my class?***

Answer: First of all, let's talk about friendship building behaviors. Some of the basics are cooperation, kindness, turn-taking, trust, and negotiation. It is also important for friends to communicate with one another. Many young children are not sure how to ask another child to play. Learning this social skill takes time and practice. Teachers can encourage a child who seems reluctant or unsure how to join a group by giving the child the actual words to say. For example, "Ask Johnny if you can play" or "Ask William if you can help him build that rocket". Prompting and coaching helps set a child up for success and provides him or her the confidence to approach other children. If you find the children in the group are not very welcoming to another child joining in, find some ways another child can add to the play and announce it. For example, "Oh, I bet if you had some extra help you could get that rocket built before it is time to get ready for lunch!" or "Rhonda could hold the rocket steady while you add the red blocks to the other side". By sharing what another friend could possibly contribute, it helps the other children see the benefits of someone else joining in.

Be intentional about planning activities that build connections between the children in your classroom. One of the best ways to build compassion and empathy is to acknowledge the children who are not present at school each day. As a group, wish them well. Click **here** to learn more about how to make your own wishing well board and how to incorporate this practice in your classroom. Conscious Discipline does this very well!

Another great way to teach friendship skills is through books on friendships. Click **here** for a list of friendship-themed books for young children. Discuss the characters in the books and talk about the friendship behaviors the characters exhibit. Add puppets to your classroom so children can act out the story.

Set up activities that call for a small group of children to work together to complete a task. Have themed play activities that naturally group children together based on their interests.

Enjoy the results!

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…

SAY SOMETHING KIND TO MYSELF



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

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and joyous holiday season!



Social/Emotional Book Nook



What's My Superpower? is a book written by Aviaq Johnston that encourages children to think about themselves and what it means to be successful. Nalvana feels like all of her friends have some type of superpower. She has friends with super speed (who always beat her in races), friends with super strength (who can dangle from the monkey bars for hours), and friends who are better than her at a million other things. Nalvana thinks she must be the only kid in town without a superpower. But then her mom shows Nalvana that she is unique and special, and that her superpower was right in front of her all along.

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