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AUTHOR Chalufor, Ingrid; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The curriculum presented in this guide focuses on enhancing the mental health of children in Head Start or in other comprehensive early childhood programs. The guide begins with two introductory sections: "Stress and Children," describing stressors in young children's lives, how children manifest stress, and teachers' role in mediating stress; and "Children Who Need Special Consideration," describing special needs related to this curriculum for children with disabilities, children from other cultures, and gifted and talented children. The curriculum itself is divided into four areas: (1) "Being," knowing and accepting oneself, feeling capable, and using one's body to express oneself in positive ways; (2) "Feeling," identifying and accepting one's feelings, understanding how feelings may be expressed verbally and nonverbally, and learning coping skills for dealing with difficult situations and feelings; (3) "Relating," listening and communicating with family and friends, developing skills to maintain meaningful relationships, valuing all living things; and (4) "Thinking," exercising and enjoying one's growing imagination, building knowledge and thinking skills from one's experiences, and understanding and using language effectively. A section on "Experiencing Literature" is also included. Each area of the curriculum has the following subareas: (1) "Introduction, Goals, Developmental Considerations"; (2) "Being [Feeling, Relating, Thinking] in Your Classroom"; (3) "Teacher's Role"; (4) "Experiences"; and (5) "Resources." The bulk of the guide is comprised of the descriptions of classroom experiences, each of which details the benefits to the children, the materials needed, the groundwork necessary, and the implementation of the experience. (KDFB)

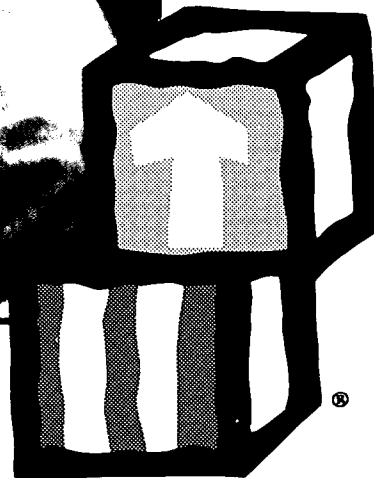
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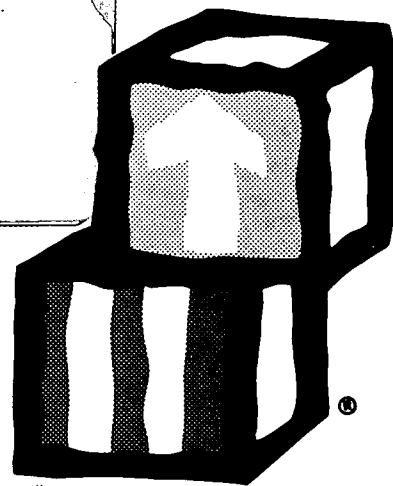
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AS I AM



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Produced By:

**Action Opportunities, INc.
P.O. Box 562
Ellsworth, Maine 04605**

**Peter McGregor, President
Grant Lee, Executive Director
Barbara Peppey, Project Director**

Developed By:

**Ingrid Chalufor
Catherine Bell
Jane Weil
Amanda Dyer
Barbara Peppey**

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PREFACE

With the development of the Federal Innovative Projects, the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families began an initiative to enhance the quality of services to Head Start. Comparable to the research and development efforts of private corporations, this initiative provided the funding necessary for experimentation in how to improve the delivery of Head Start services.

Under the Innovative Program, two million dollars were set aside to fund demonstration projects for fiscal years 1985-87. Head Start grantees from all parts of the country submitted proposals to address their priority areas.

The mental health component of Head Start became one such priority area because few practical day-to-day resources were available to Head Start programs to augment their mental health components.

In the spring of 1985, the mental health curriculum project staff approached the Executive Director of Action Opportunities, Inc. with the idea of submitting an application to address the pressing need for mental health resources in the preschool classroom. As a result, a proposal to develop a mental health curriculum was written, submitted, and subsequently funded by the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families. In September 1985, Action Opportunities began work on the curriculum. This project, and other innovative projects, has underscored the commitment of Head Start to develop and test products and ideas which enhance Head Start's delivery of comprehensive services. Contacts made throughout the country since the beginning of the project confirmed that there was a growing need to highlight mental health in the preschool classroom.

AS I AM is the result of a two-year process. During the first year the conceptual framework was built based on ideas of prominent researchers, theorists, and practicing early childhood professionals. The researchers and theorists provided the theoretical material that shaped the design of the curriculum. Comments from early childhood professionals with extensive classroom experience emphasized the value of including practical guidance to teachers. By September 1986, a first draft was completed.

Work then began to refine the curriculum. Staff focused on blending the theoretical with the practical to arrive at a curriculum that reflected the best of theory and practice. In the fall of 1986 field testing began. Teachers and parents

from four Head Start Centers in Maine and one in New Jersey used it as a resource in their day-to-day work with children. Their practical application and suggestions became an integral part of **AS I AM** and provided many improvements.

Central to the task of improving the curriculum was the creation of the Mental Health Curriculum Project Review Committee. Composed of mental health and early childhood specialists, the committee brought life to **AS I AM**. Committee members offered a strong mental health and child development focus and helped integrate the conceptual and practical. New ideas, fresh perspectives, and changes in the text and format resulted.

A great deal was learned by the project staff of AOI during the two-year development of **AS I AM**. Most importantly, project staff members realized mental health does not exist in a vacuum. Every activity, every interaction in a preschool classroom has an impact on the emotional development of children. Preventive mental health is providing children with opportunities to better understand and accept themselves and their own emotions; it is encouraging adults to open doors to children and helping children open doors to each other; it is supporting children and facilitating all they do.

We feel this curriculum offers some new ideas and approaches to building mental health into early childhood programs. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for **AS I AM** and accept Action Opportunities' invitation to offer your suggestions for further improvements.

Ingrid Chalufour, Director, Mental Health Curriculum Project
Catherine Bell, Writer-Editor
Jane Weil, Writer
Amanda Dyer, Writer
Barbara Peppey, Contributor

INTRODUCTION

Why a Mental Health Curriculum?

Early childhood educators have long focused on the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of young children. Some teachers in preschool programs tend to look at children's developmental levels, consider what skills are prerequisites for kindergarten, and plan activities - often without a clear philosophical base. These programs address certain needs, but do not necessarily prepare children for the variety of life experiences they will face.

Life in America has changed rapidly in recent years. Changes, such as shifts in the economy and the women's movement, have placed a great deal of stress on families and resulted in home and social environments with less stability than children experienced previously. Physical and sexual abuse, divorce, single parenthood, and "working parent" families increase the stress on children. Children need responsive environments and meaningful relationships in which to strengthen their inner resources.

Children in very stable situations also need support as they build life skills. The joys and stresses of growing and changing can cause children to feel insecure. All children benefit from an environment which accepts them as individuals, appreciates their capabilities, and fosters their growth in many areas.

" . . . the aim of education must be to develop individuals who are open to change. Only such persons can constructively meet the perplexities of a world in which problems spawn much faster than their answers. The goal of education must be to develop a society in which people can live more comfortably with change than with rigidity. In the coming world the capacity to face the new appropriately is more important than the ability to know and repeat the old."¹



¹ Rogers, Carl. Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969, p. 304.

Children need to be able to rely on adults. Caring, responsible adults can help young children develop self-confidence and the ability to make intelligent, thoughtful, and appropriate decisions. Children need to be able to express themselves - whether they are joyous, curious, hungry, fearful, or lonely - and have someone listen. To help meet these needs, adults must work at being healthy role models.

The content of **AS I AM** is based on preventive mental health concepts. Focusing on the total child, the curriculum provides a context for fostering self-confidence and skills for healthy living. It is a framework from which teachers can view every classroom experience as an opportunity to encourage mental health.

What Are AS I AM's Assumptions?

Mental health is reflected in how people perceive themselves, how they relate to others, how successful they feel, how constructively they cope with difficult situations and emotions, and how they achieve satisfaction with their lives. **AS I AM** assumes that most children are born mentally healthy, and have the capacity to develop the attitudes and skills needed for mental health.



"Mounting research shows that the fully functioning child (or adult) is different from the person who flounders through life. The difference lies in his attitude toward himself, his degree of self-esteem."²

² Briggs, Dorothy. Your Child's Self-Esteem. Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1970, p. 3.

The focus of **AS I AM** is the relationship between teachers and children. In a meaningful relationship, children learn to trust, care, communicate, express joy and pain, accept and then value themselves. In her book, Helping Your Child Handle Stress, Katharine Kersey tells us:

"A meaningful relationship with an adult is the single most important factor in determining the future mental health of any child. Every child needs to have at least one adult who thinks he is wonderful, who really cares what happens to him, and who gives freely of his time and energy to the child, and the child will grow up to internalize the coping skills he learned through observation and imitation."³

A teacher's attitude about child development is important to creating these meaningful relationships. **AS I AM** assumes that children: 1) have physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs; 2) must have self-esteem in order to feel lovable and worthwhile; 3) have varying temperaments and styles; and 4) are moving toward independence, but need support.

AS I AM was designed to help teachers incorporate this mental health perspective into their relationships and classrooms. In this context, "teachers" include any adults who provide care for children. Cooks, bus and carpool drivers, parents, and aides all have the opportunity to provide nurturing relationships to children.

What Is Included In AS I AM?

AS I AM is a curriculum and resource book designed for use in comprehensive early childhood programs. These programs emphasize nutrition, health, and parent and community involvement, in addition to education. Head Start, long concerned with development of the whole child, is an example of such a program. The following features will help integrate a mental health perspective into Head Start and other comprehensive programs:

- **AS I AM** focuses on the human processes of being, feeling, relating, and thinking. The body of the curriculum contains sections with a wide-

³ Kersey, Katharine. Helping Your Child Handle Stress. Washington D.C.: Acropolis Books Ltd., 1986, p. 17.

range of experiences for children based on the mental health development of the whole child.

- **AS I AM** addresses teachers because their attitudes and skills are the core of any mental health program. Guidance for teachers as they model mental health skills, observe development, build relationships, and facilitate growth is found throughout the curriculum.
- **AS I AM** fosters active, experiential learning. Activities, called "experiences," meet children where they are, recognizing differences in temperament, style, and development and encouraging self-expression.
- **AS I AM** promotes children's literature as a classroom resource for mental health learning. The Experiencing Literature section provides concrete, creative ideas for selecting and using good children's books.
- **AS I AM** encourages parents to take active roles in their child's mental health development. The curriculum suggests many ways to carry preventive mental health concepts into children's homes and to involve parents in classroom experiences.

AS I AM emphasizes the positive potential of environment from a stress response perspective and is useful in understanding many behavioral difficulties, particularly when change has occurred. There are children with manifest mental health disabilities from birth or very early in their lives whose behavior may present in the form of persistent patterns of behavior. Such children warrant special attention from mental health professionals. **STRESS AND CHILDREN** provides guidance on the referral process.

Finally regarding gender usage, **AS I AM** alternates masculine and feminine pronouns between sections.

STRESS AND CHILDREN

*"No parent should try to raise children in a stress-free world or to shield them from the realities of life. Instead, your goal should be to give your children inner skills and strengths, so they can handle the challenges ahead. We know that our children will trip and fall at times, but we want to teach them how to pick themselves up, how to turn problems into opportunities, and stumbling blocks into stepping stones."*⁴

What Is Stress?

Stress is a normal part of our lives. It is our response to the many demands placed on us every day. These demands, called stressors, may range from the challenge of a job to the physical exertion of chopping wood.

Our responses are determined by how we perceive the stressor, our temperaments, and our self-concepts. As a result, each of us is stressed by different things to which we respond in unique ways. Responses can be physical, emotional, or intellectual and have positive or negative results. One person under stress on the job does his best work and feels in the peak of health. Another may be overwhelmed and develop headaches.

We can learn to recognize our particular stressors and be prepared to cope when these demands arise. If we are able to meet these situations with confidence and ability, our experiences may well be positive. Stress is cumulative. Repeated stressful experiences may cause our physical and mental health to suffer.

Young children have many stressors in their lives. They are often presented with a world in which both parents must work, single parenting is common, economic security is tenuous, television violence is pervasive, and accessibility to an extended family is no longer the norm. Coupled with the stresses of normal development these situations challenge the young child's coping skills.

As parents and teachers, we need to understand what stresses our children and

⁴ Kersey, Katharine. Helping Your Child Handle Stress. Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, Ltd., 1986, p. 7.

be able to recognize their responses. We also need to know how to foster healthy ways of coping with the stressors in their lives.

What Stresses Preschool Children?

Young children are stressed by the normal developmental milestones of growing physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. Achieving autonomy, separation, independence, and social skills are all stressful for the preschool child. When adults are understanding and supportive, children usually experience these milestones as positive challenges and, as a result, develop confidence and ability.

A variety of internal factors can also stress young children. Certain temperamental characteristics make everyday events more stressful for some. For example, it's important to recognize that the child who is sensitive to sound, touch, or sight may have a difficult time in large groups. In addition, handicaps, illness, fears, developmental delay, and even giftedness can create stress in the young child.

Many external factors stress children as well. Some of these occur within families and may include poverty, separation and divorce, the birth of a sibling, abuse, lack of positive relationships, inappropriate expectations, and death. Others are present in society at large. Through the media, children become aware of the threat of nuclear war, witness violence and substance abuse, and are enticed by material possessions and life styles beyond their reach.



Our challenge as caring adults is to recognize when children are stressed beyond their abilities to cope in healthy ways, and then to provide support.

How Do Children Show Stress?

Young children communicate through their behavior. Many are not yet able to talk about their feelings. Others are verbal, not hesitating to tell us what's going on in their lives. It is up to us to learn the language of behavior and grasp the feelings behind the child's words.

Understanding normal development allows us to more accurately read the clues as to whether or not a child is under stress. Behavior appropriate at one age may be a sign of stress when the child is older.

We also need to be aware of each child's unique temperamental characteristics. Significant or abrupt changes in a pattern of behavior are often the indication of stress. Take note of a very active child who suddenly becomes withdrawn, or a typically healthy child who begins to complain of aches and pains.

What Is Your Role as a Teacher?

The ways you interpret and respond to a child in stress will profoundly influence the development of his coping skills. Supportive adults address the mental health of children in at least four important ways - observing, communicating, facilitating, and modeling.

Through observation you become aware that some children need support. There is evidence in a child's face, posture, voice, or behavior. It is important to share your observations with co-workers and parents. They may be able to provide important information on which to build an understanding.

Communication opens the door. Provide time and privacy for sensitive discussions. Listen attentively as you help the child identify his feelings. Show your concern by stating, "I have been worrying" Plan opportunities for expression through art, play, and movement.

As a facilitator, provide a variety of experiences for: self-awareness, play, self-help, laughter, positive interaction, decision making, problem solving, crea-

tivity, and success. Stressed or not, children are constantly building strengths and skills to handle challenge.

As role models for children, you need to take good care of yourself, express your feelings openly, energetically tackle the problems in your life, and have fun. Children are observers, too. They observe adults coping with stress and imitate their behaviors. In what ways do you model successful coping?

Occasionally, a child you care for may seem to be clearly outside the boundaries of normal behavior. He may be severely stressed, suffering abuse, a painful separation, or an unsuspected physical illness. Or the child may be emotionally disturbed. In such cases your role changes. If the child has not adjusted to a program within two months, it is time to bring in other professionals in a helping capacity. It is very difficult to know when to refer. The following outline may guide you in this process:

1. Conduct a careful observation for one to two weeks.
 - a. Look for patterns of behavior and record your observations.
 - b. Observe on different days of the week and at different times of day.
 - c. Have several staff members take observation notes.
2. Discuss your concerns at a staff meeting.
 - a. Share your observations, being specific about the behavior in question.
 - b. Determine whether the problem occurs in relation to one or more staff.
 - c. Be prepared to redefine the problem as you get more information.
3. Involve the child's parents in the process.
 - a. Share your observations and concerns with the parents.
 - b. Solicit new information from the parents, discovering their perspective.
 - c. Be prepared to redefine the problem as you get more information.
4. Seek outside assistance as needed.
 - a. Refer to a physician for a medical or pediatric evaluation.
 - b. Consult a child development specialist.
 - c. Consult a child mental health specialist.
 - d. Get recommendations that will help you set up a plan of action.
5. Set a date within six weeks to review progress with those involved and then continue to meet at regular intervals.

CHILDREN WHO NEED SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Who Are The Special Children In Your Classroom?

Every child is special. Each child is a unique person with a temperament, style, and personality all his own. Children develop in individual ways, reaching milestones at varying times and using many approaches.

Today, as they acknowledge and plan for each child's unique developmental needs, teachers are further challenged and enriched by the presence of a variety of children who need special consideration. Increasingly, handicapped children, including those with chronic or terminal illnesses, are being mainstreamed into preschool settings. Particularly in urban areas, there are children from many cultures whose languages are often the most obvious aspect of cultural differences. Finally, the needs of gifted and talented children are also being recognized.

Children with Special Needs

There is an increasingly large body of research and resources about including special needs children in regular programs. Children with a full range of special needs have successfully been mainstreamed into preschool and public school classes during the past five to ten years.

When a special needs child enters preschool, your first thoughts will probably be about how you, the child, and his other classmates will adapt. What are the child's physical, cognitive or social skills? Focus on how the child views himself, his temperament, his learning and coping styles. These are the qualities which will help him master tasks and become an integral part of the classroom.

Emphasize the child's strengths. A child confined to a wheelchair or other mobility device may be especially verbal or have strong cognitive skills. A retarded child may be very helpful or have an exceptionally friendly nature. A deaf child may be getting proficient with signing, a skill that can be fun and useful for everyone else to learn.

For some special needs children, entrance into a preschool may be their first encounter with other children their age. They may become aware for the first time of skills or abilities which they lack. In such cases, the self-esteem of the child may be dealt a harsh blow. As a teacher, you can help by working with therapists or other specialists to implement a program appropriate for the child.

Consider the extent to which the handicapped child and his classmates need preparation before school starts. Discuss this with his parents. They may have strong feelings about how their child should be introduced into a classroom. Parents of special needs children have had to become "specialists" with regard to their child's illness or condition. They or other family members may be available to help you understand more about the child's strengths and needs. They may be willing to come into class to help orient the other children and answer some of their immediate questions. At the same time, parents will become familiar with the classroom, children and teachers, and can better prepare their own child for the new situation.

When you approach parents about classroom involvement, recognize that their expectations for their special child will influence their response. Some parents may be hesitant because they want their child to gain independence. Others may be intensely focused on their special child and his needs, eager to participate in his initial adjustment to the classroom experience. Acknowledge their feelings as you include them in planning their child's first days in your program.

Make learning about special needs children a part of your curriculum. If you have physically handicapped children, try to find equipment that can, over time, become ordinary to the other children - a wheelchair, walker, special chair, eye glasses, or a hearing aid. You can make dolls for the classroom that depict various handicapping conditions. Add books about handicaps to your collection.

Think about how a child's special needs can be a special learning opportunity for the group. For instance, you may have a child with a severe heart condition who is frequently ill or in the hospital. Use a stethoscope to help children listen to their own and each other's hearts. You might have the child's parents, doctor, or nurse as visitors. You can send greetings, pictures, and photos home or to the hospital. Such experiences need not be limited to a unit on special needs. Carried on throughout the year, they will take their direction from the children's growing knowledge and new questions.

Children From Other Cultures

Other children who need special consideration are those who come from substantially different cultures with communication skills based on their own languages. Many urban and suburban communities are now home to immigrant or refugee

children speaking as many as 20 different languages. This can indeed be stressful for both children and teachers.

From a different perspective, however, this situation has many benefits. As you help children from other countries adapt, you can learn about their languages and cultures. Plan for the foreign child to receive appropriate help through closely shared experiences with classmates and adults. Include parents or extended family members in order to learn about the food, holidays, customs, games, and stories of other cultures as the natural outgrowth of having this child in your class. Having the class learn a few words or phrases from the child's language will help him feel valued and safe.

Although they may initially take extra planning, such experiences allow you to tap the rich and varied cultures in your midst. Working with children from other countries gives you the chance to foster an open attitude in your classroom - one that seeks information about the world and respects differences.

Gifted and Talented Children

As our society makes tentative steps toward identifying gifted school-age children, there have been some efforts to look at special skills or talents in even younger children.

In preschool, it is likely that a given child's special abilities are just emerging. Having good observation skills will be important to you at this point. Talk with children about what they enjoy doing and listen carefully to what they say. Watch how they approach a situation or task. Ask parents what particular interests, skills, and talents they have observed at home.

It is important to identify giftedness across the whole spectrum of abilities, avoiding the traditional emphasis on cognition and the arts. Look for special abilities in every child. These may be such things as a particular ease and comfort with language, being able to lead and direct, a special love for books, a talent for relating to others, an affinity for art activities or an unusual ability with fine motor tasks. You can provide young children support in pursuing those activities at which they excel. For some, continued attention to their talents and abilities will lead to pastimes, hobbies and even occupations which can provide lifelong sustenance. Remember, however, that early childhood is a time for ex-

ploration of possibilities. Rather than guiding children in particular directions, it is important to provide many opportunities for development in all areas.

Conclusion

Handicapped or gifted children, as well as those from other cultures, often have a particular need for classroom experiences that are based on sound mental health concepts. Their unique characteristics may make developing a positive self-image, learning to express themselves, and acquiring certain skills especially difficult. At the same time, it is important to consider how the special child's strengths or ways of compensating can become the basis for healthy emotional development. Teachers have the responsibility to seek current information, adapt their methods, and plan carefully for these new or different circumstances - to the benefit of the special child and his classmates.

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AS I AM: BEING

Introduction

Mental health begins with an understanding of who you are. Knowing yourself - your style, abilities, temperament, and looks - helps you set realistic expectations and make appropriate decisions throughout your life. You can help young children learn a great deal about themselves. Much of their learning will come through getting in touch with and using their bodies.

Goals

This section's mental health goals are to encourage children to:

- 1) know, accept, experience and enjoy who they are.
- 2) feel capable of helping themselves.
- 3) use their bodies to express themselves in positive and lively ways.

Developmental Considerations

Preschool children are very physical beings. They use their bodies to learn and communicate. How children feel about themselves, their self-esteem, is closely related to their physical abilities. As they grow and develop control over their bodies, their life experiences and self-awareness expand.

Preschool children are also gaining independence. The desire and ability to do basic things for themselves, such as washing, pouring, and playing alone, are essential to the development of a positive self-concept.

As children work toward independence and self-awareness, common issues emerge: understanding sexuality, the differences between boys and girls; defining social roles for men and women; grappling with life and death, how life begins and ends; recognizing physical limitations; and, mastering new tasks. These issues are at the core of young children's developing awareness of their physical selves - their "being."

BEING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The tone you set and the way you arrange your classroom can contribute to a child's mental health by encouraging her to be self-aware and independent.

- Atmosphere:
- Promote self-help skills by allowing children to do things for themselves. Give them tasks they can succeed at or break tasks into smaller parts. Let them know you notice their efforts at independence. Allow them to try other ways of reaching goals.
 - Encourage self-control through use of simple class rules that the children help make and learn to use. A poster with photos representing the rules helps children remember. Consistent reinforcement of the rules is also an important reminder. Catch them following the rules and comment positively.
 - Develop self-awareness by appreciating each child's unique physical and personality characteristics. Talk with the children about what you observe. Talk about yourself as well. Take photos that you post and discuss. Note what the children are doing. How do they look? Who are they with?
 - Foster self-esteem by acknowledging the children's accomplishments and attempts. When they feel capable, children are motivated to keep trying.
 - Allow self-expression by providing frequent opportunities for the children to move freely, indoors and out. Stimulate their expression with a variety of activities and appreciate their responses.
- Physical Setting:
- The arrangement of your classroom can provide for healthy physical activity and independence. Children need to use and move their bodies, especially on days when they can't go outdoors. Create a space with equipment for climbing, sliding, jumping, and tumbling. It should be removed from the traffic flow and activities that require concentration.
 - Low shelves with materials displayed in an orderly way allow children to get and put away their play things. Sinks, towels, soap, and toothbrush storage at the children's level

give opportunities for self-care. Cubbies and storage of personal belongings should be arranged in the same way.

- Create a place for children to be alone - a tree house, a bed tent, a rocking chair, an old bath tub with pillows, or a corner for one. Part of developing independence is learning to enjoy moments of solitude. Some children have temperaments that dictate being quiet or out of the crowd from time to time.
- Equipment and materials that encourage physical activity can enhance body-awareness, skill, and expression. Blocks, air pump and tires, clay, a slide, tumbling mats, a climbing structure, and creative movement records are just a few possibilities. Set up an obstacle course to create movement over, under, around, in, out, and through.
- Mirrors placed at the children's eye level throughout the room provide children varied opportunities to observe themselves at work, play, and rest. Use mirror tiles, safe hand mirrors, small and tall mirrors. Each location - the block area, the dress-up area, the alone space, over the water table or the bathroom sink - will help a child add to her picture of herself. Take mirrors outside, too.
- Scrap wood and real tools are a wonderful medium for physical activity and the development of self-confidence. Outdoors or in, sawing and hammering provide opportunities for expression and skill-building. While children are learning to use the tools and space, careful supervision is important.

TEACHER'S ROLE

Children can gain self-awareness and the independence necessary for mental health when teachers learn about and respect who they are. Your skills as an observer, communicator, facilitator, and model help to create an environment in which young children can discover their capabilities.

Closely observe each child. Notice her state of health, independence, confidence, expression, and self-awareness. Share your thoughts with parents. Use your observations when planning experiences to help the children grow.

Communicate through physical touch, as well as language. Most of us are encouraged and nurtured by certain kinds of touch. Children, especially, need it. Discover what kind of touch each child is comfortable with. It may be a light hand on the shoulder or a hug. Use it to communicate your acceptance, concern, and delight.

As preschoolers strive to understand themselves, they will ask to discuss some important issues. Clarifying your values in relation to sexuality, male/female roles, and life and death will help you explore these topics with children.

As you facilitate, consider how to provide an atmosphere which encourages independence and self-expression. Your appropriate expectations and the physical arrangement of your classroom allow the children to do as much of the work as they can. Provide many opportunities for the children to explore their ideas through painting, modeling clay, movement, music, building with blocks, dramatic play, and talking. Use acknowledgement, appreciation, and open questions to encourage them further.

Model self-awareness by sharing what you know about yourself. "I'm really good at fixing my car." "I'm not a good singer, but I enjoy it anyway." "I am crabby on rainy days." You can also model good health care. Show interest in a variety of foods. Brush your teeth and wash your hands with the children.

EXPERIENCES

BOOK ABOUT ME: A YEAR LONG COLLECTION

- Benefits:** A compilation of experiences over a year can enhance a child's feelings of accomplishment and sense of self.
- Materials:** Folders to store children's work in, materials to cover and bind their work at the end of the year.
- Groundwork:** Prepare folders in which to save each child's work.
- The Experience:** Let the children know that during the year you will be collecting appropriate photos, quotes, and art work in order to complete a special book about each of them.

Include photographs of the child being physically capable, expressing her feelings, playing with a friend, or taking pride in an accomplishment. Fall and spring pictures may indicate how she has grown and changed.

Save the child's personal products - a collage of favorite foods, hand and foot prints, her autograph, or perhaps a page with everyone's autograph. Include products from many of the experiences in **AS I AM: MENU MAKING, THREE CHEERS FOR ME, and MY STORY.**

Covers may be as simple as a piece of folded construction paper, or as elaborate as a laminated handprint. Allow the children to participate in compiling their work, making the cover, and putting the book together.

Before they take them home, talk with the children individually about the pages in their books. This is a chance to celebrate who they are, enhance self-awareness, record growth, and capture memories.

BOOK ABOUT ME: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

One of the most important things we do is to help your child learn more about herself. This is part of developing a self-concept. We take photographs of her doing all kinds of things. We look in mirrors, make life-size portraits, and talk about her. Many of her words, works of art, and photos will go in a BOOK ABOUT ME that she will bring home at the end of the year.

Why We Do What We Do:

We all benefit from knowing about ourselves. This knowledge, our self-concept, helps us make decisions about what we do throughout our lives. You might become a carpenter because you know that you like to work with wood and you are good with your hands. You take pride in what you like about yourself and learn to accept or change what you don't like. Children need to develop accurate self-concepts.

What You Can Do at Home:

Collect family photographs and look at them with your child. Put them in an album that she can get out and look at whenever she wants. Include photos of her and other family members: aunts, cousins, grandparents, or pets. They are all part of who she is.

Use specific comments to praise your child for her accomplishments. "I like it when you put your toys away. That helps me." "You look very pretty today. I like you in red."

Encourage your child to take pride in her appearance by learning to wash her hands, comb her hair, and pick out her clothes. Let her look in a mirror to appreciate her work.

Talk with your child about her likes and dislikes, favorite foods, best friend, and feelings. Listen to her ideas, accepting them without judgment.

NAME GAMES: USING CHILDREN'S NAMES EVERY DAY

Benefits: Frequent and creative use of children's names shows respect for them as unique individuals and increases self-awareness.

Groundwork: For most people, names are an important symbol of who they are and often the source of strong feelings. At the beginning of the year, or when a new child enters, make sure you are using the correct version of everyone's name. Becoming comfortable and familiar with their own names and those of the others in the classroom is one way young children develop awareness of their separate identities.

The Experience: Early in the school year, talk about names - their importance, why we have them, and where they come from. "It's your own special gift from your family." Share something about your name with the children. How did you get it? Do you like it, or not? What's your "middle" name or nickname? Ask questions about their names. Then, throughout the year, make a point of using names each day in many ways. Here are a few suggestions:

- On first arrival greet each child by name. Notice something particular: "Good morning, Patty. You got wet this morning." "Hello, John. You're wearing a smile." From time to time, touch children in a way that is comfortable for you and them (on the hand, shoulder, or top of the head) as you use their names.
- When singing a song or reading a story, try substituting a child's name for the main character's. "Judy Had a Little Lamb." "Joel and Heather Went up the Hill."
- Have children leave a group one at a time as their names are called or sung. This is a good listening activity, helps children learn the names of the others, and allows teachers to set the pace as the group moves from one activity to another.
- Print each child's name on sturdy tagboard. As the year

goes on, some children will become interested in the "look" of their names. Don't feel compelled to teach them the letters, however. They will be learning them soon enough in school. In small groups of five to eight, play name recognition games. Hand the namecard to each child as she recognizes her name. Later in the year, some children also may begin to recognize the names of others.

- When parents, substitutes, or other guests are in the classroom, make sure you introduce them. Have them share something interesting about their names. Do this with a few children or at circle time with the whole group. Give your guests the option of sharing in this way. Also, if the children wear name tags, visitors can learn and use their names.

Reflections:

Some children will be shy about being singled out or having special attention paid to them. Note this and watch for changes as the year progresses. Most children will come to enjoy the recognition that comes with the use of names. With the child who truly seems to be embarrassed, don't push. Recognize that some children will naturally be more reticent than others. Try these and other "name" experiences on an individual basis.

Children may not know their middle or last names. You can suggest, "Let's ask your mom when she comes." Because of a divorce or remarriage, some children may have different last names than a parent or siblings. Be ready for and accepting of these situations.

One teacher noted, "This experience gave me an awareness of kids' feelings about themselves."

ABOUT MOVEMENT

Movement is basic to preschool children. As they experiment with movement in imaginative ways, children are learning and expressing themselves. Creative movement can help children develop self-awareness, express their emotions, feel belonging, and exercise their imaginations. Among other things, children judge themselves on their physical abilities. Providing them with regular opportunities to develop skill through movement also contributes to their self-esteem.

Think about the ways you can build creative movement into your daily classroom routine. Structure regular time, indoor and outdoor space, and a variety of activities as a framework for self-expression. A movement experience may be as simple as imitating a kite in the air, or as complicated as acting out a story.

It is essential that the movement be an expression from each child. Many children express themselves spontaneously with movement, while others are more inhibited. Your role is to encourage each child. A smile, a touch, acknowledgement of an idea, respect for reluctance, and evidence of your own pleasure with movement are all reinforcing.

Your Notes:

DANCING STATUES: A FREEZE MOVEMENT GAME

Benefits: By stopping movement, children practice awareness and control of their bodies.

Materials: Recorded music or a rhythm instrument, pictures of famous and fun statues.

The Experience: Introduce this experience with a brief discussion of what a statue is. Show a few pictures, model for the children, and ask them to imitate. Explain that you will be playing a game in which they are to move around the room to the music. When the music stops, they are to "freeze" and become statues.

Have someone start the music or play a simple rhythm on an instrument. Listen for a few moments before you and the children begin to move around the room. Demonstrate that, when the music stops, you stop moving at the same time. After a pause, continue to move to the music, encouraging all the "statues" to come alive. Comment on details of the statues. "Oh, look at Mischa, her eyes are closed and she is standing on her toes." They may want to name their statues. "I'm a Jessica statue." "I'm the sun."

Play this game often. Take photos of statues. The expressive, free movement and stop-action help children develop body awareness and control. When the children are familiar with how the game is played, let them take turns at being the one who stops and starts the music.

Reflections: One parent said, "I really enjoyed it myself." Another said her children loved this experience. "They continued by themselves when I got tired."

This is often a lively activity. To conclude the experience, have music available that will help to calm the group.

Variations: Vary where and how you do this experience. Try it outside or in front of mirrors. Choose a variety of music as well.

HERE'S WHERE I SIT: MAKING PLACEMATS

Benefits: Using placemats they make helps children build competence and establish "their own space" at the table.

Materials: Clear contact paper, white or colored construction paper cut to placemat size, markers, crayons, or paint.

Groundwork: The children have a chance to feel proud when they produce a durable, useful placemat. Think through the logistics of this project ahead of time, planning for the children to do as much of the work as possible.

The Experience: Introduce this activity by talking briefly about why we use placemats - in particular, how it feels to have your own special place at the table, to know where you belong.

Then, have each child do a drawing to be used as her own placemat for meals each day. Make sure each child's name is printed in bold letters somewhere on the front. Some children will want to write their own.

Help the children cover their drawings with contact paper. For placemats that will last and are easy to clean, cut the pieces of contact paper larger than the drawing so an edge can be sealed all the way around. The younger children will probably need more help with this process.

Remember, you'll need a placemat too!

Reflections: For awhile at each meal mention something about the new placemats, what the children accomplished, or how it feels to have their own sitting spaces. "What do you see from your place at the table, Jesse?"

Use the placemats for table top cooking or clay projects. Children can easily identify their work by looking for their placemats.

One parent noted, "The children really enjoyed having their

own placemats. It made them feel very important."

Variations:

- This can be an ongoing activity. Make new mats periodically. Try different themes related to holidays, seasons, or classroom events. Hand prints can lead to discussions of how we are all different. Placemats with silverware shapes traced on them help children learn to set the table.
- Combine this experience with MENU MAKING. During the month when the children do meal planning, they can also make placemats decorated with their favorite menus.
- Placemats made from the children's drawings make nice gifts for family or friends.



WHIPPING UP SNACKS: DISCUSSING, FEELING, AND TASTING FOODS

- Benefits:** Learning about nutritious foods and preparing snacks gives children self-help skills.
- Materials:** Healthful snack foods. You may want to represent the four food groups.
- fruits and vegetables: apples, melons, carrots, celery
 - grains: crackers, bread, popcorn
 - meat: tuna, peanut butter, eggs
 - dairy: milk, yogurt, cheese
- Groundwork:** Try this experience at breakfast or snack time when the children are hungry and can enjoy the tasting process.
- The Experience:** Discuss healthful eating habits as you enjoy exploring an interesting variety of snack foods. Encourage conversation about how each snack looks, feels, smells, and tastes. Note how they sound when you chew them. "Let's find a food that crunches when we eat it." "Which one is soft between your teeth?" "How does this melon smell?" Discover the similarities and differences among the foods. "Which of these foods has a skin on the outside? A shell? Which have seeds?"
- Point out that we can all grow healthy bodies by eating such foods every day. Ask what the children like to eat for snacks. "What fruits do you like? Vegetables? Do you help fix any snacks at home? What?" Some of their favorites will not belong in the four food groups. Acknowledge the pleasure in eating these foods, at the same time explaining that they do not nourish healthy bodies. "Yes, candy tastes delicious, but it does not help your body grow."
- Reflections:** Practice at recognizing healthful foods and discussion of how they can nourish growing bodies helps children learn to take care of themselves.
- Variations:**
- Young children can help prepare many snack foods. They enjoy changing the form of foods through whipping, grinding, and cooking. Make cream into butter by using an egg beater

or baby food jars the children shake. Let them spread the butter on crackers or toast. Make apples into applesauce and peanuts into peanut butter. Help children pick projects in which they can be active participants.

- Introduce the four food groups. Talk about how we can get all the nutrients we need by regularly eating a balance of foods from each group. Learning the four food groups is not a necessary skill for preschoolers. Children at this age are beginning to categorize, however, and many will enjoy thinking about foods in various groupings. Naming and sorting fruits and vegetables is a developmentally appropriate place to start.

Your Notes:

IF I WERE AN ANIMAL: PAINTING FACES

Benefits: This opportunity for self-expression fosters children's awareness and enjoyment of individual characteristics.

Materials: Orange, yellow, and black tempera paint mixed half and half with Ivory liquid soap, Q-tips, a mirror, a variety of animal pictures, paper.

Groundwork: The children will be deciding what animals they would like to be and having their faces painted. Previous knowledge of an interesting variety of animals will help them make meaningful choices. Before doing this experience, you may want to read some animal stories. Post pictures of animals at the children's level to stimulate their ideas throughout the experience. One teacher hung pictures of tropical fish, a tiger, an eagle, a horse, a kitten, a snake, a raccoon, and an ape in the area where she painted faces.

This experience is complicated, but well worth the effort. It will take two teachers to paint faces and fill out IF I WERE AN ANIMAL papers. You may want to plan for extra adults to help with the rest of the group.

The Experience: This all day experience allows the children to make decisions (which animal they want to be), and then express themselves (as that animal) both verbally and nonverbally.

Begin by asking, "Suppose you could be an animal right now. What would you be?" Working with one child at a time, paint her face with features representing her animal choice. Have fun creating whiskers, stripes, bright spots, noses, and circles around the eyes. Show her the new face in a mirror. Talk about the animal you would like to be and paint your face as well.

Encourage the children to move and make sounds like their animals. Allow plenty of time and space for this important

self-expression, inside or outdoors. This experience is often a good opportunity for children to express feelings they don't express at other times. They may chase, snarl, or curl up in your lap while you "pet the kitten." Your acceptance and appreciation of their animals show acceptance of them.

Many of the children will have important things to say about their animals. One teacher recorded each child's comments on a sheet of paper entitled IF I WERE AN ANIMAL. She prompted discussion by asking: "Why did you want to be a fish?" "What do you do outside?" "What do you eat?" "What do you like about horses?" "What does a snake look like?" The children also drew their animals and the papers were put in the BOOKS ABOUT ME.

Reflections:

Teachers were excited about how much thought the children put into their choices and the feelings that were revealed. "If I were an animal, I would be a tiger. I want to be a scary tiger. I want to scare Dustin. I pretend to bite people. I am a mad tiger because the paint got in my eyes."

You may want to tell parents about this experience ahead of time. If they know the paint will wash off easily, they'll be prepared to share their child's enthusiasm.

Variations:

- Create a jungle for the "animals" outdoors in the spring or summer.
- Try making and wearing masks. It frees children to express themselves in new ways. How do their masked people or animals stand, walk, dance, talk? What do they say? Take pictures for each BOOK ABOUT ME.

FEATURING ME: LIFE-SIZE SELF-PORTRAITS

Benefits: Familiarity with their bodies and special features contributes to children's realistic self-concepts and awareness of individual differences.

Materials: A sheet of large newsprint for each child, colored markers, full-size mirror. Optional: paints, brushes, yarn.

Groundwork: By working on life-size outline drawings of their bodies, children create "pictures of themselves." This project is best done on an individual basis over several days, or even weeks. Plan to display the outlines on classroom walls for awhile, and then send them home to be enjoyed there. As much as possible, let the drawings be the child's work. If you do the first one with a verbal, confident child, the experience may serve as a model.

Prior to trying this experience, practice drawing around hands or feet. This will acquaint the children with the idea of outlining. Indicate that on another day you will use bigger paper and draw around the whole body.

The Experience: Using a full-size mirror, look at and talk with individual children about themselves. Have the child point out such features as hair, nose, mouth, eyes, ears, hands, and feet.

With a marker, draw around the child's body, either having her lie down on the newsprint or stand close to paper taped on the wall. Talk with her about the drawing. "Where are your fingers? Legs? Shoulders?" Focus on the head. "Where do your eyes go? Your ears? Your mouth?" Have various colors of markers or crayons available and let her put in facial features. Instead of drawing in hair, children may want to paste on colored yarn. Have her refer to the mirror again as a visual reminder of where her features are located, but do not be overly concerned about accuracy.

Talk with each child about individual characteristics - hair,

skin, eyes, freckles, or glasses. Add her name or some letters from her name, or sign the paper with a handprint. If you have a camera, photos of the children with their drawings will help them remember the activity for future conversations.

Include outline drawings of all the adults in the classroom. This will allow for lots of comparisons (shorter than, taller than) and provide opportunities for talking about "as I grow bigger"

Reflections:

Acknowledge feelings of pride or self-doubt as they are expressed. "You have a smile when you look in the mirror." "You wish you were as tall as Nancy."

Over time, encourage children to observe and appreciate shared characteristics, as well as those that are unique and different. "Three people here have blonde hair like you, but you are the only one with green eyes."

Variations:

Using a yardstick and bathroom scale, measure and weigh the children. They might want to have their heights and weights written on their outline drawings. Ask questions to stimulate development of classification skills. "Are you taller than Amy?" "Who is shorter than you?" A permanently placed yardstick allows you to record growth throughout the year.

HOW I LOOK WHEN . . . : MIRROR PLAY

- Benefits:** Children's self-concepts include familiarity with how their bodies look and work.
- Materials:** Large, small, and magnifying mirrors, magnifying glasses.
- Groundwork:** Set up mirrors in several places in your classroom - the housekeeping area, vertically along the floor in the block area, over the water table, and at eye-level in the bathroom. Give the children several weeks to become comfortable with the mirrors before using them in a special activity. Observe how they react to the mirrors and take notes about what you see. Who is using them? Who isn't? Do children make faces, parade with pride, or examine with curiosity? Let them see you look in the mirror regularly.
- The Experience:** You are a facilitator for the mirror play. The actual ideas and feelings come from the children. By providing stimulation and observing results, you make a lively, self-directed, self-enhancing experience possible.
- Try mirror play with one child or a small group, indoors and out. Having observed how children are using the classroom mirrors, encourage informal activities based on their ideas. If they make funny faces, suggest they invent some more. Encourage parading in dress-up clothes. A child can also enjoy and learn from looking at her accomplishments in the mirror - jumping, learning to skip, combing hair, or buttoning a coat.
- The children may be least self-conscious when they are pretending to be something else - melting ice cubes, animals, story book characters, or objects like trees and kites. Whether it's in painted faces or dress-up clothes, let them imagine and admire themselves in the mirror.
- Reflections:** Some children may be uncomfortable looking in the mirror. Don't push them. Build their self-concepts in other ways. Do

FEATURING ME or **THREE CHEERS FOR ME**, and take their pictures. Observe changes in their attitudes and feelings about mirror play.

A parent who used this experience with her children said, "This is good for children with low self-esteem. It helps them feel better about themselves. Besides it's fun."

- Variations:**
- Use pocket or magnifying mirrors to look at details of faces up close, including your own.
 - Put mirror tiles on a wall in the block area.
 - Use mirror tiles for art activities. Allow the children to draw on them with magic markers or paint with shaving cream. Cleaning the tiles when they're finished is fun, too.
 - Ask one child to become a "mirror" for another. Begin with facial expressions. Then include body movements. Initially, you may need to model this with individual children.
 - Some children like to have their pictures taken as they're looking in a mirror. Photograph their mirror images.



ABOUT SEXUALITY

One of the more difficult and sensitive tasks facing the preschool teacher is helping children understand and deal with their sexuality.

Talking about body parts, such as arms, legs, eyes and noses is fun and natural. There are many songs and circle activities that encourage children to learn about and care for these parts of the body.

However, some of us feel uncomfortable and unsure when it comes to the topic of sexuality and the words for the genital parts of our bodies. Many of us were raised in an atmosphere of silence and anxiety about sexuality. We were not taught about our own bodies or given the proper names for our genitals.

Despite our discomfort, it is important to develop confidence and skills in terms of providing sexuality education. We are in a position to help this generation of children develop healthy attitudes about all parts of their bodies. This, in turn, contributes to their self-esteem. Also, when children have clear information, open communication, and feelings of self-worth, they are better prepared to avoid exploitation by others.

What can you do to begin? The most important thing is to acknowledge to yourself that sexuality is a difficult topic. Talk with co-workers and parents and you will realize that many of them are struggling with the same issues.

Recognize that it is part of normal development for children to explore their sexuality. When preschool children play at "mommy," "daddy," or other adult roles, explore their bodies, masturbate, or ask "Where do babies come from?", they are moving through a necessary stage in their growth.

Take time at a staff meeting to discuss your approach to sexuality education in the preschool classroom. Decide together what words you will use with children. Help each other consider what individual children may be seeking. Often, a young child wants and needs only simple responses to her questions. "Yes, the baby is living inside her body in a special place called the uterus." Take time to educate yourself.

Next, talk about your own discomfort, concerns, and ideas with parents, individually or in parent meetings. Often parents fear what others may teach their

children about sexuality. They want to be their children's teachers, but often don't know where to begin. Create an alliance with parents, sharing concerns and working together toward a plan for education.

When working with young children, consistency and repetition are necessary. Families each have their own words for the genitals and children will use the words they know. In discussing the issue with parents, let them know you will accept the word the child uses, but you will also help them learn the correct name for the body part. Giving children the correct names tells them that the genitals are a normal part of the body.

Discussion of sexuality does not need to be a circle activity. Children learn best in situations where there is a "teachable moment." This is a time when something comes up during the day that gives you a chance to talk about sexuality. It may be questions during toilet time, a slang word a child uses, having a pregnant staff person or visitor, or a trip to a farm to see baby animals.

When these moments arise, remember the information you give is not nearly as important as the attitude you are demonstrating - that you will answer their questions openly and honestly. Children need askable adults, so they can grow and develop positive feelings about their own emerging sexuality.

Beginning to work with preschool children in sexuality education will often be a slow process for both parents and teachers. It takes time to learn about sexuality and to feel comfortable using the language. Be patient with yourself and encourage parents to do the same.

OUR GROWING BODIES: THINKING ABOUT GROWING UP

Benefits: By discussing what it is like to be grown up, children begin to understand and accept the process of physical growth.

Materials: Bright light, plain wall or screen, photos from home.

Groundwork: Ask the children to bring in family photos representing people of all ages. A note or phone call to parents will help them remember. Include yourself and other staff. Using all the photos, design a "Growing Up" bulletin board.

If some families do not have photos, make a point of including them in pictures you take in class or on home visits.

The Experience: Use the bulletin board to begin a discussion of the growing process. In a small group, share impressions and feelings. "What happens to our bodies when we get bigger? As you grow, what new things will you be able to do? How do you feel about growing up?" Talk about some of your own childhood experiences and feelings.

Next, introduce the idea of using a bright light to throw body shadows on the wall. "Let's see how big you might be when you grow up." Let each child who wants to participate take a turn. Continue the discussion. Some children will have ideas about what they want to be or do when they grow up. Others may want to stay just the way they are. "I don't want to get big. I don't want to do that shadow."

When everyone has had a chance to be in the spotlight, acknowledge the fun of imagining and appreciate them for being who they are. "It is fun to pretend that you're big . . . or little. I enjoy being with you as you are."

Doing this experience during free play gives children plenty of time to talk or move on to related dramatic play activities. You may want to plan a follow-up. Be prepared with some new dress-up clothes or props and ask, "Who would like to be grown-ups? Or babies?" Then, help them choose roles.

Reflections:

This experience gives children a good opportunity to explore their feelings, positive and negative, about growing up and being boys and girls. "It's fun to grow up." "I like when you say that about being a baby. It's funner than big." "I don't want to get whiskers!" Their acceptance of these feelings is part of accepting themselves and their sexuality.

You are integral to the process. Listen carefully and reflect your impressions. "Sometimes it feels good to pretend you are a baby, doesn't it?" Help them explore their thoughts. "What would be fun about being grown up?"

Your Notes:

LITTLE WOMEN, LITTLE MEN: TALKING ABOUT POSSIBILITIES

Benefits: By imagining what they could be or do when they grow up, girls and boys begin to consider the many options they have.

Groundwork: When you relate to children, do you consider sex stereotyping? Research has shown that many teachers are more attentive to boys, although in highly critical ways. Girls are often encouraged to be well-behaved and out-of-the-way. Boys are touched less than girls, and asked less often about their feelings. Girls frequently encounter negative adult reactions when they try to assert themselves.

Observe the body language and behavior of the girls and boys in your class. Become conscious of your own biases and opinions, and consider your responses and language.

Read through some of your favorite children's books and notice what roles are assigned to the characters. What is assumed? Is it assumed on the basis of sex alone? Can boys as well as girls cry and be sad? Can girls express anger and be physical? Are adult men and women portrayed in a variety of ways?

The Experience: During a quiet, small-group time or a meal, ask "What could you be when you grow up?" Let the children brainstorm the many possibilities. Suggest a few unusual occupations which may not be familiar to the children. Talk about each one. "What does someone do when working at this job? What would you like about this work? Does the person earn money? Does a man or woman usually do this job? Could either one do it? Why, or why not?" Invite the children to talk about the work their parents, relatives, or adult friends do.

Find photos or stories that relate to the roles the children have mentioned and bring these in throughout the year. Continue to talk informally as the interest arises.

One center did this experience using photographs of women in

the experience with a song - "I want to be a _____."
The children took turns standing and filling in the blank.

Reflections:

It is important that you challenge sexual stereotypes. Are there other materials in the block area besides those that promote rough and tumble play? . . . in the housekeeping corner besides playing with dolls and cooking? Are there dress-up clothes for boys? Do girls' dress-ups include professional clothing? Can boys play with dolls without being teased? Does everyone use real tools, such as hammers and measuring cups? It is particularly in these areas of the preschool classroom that children begin to rehearse for later life, try out possibilities, practice roles, and entertain new ideas.

In one center, two children shared their negative feelings about having working mothers. As a result, the center director contacted the parents, suggesting ways to help these children deal with their distress.

Variations:

Invite adults of both sexes into the classroom to talk about their occupations. Ask the adults to discuss their jobs, their uniforms, or the tools of their trade. Include parents of the children. Take field trips to places of work. Display photos of men and women at work. By including a wide range of roles for both sexes, you will help children learn that their sexuality is a source of opportunity, rather than limitation.

Your Notes:

THE SHADOW DANCER: MOVING TOGETHER

- Benefits:** This song builds self-awareness and gives children a "relating" experience.
- Groundwork:** Use the tune of "Skip to My Lou" for this movement song.
- The Experience:** Begin this song with everyone standing in a circle. The words will provide the directions as you go along.

Stand around the circle - one, two, three.
 Stand around the circle - if you please.
 Stand around the circle - one, two, three.
 Shadow just like me.

Clap your hands - one, two, three.
 Clap your hands - if you please.
 Clap your hands - one, two, three.
 Shadow just like me.

Find a neighbor - one, two, three.
 Find a neighbor - if you please.
 Find a neighbor - one, two, three.
 Shadow just like me.

Have the children pair up and use the following lines to create verses like those above:

And dance, dance - one, two, three.

Put your foot on your neighbor's foot.

Put your hand in your neighbor's hand.

Put your back on your neighbor's back.

Put your cheek on your neighbor's cheek.

And dance, dance - one, two, three.

Lyrics of "The Shadow Dancer" by Judy Lincoln.

ABOUT PRAISE

Dr. Haim Ginott, author of Between Parent and Child and Teacher and Child, tells us that praise should be for the child's efforts and accomplishments, rather than her character and personality. "Praise has two parts: our words and the child's inferences. Our words should state clearly that we appreciate the child's effort, work, achievement, help, consideration or creation. Our words should be so framed that the child will almost inevitably draw from them a realistic conclusion about his personality."⁵ For example:

Helpful praise: Thank you for picking up the blocks during clean-up time.

Possible inference: I am helpful.

Praise is kind of tricky. Many of us feel somewhat uncomfortable, both giving and receiving it. Usually it feels pretty good, but sometimes we don't think it is true. However, most children seldom have trouble accepting and returning praise. One teacher commented, "I have noticed as kids are praised they learn to praise and regard others."

Try thinking of praise in terms of some different words - appreciation, showing regard for, encouragement, thanks, or reinforcement. With preschool children, be specific. "Thank you for giving Jenny a turn on the swing." "That's a nice job of getting your boots on, Seth." "Good idea, Jeremy. That's a favorite book for lots of you. Can you find it on the shelf?"

Also, be as immediate as possible. At noontime, it is hard for a four-year-old to be thanked for something she did at 9:00 a.m.

As you work with a group of children, you may notice some who seem overwhelmed by being praised in front of other people. A meaningful look, gesture, or pat on the shoulder can be a private way of communicating praise, thanks, or regard.

Make your praise genuine and only one of many forms of communication. Taking time for a meaningful discussion with a child, one that takes her seriously or reflects shared amusement or joy, can be the nicest kind of regard.

⁵ Ginott, Haim. Between Parent and Child. New York, N.Y.: Avon Books, 1956, p. 48.

THREE CHEERS FOR ME: AFFIRMATIONS

Benefits: Becoming aware of their special qualities helps children develop self-awareness and self-esteem.

Materials: Paper and pen.

Groundwork: On a daily basis, compliment children on their unique qualities. Be specific. Practice pointing out personality traits, physical attributes, things they do well, and positive behaviors.

The Experience: Working with one child at a time, ask her what she likes about herself. Draw out her ideas with discussion and questions. "What are you good at? What do you like about your body? What is something your family likes about you? How do you feel about that? There are many ways you help during the day - tell me about one."

Suggest your own ideas only if the child is having difficulty. Ask one or two of the child's friends what they like about her. Record some of each child's comments for her BOOK ABOUT ME.

Reflections: In one center, three year old Tommy held up a finger and said, "I like my finger. I like my thumb, too." As Tommy learned to receive compliments and had more opportunities to learn about himself, he discovered other things he liked.

The children may also mention things they don't like. Listen, acknowledging their feelings. "You wish you could run faster." "You wish you had more friends."

THREE CHEERS FOR ME: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

We try to help the children feel good about many aspects of themselves. Everyday we praise their efforts and accomplishments and notice their special qualities. From time to time, we talk individually with the children about themselves. "What do you like to do? What is something your family likes about you? What do you know how to do?" We write down part of these conversations and put them in each child's BOOK ABOUT ME.

Why We Do What We Do:

Feeling good about ourselves is important to our mental health. When a child likes herself, she is better able to learn, try new things, make choices, and say "no" to things that are not good for her. She believes she is capable. These positive attitudes contribute to her self-esteem.

What You Can Do at Home:

You can help your child build self-esteem. Listen to her when she talks about her life. Show her you are interested. What does she like to do by herself or with others? What does she like about herself? Praise her efforts and accomplishments. "I like the way you help me sort the laundry."

When you have shared a pleasant talk or experience with your child, make a brief note on a slip of paper. Your notes might say things like:

- playing at the park
- reading a story before bed
- watching TV together
- shopping at the store together

Keep these slips of paper in a jar. From time to time, let your child pick one. Read it to her and have fun talking, and remembering. Do the activity again and again.

Small children really enjoy knowing their parents were once little. Talk about your childhood and what you like to do. Look at old photos together. Let your child know what you like about yourself.

BASH, MASH, SMASH!: THE ART OF POUNDING CLAY

- Benefits:** Uninhibited work with clay is a safe and satisfying way for children to physically express inner feelings.
- Materials:** A lump of clay or playdough for each person.
- Groundwork:** Prepare for this experience by setting individual lumps of clay around the table. Place one at each chair.
- The Experience:** Allow children to choose this experience during free play. Begin by observing how the children use the clay. Are their movements forceful? Hesitant? Free? Controlled? Use the clay yourself. Take ideas from them. Repeat one of their motions to create a rhythm. Encourage the children to express themselves rather than copy you. Let them know that you expect the clay to stay in their spaces on the table.

Judy, a teacher, joined the children in BASH, MASH, SMASH and facilitated their expression. "Jessica, tell me what you are doing with your playdough?" She reflects Jessica's answer. "Oh, look what Hollis did with his." Hollis begins pounding. Judy counts his pounds. All of the children begin pounding, first with one fist, then two. Judy asks if they can pound with their thumbs. The table quiets. One child begins to roll her dough and Judy encourages the others. Another child arrives and everyone offers him a piece of dough. Judy tells them how good it feels to see them share. Someone asks for a knife. "What part of your body could be used as a knife?" Billy is not sure how to roll his dough into a ball. Judy asks who can show him. As she makes a ball of dough, Judy wonders if the ball can roll across the table. Soon many big and little balls are rolling around. Noticing smiles, Judy asks what is making them smile. Jessica says, "sharing."

- Reflections:** Notice how individual children respond to this activity. One parent noted that her four year old enjoyed the soft, slow motions. Her five year old liked the hard, pounding noise.

Children who are particularly expressive with clay could be

given a chance to use it when they are upset or under unusual stress.

Playdough, plasticine, and potter's clay provide very different experiences - the way they feel, move, and take shape. Try them all.

Variations:

- When children have played freely for awhile, ask them how many different ways they can think of to touch clay. Use the words gentle, heavy, light, fast, slow, big, little, poke, roll, punch, drop, pinch, pull, or squeeze. Acknowledge their ideas. Use fists, fingertips, palms, or knuckles. Again, let the children take the lead in deciding how to treat the clay.
- Use recorded music to "pound to," or thick fingerpaint instead of clay.
- Another teacher reported doing this as a structured activity. Because of her enthusiasm, all of the children participated and stayed with the activity for longer than usual. They each began by picking a color from a selection of new, brightly-colored plasticine. They softened their pieces and followed the teacher's instructions, squeezing, rolling, and patting for several minutes. Then the children suggested pulling, pushing, and pounding. All ideas were acknowledged. "Good idea!" "That is neat, J.J." The children finished by working with the plasticine individually.

Your Notes:

ABOUT TEMPERAMENT

Everyone is unique. Our genetic predispositions and environments come together to create who we are. Each of us has an individual style of behavior, a temperament. We are born with these characteristics which are modified as we interact with our parents and others in our environment.

In Your Child Is A Person, Drs. Stella Chess, Alexander Thomas, and Herbert Birch documented studies of more than 200 children and defined the following nine categories of temperament.⁶ Their temperament theory is a very useful framework for considering our own and our children's behavior and interactions.

1. Activity level: Some children are, from early infancy, very active. Other children are less active; still others are physically quiet.
2. Regularity: Children vary in the regularity of their biological functions. While some children eat and sleep at the same time every day, other children are entirely unpredictable.
3. Approach or withdrawal as a response to new situations: Some children meet new situations eagerly; others are hesitant.
4. Adaptability to change in routine: Some babies adjust easily and quickly when there is a change in routine; others have much more difficulty.
5. Level of sensory threshold: Some children respond to sounds, sights, and touch with tolerance and pleasure, while others fuss and cry at the slightest stimulation. Many children react with sensitivity or particular pleasure to one kind of stimulation (for example, loving or hating music).
6. Positive or negative mood: Some children have a preponderance of either positive or negative moods.
7. Intensity of response: Whether the mood is positive or negative, children show feelings with different amounts of energy. Some quietly smile when they are pleased, while others have a loud outburst.

⁶ Chess, Thomas, and Birch. Your Child Is A Person. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

8. **Distractibility:** Children vary in their concentration. The child who is not easily distracted will continue with a task no matter what is going on around her. Others will be quickly distracted.
9. **Persistence and attention span:** A persistent child continues an activity in the face of difficulty or after interruption. Attention span is the amount of time a child attends to one thing.

It is important to a child's mental health that you accept her temperamental characteristics and become aware of your own. If your temperaments are mismatched, this can be hard to do. For example, if you are easily over stimulated, noise and activity bother you. Occasionally, a child in your class is very active and expresses herself energetically. Given your temperament, it is difficult to accept her.

Understanding the mismatch may help you build a relationship. Your role is to adjust your expectations to accommodate the child's temperament. She needs space to move without being disruptive. It would be inappropriate to ask her to sit for long periods or reprimand her for being restless. Your recognition of her needs will help her feel good about herself.

Think of the temperamental characteristics of the children in your classroom and how well they match your own. Are your expectations appropriate? How does your temperament affect the relationship? How can you be more accepting? With such awareness comes an increase in your potential to help children be and accept who they are.

If a child's temperamental characteristics seem consistently extreme and interfere with her adapting to the classroom routine, you should request assistance from a mental health professional. **STRESS AND CHILDREN** provides guidance on the referral process.

ME, MYSELF, AND I: USING LITERATURE

Benefits: In a warm, sharing atmosphere, the children get to know a resourceful character who is secure in himself, and enjoys his solitude.

Materials: Bear By Himself by Geoffrey Hayes, Harper and Row, 1976.

Groundwork: As you preread the story, recall some of the "alone times" that you have most enjoyed and be prepared to share one with the children. Consider the ways you make such times possible for them even within the busy classroom. Practice reading the story out loud, feeling the pauses and experiencing the imagery.

The Experience: Set a quiet tone. One teacher did this by asking the group to take in a deep breath and let it out three times before she said softly, "Do you hear the quiet?" Introduce the book by talking a bit in a positive way about being alone. Let the children know that you will read the story without stopping. Then read it for the peaceful rhythm, sensory images, and simplicity.

Ask a few questions to prompt discussion. What do the children like to do all by themselves? What are some of the secret hiding places where they like to spend time alone? Have they ever heard a river "talk"? Most of us have enjoyed watching the clouds, a lovely sunset, or a rainbow. Describe a time you felt "alone and free."

Some children may ask literal questions. "What is a lamp-lighter?" "What is the bear dreaming about?" Answers to these can lead to interesting conversation.

Reflections: One teacher discovered that a "behavior problem" had actually come from a child's need to get away from the group for a time. "I learned a lot about Brian when we did this experience. He was hiding out of the classroom just to be alone."

A common childhood fear is that of being abandoned. This

story, used throughout the year, can help young children learn that being by oneself can be a happy, satisfying experience.

- Variations:
- Allow for "alone" places in your classroom. Large cardboard boxes, a blanket draped over a table to create a tent, or a rocker in a quiet corner or the book area will do fine.
 - Sometimes when you're all outside, try to "listen" to the wind or to snow as it falls.



RESOURCES

These adult resource books may help carry out the goals of the Being Section:

Carr, Rachel. Be a Frog, a Bird, or a Tree. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973.

Clemons, Sydney Gureivitz. The Sun's Not Broken. A Cloud's Just In The Way. Mt. Rainer, Maryland: Gryphon House, 1983.

Karman, Shira and Emily Ransom. Creative Movement for the Young Child with Special Needs. Lexington, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, 1975.

Kritcheusky, Sybil and Elizabeth Prescott. Planning Environments for Young Children. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Education of Young Children, 1969.

Mc Clemahan, Pat and Ida Jagua. Cool Cooking for Kids. Belmont, California: David S. Lake Publishers, 1976.

Sullivan, Molly. Feeling Strong. Feeling Free: Movement Exploration for Young Children. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Young Children, 1982.

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AS I AM: FEELING

Introduction

An understanding and acceptance of your many and varied feelings is an important aspect of mental health. This awareness can help you choose appropriate behavior, communicate honestly, and take good care of yourself. As you come to terms with your emotional self, you are better able to help children build security, use a sense of humor, and cope with intense feelings.

Goals

This section's mental health goals are to encourage children to:

- 1) begin to identify and accept their feelings.
- 2) understand how a range of feelings can be expressed in appropriate ways, both verbal and nonverbal.
- 3) learn coping skills for dealing with difficult situations and feelings.

Developmental Considerations

Young children experience a full range of emotions. Beginning in infancy, they express their feelings directly and strongly. As children grow and acquire language, they begin to use words to express themselves. This broadening of self-expression allows children to communicate more fully with others and explore a variety of relationships.

A fundamental task in early childhood is coping with separation. Children are coming to terms with emotional separation - from parents, from home, and, especially when there is a new sibling, from "babyhood." In addition, society has increased the separations children face as more mothers go to work, families move, and parents divorce.

As preschoolers reach out, they begin to understand the relationship between events in their lives, their feelings, and their behavior. Expressing a broad range of emotions gives them a clearer awareness of their "feeling" selves.

FEELING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The tone you set and the way you arrange your classroom can provide a secure place for recognition and expression of feelings.



Atmosphere:

- Promote security by establishing consistent classroom rules and routines. They will help the children feel comfortable and safe. When they know what to expect, children need not be apprehensive or "on guard."
- Develop trust. Your lap, hugs, and sympathetic ear help children feel cared for and accepted. The trusting child will be more comfortable with self-expression.
- Share laughter and fun with children. An important part of successful coping, humor can heal, relax, or inspire.
- Allow spontaneity. Address the children's feelings when the time is right, capturing the moment and feeling it intensely. You do not know ahead of time what joys, conflicts, or losses children will bring into your classroom.

- Physical Setting:**
- Children need a variety of settings to enrich their emotional growth. "... inner urges do dictate much of children's play, much of all play, and that is children's way to explore the whole inside world of feelings."⁷ Can children choose to be quiet, to create, to play, to be alone, or to be physical in your classroom?
 - Give children a variety of spaces and props for dramatic play. Go beyond traditional roles and the "housekeeping" area. Help boys and girls "try on" many community and fantasy roles by providing occupational hats, a doctor's kit, a space suit, magic wands, or a superman cape. Give them large boxes or let them rearrange the furniture. With dolls and a doll house, allow boys and girls to rehearse life.
 - View outdoor space from a new perspective. With planning, art, sand, water, and dramatic play can all take place outside.
 - Your classroom arrangement can help children feel secure. A variety of play centers protected from each other by bookshelves and other informal barriers allow for privacy and physical safety.

⁷ Rogers, Fred and Barry Head. Mr. Rogers Talks With Parents. New York: Berkley Books, 1983, p. 98.

TEACHER'S ROLE

Teachers help children learn by valuing feelings and planning appropriate activities. Your skills as an observer, communicator, facilitator, and model help to create a mentally healthy environment in which young children can work to identify, express, and accept their feelings.

Observe the children's "body language" as you listen to their words. Most of what they tell you will be through posture, movement, behavior, and facial expressions. Tune in to this important communication, being careful not to make assumptions about meaning. A frown could imply many things, including fatigue, eye strain, sadness, or concentration.

Communicate your observations with acceptance. "I realize you are furious. I would be, too, but I can't allow you to throw the puzzle across the room." "Your body looks so tense, Joan. Are you feeling frustrated with that zipper?" Children will begin to learn that feelings are OK when they experience acceptance from caring adults. Your comments will help them relate their feelings to the appropriate words.

Facilitate opportunities for children to consider the feelings of others, act out emotions, and brainstorm ways of coping. Provide for self-expression through art, play, music, and physical activities. Take advantage of "teachable moments" when they arise in your classroom. As children experience joy, sorrow, and frustration, talk about it. Encourage them to talk to each other, too. You will help them learn to choose healthy ways of expressing themselves.

Model genuine and appropriate expression of feelings. When you tell the children you are angry, do your body, face, and voice send the same message as your words? The children learn that their feelings are OK when they recognize that you have them, too. At the same time, you present them with alternatives for coping. "I was so upset that I had to take a long walk. I felt better when I got back."

EXPERIENCES

ABOUT FEELING WORDS

Children and adults experience a broad range of emotions throughout life. It is healthy to recognize, accept, and talk with others about them and to learn terms more explicit than the typical "mad, sad, or glad." Teachers can help preschool children explore and use the feelings words in our language, which is rich in words that describe complex emotions.

An important aspect of preschool is learning new words and beginning to understand what people mean by their words, looks, and gestures. As you talk, read, and share in their activities, the children's awareness and feeling vocabularies will grow. Even if a child does not begin to use a new word, it becomes a part of his receptive vocabulary. Some children will love having different, more accurate words to describe how they feel. "I feel miserable!" "My mother was delighted!"

You often will see young children's emotions reflected in their actions. These behavioral responses are important releases and should be encouraged. At the same time, however, you can offer them words to describe their feelings. Language can empower children. It allows them additional control as they seek support from those around them.

As you encourage children's expression and respond to their feelings, respect the complexity of their emotional lives. Avoid telling children how they feel, making assumptions, or putting "words in their mouths."

Work to expand your own feelings vocabulary. With practice you will gain awareness and new ways of talking about your emotional self. If you enrich your own vocabulary and begin to use a variety of "feeling words" with preschool children, their options for emotional self-expression will also increase.

Think about ways to broaden your feelings vocabulary. Here are some words to replace the familiar "mad, sad, glad":

enraged
wrathful
irritated
frustrated
furious

desolate
miserable
woebegone
distressed
gloomy

blissful
elated
delighted
ecstatic
thrilled

What feeling words could be used to describe these faces?

Is she anxious, bashful, confused, apprehensive? It is hard to know for sure.



Can you think of five words that might reflect his feelings?

A LOOK AT OUR FEELINGS: A CLASSROOM PHOTO ALBUM

- Benefits:** Keeping a feelings photo album gives children repeated opportunities to recognize a full range of emotions and the accompanying body language.
- Materials:** Camera, film, a photo album (commercial or homemade).
- Groundwork:** Be prepared to "capture the moment" with a photo. Children are constantly expressing their feelings with posture, facial expression, movement, and behavior. At times you will need to make quick decisions with your co-workers - who intervenes to offer support and who takes a picture?
- The Experience:** Introduce this experience the first week of school and continue it throughout the year. Start by photographing expressive faces and bodies. Ask the children what they are feeling and write down what they say. "Marie is sad. She left her bear at home today." "Jason is proud of his block building. 'I am happy I built it so tall.'" Take pictures of adults too.
- With the children's permission, mount the photographs in the album along with the quotes. Name the album so children know it is about feelings. Use it for discussion with individual children or small groups. Look at photos and point out examples of "body language" the children use. "Your clenched fists tell me you're upset." "Your arms are around each other. I can tell that you're feeling comfortable and friendly."
- Call attention to the album by regularly adding new photos. Have it available for the children to look at by themselves or with a friend. Children will gain self-awareness as they see themselves through the camera's eye. After you've all enjoyed the album during the year, put the pictures in the BOOKS ABOUT ME.
- Reflections:** Take the photo album to parent meetings. It could stimulate interesting discussions and communicate the importance of being sensitive to children's feelings.

Variations:

- Some of your children can learn to use the camera. With your supervision, allow them to photograph their classmates. When mounting their pictures in the album, credit them as photographers.
- Have a play camera available. Encourage children to draw the pictures they take.



"WEATHER DANCE": SINGING TOGETHER

Benefits: As they sing these words, children have a chance to express themselves through movement.

Groundwork: Use the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" to sing this song.

The Experience: Encourage the children to move like clouds, snow, and the sun while you sing "Weather Dance."

Clouds are floating all around
All around, all around
Dancing softly, little sound
Very quietly.

Snow is falling on the ground
On the ground, on the ground
Swirling, twirling, all around
Very quietly.

Sun is shining, oh so bright
See the light - bright, bright, bright
Flashing, flashing - very bright
Very quietly.

Lyrics to "Weather Dance" by Judy Lincoln.

Reflections: You do not have to be musical to enjoy music with children. It doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune. Put your inhibitions behind you and have fun!

Variations: Make up verses for whatever you want to sing about. Ask the children to be animals or rainstorms, to point to colors or shapes.

ABOUT PUPPETS

Puppets are one of the most powerful mental health tools in your classroom. A puppet is an active character who captures the attention of many children easily and fully. Although tangible and believable, a puppet can transport listeners to a fantasy world. There is often safety and freedom in expressing feelings, positive and negative, to a puppet or through a puppet's voice. Children who learn to use puppets have unlimited opportunities to work with their feelings in acceptable, imaginative ways.

Bring a puppet to life by giving it a personality. Pick several adjectives to describe its character - happy, bouncy, and talkative, or tired, grumpy, and troubled. Let these adjectives define the puppet's actions. Next, give your creation a name, a special voice, and a home in an old purse or lunch box.

Practice having your puppet emerge from its home to interact with the children. When the puppet talks, open its mouth on the first syllable of each word. Be sure the puppet looks directly at the audience. Plan conversations that use feeling words, colorful phrases, noises, and humor. Once you've become friendly with your puppet character, introduce him or her to the children.

You may want to create several distinct puppet personalities, as well as having a variety of nondescript puppets for play. Puppets are versatile and readily available for planned or spontaneous use in a time of individual or classroom crisis, lively fun, or quiet sharing.

Base some of your classroom experiences on puppets the children make. Help them create personalities, homes, and voices. This taps their feelings and fantasies, and allows them choices.

Important opportunities for growth are available when children get to know and rely on certain puppet characters (SEEING RED). They will build relationships, practice roles, and rehearse life experiences as they interact with familiar puppet friends.

NEW FRIENDS: MAKING AND USING PUPPETS

Benefits: By creating and playing with puppets, children have endless opportunities for self-expression.

Materials: Lunch-size paper bags, markers or crayons, collage materials.

Groundwork: Plan plenty of time for this experience. Many of your children will want to play with their puppet creations. A theater may encourage development of puppet shows, but is not necessary for meaningful play.

The Experience: Set puppet-making materials out on a large table. Introduce the experience by placing a paper bag on your hand and showing the children how the puppets will work. Explain that they can use crayons, markers, or collage materials to make puppet faces. You may want to review the facial features, mentioning eyes, nose, mouth, and perhaps a freckle or two.

Allow time for the children to make their puppets, giving help without direction. Many preschool children cannot do representational drawing. Though their puppet faces may be no more than scribbles, this will not inhibit expressive play.

Encourage children to talk about and through their puppets with open questions such as: "Who is your puppet?" "Tell me about your puppet?" Try speaking directly to the puppet. "How old are you?" "Where do you live?" "Tell me about the girl you are with."

Enjoy watching the children as they play with their puppets. What kinds of interactions do you see? How are these different from other play interactions? What are they talking about? Teachers in one center noted that the children stayed with this activity for an unusually long time and many non-talkers joined in the conversation.

Reflections: Often children will use puppets to express thoughts and feelings that they are not comfortable stating directly. At these times, puppet play is a valuable tool. However, it is a

mistake to make assumptions about the meaning of this play. For example, aggression towards another puppet could be a reflection of deeply felt feelings or an imitation of last night's TV show.

- Variations:
- Create awareness of body language by discussing the facial expressions and feelings of the puppets. Take cues from the children. "Your puppet looks frightened. Did something scare her?" "Your puppet sounds excited."
 - Using mirrors, let the children imitate their puppets' faces, or even each other's. Observe and note details - sparkling eyes, an up-turned mouth, or a wrinkled forehead.



NEW FRIENDS: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

Puppet play is one of the many activities we do that encourages children to express feelings. Sometimes we paint small puppets on the children's hands. Other times we make puppets out of paper bags. We have puppet conversations about all kinds of things. Your child may want to bring his puppet home so you can hear about his adventures and play a role yourself.

Most young children enter eagerly into "puppet play." Some will watch the activity of others for awhile before joining in. This is fine, since each of us approaches an experience differently.

Why We Do What We Do:

Children have a lot of fun with puppets. They are also a valuable way for children to express their feelings. With puppet friends, children are free to say whatever is on their minds or in their hearts.

What You Can Do at Home:

Puppets don't need to be expensive or complicated to make. Try creating your own puppets out of socks. Ask your child to help you sort the laundry. When you come across a sock, slide it over your hand and push in a piece of the material around your thumb to create your puppet's mouth. Move your thumb and fingers as if you're going to pick something up. Try using an interesting voice - maybe high and squeaky or low and whispery.

Have your child find his own puppet in the laundry basket and have a conversation with him. Talk about your plans for the day or what he thinks about something. Make up a story about your puppet or just have fun being silly.

WHEN I GOT LOST: CONVERSATIONS WITH A PUPPET

Benefits: This puppet dialogue helps children recognize feelings and consider various ways of coping with problems.

Materials: A dog puppet, shoe box.

Groundwork: The following story, one of many possibilities, focuses on the fear of being lost. It is about a puppy named George who lives in a shoe box painted like a building. Practice the dialogue and plan how you will involve the children.

The story can be lengthened or shortened to suit the needs of the class. Children at different developmental stages will vary in their ability to identify feelings. In smaller groups, children can be more involved.

The Experience: Introduce George and give the children plenty of time to get acquainted. In one center, children began to ask questions immediately: "Where is your mom? Why do you live in that box? Where do you sleep?" If they are allowed to satisfy their curiosity and feel comfortable with George, children will be better able to empathize as they do the experience.

Have George talk to the children about the time he got lost. At appropriate times have him ask them how they think he felt, what he should have done, and if they ever feel the same way.

Reflections: For many children, a puppet can eventually become a good friend who provides comfort, shares joy, listens to problems, and suggests ways to cope.

Variations:

- Create puppet situations about other pleasant and unpleasant feelings.
- Let children tell their own stories to the puppet, in small groups or one-to-one. Have the puppet ask about their feelings. A special puppet may have only this role. Get him or her to come out when you sense a need, or just sit down with the puppet and see who comes to you.

- Use two puppets to act out situations. Stop and ask the children to imagine how the puppets feel and what they should do next.
- Have a puppet the children can talk to whenever they're feeling frustrated, delighted, or anxious.
- Allow individual children to take a puppet home overnight. The next day, the puppet can talk about what he did.

Your Notes:

WHEN I GOT LOST

George: "You wouldn't believe what happened to me yesterday! I was out walking with my mother. We were looking for things to eat. I stopped to look in a store window, and when I turned around I couldn't see my mother. (to the children) Have you ever had that happen? (listen to answers, ask questions to encourage dialogue) Where were you? Was anyone else with you?"

Teacher: (to George) "How did you feel when you were lost?"

George: "I was scared. I looked all around. I ran from one store to the next, but I couldn't see her. I started to shake." (shake puppet)

Teacher: (to class) "How would you feel if you were lost? (allow for lots of answers and more questions) Now, let's find out what happened to George."

George: "I had to walk around by myself for a long time. I met a strange man who wanted me to go with him."

Teacher: "What did you do?"

George: "In a very loud voice I said, 'No I won't go with you!' I wanted someone else to hear me."

Teacher: (to George) "Did anyone come by and help you?"

George: "Yes, a big dog came by and said he had seen my mother looking for me."

Teacher: (to class) "Another dog helped him. Who else in the neighborhood might help? Who helped you when you were lost?"

Teacher: (to George) "How did you find your mother then?"

George: "I ran right over and there she was. She gave me a big hug and patted my head with her paws. (to children) How do you think I felt then? (allow for many responses) Well, you're right, I felt _____ (repeat a phrase given by one of the children). But, you know, I suddenly felt very tired. I wanted to be rocked to sleep."

Teacher: "What happened next?"

George: "Since I was so tired, we went right home. It was great to be safe at home after being lost. When you are afraid, what makes you feel better?"

Conclude by having George return to his shoebox home with an assurance that he will come again.

"BOA CONSTRICTOR": A POEM TO ACT OUT

Benefits: This poetry experience incorporates body parts and feelings as it uses humor to temper real or imagined fears.

Materials: "Boa Constrictor" from Where The Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein, Harper and Row, 1974. Markers, two pillowcases or a sheet, scrap material.

Groundwork: Become familiar with the poem before sharing it with the children. Practice using your face, voice, and body to convey the feeling of being swallowed by a boa constrictor.

Next, use two pillowcases to make your own boa constrictor. Cut off the closed end of one pillowcase. Sew the two pillowcases together. You should have a long tube with one open end - a boa constrictor long enough for a child to crawl into or pull up over his head. For children who do not want to be enclosed in the pillowcase tube, a sheet will do fine.

You'll want your boa constrictor to be funny and colorful, rather than frightening. Use pom-poms for eyes and scrap material for two fangs.

The Experience: Introduce the children to this collection of poems. Explain that you have chosen one poem for today, and offer to read others of their choice later. Read the poem through, touching each body part as it is mentioned. Then introduce your boa constrictor. Pass him around so everyone can touch him and get acquainted.

Ask for a volunteer to be swallowed by your boa constrictor. Ham it up and exaggerate as you recite the poem again. Gradually pull the pillowcase or sheet boa constrictor up towards the child's head. Give everyone a turn who wants one.

Leave the boa constrictor in the classroom for several days, or make him available upon request. Do this activity during transitional times, while waiting to wash hands for lunch, or to go outside.

Reflections:

Emphasize that this is a pretend game and keep the atmosphere light and funny. You are providing a safe, fun environment for dealing with a scary idea. Don't push anyone into having a turn. Allow hesitant children plenty of time to get acquainted with the boa constrictor. Some may not want their heads completely covered. Some may only want their toes or knees "swallowed." These differences are normal and reflect varied temperaments.

In the future, as they read or learn about snakes or other animals which may seem frightening, the children may be able to rely on this positive, pretend experience.

Variations:

- The "Boa Constrictor" is recorded in lyric form by Peter, Paul, and Mary on their album Peter, Paul, and Mommy. Try singing along as you or the pillowcase snake cover each body part that is swallowed.
- Have a variety of art supplies available. After reciting or singing the poem, the children can create their own boa constrictors.
- After doing "Boa Constrictor," children can add features to the sheet or pillowcase.

Your Notes:

FEARFUL FANTASIES: USING LITERATURE

Benefits: This book helps children explore their fearful fantasies and recognize that others have fears, too.

Materials: There's a Nightmare in My Closet by Mercer Mayer, Dial Books for Young Readers, New York, 1968.

Groundwork: Preread the book, tuning in to your own feelings about the story and illustrations. Was there a bedtime "monster" in your childhood? Become familiar with the language, so you will read out loud with comfort, a light tone, and an element of fun. It's worth noting that this story is written in the first-person, as if the boy is speaking. As a result, children can more easily identify and empathize.

It is a good idea to let parents know about this experience ahead of time. They will be prepared when children come home talking about "nightmares" or "monsters." One center did this by adapting the experience for use at a parent meeting.

The Experience: When the children are settled for a story, briefly discuss the book. Point out that the author wrote the story and drew the pictures. If you share the details that make each book special, children soon will begin to notice, make distinctions, and recognize favorite authors on their own.

After you have read the story, talk about "things that scare us at night." An understanding but matter-of-fact tone, plenty of acknowledgement, and laps available for cuddling will help the children feel comfortable as they listen and talk about their fearful fantasies. Your conversation may use a variety of fear words (scared, frightened, afraid, terrified, worried) and include some of these questions or acknowledging responses:

"I get scared sometimes like the boy in the story, do you?"

"What makes you feel terrified?"

"When are you afraid?"

"Sometimes when I'm frightened, I _____."

"What can you do when you're fearful?"

"What did the boy in the story do?"

"How do you think (boy in story or child in group) felt when _____?"

"Tell me about your nightmare."

Reflections:

Read this story again and again. There is security in repetition and familiarity. One center found this book particularly comforting to a fearful child. "Larry asks for this story every time he's in the book area. He's an extremely active boy who listens intently to Nightmare."

Some children may mention very personal subjects or seem extremely disturbed by nightmares. You will want to decide how to respond if they do. It may mean further individual conversation with the child, discussion with parents and fellow teachers, or follow-up with a consultant.

Consider having an extra copy of this book available to send home with a child who frequently requests the story. Share your observations and reasons for suggesting the book for reading at home with parents.

Variations:

- Some children may want to share a dream or nightmare on a one-to-one basis. If possible, record their dreams and listen together as they play them back.
- Have each child make a nightmare puppet out of an old sock. When you have a group of nightmares ready, allow time and space for dramatic play.
- Add a "monster" puppet to the classroom collection. It may or may not look frightening, depending on the children's needs. Find it an interesting home, feed it, and let children interact.

ABOUT RELAXATION

Everyone benefits from knowing when and how to relax. We are more in control of our bodies, feelings, and thoughts when we can “unwind” or change the pace. At particularly stressful times, relaxation skills can help us focus and concentrate on seeking positive solutions.

Each of us has a style of relaxation, based on temperament, physical needs and abilities, and the situation. Some people take long walks or a run, while others watch TV or read. Still others do meditation or visualization exercises. What helps you relax? How do you know when you are under stress, or just need a change of pace? Do you relax regularly?

It's important for preschool children to learn relaxation skills. Although children often relax more easily and naturally than adults, some need help learning how to release their tension. Sometimes a whole group is tense. Sometimes it is just one or two children. By becoming aware of how tension feels in their bodies and what they can do to get rid of it, children learn self-control.

You can help by:

- noting each child's style. What stresses him, how does he show tension, and what seems to help him relax?
- reflecting your observations to the children. “You are frowning John. Are you worried about something?”
- guiding children to relaxing places or activities such as: quiet music, water or sand table, books, the alone corner, your lap, and PACEMAKERS or CLOUD NINE.
- discussing tension and relaxation with the children. Help them learn the words and act out what they mean. Try being a melting ice cube, a soldier and then a rag doll, or a stop sign and then a flower blowing in the breeze.
- planning physical activities. More time outside and indoor gross motor equipment provide important relaxation opportunities for particularly active children, or the whole group.
- letting children know what you do to relax. “I feel jittery and uptight. I think I'll take ten deep breaths.”
- giving positive reinforcement. “What a good decision you made, Amy. You found a quiet spot to relax.”

CLOUD NINE: A VISUALIZATION

Benefits: By learning a way to focus their energy and gain perspective, children are better able to cope.

The Experience: At a time when the class needs to make a transition, try a relaxing fantasy journey. Gather the children and take a few deep breaths. Use a quiet, slow voice, pausing between sentences. "Now sit quietly and close your eyes. Imagine a beautiful day. We're going to go up and ride on a cloud. Look up into the sky. What colors do you see? What does your cloud look like? Can you feel yourself floating up into the cloud? Sit on the cloud and feel how soft and fluffy it is. You can feel the breeze going past your ears. You can smell the fresh air. It smells like flowers. Taste a little piece of the cloud; notice what it tastes like. Now float back down from the cloud, very slowly, and back into the room. When you are ready, you can open your eyes." The children may want to talk about their experiences.

Reflections: Imagination and relaxation are important stress management tools. They allow us to step out of our habits for a short while and get a new perspective. Our thoughts, wishes, and feelings all come into play. Children's responses to this experience will vary. Some will relax and some won't. Others may relax very deeply. Everyone has his own style for relaxing and responds to each situation differently. One child will find visualization helpful, while another may need strenuous physical activity. Help children recognize what they need. "Seth, I noticed that you really calmed down when we did this experience. How do you feel now?"

Variations: Make up another simple inner "field trip." It might be a walk on a peaceful beach or a ride on a magic carpet. Avoid taking the children to a place that might be frightening. Tie in your suggestions with the five senses: what do you see, hear, taste, smell, or touch? How do you feel? Keep the overall time less than one minute.

PACEMAKERS: TAKING RELAXATION BREAKS

- Benefits:** Learning how to relax can help children gain self-control.
- Groundwork:** Use relaxation techniques whenever you need them. In the midst of a hectic time with young children, it is often difficult to remember that you can reset the pace. Children can also learn to calm themselves and stay in control.
- The Experience:** Activity is wild and unfocused, it's too noisy, and you can feel energy scattering. Now is the time for a "pacemaker." Call the children together with a bell, a spoken signal or some other attention-getter. Look each one in the eye and speak firmly as you ask that they join in one of the following:
- singing a repetitive, calming song with a strong steady beat
 - chanting a short simple verse, perhaps to the rhythm of clapping hands
 - creating easy but definite rhythms by clapping or slapping thighs
 - making a motion and "freezing" as you direct
 - trying to hear their own breathing
 - acting like a monkey or cat who jumps around and then curls up and goes to sleep
 - falling down slowly to the floor, perhaps three times
 - taking a deep breath and slowly letting it out several times
- Pacemakers can be used successfully with one child or a small group. As you work with this technique, you will notice which ideas work for different children. Their varying styles and temperments will influence their moods or behaviors and how they relax.
- Help children develop a language to describe these experiences by introducing and using such words as "relaxation," "calm," and "pacemakers."
- Reflections:** Begin with pacemakers that feel comfortable to you. As you practice them, you may find the children respond well to repeated use of a particular relaxation technique.

Avoid overusing pacemakers. Children naturally have times of high spirits and energy. Rather than maintaining constant order, join in their fun and encourage their joy.

Pacemakers help to:

- provide a physical activity that releases tension;
- focus concentration on a simple, repetitive task;
- provide a "time out";
- turn attention to a different or challenging activity;
- set a soothing rhythm or mood.



PACEMAKERS: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

Sometimes at preschool, things get a little hectic and crazy! When it's time to calm down, we often try a "Pacemaker" as a way of helping the children relax. Rather than adding to the confusion by raising our voices, we flash the lights or ring a bell to get everyone's attention. Then we begin a relaxing, repetitive action that, as the children join in, helps to break the wild mood. It might be a calm, rhythmic slapping of the thighs, singing a soft, familiar song, or speaking in a whisper about what is coming next.

Why We Do What We Do:

Children, even when very young, can begin to learn self-control. We try to be models for them by introducing and using simple relaxation techniques. With practice, children can recognize when they are tense or getting out-of-control and learn ways of pacing themselves. As they grow, their mastery of self-control will be far more satisfying than discipline imposed by others.

What You Can Do at Home:

You can help your child learn self-control or self-discipline at home. When things get too loud and boisterous, begin to clap as you chant, "One, Two, Three, Four." Have him join you in this "game." After a minute or two, slow down the chant and clapping and lower your voice to a whisper. Hopefully, you'll both be more relaxed and the mood will have changed. Now you can redirect him or begin a new activity together on a positive note. Let us know about any Pacemakers that work for you.

ABOUT SELF-EXPRESSION

In the preschool classroom, young children need regular and ongoing opportunities to creatively express themselves through play, art, music, and movement. The child who is encouraged to be creative, imaginative, tap feelings, and express himself in constructive ways is learning mental health skills.

In their book, Art: Basic For Young Children, Lila Lasky and Rose Mukerji describe four steps common to the creative process. They provide us with a useful way to observe and understand self-expression in the preschool classroom as a whole.

"The creative process usually begins with a time of playing around and exploring The next step is focusing. Of the many possibilities sensed in the exploring phase, one is finally selected and pursued. To focus means to commit oneself to a particular choice Producing is the easily recognized working stage during which the creator, using whatever technical skills are required and available, carries out the project The creator stops when satisfied with the solution to a problem or expression of an idea. This fourth step, stopping, can also be combined with evaluating or reworking."⁸

With this framework, we can become more aware of each child's creative approach to any area of the classroom. As you observe, notice when a child is exploring and when he moves on to focusing and producing. Discover the great variations in style and temperament. One child may move almost immediately from exploring to focusing, while another explores endlessly and is quite uninterested in producing. Yet, each child is experimenting, deciding, and expressing himself.

Think about how you, as an adult, express yourself - in the way you dress, wear your hair, decorate your living space, cook, garden, work, and play. With these examples of self-expression in mind, consider the creative potential of the various areas of your classroom. Do they set a tone or atmosphere which fosters the self-expression of children?

It is important to become comfortable with your role as facilitator. Refrain from making judgements or involving yourself in a child's task. Consider whether your questions or suggestions will change a child's expressive intent. In a supportive atmosphere children will move, dance, paint, build, sing, play, and laugh, each in an individual manner.

⁸ Lasky, Lila and Rose Mukerji. Art: Basic for Young Children. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC, 1980, pp. 17-18.

PAINTING: A LANGUAGE OF FEELING

Benefits: Through painting, children can express feelings nonverbally and enjoy creating color, shape, and line.

Materials: Paints, different-sized brushes, paper, easels, smocks or aprons, newspaper or a large sheet.

Groundwork: Most of the time, painting for young children needs to be unstructured, spontaneous, simple, and available daily. This important self-expressive experience is sometimes neglected because teachers dislike the accompanying mess. Planning, regular routines, and parent volunteers to help may allow you to view the painting "mess" as a creative tool for mental health.

These suggestions may help. Put an old sheet under the easels. It can be gathered up at the end of the day and washed periodically. Old shirts with cut-off sleeves make good smocks that children can readily slip on and off. Keep a roll of masking tape or a box of clothespins near the easel. An adult can easily tape paintings to a wall or hang them on a line. Two easels side-by-side create opportunities for experimentation with language, as well as art. Sometimes a reluctant child will paint with a friend.

The Experience: Set out paper, paint, and brushes for use at the easels or a table. Freedom of movement and experimentation are important to the process. Painting allows for the unique expression of each child's feelings and ideas.

Encourage the children's natural interest by talking about their paintings. Open-ended statements or questions will not impose a structure or standard on the child. "Tell me about your painting." "How did you mix that purple?" Note interesting use of line or color. "I like those squiggly lines in the corner." "I feel cheerful when I see the yellow and pink you used." "Those lines and shapes make an exciting design."

For other children, painting is a very private experience. They

may ignore questions and comments and yet benefit from what they overhear. Also respect any reluctance to show or own a painting.

Reflections:

Be careful not to inhibit self-expression by having expectations for finished "products" or making comparisons with other pictures.

Some children may want to tell you about their paintings. "Oh, it looks like feathers!" Write down their comments on another piece of paper or on their paintings. This can help adults understand and appreciate each child's work.

Date the paintings. Over time you can see children's skills develop.

Variation:

- Play music while the children paint.
- You might begin the year by having only one color available. After a few weeks, set out two. Children enjoy making new colors by mixing. Adding white or black paint at a later point allows experimentation with tones and intensity of color.
- Paint on all kinds of paper - wallpaper, newspaper, aluminum foil, gift wrap, or corrugated cardboard.
- Paint with a variety of objects - different-sized brushes, carrot tops, Q-tips, feathers, sponges.

Your Notes:

AND HOW DID HE FEEL THEN?: AN IMAGINING GAME

Benefits: Children begin to recognize feelings and empathize with characters as a story develops.

Materials: A story whose main character moves quickly through a variety of situations. We recommend Peter's Chair by Ezra Jack Keats, Harper and Row, 1967.

Groundwork: As you preread, note the variety of situations, small and large, that can be used to evoke the children's feeling responses. First try the experience with staff, aiming for a range of really colorful feeling words and descriptions.

Plan to use the experience with several smaller groups early in the year. With practice, the class as a whole eventually will be able to imagine how characters in a story "felt then."

The Experience: Read the story aloud, making sure everyone can see the pictures. Then pick a situation in the story and ask the children to consider Peter's reactions. "Let's go back and look at Peter's tall building. How do you think Peter felt when he finished building it?" Listen and acknowledge their ideas. "Let's look at another page. Here the dog knocks the building down. How does Peter feel now?" Continue discussing situations for as long as you have the children's interest.

Reflections: The question "... and how did you feel then?" can become a familiar one for children, not only in relation to stories, but for everyday events in their lives. As children talk to you, ask how they feel whenever it is appropriate. This question invites further conversation. It indicates that you are listening, that feelings are normal, and that you are interested in their lives. Be careful not to overuse the question, and respect children's privacy when they choose not to respond.

Peter's Chair is about a boy coping with the birth of a baby sister. This is a common event in the lives of many preschoolers. Discussing Peter's feelings will give these chil-

dren an opportunity to have their own feelings acknowledged.

- Variations:
- Try using stories with some unusual heroes and heroines, fantasy and real.
 - During conversations between children and a puppet character, find out "how the puppet felt then."

Your Notes:

TEACHER GETS A SHOT: A HOSPITAL IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Benefits: Role playing medical situations helps children cope with illness, doctor visits, and accidents when they arise.

Groundwork: This experience requires a great deal of preparation, but is well worth it. Involve parents, children, local businesses, the news media, and the medical community as you imaginatively convert your center into a hospital! In one classroom the staff used blue hospital sheets on the walls to create the right atmosphere. With dividers and props, they designed a nurses' station, blood bank, operating room, and patient rooms. Hospital gowns, ID bracelets, bandages, face masks, gloves, crutches, a wheelchair, shots (without needles), and medicine bottles were some of the items donated. One father built an ambulance out of a cardboard box and a siren was attached. The children brought materials from home and came dressed in white. The teachers and parent volunteers dressed as nurses, doctors, and ambulance attendants. Some non-medical activities were available for the few children who did not want to participate.

As an introduction to the medical world, take a field trip to your local hospital, clinic, or doctor's office. Discussions after this visit will help build the children's understanding of medical terms and practices. Read a hospital story. Some children may want to share experiences they have had.

Have an ambulance visit your center. As the children turn on the siren, see the stretcher, and listen to the attendant, their medical knowledge will grow.

The Experience: You will probably need to begin your day with teacher-directed activity. The following was effective in one center. The teacher calls the ambulance. "We've got a man down on the ground on Maple Street. He fell out of a tree." The ambulance, driven by a child, arrives. Teachers and children place the man, being played by a child, on the stretcher and

take him to the hospital. In the operating room, the patient receives a shot for his pain and bandages from a doctor (teacher) and nurse (child).

The children can gradually take over all of the roles, switching from doctor to patient to ambulance driver as more accidents occur. Allow them an unlimited supply of band-aids and turns with crutches, masks, and a wheelchair.

Look for the child who is watching from the sidelines, perhaps not knowing how to enter the play. Create opportunities for him. "Would you help me with this stretcher, Josh? We need one more person." "Would you give John a shot while I take his blood pressure?" Accept the feelings of the child who does not want to participate.

Reflections:

The unknown and often frightening world of the hospital can become familiar to children as they dramatize real events with real props and terminology. Be aware that some children in your classroom may have had unpleasant medical experiences and will need special consideration.

Your Notes:

SEEING RED: QUESTIONS ABOUT ANGER

- Benefits:** Red the Dragon's tantrums provide a structure for talking about angry feelings and how to handle them constructively.
- Groundwork:** A day or so before you do this experience, briefly introduce Red to the children. If he's a puppet, Red can talk about himself and answer the children's questions. If he's to be an imaginary character, have the children consider how a dragon looks. In particular, "What kind of eyes does Red have? What about his nose, mouth, ears, skin, body, and tail?" One teacher did a large drawing on the wall in response to the children's comments.
- In either case, let the children know that Red has a problem and will be back to get their help in finding solutions. Talk about how enraged he gets and allow them to share some of their angry moments or memories.
- The Experience:** Introduce the story with your puppet or pictures. The children will be more involved if they have something to look at, as well as listen. You might say, "Red has a problem. He gets angry all the time. He doesn't know what to do with these feelings. Maybe you will have some ideas."
- Depending on the children's attention span, use one or more of the segments about Red. Read expressively. Let the children hear Red's feelings in your voice. Stamp your foot, or turn a plate upside down on the table. When you see an underline in the text, stop and collect responses from the children.
- Bring Red back periodically. Use him to discuss real situations that have made you or the children furious. When the children become familiar with Red, they may ask for him at appropriate times.
- Reflections:** Although it is not always possible to understand or "solve" a child's anger, simply acknowledging the feeling ("You seem angry.") is very important. You are helping the child name

and accept his feelings. The angry child also needs help in learning appropriate ways of physically expressing his anger. (Refer to BASH, MASH, SMASH.) Expression and acknowledgment often defuse feelings.

If you sense that you have helped a child work through some angry feelings, you might want to go on to talk about "not feeling angry any longer." This, too, is a useful skill to practice.

- Variations:
- If the children enjoy Red you may want to incorporate him into art or puppet activities. He may also be a model for developing other characters, such as Blue the Sad Hippo or Pink the Happy Parrot.
 - Try role playing conflicts. In one center the teachers acted out Red's adventures. The children were fascinated, became involved in the conflicts, and suggested they "talk things over." The staff was impressed with the problem-solving role taken on by the children.
 - The children may want to dramatize Red.

Your Notes:

SEEING RED

Once upon a time there was a young dragon named Red. He was called Red because he got angry so easily. When he was angry his face would turn bright red and fire would come out of his ears.

Red keeps getting into trouble because of his temper. In each situation, let's see if we can help him think of ways to get his angry feelings out without hurting anyone or anything.

- Red's friend Pete borrowed his favorite toy without asking. Red went right over to Pete's house and punched him in the nose. Of course this made Pete furious, too. Can you think of other things Red might have done?
_____ *(hit a pillow, count to ten, tell Pete that people should ask before borrowing something, say, "I'm mad. I don't like it when . . .," etc.)*
- Red doesn't like spaghetti. Last time his mother served it, he dumped his plate upside down on the floor and stamped on it. Then he got hungry. What would you suggest he do next time? _____ *(eat some dinner anyway, politely ask for something else, etc.)*
- Red tripped on a rock and scraped his knee. He got so enraged he roared and flamed for the rest of the day. Do you think he might have done something else? _____ *(tell somebody what happened, ask for a band-aid, cry because it hurt, etc.)*
- When the bus was ten minutes late, Red got upset and decided not to go to school. He walked back home kicking stones and thinking about how irritated he was. Was there anything else he could have done? _____ *(play games while waiting, tell the bus driver how he feels, do jumping jacks to let off steam, etc.)*
- At school Red wanted to listen to the tape recorder. He could not get it to work. After trying for a long time, he blew up. Then he sat in his cubby for one hour. He wouldn't even come to music, his favorite part of the day. Next time, what could Red do? _____ *(ask for help, decide to do something else, etc.)*

You won't be surprised to hear that all of this tired Red out. He grumbled but no fire came out of his ears. He was "fired out" too. Maybe your suggestions will help him in the future. Let's invite him back to talk again.

BODY FEELINGS: TUNING IN TO BODY LANGUAGE

Benefits: Through imagination and observation, children learn that, even without words, their bodies and faces communicate feelings.

Groundwork: At a quiet time, alone or with other staff, think about the unique face and body language you use with children each day. In what ways does your body respond when you feel joyful? How do you breathe, sit, stand, or walk when you're irritated? How do you hold your shoulders, hands, and mouth when you feel timid?

Much of our communication is nonverbal. As we support mental health in young children, understanding this aspect of communication is essential.

The Experience: Gather a small group for a game. Introduce the idea of "body language" - how, if we look carefully, we can tell how someone feels without the use of words. Choosing something obvious, pantomime an emotion and see if the children can guess what it is. Then ask what things "told" them how you were feeling?

Next, in a spirit of fun, suggest that they all give their bodies a chance to "talk." As a group, try to answer any of these questions. "How do you walk when you're cheerful?" "Show me a furious face." "What do your mouth or eyes or eyebrows do when you're lonely?" Finally, invite everyone to do their version of a joyous dance. Be sure to use a variety of feeling words. If you'd like to end on a quieter note, ask to see a group of sleepy bodies and faces.

Reflections: Try this experience mid-year or later, when the children are comfortable with you. It may be difficult for young children. Work up to it by doing **FACES SHOW FEELINGS** and **HOW DID HE FEEL THEN?** first. Repeat it after a few weeks. Notice if the children are more sensitive to body language.

RESOURCES

These adult resource books may help you carry out the goals of the Feeling Section:

Champlin, Connie and Nancy Renfro. Storytelling With Puppets. Chicago: American Library Association, 1985.

Cherry, Clare. Think of Something Quiet. Belmont, California: David S. Lake Publishers, 1981.

Juster, Diane and Linda Stein. Creative Arts for the Young Child with Special Needs. Lexington, Massachusetts: Commonwealth Mental Health Foundation, 1975.

Rogers, Fred. Mister Rogers Talks With Parents. New York: Berkley Books, 1983.

Zavitkovsky, Docia and Katherine Read Baker. Listen to the Children. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1986.

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AS I AM: RELATING

Introduction

Fulfilling the need for belonging and love is basic to mental health. In their relationships with you, young children can feel acceptance and develop positive interaction skills they will use all their lives.

Goals

This section's mental health goals are to encourage children to:

- 1) listen and communicate with family and friends.
- 2) develop skills needed to maintain meaningful relationships.
- 3) value all living beings with acceptance and appreciation of differences.

Developmental Considerations

Young children separate from their parents as they gain confidence in their ability to relate to others. In this process they become more aware of their "social" selves, the group, and their place in it. Their peer group becomes very important. This is the place where children begin to compare themselves to others and learn to negotiate and cooperate in their expanding world.

As members of a peer group, children experience belonging and discover the value of friendships. They also assume a variety of social roles - daughter, playmate, student, friend, and helper.

Relating to adults outside the family is also a critical step for young children. Responding to new expectations, establishing limits within relationships, and developing trust with adults can be exciting and challenging.

For preschoolers these social experiences with peers and adults can foster a sensitivity for others, respect for feelings, and recognition of different perspectives.

RELATING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The tone you set and the way you arrange your classroom can provide a context for positive social relationships, open communication, and cooperation.

- Atmosphere:
- Greet children at their level, using their names and making positive statements. "I'm glad to see you, Sally. Look how easily you unzip your jacket now." You can set a positive tone for social interactions throughout the day.
 - Encourage conversation by asking fun or unusual open-ended questions. "What do you like to do on rainy days?" When you begin questions with "How . . . , Why . . . , Where . . . , and What . . . ," children have the freedom to respond in many ways. "Do you . . ." limits their possibilities. Meals are especially good times for conversations. You have a small group, a quiet activity, and time to share.
 - Listen intently to children's conversation, observe their body language, and respond with acceptance and understanding of what you hear and see. When children feel accepted, they are better able to reach out to others.
 - Involve children in the work of the classroom. Feeding pets, cleaning up, setting the table, cooking, washing dishes, planning activities and meals help them learn to cooperate and assume responsibilities. What other jobs can the children do?
 - Respect individual temperaments - your own, your co-workers, and the children's. Personal qualities such as activity level, adaptability, and intensity influence interactions. Respect a child's desire to be alone, as well as with others. Some children need regular breaks for quiet time.
 - Foster interaction by doing most of your activities in small groups. Young children benefit from the extra time, space, and attention this provides.
 - Introduce all visitors to the class. You will be modeling a social skill for the children, helping your visitors feel comfortable, and respecting the children's right to know who is in the classroom.

- Physical Setting:**
- Children can assume responsibility for cleaning up the classroom. Store toys and materials at their level and in containers easy for them to handle. Use labels with symbols the children understand, such as block shapes, to guide their efforts.
 - Photographs displayed at eye level can help children recognize that they belong to many social groups - friends, family, and their preschool class. Encourage them to bring in photos. Include group and individual pictures.
 - Use the physical set-up of the classroom and available materials to promote interaction and cooperation. Large blocks or notched boards for building can be used more easily by two than one. A couch or mattress for reading together, a small play space for "two children only," a large paper or appliance box for a few to decorate, a seesaw, and a wagon are all tools for relating.



TEACHER'S ROLE

Teachers help children enjoy satisfying relationships by valuing and supporting efforts to interact. Your skills as an observer, communicator, facilitator, and model contribute to a mentally healthy environment in which young children can feel belonging, learn how their actions affect others, and develop relating skills.

Observe children's interactions. Are they seeking relationships? Are they relating well? Are they developing special friendships? How do they relate to adults? To children? Preschoolers have a wide range of social skills, reflecting both developmental and temperamental differences. Accept them where they are.

Communicate with children. Let them know you are concerned and interested in their well-being. Acknowledge their healthy interactions. When they cannot solve a problem on their own, intervene and help them through the process. Encourage them to explain the circumstances and describe their feelings. Listen carefully and guide them towards an acceptable solution.

Facilitate relating throughout the day. Plan projects, such as murals or cooking, that children can do together. Emphasize cooperation. "Jill, would you hold the cup for Courtney while he pours the oil." Encourage such joint efforts at clean up, meal, and play times. "Melissa, you look like you want to help. Ask Kate if you could pass the blocks to her." Build their relating vocabulary by using and discussing words like cooperation, sharing, teamwork, and problem solving.

Some children are not ready to meet the expectations of the group. Accept them as they are. Offer alternatives, allowing them to do things by themselves while others are gathered in a group.

Model acceptance and healthy ways of interacting with children and adults. The value you place on each child and her feelings will set a standard for all. Every day use the listening and problem-solving skills that you want children to practice in their relationships. The tone you set will influence their behavior. As they experience belonging, they can begin to accept and value each other.

EXPERIENCES

GETTING ALONG: MAKING CLASSROOM RULES

- Benefits:** When children are encouraged to think about what they need to do to get along, they will better understand their role in helping the classroom run smoothly.
- Materials:** Poster board, magic markers.
- Groundwork:** With your staff, think carefully about your expectations for having the children get along in the classroom. Some examples might be using words instead of hitting, putting materials away when a project is finished, making room when another child wants to join an activity, walking when inside, or asking for food to be passed instead of reaching.
- The Experience:** Early in the year, discuss your list with the children. Talk about the different groups all of us belong to - our families, our preschool, or a Sunday school class - and why the members of any group need to get along.
- Together, "brainstorm" ways for everyone at preschool to get along. In the process, have the children experiment - run and then walk, talk quietly and then shout. "How does it feel? What things do we need to do to get along together?"
- Make a list on poster board. Illustrate it with drawings or photographs so the children can "read" the list. Review the poster from time to time. There may be changes you or the children will want to make as the year progresses.
- Variations:** When you plan new or special activities, discuss with the group what they will need to do to get along. Such activities might include field trips to a nursing home or grocery store, or having important guests visit the classroom. Review your poster or make a different one.

ABOUT TOUCH

Preschool and day care teachers have a nurturing role with the children they care for. Part of this role is responding to the children's need for touch. With the current emphasis on physical and sexual abuse, many caregivers are more cautious about touching children than they once were. This is an unfortunate development, as young children need to learn to relate to others in this very basic way.

Abundant research documents the importance of touch and human contact. Studies of babies and children reared in institutions demonstrate that an extreme lack of holding, touching, and tactile stimulation results in diminished growth and inability to make human attachments. Gentle touch shows a child she is cared for and accepted. Human contact allows some children to release tension. It can be a warm positive communication from a man, woman, or another child.

However, as with all aspects of temperament, each child varies in the amount and kind of touch she needs, wants, or can ask for. What relaxes one may over-stimulate another. One child is comforted by your hand on her shoulder, while another needs to be held in your lap. Sometimes the child who consistently resists touch is the one who needs it the most.

Observe carefully and, with time, you will gain a sense of what each child needs from you. The reluctant child's resistance may be overcome by classroom pets. Try a fond pat on the head or a gentle touch on the arm as you pass by. Hold the child who wants more closeness in your lap during stories. Sit side-by-side to do an activity. Give her hand a special squeeze after a circle. A rocking chair invites soothing contact.

It is important that you and your co-workers keep this important way of relating alive and well in your classroom. Hold open discussions with parents as part of developing a policy. Voice your concern for the children's physical and emotional well-being and the importance of touch in their development. Once you have a policy, communicate it to everyone involved in your program.

REACHING OUT: SHARING WITH SENIOR CITIZENS

Benefits: When children spend time with senior citizens, they have an opportunity to express and receive caring as they learn to appreciate others.

Materials: Children's books.

Groundwork: Contact your local senior citizens' center to locate individuals who would enjoy reading with children from your class. This might happen only once or on a regular basis. If you are unable to travel to them, arrange for the senior citizens to come to your center. Meet ahead of time to discuss the experience and what to expect. Bring along books for prereading. What activities have they enjoyed doing with children in the past? How would they like to be introduced?

The Experience: Divide your class into four groups and schedule monthly visits for each. Ideally, about five children and two or three senior citizens will get together each week. Before a visit, let the children know who they will meet, what they will be doing, and what they will see. Share photos of past visits.

Take several children's books for the senior citizens to read to the children. Make careful introductions. A quiet area with couches where they can sit close together is ideal. If you think it seems natural to the children, suggest they give hello or goodbye hugs. Encourage them to listen quietly and talk about what has been going on at school. Capture the experience with photos, to be enjoyed later by classmates and the senior citizens.

Consider other activities they might share - simple games like lotto, a walk, a "tea party."

Reflections: Look for individuals who are enthusiastic and able to interact with young children. It is important to choose an appropriate setting. Protect the children from potentially confusing or frightening situations.

One teacher noted that it "felt good to do this experience." She found that some of the children who were uncomfortable at first got a chance to enjoy and become familiar with elderly people. The senior citizens benefited as well.

- Variations:**
- Have holiday parties at a senior citizens' center. Share Thanksgiving dinner or celebrate a local ethnic event. The children can make and deliver valentines, go in costume on Halloween, or sing carols.
 - Discuss jobs people do at the senior citizens' center. Arrange for some of the employees to tell the children about their work.
 - Have the children dictate a thank you note. Each child can contribute a line or a memory. Send photos or children's drawings along with the note.

Your Notes:

SIGNED WITH LOVE: TALKING WITH OUR HANDS

- Benefits:** A lesson in sign language provides children with another way to express caring and acceptance.
- Groundwork:** This experience works best with a small group. Children of all ages will enjoy learning to talk with their hands. Practice the three signs for "I love you" until you feel comfortable with them:
- I: Point to yourself. (Hand is closed with palm toward you, except index finger which touches center of your chest.)
 - love: Give yourself a hug. (Hands are loosely closed with palms facing you and thumb beside each fist. Cross both arms just below the wrists and bring them toward you until hands touch your chest.)
 - you: Point to the other person. (With right fingers curled under and thumb outside, point outward with straight index finger.)
- The Experience:** "We are going to begin by covering our ears with our hands for a few moments . . . Did you notice it was hard to hear when your ears were covered? Some people don't hear as well as others. Some don't hear at all. This is called being deaf. Some deaf people learn a special and beautiful language. Today we are going to learn how to say 'I love you' in Sign Language."
- Demonstrate the three parts of the phrase, asking the children to imitate the signs. Let your face, as well as your gestures, communicate. Repeat the signs several times.
- "Who would you like to say 'I love you' too?" Talk about where and when the children might use the signs.
- Reflections:** Signs stand for words and letters. However, their reliance on movement gives them an expressive, dance-like quality which captures the imagination of children.
- Variations:** • One center did this experience on Valentine's Day. They also

made cards - another way to send a message without talking.

- The children will have words they would like to sign. There are many reference books to help you. One of these is The Joy of Signing by Lottie Riekeholf, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri, 1978.
- You may be able to invite a person who knows sign language to visit the classroom and teach this experience.

Your Notes:

MIXING, MUNCHING AND MOPPING UP: MAKING MUFFINS -- mmm!

Benefits: A cooperative cooking project is a relaxing and satisfying social event to which children can easily contribute.

Materials: Four spoons, 2 small bowls for eggs and bananas, egg beater, 3 large mixing bowls, 2 muffin tins, soap and water, pre-measured ingredients for "Never-Enough Muffins":

BOWL 1:

4 c. flour (or 3 c. flour and 1 c. bran)
4 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
2 tbsp. sugar

BOWL 2:

4 eggs, beaten
2 c. milk
1/2 c. oil
1 c. mashed bananas (or other fruit)

Mix both bowls separately. Then mix together, leaving lumps to avoid overmixing. Fill oiled muffin tins 2/3 full. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes. Makes 24.

Groundwork: Set up ingredients and equipment at a classroom table, or in a kitchen area well away from the stove. Plan to work with only four children at a time, so that they participate in all phases of the project. Another group can cook next time.

The Experience: This project has three distinct phases: preparing, serving, and washing up. Give clear directions for each step. Convey the value and cooperative nature of their work, as well as the enjoyment of wonderful smells, tastes, and textures. Give each child a special task for each phase, whether peeling or mashing bananas, beating eggs, mixing, oiling tins, serving, washing, rinsing, or drying. Avoid the dangers of hot stoves to preschoolers working in a group by having an adult put the tins in the oven and later take them out to cool. Notice and comment on the details of children's individual work and cooperation. Talk about the foods and where they come from. When you're finished, make cleaning up as much a social occasion as the cooking.

Variations: Repeat this project often, using other simple recipes. Ask parents for ideas and invite them to participate. Branch out, trying main dishes, snacks, salads and raw foods, beverages, breads, or unsweetened desserts. Cooking special dishes for festive days will add warmth and delight to these occasions.

MENU MAKING: A NUTRITION AWARENESS PROJECT

Benefits: Children experience giving, caring, and social interaction when they share their favorite foods with the class.

Materials: Magazines with pictures of food, scissors, paper, glue, or a set of food picture cards.

Groundwork: This project should follow nutrition activities that introduce the concept of healthy foods. As you carry it out, you can continue to talk about good nutrition.

The Experience: Have each child plan a breakfast or lunch menu to be prepared for the entire class. Do this on a random basis, giving each child a special day. Guide children in planning balanced meals. "Jennifer, your lunch needs a vegetable. What is your favorite vegetable?" You may want to send a letter home, asking parents to share their child's favorite recipe, or even to come in and prepare the meal.

Help each child make a poster about her menu to share with the class when her meal is served. Add this menu to her **BOOK ABOUT ME**.

Reflections: Staff found that children really enjoyed the special attention they got during this project. There was also an increase in appetites when a classmate was responsible for the day's menu.

This is a good opportunity to tap a child's ethnic or family heritage. Share one of your special dishes with the children too.

In two centers, the cooks were responsible for helping the children plan their meals, make their posters, and present their menus to the class.

Variations: If your center does not prepare its own meals, let the children plan snacks. Put together a snack cookbook for parents.

ABOUT MUSIC

Think about the part music plays in your life. What are your experiences, either creating or listening to music? How does it influence your well-being? For many people the relationship between mental health and music is strong.

In a preschool classroom, making music begins as a social event. You can help children experience and use music as a mental health tool in many ways.

Music creates a mood. One teacher described the power of music in her childhood by saying, "When my head was clogged and I had to deal with unhappy things, music was the one thing that made me feel better." Music calms, excites, soothes, energizes, and lulls. Plan musical experiences carefully, defining your purpose. If it is constantly in the background, the potential and impact will be lessened.

Music is a form of self-expression. The music a person creates comes from the feelings inside her. Rhythm, melody, and words are all ways of communicating. For some, music is the most comfortable way to express themselves. A teacher remembered how her grandfather expressed his grief by humming and singing.

Music may also lead children to express themselves verbally. If the words of a song trigger a memory, they may initiate a conversation about birth, death, or a past holiday. Select songs with this in mind. In her book, Windows To Our Children, Violet Oaklander tells us about folk songs. "There are songs about every feeling and life situation, nonsense songs, and songs that tell stories. Because such songs have lasted through time, they never appear contrived or 'cute.' They add vitality, beauty, and power to children's emotions, imaginations, and experiences."⁹

Music teaches. A music experience provides many opportunities for fun, being part of a group, listening, following directions, and verbal expression. Songs can convey information, reinforce cognitive skills, and help children cope. Music with movement encourages physical development. If you can't find an appropriate song, make one up.

You do not have to be a musician, or even have a good voice, to make music a meaningful experience for children. All you need is an appreciation of its possibilities and the freedom to experiment.

⁹ Oaklander, Violet. Windows To Our Children. Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1978, p. 116.

"I'M A MEMBER OF THE BAND": MAKING MUSIC

- Benefits:** Children can feel a sense of belonging as they join in this song.
- Groundwork:** Use the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush" for this song. Have rhythm instruments for your whole class on hand.
- The Experience:** Give each child an instrument and together march around the room singing "I'm a Member of the Band."

I'm a member of the band
Of the band, of the band.
I'm a member of the band
Oh, come and watch me play.

This is the way I play my _____
Play my _____, play my _____
This is the way I play my _____
Oh, come and hear me play.

Lyrics for "I'm a Member of the Band" by Judy Lincoln.

Repeat these lines for each instrument being used. End with a repeat of the first verse.

- Variations:** Try using the children's names as you sing. This is the way Chad plays the _____.



PEOPLE ARE DIFFERENT, PEOPLE ARE THE SAME: USING LITERATURE

Benefits: As they enjoy this book, children learn that all of us live together in a world made colorful by human variety and differences.

Materials: People, written and illustrated by Peter Speir, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1980.

Groundwork: Because of the detail, it is important to preread the book, becoming familiar with the themes and perhaps choosing a few pages that you think your class would particularly like. You will find many of the themes you have encountered in AS I AM. This might be a time to renew ideas and recall experiences you and the class have shared.

The Experience: Read People with small groups of children, no more than five. They need to be close enough to the pages to see the drawings and notice special details. You may want to read quite rapidly in some sections and go into more depth in others. In one center, a small group was so fascinated that they spent the entire story time talking about just two pages.

Whenever possible, tie a fact in the book to the children's own experience. Be enthusiastic about the unique human expression that each picture illustrates. "People all have faces and bodies and feelings and ideas and dreams. And each face and body is different from every other. People have many ideas and ways of making their dreams come true."

Variations: Use People as a reference book for interesting ideas related to acceptance and understanding. It is a source of information about many aspects of human life all over the world.

FAMILY WEEK: SHARING WITH OUR FAMILIES

Benefits: Family awareness and a sense of belonging are created when families are the focus of a special week.

Groundwork: Family is defined differently for each of us. The children in your class probably represent a broad variety of families. Whatever its makeup, each child feels a sense of belonging to her family. Respect these differences and feelings as you proceed with this experience.

Plan a special week of family awareness activities. Do a "family" experience every day.

Encourage each child to bring in a family photo. Send requests home well in advance. Children without photographs may want to make collages using magazine pictures or have you take their pictures with a family member or friend. Make sure you contribute a photo or collage too.

Discuss FAMILY WEEK with parents. Communicate through newsletters, parent meetings, and personal contacts. Prepare them for the children's questions and responses. Involve them in planning and carrying out a family potluck or picnic.

The Experience: Let the children know that you have planned a special week of activities to celebrate and learn about the many different kinds of families.

On the first day, allow time for the children to share their photos and collages with you. Though not all children will participate verbally, give each the chance to talk about the members of her family. Children may focus on a grandparent, a sibling, or even a pet. Ask, "What is a family?" "What do families do for us?" Share something about the family you grew up in or your family now. Point out that each family is special and different. Post all the pictures and collages on a bulletin board.

Continue through the week with other family experiences such

as the ones listed below:

- Discover the various nationalities of children in the class. Families may be able to share a few words of another language, folk music or dancing, holiday celebrations, costumes, foods, and other traditions.
- Talk about families in nature. For example, mother bears raise their cubs alone and father birds feed their young.
- Several experiences in AS I AM can result in gifts or communications to families. SIGNED WITH LOVE teaches a new way of saying "I love you!" to someone special. Share FEATURING ME with parents. The placemats made in HERE'S WHERE I SIT are good presents for family members.
- Have the children make paper doll chains with a doll representing each family member. Allow them to decide who to include. It may not be everyone. It may be a friend or a pet. Help them write the appropriate names. Let them put faces on the dolls. Make a bulletin board posting the dolls with the photos or collages.
- Celebrate family week before a holiday and conclude it with a party which brings together the families of your children.
- More exchanges with families can be planned in learning areas of your classroom. For example, allow children to create and play with puppet families.
- Top the week off with a family potluck or picnic. Invite all the families and involve them in the planning. Suggest they prepare traditional or ethnic foods and have a multi-cultural feast.

Reflections:

This may be a sensitive subject for some children. They may have just experienced divorce, remarriage, or foster care and their "family identity" is changing. Acknowledge their feel-

ings, whatever they may be. Respect any reluctance to talk. Some children may consider members of the class or other important people as being a special kind of family.

Your Notes:

TEACHERS OF LIFE: PETS IN THE CLASSROOM

Benefits: Caring for an animal helps children begin to value living beings.

Materials: A classroom pet or pets (such as chameleons, gerbils, guinea pigs, rabbits, fish, turtles, or a hen), appropriate housing and food, a supply of fresh bedding and litter if needed.

The Experience: The classroom pets have names and are part of the "family." They live in a quiet corner of the room. The children visit them daily, but do not handle them too much. Feeding and cleaning chores are rotated along with other classroom duties. You will have to assume responsibility for overseeing daily care and finding a reliable caretaker each weekend and vacation. It will be your decision whether or not to embark on the adventure of breeding a pet.

One center had a wonderful experience hatching the eggs of a pet hen named "Jessica." She was the center of attention and many conversations about responsibilities, healthy foods, fears, and being gentle. The cook who carried out this project commented, "All the children showed an interest in feeding, watering, and cleaning . . . I feel honored that I could share the full circle of life with the children."

Reflections: At an age when the children's primary experience is being cared for, they can take the caregiver role with pets. In this role, they assume on-going personal responsibility, share warm feelings, and gain knowledge of animal life.

What if a pet dies? This is a real sorrow for the whole group. Yet, it also permits children to experience death as a normal part of life. With your help, they can ask questions when they are ready to, grieve openly, and try to understand their often conflicting feelings.

The birth of an animal can also provide valuable learning as you answer the children's questions about life cycles, reproduction, and anatomy.

Variations: Use the following recipe to make biscuits for children's pets at home. Animals are often members of the family and this is a good way to show caring and sharing.

BISCUITS FOR DOGS AND CATS

3 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
2 c. whole wheat flour
1 c. rye flour
1 c. corn meal
2 c. bulgur (cracked wheat)
1/2 c. nonfat dry milk
4 tsp. salt
1 pkg. dry yeast
2 c. chicken broth
1 egg plus 1 Tbs. milk to brush on top
warm water

Combine all dry ingredients except yeast. In a separate bowl, dissolve yeast in 1/4 c. warm water. Add the broth. Then add the liquid to the dry ingredients, mix, and knead 3 minutes. The dough will be stiff. If too stiff, add extra liquid or an egg. Roll out the dough to a 1/4" thickness. Cut into various shapes or let the children make little bone shapes. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Brush tops with milk or a beaten egg. Bake at 300° F for 45 min. Turn off the heat and leave the biscuits overnight in the oven to get bone hard.

Your Notes:

I CAN DO IT: REAL WORK

Benefits: Learning how to do housekeeping tasks cooperatively helps children feel confident they can share in family responsibilities.

Materials: Vacuum cleaners and brooms, sponges and soap, laundry baskets and clean clothes, or window cleaner and rags.

Groundwork: Choose several developmentally appropriate household jobs for the children to learn and practice (vacuuming, washing windows, sorting laundry, and cleaning sinks, storage shelves, or pet cages). Consider duration and group size for the project and then collect the necessary materials or equipment.

The Experience: As an introduction to this experience, share one of your childhood responsibilities with the class. Find out what jobs some of the children do at home right now. Talk about how each member of a family (or class), no matter what size or age, has a role to play. "Part of being a family is sharing and working together to get jobs done."

"Let's see how we do one of these jobs." As you demonstrate a task for the entire group, help the children plan. Show them how to get ready. Divide the job into manageable, child-size portions and explain the steps involved in doing the job safely and well. Remember clean up, too! Perhaps list the steps on a large sheet of paper with space to check off accomplishments.

To practice, break into smaller groups, each with an adult. Find some aspect of everyone's work to compliment. "You worked hard to scrub the sink. No more fingerprints there!"

Your enthusiasm, sense of fun, and appreciation will help the children see a job well done as a pleasurable experience. When a child begins to feel confident, help her make plans for doing the job independently at home. This might become a special event, involving a letter, a form to fill out, or a gift coupon from the child to her family.

Reflections:

This is a good short-term project, or an on-going activity where children build a repertoire of skills to use at preschool and at home. Consider organizing Fall, Winter, Spring, and Year-End Cleanings.

Take photos of the children "at work." Post them on a bulletin board for awhile, and then add them to each child's BOOK ABOUT ME.

Variations:

- To make classroom responsibilities fun, jot down appropriate small jobs on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Have each child pick a slip and make a game of getting to work.
- Use this experience as the focus of a parent meeting. Encourage parents to let children help with "real work" at home. One parent happily reported, "All you need is a dirty house or classroom!"



I CAN DO IT: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool: In the housekeeping, dress-up, and block areas, the children often pretend to do the "real-life" work they see done at home. Boys and girls make believe they are baking, driving the car, washing dishes, or putting the baby to sleep. We also give them the chance to help with real classroom chores. Some of these are cooking, setting and clearing the table, serving food, and cleaning up after free play. They can even learn to vacuum, clean mirrors, and wash dishes.

**Why We Do
What We Do:**

We have all heard preschool children proudly say, "I can do it myself!" As they practice real work, children become more independent and self-reliant. These qualities contribute to self-esteem.

At the same time, children learn about helping others and cooperating to get a job done. This healthy process is part of making friends and belonging to any group.

**What You Can
Do at Home:**

Let your child help with household and outdoor chores. If children are allowed to help when they are very young, they will be more likely to have cooperative attitudes and confidence as they grow up.

Here are a few jobs preschoolers can help you do: Carry groceries. Take groceries out of the bag. Scrub the bathtub. Wash windows or the car. Sort laundry. Set the table. Put dog or cat food in the pet dish. Rake leaves. Carry wood for a fireplace or woodstove.

Sometimes you could get the job done "twice as fast by yourself." You don't always need to include your child, but as often as you can give her a useful task. Then she'll have the chance to say, "I can do that myself!"

ABOUT LISTENING

Listening carefully and non-judgmentally to children helps to validate their thoughts and feelings and contributes to their self-esteem. As you listen, you are also modeling one important way of relating positively to others. This is a skill children can best learn by example.

There are many aspects to good listening. Attentiveness can be demonstrated by getting down to the child's level and maintaining eye contact. Your facial expressions tell even very young children when you are really paying attention. Active, reflective listening responds to feelings behind the child's words. It gives you and the child opportunities to clarify whether you are understanding one another.

There are three steps in the active listening process:

1. The child sends a message in words, manner, tone, or body expression. "We're going camping this weekend!"
2. You interpret the feelings behind the message and check to see if you are correct. This tells the child she is being listened to. "You seem to be pretty excited about going."
3. The child affirms your feedback ("Yes, I love camping!"), or denies it and tries to send a clearer message ("No, I don't like sleeping outside.").

You may want to arrange for training in active listening for yourself and fellow staff. Using active listening consistently will clarify conversations with children and help you understand the emotional content of what they say. Such an understanding enhances your ability to relate in a meaningful way.

Give children many opportunities to speak and listen to one another and adults, at meal times and in groups of all sizes. Use a tape recorder regularly. Most children enjoy hearing themselves and peers on tape, and it reinforces the need to listen, as well as talk.

If possible, plan some of your parent meetings around the topic of listening. Discuss the importance of listening attentively to their children.

Children need to develop listening skills for practical purposes, such as being able to follow directions. Most important, however, the ability to listen can help them build healthy, caring relationships.

AND THEN . . . : A COOPERATIVE STORY

Benefits: Cooperatively building a story helps children learn to listen to each other.

The Experience: With a small group, five or fewer, sit at a table or in a circle. Tell the children you are going to make up a story together and, in order to do that, you all need to listen to each person very carefully.

You start with a line or two, and have the children take turns adding to the story. Choose a topic that is of current interest to the children. It may be related to a recent field trip, class visitor, conflict the children are working on resolving, or pure fantasy. Some examples of story beginnings are:

"Once upon a time there was a family of bears living next door to the _____ Head Start Center. One morning, as the children were arriving . . ."

"This story is about a girl named Sally. Sally wanted to be a truck driver when she grew up. Everyone told her that only boys become truck drivers. But Sally . . ."

Go around the circle once or more. The children's behavior will tell you how long they can attend. Emphasize the importance of listening as you move from one child to the next.

Reflections: Play this game regularly. Vary the topics according to the children's interests and your educational goals. Find other times to encourage listening - during meals, circle, small group play, and moments of conflict.

Listening is a lot of work! Review your own listening skills often. Do you pay attention to both words and body language? Stop what you are doing and look at the child who is speaking? Get on the same eye level? Reflect what is said, instead of criticizing, solving, or judging?

Variations:

Staff in one center found this experience difficult for their children, and created a story at the clay table instead. As the children talked about what they were doing, the teacher wrote down what they said. When she read the story at circle time, the children loved looking for their names in the text.

Your Notes:

WHO IS GONE?: A GROUP AWARENESS GAME

- Benefits:** By noticing who is missing, each child becomes more conscious of the other children in the class and is able to identify them by name.
- Groundwork:** In all classroom activities, encourage awareness of others and use of names. At meals, an important social time, Susan can be asked to pass Justin the muffins. A teacher can comment on how well Dale and Tom are sharing the blocks. This preparation will help children get to know the members of the group. Later, when children are absent, others will be able to recall them by name.
- The Experience:** Sit in a circle with a small group of five or six children. Explain that they will take turns being hiders or guessers. Go around the circle, identifying each child by name. Ask one to leave the room, and another to hide. The child outside the room returns and guesses who is hiding. Keep playing until everyone has had a turn.
- Reflections:** It will take time to build the children's awareness of the group as a whole. Begin with small groups. Later in the year, the entire class will probably be able to play the game.
- Teachers and parents report that children enjoy this experience. The "hide and seek" feature is fun and manageable within a classroom setting.
- Variations:** Attach photos with names of the children to coat hooks or placemats. Seeing their friends and classmates in photographs helps children make associations and use names more often.

WHO IS GONE?: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

At preschool we are helping your child get to know everyone in the group. We try to use the children's names in many ways throughout the day. As they hear the names of their friends and classmates, they begin to use them too. We sometimes play group awareness games. When a child is absent, we encourage the rest to think about who is missing.

Why We Do What We Do:

Your child's world is expanding beyond the family. She is meeting more people and making her own friends. She, like all of us, enjoys the feeling of belonging. As your child grows, she will belong to many groups - at school, in your neighborhood, and in the community.

As part of a group, we learn to listen, talk and share. We learn how to be a leader and how to follow an idea from someone else. We learn about belonging.

What You Can Do at Home:

Help your child think of all the people she knows. Some she knows quite well; others she knows only slightly. We often think of a child's world as being very small. Making a list can help her see that she belongs in many different groups.

Questions like these may help you and your child make this important list. Who do you know at preschool? Who are the other members of your family? Those at home, or far away? Who lives in your neighborhood or your apartment building? Kids? Grownups? Who are the people in the stores where you shop?

Young children are learning to remember things, to hold ideas and people in their memories. You can have fun helping your child understand how many people she knows - all the ways in which she belongs.

ABOUT RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Conflicts are inevitable and frequent in our lives. How we resolve these conflicts influences our mental health. Preschool children come to us with a variety of established patterns for dealing with conflict. We are in a position to help them practice positive, non-violent ways of solving their problems every day. Self-confidence and satisfying relationships are potential benefits.

It is possible to create a classroom atmosphere in which children will have many opportunities to resolve conflicts successfully.

- Begin by establishing an atmosphere of trust. When children are protected by consistent rules, they can learn that their rights will be respected. Rules that protect individuals and promote cooperation contribute to the development of trust. GETTING ALONG gives you a process for making and introducing rules.
- Observe carefully, noticing children who need special help resolving conflicts. One child might respond aggressively, while another withdraws. Provide guidance to these children as they learn to modify their behavior.
- Point out the advantages of cooperation. Cooking projects, classroom clean-up, or group play all involve community efforts. "Look at how fast we can clean up when we all work together. We will have extra time outside today." "The two of you are doing an especially good job with that difficult puzzle."
- Help children understand their own feelings and those of others. A fallen block building, a beautiful painting, or a fight over a toy are all opportunities to talk about feelings. Reflect children's non-verbal communication. "You look very happy, Tommy. You seem pleased with your picture." Ask children how they feel. "How did you feel when Samantha took your truck?" Encourage children to listen and talk directly to each other when conflicts arise. Too often children turn to the teacher to communicate for them. "Josh, Mary wants to tell you how she felt when you hit her."
- Provide models of non-violent conflict resolution. Children learn from observing others. How do you communicate with your co-workers or parents? Regularly look for examples of positive problem solving on TV and in children's literature.

- Help children understand their own successes and failures. "Johnny, I noticed that when you calmly asked Mark for a turn with the bike, he gave it to you right away." "Sue, when you grabbed the doll from Joe, he hit you. You did not like that. Can you think of something else you could have done?" Verbalizing helps children remember this information and use it to resolve future conflicts.
- Give children time to resolve conflicts on their own. Be on hand to observe their interaction and intervene only if necessary. Afterwards comment on their interaction, reinforcing positive skills and filling in information when needed.

As children become comfortable with this routine, help them begin to practice the following steps for problem solving. After they have used them repeatedly with you, many children will begin to integrate them into their daily interactions. Whenever a conflict arises:

1. Listen: Give each child involved in the conflict a chance to talk about her feelings.
2. Define: What is each child's problem and what does each one want? Preschool children have difficulty understanding other points of view.
3. Sum up: In your words, reflect the children's feelings.
4. Brainstorm: Ask the children to think of possible solutions. You may want to write them down.
5. Evaluate: Be sure everyone's feelings are considered. Allow the children to evaluate their ideas and consider which alternatives are feasible.
6. Decide: Restate the problem, summarize the possible solutions, and decide on one.
7. Review: After living with the decision, review it. Revise it if necessary.¹⁰

¹⁰ Crary, Elizabeth. Kids Can Cooperate. Seattle, Washington: Parenting Press, Inc., 1984.

PUNCH AND CRUNCH: NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Benefits:** Children develop problem-solving skills and consideration for each other's feelings as they brainstorm solutions to familiar conflicts.
- Materials:** Two puppets (Punch and Crunch), a little square of cloth (very ragged).
- Groundwork:** Think about some of the conflicts that you experience. How are they resolved? Are they power struggles with winners and losers? Or, are everyone's feelings considered in the solution?
- Consider some of the ways you create an atmosphere of cooperation and communication in your classroom. When conflicts arise, encourage the children to express their feelings, communicate with each other, and participate in finding an "everybody wins" solution.
- The Experience:** With two puppets, recreate the following story for a small group of children. You may want to establish a special team of puppets to work out conflicts on a regular basis, or just use ordinary classroom puppets to deal spontaneously with problems. Act out the story as far as it goes, and then ask the children how it should end.
- Let them suggest several solutions, accepting them all as interesting or good ideas.
- "What is the problem? How will (puppet's name) feel about doing _____ or _____? Will (child's suggestion) help to solve the conflict?" Act out the solutions the children decide are best. In one center a child suggested the story end with the puppets sharing a bed and blanket. The teacher had the child come up and tuck the two puppets into bed.
- Reflections:** One teacher noted that this is a non-threatening way for children to practice problem solving. They sympathize with the puppets and solutions come more easily. She also

recommended encouraging parents to participate. "It can help them listen to their children and consider other ways of solving problems."

Variations:

When a conflict arises in class, allow the children to brainstorm solutions. Encourage them to make "I" statements about how they feel in such situations. Together make up puppet stories about their real conflicts. During a story, stop reading in the midst of a problem and let the children find an answer.



PUPPET STORY: PUNCH AND CRUNCH

(Punch is hugging a small, tattered piece of cloth as Crunch enters.)

Crunch: Guess what? Just guess what?

Punch: (sleepily) Wha

Crunch: Hey, that is my blanket (takes one end of it).

Punch: Well, I just borrowed it. Mmm.

Crunch: (rips blanket away) I said it's mine, an - I - wannit now!

Punch: (hits Crunch) I hate you! You're mean (cries).

Crunch: Aw, come on. You don't need it. Besides, it's my very special blanket and I'm sleepy.

Punch: (cries louder) Well, I want one too.

Crunch: Come on, it isn't that bad. I didn't think you'd get so upset.

Punch: Boo-hoo . . . sob . . . sniff . . .

-- How does this story end? --

RESOURCES

These adult resource books may help you carry out the goals of the Relating Section:

Center for Child and Family Development. Growing Up Strong. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State Department of Mental Health, 1984.

Crary, Elizabeth. Kids Can Cooperate. Seattle, Washington: Parenting Press, Inc., 1984.

Smith, Charles. Promoting the Social Development of Young Children. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1982.

Wancemaker, Nancy, Kristin Hearn, and Sherrill Richarz. More Than Graham Crackers. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1979.

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AS I AM: THINKING

Introduction

Thinking and language skills are basic to mental health. You use them to solve problems, communicate your needs and thoughts, and gain confidence in your ability to meet life's challenges. In a preschool program that provides for cognitive growth, children have many opportunities for practice and accomplishment.

Goals

This section's mental health goals are to encourage children to:

- 1) exercise and enjoy their growing imaginative abilities.
- 2) build useful knowledge and thinking skills based on their own experience.
- 3) understand and use language effectively.

Developmental Considerations

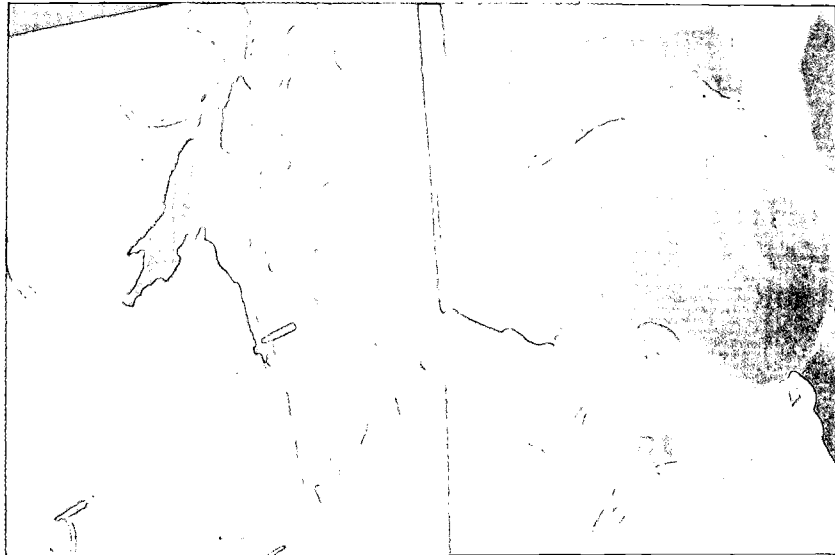
Preschool children perceive the world differently than adults. Two equal balls of clay are not equal when one is made into a pancake. Two ten-block towers do not have the same numbers when one is spread out vertically.

The development of thinking skills happens in a sequence and children can not be rushed through it. The preschool child's earliest cognitive tasks include classification, one-to-one correspondence, seriation, and language comprehension. These need to be firmly established before more complex tasks, such as addition and reading, can be learned. Children will gain understanding of the world as they experiment and work with materials in their environment. They also will have a greater appreciation of their "thinking" selves.

THINKING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The tone you set and the way you arrange your classroom can stimulate children's thinking and language skills.

- Atmosphere:
- Offer opportunities for children to make decisions - where to play, how much food to take, what to drink, what art materials to use, who to befriend, what story to hear, and how to resolve a conflict.
 - Build children's attention spans by noticing what holds their interest, giving importance to what they do, praising persistence, and recognizing when "enough is enough."
 - Develop children's awareness by making observations and asking questions. "Look at the way the grass is drawn in this picture!" "Does anyone notice what is different in our classroom today?"
 - Recognize children's accomplishment in the steps along the way, as well as completed tasks. So much is achieved before a block structure is finished. "David, you made an interesting corner here." "Susan, I like the way you used two triangle blocks to make a square."





- Physical Setting:**
- Allow children to make choices frequently during the day. In the design of your room, give them access to a variety of activities: large and small motor, dramatic play, water, sand, art, literature, and cognitive. You can also offer choices within specific areas. For example have glue, paint, crayons, chalk, and clay available for structured or free play in art.
 - Physical barriers between areas of your room can help children attend to their tasks. It is easier for a child to concentrate on a puzzle if more active play is not going on right next to him.
 - Encourage awareness by using thought-provoking materials and equipment, such as photos, magnifying glasses, food coloring in the water table, gels on the lights or windows, or a video camera. Lofts and changes in classroom arrangement give children new perspectives on the room.
 - Blocks, peg boards, objects to sort, art supplies, a toy phone, a clock, sand, and other open-ended materials allow children to creatively solve problems. Use of these materials, as well as cognitive games and puzzles, also gives children a sense of accomplishment.

TEACHER'S ROLE

Teachers can help children expand their thinking and language skills by valuing this learning and providing appropriate cognitive experiences. Your skills as an observer, communicator, facilitator, and model contribute to a stimulating environment in which children think creatively, express themselves verbally, feel successful, and gain confidence.

Observe the children's capabilities. What are their cognitive skills? How much language do they understand and use? Do they have active imaginations? How far do their worlds extend? This knowledge will help you set realistic expectations and challenge the children to move forward.

Communicate your observations. "Eric, you really understand that puzzle now." "I like the design you made with those pegs, Marc. It has an interesting shape." Children can gain self-awareness and confidence when they hear you reflect their actions and thoughts.

Facilitate exploration of thought and language. Challenge children's thinking by creating problems to solve and decisions to make. Support children throughout the process without doing their work for them. Encourage language by asking questions and listening.

Model pleasure in the learning process. Share your curiosity about the world around you. Seek answers to your own questions, telling the children about your search or letting them help you with it. Include your hobbies and interests as part of classroom activities.

EXPERIENCES

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE: LIVING WITH BOOKS

- Benefits:** Literature provides children with valuable information about themselves and their environment.
- Materials:** A variety of children's books relevant to classroom activities.
- The Experience:** Set aside a shelf or create a special space for a book display in each of your classroom learning centers. Choose books that relate in some way through theme, concepts, characters, or illustrations to the learning and play taking place in each area. Here are some examples to get you thinking:

Block Area

Trucks by Donald Crews
Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel by Virginia Lee Burton
Anno's Counting Book by Mitsumasa Anno

Art Area

Anno's Alphabet by Mitsumasa Anno
Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats (or any by this author)
My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies. Ghosts . . . by
 Judith Viorst

Science Area

Some Plants Have Funny Names by Diana Harding Cross
The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
The Popcorn Story by Tomie de Paola
Is This A Baby Dinosaur? by Millicent E. Selsam
Look Again! by Tana Hobin

Dramatic Play Area

Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

Dandelion by Don Freeman

The Trip by Ezra Jack Keats

As you talk with the children about the different activities available each day, mention a book or two they can look for in the special displays around the classroom. Try this new arrangement for at least a week or, if everyone enjoys it, longer. Continue by rearranging your books from time to time.

Reflections:

Reading literature for information and enjoyment can be a dynamic experience - one that strengthens as a child grows. By making books available in many areas of the room at any time of the day, children begin to learn that books are a natural part of daily living. The enjoyment of words, language, and literature are the foundation for a child's motivation and ability to read.

Variations:

- Books may also be displayed to suggest a specific activity. A selection of Ezra Jack Keats' books in the art area is a good introduction to making collages.
- Use books to address a specific issue, such as a new sibling in the family. Along with the baby dolls in the housekeeping area, display:

William's Doll by Charlotte Zolotow

A Baby Sister for Frances by Russell Hoban

Nobody Asked Me If I Wanted A Baby Sister by Martha Alexander

ABOUT COGNITIVE SKILLS

As we strive to achieve personal goals throughout our lives, we are called on to know, perceive, and figure things out. Our success at developing our cognitive abilities fosters self-esteem. Achievement at cognitive tasks not only improves the young child's self-concept, but it motivates him to reach out and do more. Teachers play an important role in helping children develop these capabilities.

Observing children carefully and noting their cognitive abilities will lead you to develop appropriate expectations. A good understanding of child development helps in this process. Your expectations are the key to a child's self-concept. If he can meet your expectations, he can feel good about himself. When your expectations are inappropriate, he will doubt his abilities. Our society places such importance on academic skills that it is not uncommon for preschoolers to be pushed into learning formal tasks before they are ready.

Preschool children have been working on their cognitive skills since birth. New abilities are acquired when a child is ready and has been provided the necessary stimulation. Progress occurs in a step-by-step, developmental sequence. One important way children develop cognitive skills is by interaction with their environment. Hands-on materials, time to explore, and supportive, stimulating adults are important aspects of a learning environment.

Consider carefully the environment you are providing for children. What materials are available for cognitive exploration? Unit blocks, sand and water with measuring equipment, clay, pegs, puzzles, and magazine pictures all encourage skill development. Your children will measure, order, sort, compare, and count. Do you give the children enough time to make choices, involve themselves, and explore their ideas? The bulk of your day should be devoted to this kind of activity. Do you stimulate cognitive development through your interactions? Provide information about the world and hands-on experiences? Challenge with questions? "How many cups do we need at this table?" "Can you find two blocks to fill in that space?" "How many pictures can you find of things we use in a kitchen?"

Help parents understand how their children's cognitive skills develop. Discuss how appropriate expectations influence children's developing self-concepts. Talk about how the activities you do in your classroom help children learn the skills they will need later for reading, writing, and arithmetic. Encourage understanding of the importance of play as a tool for cognition and discuss the children's

need to progress at their own pace.

Expecting preschool children to acquire academic skills too soon can create learning problems. When asked to perform tasks they are not developmentally ready for, children experience failure. They may continue to have difficulty with these tasks when they reach elementary school. A preschool classroom rich in language and sensory experiences can provide a good base on which to build these skills at the appropriate time.



SORTING OURSELVES OUT: A DECIDING GAME

Benefits: Giving early-level practice in decision making, comparing, and classifying helps build thinking skills.

The Experience: Begin by telling the children they will be playing a sorting game. Describe what "sort" means by referring to a familiar activity, such as sorting pegs according to colors. Have the children group themselves on your right and left sides as you call out a set of categories: "All the girls come here (indicate your right side) and all boys come here (indicate your left)."

Appreciate the variety in each as you continue with other categories: those wearing blue and those not wearing blue, those in skirts and those in pants, those who like spaghetti and those who don't. Think of fun and crazy choices.

One teacher joined in the game. "The children were interested to see that I was like them in many ways." Children remarked: "You have a brother, too?" "I have brown eyes just like you."

Use this activity as an icebreaker early in the year to show the children they are like others in the group. As children get the idea, make the game more complicated. Have more than two groups and involve decision making. Try a variety of categories: likes and dislikes, colors, seasons, animals, TV shows, foods, games, and classroom activities.

Do this experience often. Use it to create groups for meals, brushing teeth, or getting coats on. Continually appreciate the differences.

Reflections: Classification is an early cognitive skill that is a prerequisite to learning math and reading. A lot of varied opportunities to compare and classify increases a child's school readiness. Observing as the children "sort themselves out" will give you information about their classifying abilities.

This is a fun game with no winners and losers. The children are able to see themselves as individuals and as members of a

group. They learn it is OK to be different from others. Think about this element in other games you play. Encourage children to support each other as they strive to achieve goals. The esteem a child gains from winning should not mean all the rest feel like losers.

- Variations:
- You may not want your group to move around this much. Try having them raise their hands or put their hands on their heads.
 - Have the children explain why they picked certain groups.
 - Play sorting games with objects, such as colored beans, seeds, stones, pasta shapes, small change, playing cards, poker chips, sets of buttons, or sea shells. Ask the children about one characteristic at a time. "Is it the same size?" "Let's find the stones this color." "How are these two different?" Provide egg cartons or small boxes and let the children group the objects in their own ways. Comment on their decisions. "I see you are putting all the round buttons here."

Your Notes:

THE COMMUNITY CLASSROOM: MAKING THE MOST OF FIELD TRIPS

- Benefits:** Classroom activities before and after a field trip increase awareness, build vocabulary, and help children anticipate and remember events.
- Materials:** Pictures, a story or song, camera and film, pen, large and small paper, crayons.
- Groundwork:** Plan regular trips out of the classroom. When choosing a place to visit, consider its personal relevance to the children. If they can touch, taste, and smell, as well as see and hear, their experience will be richer. Look for places of interest that are within walking distance.
- The Experience:** Prepare the children for their trip by reading a related story or singing a song. During a group time, build a list of vocabulary words based on what they will see. Use pictures if possible. While on your trip, take photos for later display and discussion.
- After your trip, have the children add to the vocabulary list. Give them each time to talk about their experiences. What did they like best? What did they learn? What feelings do they associate with the trip? Write their comments down for them. Some may want to draw a picture. Add appropriate props to their dramatic play equipment to encourage the acting out of new roles.
- Reflections:** Parents or other relatives can be the inspiration for certain field trips by sharing hobbies, an interest, their jobs or work place. Include them in the planning and follow-up activities, as well as involving them as leaders, guests, or helpers during the field trip itself.
- Variations:**
- Think of new and different ways to help the children learn about your neighborhood. If you are in the country, collect natural objects to sort and classify. Rocks, shells, leaves, grasses, and wild flowers are all possibilities. If you are in a town or city, look at buildings in new and different ways. Con-

sider the materials used, shape of windows, color of roofs, or who works or goes into the buildings.

- Consider "mini field trips" with a small group of two to four children and one staff person. For instance, a small group might plan lunch or a snack and then go to the store to buy the necessary ingredients.

Your Notes:

BLOCKS: A TOTAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Benefits: Constructing with blocks helps children use many cognitive skills, develop imagination, and feel accomplishment.

Materials: Unit blocks, shelves for orderly display, symbols on the shelves for matching blocks as they are put away.

Groundwork: Display your blocks on low shelves ordered by size. A large open floor space protected from traffic in front of the shelves is important. Mirrors along one wall at floor level can stimulate interesting building and self-awareness.

Blocks present endless questions without dictating answers. Children's imaginations are continually challenged as they play with blocks.

Consider your role as an observer in block experiences. Nod, encourage, listen, or challenge with questions. "You have been working very hard and are almost done!" "Does your house need a garage?" Join in with a helping hand at clean up time.

The Experience: Unstructured experiences with blocks can take place every day. The attention you give children as they build will encourage their frequent use of this valuable learning tool.

Help the children maintain safety. If your block area is small, limit the number of children who can be there at one time. This will ensure that they have the necessary floor space. Ask children who are not building constructively to leave, allowing others to use that space.

As you observe their play, reinforce the many thinking skills you see them using. They are continuously solving problems. Talking with you about what they are doing may help them in this process. As they build, they are also counting, classifying, experiencing one-to-one correspondence, matching, planning, visualizing, experimenting, being persistent, and using information from their world.

The block area also is a place where children work on many relating and being skills. Here they can feel a dramatic sense of accomplishment. Reinforce this by taking photographs of buildings and letting structures stay up long enough to be admired.

Reflections:

Acquiring and practicing these many skills contribute to a child's readiness for school. The block area of the preschool classroom is one important place where children's play lays the foundation for later learning. Encourage both boys and girls to play here.

Variations:

- Provide small, colored blocks, wooden spools, plastic people, animals, vehicles, and traffic signs in the block area. Encourage fantasy play with these props.
- Put up a "Do Not Destroy" sign and leave a child's structure intact until the next day. This is a real self-esteem builder. Let the child make the sign and tell others what it means.
- Take a photograph of a child or group of children with their block creations. Display the photo on the building and then put it in the child's BOOK ABOUT ME.

WHAT TO DO?: PLANNING WITH PRESCHOOLERS

- Benefits:** Making small, daily plans fosters cognitive skills and presents young children and their teachers with content for meaningful interactions.
- Groundwork:** Talk about this experience with your co-workers, considering whether you want it to become an everyday, integrated feature of your program. Brainstorm and discuss the idea of "planning" by preschoolers. At first it may seem to be a more sophisticated, adult skill. With your help, however, children can begin to practice planning in many developmentally appropriate ways and situations.
- The Experience:** In the morning have each child "plan" something he will do that day. You might begin the day with a "meeting" or make plans over breakfast. Tell the children what their choices are and ask each one where he plans to begin his day. "Let's see, you might like to paint or build with blocks or help fix a snack." "Sam, what is something you plan to do today?" Keep brief notes of what each child has planned.
- If this is a new way of doing things in your classroom, the children may need time to get used to the routine. Throughout the day, communicate with the children about what they planned and worked on. Encourage them to talk with and listen to their peers. As children become accustomed to planning and gain vocabulary, their own ideas of what they want to do will flow more easily.
- Reflections:** Mastery of cognitive skills, such as planning and following through with plans, has positive mental health consequences. As children learn new information, complete tasks, and communicate with others, they have concrete evidence of their capabilities. This process helps them develop the self-confidence and resources to attempt new hurdles.
- Variations:**
- Use the planning process with the whole group when you are scheduling class activities, such as a field trip, a guest speaker, or a holiday celebration.

- Use planning as a way to: team children up, help a new or shy child to become integrated, encourage some children to teach what they know to others, or enhance the fun that can come when a plan is carried out by teamwork.

Your Notes:

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: PLAYING WITH LANGUAGE

Benefits: Poems stimulate children's creative thinking and expression.

Materials: Large paper, a marker.

Groundwork: As an introduction, you may want to share a few of your favorite poems with the children. Plan to discuss how poetry communicates feelings. At this age, avoid any emphasis on rhyme. It is not an essential part of poetry and may interfere with the expressive process.

The Experience: The children will be creating group poems. Begin by choosing a topic. The possibilities are endless. Pick something timely and create a first line for the children to complete. "Walking through falling snow makes me feel" "When I see the first flower of spring I think" "On Valentine's Day I like to" Other first lines might be "I wish" "When I see yellow I feel" or "The moon is like"

Do this with a small group. Begin by writing the opening line at the top of the paper. Let each child who wants a turn add a line to the poem. Acknowledge each contribution. "What an interesting thought." "I can just picture that." List their names as authors. Then read the poem to the whole class.

Put these poems together in a book. At the end of the year, send a copy home with each child. This gives them a chance to feel proud of their creative cooperative effort.

Reflections: One teacher observed that all ages relished this experience. "I really enjoyed the children's thoughts and I think I learned things about some of them." Another noted that the children had worked well together and listened to each other's ideas.

Do this often. With practice, children will become more confident and begin to trust their innate "poetic" instincts and vision. Some may begin to suggest first lines or want to write their own poems with more than one line.

ABOUT TELEVISION

Television viewing is a controversial issue. It has become an important part of most Americans' lives. For young children it brings both educational opportunity and exposure to unhealthy influences. When programs are carefully selected, TV can expand a child's knowledge of the world, cognitive skills, social concepts, and even his self-awareness. On the other hand, TV, because of its passive nature, interferes with time spent reading, imagining, interacting, and actively playing. Excessive TV viewing has been linked to decreased physical fitness, poor eating habits, and behavioral problems.¹¹

You can help parents consider how to use TV as a positive influence on their child's development. Plan one or more parent meetings on this topic. Send information home in a handout or through a newsletter. Some ideas for parents are:

- Keep a one-week record of how much TV is being watched.
- Plan viewing time with children.
- Watch TV together whenever possible. Discuss characters and events.
- Model good TV habits. Be selective in what you watch.
- Have children spend as much time at other developmentally appropriate activities as they do watching TV.
- Communicate your values about TV shows to children.

Recognize the important part TV plays in children's lives. Listen carefully and talk with them about the TV programs they watch. Help them be discriminating. I THINK...: TALKING ABOUT TELEVISION on the next page will get you started.

Television commercials, particularly those watched by young children during cartoons, promote high-sugar foods and toys which may be expensive and developmentally unsound. The cartoons themselves often present violent solutions to conflict. Conversations with you and other staff can give children accurate information and other perspectives. They need to hear about the importance of eating healthy foods, the fun of imaginative toys, and positive ways of interacting.

As an important adult in the lives of preschoolers, you can encourage thoughtful conversations about TV, the watching of good programs, and improved communication between parents and their children about this controversial topic.

¹¹ Brody, Jane. "Personal Health." New York Times, January 21, 1987.

I THINK . . . : TALKING ABOUT TELEVISION

Benefits: Encouraging children to talk about their life experiences builds their thinking and language skills.

The Experience: Choose a quiet time when you are with one child or a small group. Start a conversation by asking, "What is your favorite TV program?" Share your favorite programs with the children. Go on to discuss some specifics, avoiding questions that can be answered with a yes or no. "What do you like most about the program?" "Who is your favorite person on the show?" "What do you like about him or her?" "What don't you like about it?" "Do you think the story on this show is real or pretend?" "What makes you think so?" "What is the difference between real and pretend?" Listen with acceptance, not judgment.

Let the children's responses lead the conversation. They may want to describe stories to you, or talk about how the behavior of certain characters was funny or disturbing. Acknowledge feelings that may be triggered by their memories. If necessary, use questions to channel the conversation.

Reflections: The children's self-esteem will benefit by the attention you give to their thoughts and words. At the same time, you are learning about their TV viewing, an important aspect of their life experiences.

Parents enjoyed doing this experience with their children. One said, "This is a great way for adults to find out how their children interpret certain TV programs." She also learned that her four year old did not know the difference between real and make-believe.

Variations:

- One teacher made a TV out of a box. Children took turns sitting behind it and putting on a show. They told stories, sang songs, and gave the weather.
- Use this experience as a model for other discussions. Pick a topic familiar to the children. Brainstorm questions that will

encourage conversation. Try favorite movies, holidays, or books.

- Talk about superhero characters with the children. "How do they use their super powers?" "Can ordinary people do these things?" "What people in our community help people?"

Your Notes:

I THINK . . . : FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

Everyday we encourage the children to practice their thinking and talking skills. We ask them their opinions about all kinds of things. During meals and other quiet times, we start conversations with a small group, or even one child. Our questions require the children to think about their answers and use more than one word to respond.

Why We Do What We Do:

When children participate in conversations about things that interest them, they think and use language. They hear and practice new words. They get a chance to state their opinions, which is a skill they will use all their lives.

As we listen and show respect for their opinions, children build confidence in their ability to think and express themselves verbally.

What You Can Do at Home:

Encourage your child to use his thinking and language skills at home. After a TV show, book, or movie, ask him how he felt about it. Continue the conversation with questions like these: "What did you like (or dislike)?" "Who were your favorite characters?" "What did you like about them?" "Was it a pretend or real story? What makes you think so?" Certain plots may disturb your child, and he will need to talk about his feelings.

Often movie and TV characters use violence to solve their problems. As fascinating as violence can be for your child, ask him how he might solve such problems without hurting anyone. We are often expected to laugh at violence in cartoons. This also would be worth discussing.

There are no right or wrong answers in these situations. Listen attentively, respecting your child's opinion. Tell him how you feel without expecting him to adopt your views. Help him learn to evaluate and decide.

ONE OF OUR NUMBER: A COUNTING GAME

Benefits: Giving early-level practice in number concepts helps build thinking skills and feelings of accomplishment.

The Experience: With a group of four children, show how to dance out the following pattern.

The first line is: One of us is one, all alone."

The children each dance in small circles by themselves.

The second line is: "Two of us are two, me and you."

Each child takes a partner and they dance in a small circle holding hands.

The third line is: "Three of us are three, always we."

The children drop hands, and three make a ring.

The fourth dances with teacher.

The last line is: "Four of us are four, more and more!"

All four join hands and dance in a big circle.

If children get "tangled," treat it as part of the fun.

Reflections: Small children learn by doing. They usually cannot serialize, understand symbols, focus on more than one aspect of a problem, or put themselves in another's place. A teaching game that shows changes in the size or number of actual objects helps children build a real understanding of numbers, rather than simply training them in number recognition.

Variations: Another simple, but not always easy, counting game is to sit cross-legged on the floor and together slap your knees with open palms, slowly in rhythm: one, one-two, one-two-three, one-two-three-four. Repeat the sequence several times. Do only the first few if this seems difficult. Put verbal sounds (tra-la) to the rhythm rather than the numbers.

ABOUT READING ALOUD

Lifetime reading skills begin with being read to. You can provide a warm and important reading relationship for preschool children. The value you place on reading and good books helps to motivate the children. When you know and enjoy a book, the children recognize it.

Here are some tips for a successful reading relationship and experience:

- When you are preparing to read aloud, decide in your own mind why you are doing it. What is it that you want the children to get out of the book you are presenting? Establish your goals.
- Choose books that are exciting enough to hold children's interest and short enough to fit their attention spans. Imagination and ability to attend grow with time.
- The care you take in preparing to read aloud will help you achieve your goals and motivate the children. Preread every story. Familiarize yourself with the story line, rhythm of words, vocabulary, pronunciation, and character changes. This familiarity will allow you to involve the children by having eye contact while you read.
- Consider the number of children you want to read a book to. Occasionally a book lends itself to large group involvement, especially if children can participate actively. When the children's ages and attention spans vary, however, large groups can present management problems that detract from the experience. Groups of five or less allow you to make the book personally meaningful for each child. It's possible to give individual attention and provide warm physical contact. Also, children have a better chance to participate in or react to the story.
- Build your reading skills by experimenting with tone, pitch, and pauses. Use a clear, natural voice, conveying mood and emotion as you read. It is not necessary to have a special voice for each character. Pauses in the dialogue will indicate character changes. As you gain confidence, it will probably be fun to try new techniques.
- Present literature to children with an introduction and conclusion. Use the introduction to create interest and set a mood for the story. Tell them the

title of the book, who wrote the story, and who drew the pictures. Mention another book they know by the same author or illustrator. Perhaps give a brief synopsis of the story or explain the illustration technique if it is unusual. Note the type of story - for example, poetry or fairy tale. In conclusion, allow the children time to respond, discussing their reactions to the characters or events in the story.

- Plan how to show the illustrations. Hold the book so it faces the children while you read, or show them each page after you have read it. Let them know beforehand how and when you are going to show the illustrations.
- Stay in touch with the children's responses. Try to be comfortable with quiet, nondisruptive movement. Squirming does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest. Some children just cannot sit still. Find ways to involve them more actively. They can recite repetitive phrases, act out character movements, or draw the story with paper and crayons while you read. Some days the story just does not work. Put it away and try it another day.



RABBIT'S PROBLEM: USING LITERATURE

- Benefits:** Children vicariously experience the problem-solving process as they listen to this humorous African folktale.
- Materials:** Who's In Rabbit's House retold by Verna Aardema, The Dial Press, 1977.
- Groundwork:** Read and reread this folktale to become familiar with the sequence of events, rhythm, unusual words, and expressive dramatics of the animals. Practice distinctive voices for Rabbit and the "Long One," and use a pause in the dialogue to indicate a change in the other characters.
- The Experience:** Because the illustrations are a vital part of the story, be sure to seat the children so everyone can see. Since it is an African folk tale with an unusual presentation, you'll need to make a brief introduction. Turn the first few pages and talk about what you see . . . the Masai villagers preparing to present a story.
- Afterwards give the children time to comment on the story. How did they feel about what happened? How was it different from other stories they have read? Was it funny? Which characters intrigued them? Give them time to respond and then discuss the turn of events that finally solved Rabbit's problem. These questions may get you started.
- "How did Rabbit feel about not being able to enter her house?"
 "Why did Rabbit believe Frog couldn't help her?"
 "How did the other animals offer to help? Why didn't their ideas work?"
 "How did Frog's idea succeed in bringing the Long One out of Rabbit's house?"
- Reflections:** One center invited a father to read this story. He had just returned from Africa and was able to share some of his experiences and show special items he had brought back. The children listened attentively for an unusually long time.

- Variations:**
- Since this is a sequential story, using felt pieces to represent each animal you read about will help the children remember the order of events. After a few readings, many children will be able to retell the story themselves. Leave the felt pieces and book out during free play so they can experiment.
 - Although the concept of other countries is a difficult one for preschoolers, you can still introduce this idea to them by talking about Africa. Read other African folktales, many of which focus on finding ingenious solutions to problems.

Your Notes:

MY STORY: USING THE CHILD'S WORDS

- Benefits:** Having words, ideas, or events from a child's life written down and shared, reinforces his own experience and gives him a feeling of importance.
- Materials:** Large-size construction paper (a variety of colors), wide-line magic markers, ruler.
- Groundwork:** Lightly pencil evenly spaced lines on several sheets of paper, enabling neat, clear printing for a finished product.
- The Experience:** Work with one child at a time, suggesting that he pick his favorite color of paper or marker. Encourage the "author" to contribute his ideas. The weather outside, a pet, something special that happened at home, or an unusual or funny event are possibilities. Write just enough to fill the paper, at some point using the child's name.

Examples: "It is raining. The grass is wet. Ebony the Rabbit has one floppy ear. Rachel has some good views from her window."

"He's a leeny hamster. Mickey Mouse. Minnie Mouse. The hamster is a he. Mr. Scrooge. Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. Monster. Pluto. My mom and dad and Vicky, Renela, Pam and Brenda. Nana is my sister too. Winnie and my great gram at the beach. Erin, Chris and Maggie and that's it."

When you've finished writing, read the story out loud. Add the child's name and the date and then display it in a prominent place for the rest of the day. Share the stories at circle time or in a small group.

Reflections: If it's done regularly, this activity provides a creative record of events and another measure of growth. Include each child's dated story in his BOOK ABOUT ME.

Even though the children don't yet read or write, they know that books are made of words and those words have power. Verbally contributing their words, which are put on paper, gives young children a mastery and anticipation of the time when they will be readers.

- Variations:**
- The children can collaborate on a recipe book to give as presents to their family and friends. Have them describe how to make their favorite dishes. Use just the words the children give you. It's great fun.
 - This experience is a good basis for writing letters, thank you notes to a field trip site or classroom guest, or get well cards to a classmate who is sick.
 - Ask children if they would like to make a picture or drawing to illustrate their stories.
 - Use a tape recorder as the child is speaking. Let one child or a small group learn how to operate the recorder.

Your Notes:

FEELINGS AND DECISIONS: A PUPPET MONOLOGUE

Benefits: By listening and interacting as a puppet solves his problem, children consider the decision-making process.

Materials: A puppet with a shoebox house.

The Experience: Charlie emerges from his house. His manner is deliberate and his voice deep and slow. He starts talking to the children:

"You know, yesterday I had to make a decision. Do you know what a 'decision' is? (wait for response) Well, it means choosing between one thing and another thing. You can't do both, so you have to decide which one you really want to do. You might decide you want to put on green socks instead of blue ones, or eat eggs instead of cereal. Do you ever decide something like that?" (wait for response)

"Yesterday I had to decide whether to go to my friend Tanya's house or stay home. I wanted to go, but I'd been feeling a little bit sick to my stomach. I got worried that I might get worse. Have you ever felt worried like that? (wait for response) I knew I had to decide, but I just kept worrying instead. Then I felt sicker than I did before. I knew I didn't feel up to running around and playing. What do you think I finally decided to do?" (wait for responses)

"I decided to say 'No' and stay home. At first I felt really unhappy and disappointed. But before long I realized I wasn't worried anymore. As a matter of fact, I actually began to feel better. I played with my ball for awhile and then got into bed and took a nap."

"Today I feel fine and cheerful. So I decided to come tell you about what happened. I also decided to visit Tanya next week, when I feel really back to normal."

Reflections: Portray Charlie as a very cautious character who never tries to hurry a decision. He knows little decisions, such as whether to play a game or read a book, can be as important as big ones.

If you introduce Charlie early in the year, he will be available to share or give advice in many situations. One teacher found that Charlie was a great help. "The children sometimes feel more comfortable talking with a puppet than with a person."

Variations:

Have Charlie offer to assist a child who needs to make a decision. He can listen to feelings, help think up alternatives, and consider what would happen as a result of each choice.

Your Notes:

FEELINGS AND DECISIONS: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool: We give the children many opportunities to make decisions. During free play, they can decide what to play and who to play with. When doing art projects, children select colors and materials and then decide how to use them. Sometimes they get to choose what to eat or drink. Puppet dramas help them consider the whole decision-making process.

**Why We Do
What We Do:** As adults we make many decisions daily. Some are small, such as what to serve for dinner. Others are big, such as where to live. Children need to practice this important life skill. When we allow them to make real decisions, children can feel some control over their lives. As a result, they will be more likely to accept our decisions and make healthy choices on their own.

**What You Can
Do at Home:** Think about all of the decisions your child could make and give him the chance to practice. Be sure you are offering real decisions and let him know his limits. He can't choose to wear a swimsuit if it is 32° out or eat a candy bar if you want him to have a healthy snack.

In the beginning, giving him simple choices may work best. "Would you like orange or apple juice?" "Do you want to wear your blue or yellow shirt?" Occasionally, ask him to make more important decisions. He could decide on the menu for dinner, select a playmate to have over, pick out a new outfit, or help plan a vacation. Allow him some control over his environment - selecting furniture for his room, paint for the wall, or where to put his bed.

AND IN MY POCKET . . . : STIMULATING LANGUAGE

Benefits: By considering the characteristics, origins, and uses of various objects, children expand their thinking and language skills.

Materials: A piece of clothing with a pocket, many "interesting" objects (both familiar and foreign) to talk about.

The Experience: Keep something in your pocket to talk about at meal time, quiet time, or when a few children need a new activity. Sea shells, photographs, rocks, and nubbly cloth all have interesting characteristics to investigate. Identify sizes, shapes, colors, textures, sounds, and smells. Discuss how objects, such as a nut and bolt, can opener, or an oriental fan are used. Try them out. Ask how a wooden bowl or piece of handwoven fabric might have been made.

Having pulled a strainer out of their teacher's pocket, a small group of children in one center went immediately to the kitchen where they "strained" water, bottle caps, and sugar. During the process, they all agreed that "you could even wear it as a hat."

Listen to and acknowledge the children's answers. There is no right or wrong. "That is an interesting idea, John." "I would like to try that, Ellen." Encourage use of descriptive words: soft, metallic, wrinkled, crisp, glossy, bright. Ask questions that encourage problem solving: How? What? Why?

Reflections: Repeat this experience regularly. It's a wonderful opportunity to inject an element of spontaneity and fun, as well.

Variations: At meal time, put something unusual in the center of the table and ask the children to guess what it is, what they can do with it, what it resembles, what it will not do because . . . or what might happen if . . . Use an exotic piece of fruit and taste it after the meal. Wear an unusual piece of clothing or try chopsticks. This is a good way to introduce things from other cultures. Some children may want to bring in items from home.

COLORS: LEARNING AND SINGING

- Benefits:** As they sing and move, children learn to recognize and name colors.
- Materials:** "Colors," a song on the record or cassette Learning Basic Skills Through Music, Vol. 1 by Hap Palmer, Activity Records, Freeport, New York. Colored construction paper.
- Groundwork:** Using the colors mentioned in the song, cut a piece of construction paper for everyone in the class.
- The Experience:** Give a piece of construction paper to each child. A quick review of the colors will help prepare the children. As you play the song, have the children stand and sit as the words direct. It's fun!
- Reflections:** Hap Palmer and other good musicians that write for children can bring a wealth of musical experiences into your classroom.
- As they practice this song, the children are learning to listen and follow directions.
- Variations:**
- Once you have learned the words and tune, substitute fruits or shapes for the colors.
 - Other good records to use are:
Free to Be You and Me by Marlo Thomas, Arista, New York.
Songs to Grow on, Vol. 1 by Woodie Guthrie, Folkways Records, New York.
Growing Up with Ella Jenkins Folkways Records, New York.
Rosenshontz Tickles You with Gary Rosen and Bill Shontz, RS Records, Brattleboro, Vermont.
American Folksongs for Children by Pete Seeger, Folkways Records, New York.
- These and many other excellent records are listed in the catalog from the Children's Book and Music Center, P. O. Box 1130, Santa Monica, CA 90406. You might want to get on their mailing list.

ABOUT FANTASY

The mental health benefits of fantasy are numerous. Drs. Jerome and Dorothy Singer are two researchers who have documented many of these.

"... private fantasy has significant benefits for a growing child. Children of three and four who engage in pretending or make-believe play not only appear to be happier, but also are more fluent verbally and show more cooperation and sharing behavior. They can wait quietly or delay gratification, can concentrate and seem to be more empathetic and less aggressive, thanks to their use of private fantasy."¹²

Other researchers say use of fantasy leads to higher IQ's and coping skills.¹³ In the process of fantasizing, children are able to express their feelings, solve problems, periodically escape the frustrations of the real world, and imagine what could be.

Think about what you are doing to encourage the use of fantasy in your classroom. Art materials, water, blocks, sand, puppets, and dramatic play props are all tools for fanciful thinking. Extended time for free play gives children a chance to initiate and become involved in fantasy. Assume a role in the children's play, allowing a child to take over when things get going. Create visualization experiences that encourage children to imagine and discuss other places. Reinforce children's varied use of fantasy with appreciative comments.

Outdoor settings stimulate fantasy play for many children. Do you have outside space and materials that the children can imaginatively control? Trees, sand, dirt, hollow blocks and boards, water, and spaces of different shapes and sizes all feed the imagination.

Remember your childhood. How did you use fantasy? What were your props? What spaces did you inhabit? Discuss your memories with co-workers. Ask what they remember. Use your memories to plan new ways of encouraging fantasy play in your classroom.

¹² Singer, Jerome L. and Dorothy G. "Come Back, Mister Rogers, Come Back." Psychology Today, March 1979, p. 56.

¹³ Oaklander, Violet. Windows To Our Children. Moab, Utah: Real People Press, p.10.

DOING THE UNEXPECTED: A FANTASY WORLD IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Benefits: Stretching their imaginations can help children deal with their lives creatively.

Groundwork: Pick a time of year when the weather is dull and time drags. In Maine, it is March. Imagine where you could go to get away from it all: a beach, a ride in space, a jungle? What ideas do the children have? Involve them from the beginning. Consider buildings, vehicles, props, and costumes as you plan your scene. Enlist the help of parents.

One center built a rocket ship. The children's ideas, enthusiasm, and hard work made this "their" experience. Their excitement captured parents too, and everyone counted the days until blast off!

The Experience: With the children, create this special fantasy place in a corner of your classroom. Paint a mural for the wall. Make or bring in a variety of props. Create sensory experiences; find things to touch, smell, listen to, and taste. Serve a snack, a picnic, "space" food, or whatever is appropriate. Leave the place set up for a week or more, allowing the children to make additions and play imaginatively in it.

Teachers in the center that built a rocket ship felt it was well worth spending three weeks on the project. First the class considered what the ship should look like, the building materials they would need, its name, and what to wear. Rocket ship pictures, finger plays, a mobile, and Frank Asch's book, Mooncake (Scholastic, Inc., 1983), enhanced this process. During the actual collecting and building, the children designed a control panel, discussed flight plans, and imagined their destinations. By the third week, this center had a thriving child-centered activity, and a lot of fun.

Reflections: Children can use their imaginations by being involved in creating this place and then playing in it throughout the experience. Ask open-ended questions at opportune times. "How does it feel to be a _____?" "What do you eat for

breakfast?" "Where do you sleep when you're on a _____?"

- Variations:**
- Try another fantasy place later in the year. The children may ask for it or you can make suggestions. Transform your housekeeping area into a castle for princes and princesses, a store, or a farm. Build a boat or train in the block area. What could your playground become?
 - Do an individual fantasy. Allow each child to imagine a special place they would like to be. Some may want to draw pictures.

Your Notes:

RESOURCES

These adult resource books may help carry out the goals of the Thinking Section:

Bergson, Peter A. and Susan D. Shilcock. Open Connections: The Other Basics. Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania: Open Connections, Inc., 1980.

Harlan, Jean. Science Experiences for the Early Childhood Years. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1976.

Hirsch, Elizabeth (editor). The Block Book. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1974.

McVickar, Polly. Imagination: Key to Human Potential. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972.

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AS I AM: EXPERIENCING LITERATURE

Introduction

One of the preschool teacher's most powerful tools for developing a child's mental health skills is good literature. Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim has stated that the two factors most responsible for giving a child the belief that she can make a significant contribution to life are 1) parents and teachers and 2) literature.¹⁴

As parents, teachers, and children learn to really "experience" good books together, the opportunities for positive learning are limitless.

Goals:

This section's mental health goals are to encourage children to:

- build listening skills and attention span.
- enjoy the warm, close interaction between reader and listener.
- learn through the visual stimulation of book illustrations.
- have fun and feel a release from life's pressures.
- vent emotions.
- feel empathy and gain insight into human behavior.
- see conflicts resolved in healthy ways.
- see life from different perspectives.
- gain knowledge of the world and make sense of their place in it.
- consider the power of words to convey meaning.
- hear language that is colorful, rich, and grammatically correct.
- use imagination and fantasy.
- develop motivation for lifetime reading.

The literature experiences in this section are a place for you to start. As you share in-depth, hands-on experiences with children based on each of the recommended books, you will become familiar with a wide and representative range of excellent authors, illustrators, and story types, or genre. This perspective will hopefully provide you with a context for choosing and using good children's books in the future.

¹⁴ Trelease, Jim. The Read-Aloud Handbook. New York: Penguin Books, Second Edition, 1985, p. 9.

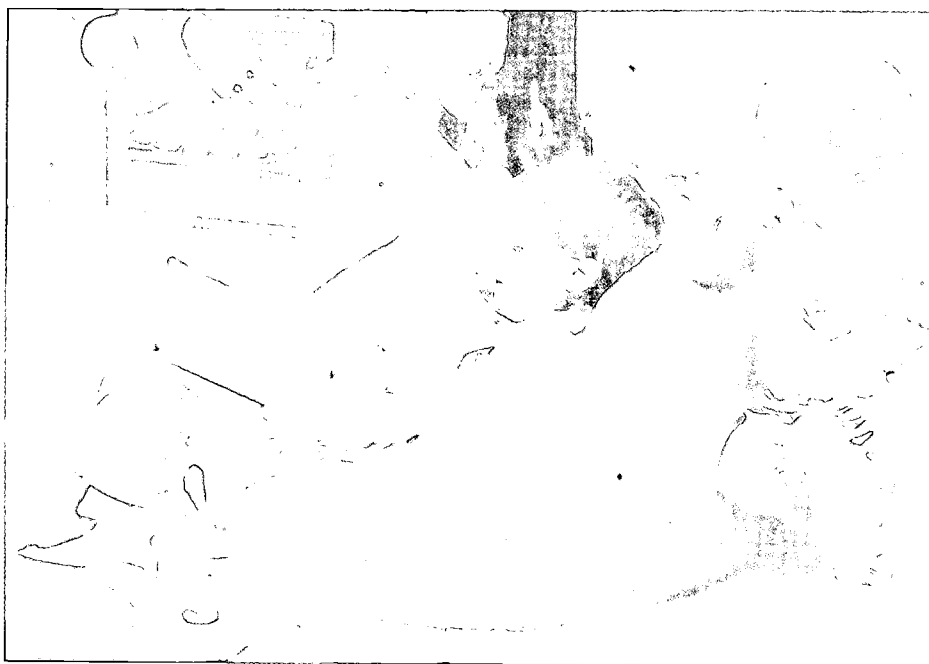
EXPERIENCING LITERATURE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The physical setting in which you present books has an influence on the way children experience literature. Consider how your setting can foster children's delight in books and their motivation for reading.

Books belong in all areas of your classroom, but it's important to display some in an area that is quiet and sheltered from the more rambunctious classroom activities. The book area can become a haven - a place for solitude or sharing, curiosity, fun, and dreams. A couch, large cushions, a bean bag chair, or rocking chair all provide comfort for one or two. Books, creatively set out with their full covers showing, invite children to take a closer look.

Plan your furnishings to encourage group sharing of books, as well. If children have comfortable seating where they can see the pictures and clearly hear your words, each book will have a chance to work its magic.

Set up a lending library, allowing the children to take books home. Book covers displayed on the wall or as a mobile above the library can help make it attractive and inviting.



TEACHER'S ROLE

Many mental health benefits are possible when teachers value and carefully incorporate literature into their classrooms. Children can gain insight and perspective as their world is expanded by the real and fantastic in books. They meet characters who are creatively solving problems, coping, interacting, and expressing themselves in healthy ways. Encourage children to enjoy literature by making it a lively, imaginative part of your curriculum.

Choose books with specific goals in mind.

- Offer a variety of books - fairy tales, nursery rhymes, realistic, fantasy, poetry, concept, informational, folk tales. Change your selection periodically, representing the various literature genre.
- Consider the quality of the book. Look for rich, colorful language and plots that are easy to follow. The illustrations are as important as the text. Will they attract the attention of the children? Are sound moral principles presented? Do the characters show growth and change? Are the book's size and shape conducive to comfortable reading? Will the paper and binding hold up to use?
- Choose books that will reinforce or introduce new ideas or concepts. Challenge the children's skills, while you match their emotional level.
- Be familiar with how long the children listen. Select stories suited to their various attention spans, and gradually increase the length and complexity.
- Choose books that you enjoy. Your enthusiasm will be contagious.

Prepare carefully for your literature experiences.

- Preread the book, so that you will know what to expect. Pay attention to the story line, rhythm, vocabulary, pronunciation, and character changes. Consider what aspects of the story the children might remember and talk about.
- Decide on a method of presentation. Puppets can introduce or read part of the story. Use flannel board pieces to tell the story, or as a follow-up activity. Provide props and ask the children to take roles. For example, have everyone wear a hat while you read Caps For Sale. Duplicate the activity in

a story. For instance, take a walk after reading A Snowy Day. Tell folk tales, fairy tales, and sequential stories from memory. This gives you an excellent opportunity to capture the children's attention with eye contact. The varied experiences in this section will give you many other ideas to try.

- Consider how much time you need, and when during the day the experience will be appropriate. Plan for books to be fun and more than transitional activities. Allow time to introduce, conclude, and create emotional closeness. If your experience calls for a wild rumpus, choose a time when it is OK for the children to be active. Quieter stories work well before lunch or a nap.
- Provide closure. Give the children time to respond to the story, discuss the characters, and ask questions. Think of questions to guide the discussion. Talk about any follow-up activities you have planned. Offer to reread the story at another appropriate time.

LITERATURE GENRE

Children's literature is divided into classifications or genre. Specialists in the field make distinctions about book classifications according to their professional perspectives and the intended use of the book. Definitions of genre vary from one reference to another. For instance, some indexes offer categories such as lap books and anthologies in addition to those listed below.

The following guide defines the different literature genre used in the Experiencing Literature section.

***Nursery Rhymes:** Books of nursery rhymes and Mother Goose are often a young child's first literature experience. Verses of nursery rhymes tell a whole story in just a few lines. Margeurite de Angeli's Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes is a collection of traditional rhymes. For a modern edition, look for Father Fox's Pennyrhymes or Kiss Me & Catch Me & Say It Again, both by Clyde and Wendy Watson. Whether a traditional or modern edition, children are delighted with the silly characters, the language patterns, rhythms, and rhymes.

***Poetry:** Children's poetry is similar to nursery rhymes in that one verse tells a complete short story. It is written for and about children. Collections of poems, such as The Random House Book of Poetry for Children are available as are single verse editions, such as Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening, illustrated by Susan Jeffers.

***ABC and Counting:** These picture books explore the alphabet and numbers. The Experiencing Literature Section introduces the counting book 1, 2, 3 To The Zoo by Eric Carle. Anno's Alphabet and Anno's Counting Book by Mitsumasa Anno are excellent examples of each of these literature types.

***Wordless Books:** In most picture books, the text, or written story, and the illustration work together to tell a story. In a wordless book, the illustrations alone narrate the story. These books are wonderful for encouraging children to tell stories and for stimulating language. Look for Mercer Mayer's Bubble Bubble or Peter Spier's Rainy Day.

***Informational and Concept Books:** Informational books provide answers about the child's world; concept books expand a single idea. Donald Carrick's The Blue Lobster is an informational book about the life cycle of a lobster. The concept

book, Push. Pull. Empty. Full by Tana Hoban is a series of photographs which illustrates the meaning of oppositional words. Look Again! also by Tana Hoban, is another concept book.

*Realistic Fiction: Stories of realistic fiction reflect everyday experiences of young children and provide insight to their world. Ann Herbert Scott's Sam is a wonderfully sensitive selection from this category.

*Modern Fantasy: The fictional characters in modern fantasy live in the world of pretend. Modern fantasy is appealing to three and four year olds because they love magic and make believe. Dr. Seuss' The Sneetches and Bartholomew and the Oobleck, examples of modern fantasy, are full of imagination and fun.

*Fairy Tales, Folktales, and Fables: These traditional stories have been passed on from generation to generation. In many instances the true author is unknown; the stories are often "retold". As in modern fantasy, the characters in fairy tales, folk tales and fables live in the world of make believe. Both written collections and single illustrated editions are available. The Three Bears, a classic, is an excellent first fairy tale for young children.

*Historical Fiction: This type of literature tells about life long ago. Although young children have difficulty understanding the concept of "long ago", these books introduce the idea and offer children a wealth of information about a different way of life. In Donald Hall's Ox-Cart Man, children learn about a family raising its own food and livestock, and trading for everyday necessities. Thy Friend, Obadiah by Brinton Turkle is another example of historical fiction.

EXPERIENCES

BEARS IN THE NIGHT: OVER, UNDER, AND AROUND

Benefits: By acting out this simple story according to the prepositions, children practice remembering the sequence and following directions.

Materials: Bears In The Night by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1971.

Groundwork: Preread the story and plan how to involve the children in setting up your obstacle course. Duplicate the story as closely as possible.

The Experience: Since the obstacle course takes up a large amount of space, it is best to include all the children. This story activity is most successful when several adults assist.

Gather everyone to hear the story. Read slowly and softly, building to a faster pace and slightly scared tone of voice. The owl's voice in the middle of the story should be rather loud, but not overwhelming. Finish the story quickly, in keeping with the actions of the characters.

Next, involve the children in setting up the obstacle course. When you are reading, have a staff member walk through it as you explain the course. Let one child go through at a time, while the story is read. Have everyone else participate by joining in the story and taking the role of the owl. Be prepared to allow more than one turn.

- Variations:**
- Repeat this activity outside.
 - Set up other obstacle courses based on this idea.

BOOK OF NURSERY AND MOTHER GOOSE RHYMES: PLAYING FAVORITES

- Benefits:** Preschoolers have fun with the colorful language, repetition, and rhythms of nursery rhymes.
- Materials:** Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes by Marguerite de Angeli, Doubleday & Co., 1953. Large index cards, stickers, or nursery rhyme coloring books to cut up.
- Groundwork:** As you read through this book, choose nursery rhymes that you and the children like and that provide opportunities for dramatization. Write the nursery rhymes on large index cards. Do a simple drawing, cut out a picture, or place a sticker that is somehow related to the rhyme on each card. For example, try a "spider" sticker on the "Little Miss Muffet" card. Put the cards in a special box and keep them where the children can use them.
- The Experience:** With a group of children (as many as 12 or so if you want), pick a nursery rhyme card from the box. Read the title and talk about the sticker. Explain that only this rhyme has this particular sticker. After awhile, children will be able to choose their favorite rhymes by remembering the appropriate stickers.
- Read the rhyme, inviting those who already know it to join in. To do "Little Miss Muffet," for example, have the children pick partners - one being Miss Muffet and the other a spider. Ask how spiders move and let the children practice. Have the Miss Muffets pick spots to sit. While they pretend to eat, begin the rhyme. Conclude with the Miss Muffets running away scared. The children will probably want to change roles and do the rhyme again.
- Reflections:** As children learn these rhymes at preschool, their parents are often prompted to remember and share favorites from their childhoods. Add these to your collection.

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR: SCIENCE IN ACTION

- Benefits:** This fun and involving story helps children understand change and growth.
- Materials:** The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle, Collins Publishers, 1978. A dozen or so large cardboard boxes or flat cardboard pieces, and a double blanket.
- Groundwork:** Design the cardboard boxes or flat pieces to represent the foods in the story. Cut a hole large enough for a child to crawl through in each. Form an obstacle course with the cardboard foods and place the blanket at the end.
- The Experience:** Gather a group of children together and read the story. Then, invite the children to become caterpillars crawling on the floor. Explain that you have some food for them to eat, so that they will grow and change into butterflies. Let one child at a time eat her way through each food in the obstacle course. At the end have her wrap up in the blanket, pretending to be a caterpillar spinning a cocoon. Show your delight when she emerges as a beautiful butterfly.
- Reflections:** The main theme of this story deals with the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly, the process of change and growth. Other subjects include: counting to 10, naming the days of the week, and good nutrition.
- Variations:**
- Using oaktag or cardboard and a wide variety of art materials, construct butterfly wings. The children can use the wings when they finish the obstacle course and have changed into butterflies. They may also want to wear them in their dramatic play.
 - Use real fruit for a hands-on counting experience. Count out the fruit as you read. When the story is finished, enjoy eating!
 - Staff or children can easily make felt board pieces to represent the caterpillar, food, cocoon, and butterfly. Let the children hold the pieces during the story and add them to the

felt board at the appropriate times. Leave the felt pieces out so children can retell the story or make up new ones.

- Draw a one-month calendar and small pictures to represent daily events in the story. As you read, place the corresponding picture on each day. The first Sunday would show the caterpillar popping out of the egg; the first Monday, an apple. Build up to two weeks of cocoon pictures with a butterfly on the last day. Allow the children to use these pictures during free play. For durability, cover the pieces with clear contact paper or laminate.
- If the season is right, catch a caterpillar and keep him in a good-sized jar with air holes. Research with the children what a caterpillar needs in order to grow. Care for him long enough to observe his transformation into a butterfly, and let then him go.
- Have the children bring in baby pictures. Allow plenty of time for sharing, one-to-one and in groups. Ask the children how they became older and bigger. What helps them grow? Take pictures of each child for them to keep with their baby pictures. They may also want to talk about who they will be or what they will be able to do when they have grown some more.
- What foods in the story were good for the butterfly? Which gave him a stomachache? Why? What would happen if you ate only candy, cake, cookies, and ice cream? Why did the butterfly need to eat food? Why do you need to eat food? Using pictures cut from magazines, have the children create food posters, perhaps dealing with healthy vs. "junk" foods.

THE SNAIL'S SPELL: A DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE

Benefits: This illustrated poem invites young children to view the world from a new perspective.

Materials: The Snail's Spell by Joanne Ryder, Fredrick Warne, 1982.

Groundwork: Preread the story to capture the quiet, slow-moving pace of the poem. Use it with either large or small groups of children.

The Experience: Gather the children so all are able to see the illustrations. Use a strong but soft-spoken voice to set a quiet, mystical mood. Read the poem twice. The first time, read so the children will become familiar with the words. The second time, have one adult read while another leads the children in pretending to be the snail in the story.

Allow plenty of time during the poem for imagining. Encourage the children to feel and use their bodies like a snail.

As you experience this poem over and over again, the children will feel more comfortable with dramatizing the words.

Your Notes:

EXPERIENCING LITERATURE AT HOME: FOR PARENTS

At Preschool:

We involve children in reading by using children's literature in many ways. A variety of books are always displayed in a quiet area for children to look at, on their own or with an adult. We often do special activities with books. The children enjoy discussing plots and characters, recreating the stories with puppets, and acting out feelings and conflicts.

Why We Do What We Do:

Good children's books provide many important experiences for children. Reading with an adult creates a warm, close relationship for children. Stories encourage children to think imaginatively, offer new ideas and information, and model healthy relationships. Children also learn appropriate language from books. Most important, having fun with books helps children want to learn to read.

What You Can Do at Home:

You can help your child enjoy reading. Use the local library, asking the librarian to suggest books to you. Let your child help pick them out. Read to her regularly. Having books at home will encourage her interest.

Pick a quiet moment and a comfortable spot for reading together. Having a special time each day gives your child something to look forward to. Some parents like to read at bedtime; others prefer morning. Reading at a time that's good for you will enhance the experience.

Talk about the story and characters. Your preschooler will want to hear some stories again and again. After a few times, let her join you in telling the story. These special moments will help your child learn that reading is fun.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE: CREATING A "RUMPUS"

Benefits: Children can join the fun as the non-threatening monsters in this story provide the chance to vent feelings.

Materials: Where The Wild Things Are written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak, Harper and Row Publishers, 1963. Large paper bags, markers, yarn, glue, crayons, glitter, fabric scraps.

Groundwork: Preread the book to catch the rhythm of the story and sequence of events. You will want to practice your most non-threatening, but slightly scary, "wild things" voice.

Each child will need a bag to turn into a "wild things" mask. Set out a variety of art materials on tables and cut the eye holes in the bags ahead of time.

The Experience: This activity works well with both small and large groups. As the illustrations are a vital part of the story, settle the children where all can see. Introduce the book and author and read the story through once. Talk about what happened, asking the children to help you retell the events. Then allow ample time for everyone to make a "wild things" mask.

When the masks are completed, reread the story. Explain beforehand that, at the "rumpus" part, you will stop reading so they can have a "wild things rumpus" with their masks. Playing some jazzy music will add to the fun. Signal the end of the rumpus by stopping the music, and then finish the story.

Reflections: This book is the first in a trilogy by Maurice Sendak. Your children will probably like In the Night Kitchen and Outside Over There as well. They also are published by Harper and Row.

Variations: • Have mask-making materials available and read the story again. Children who didn't make a mask the first time may wish to do so if this story becomes a favorite. Encourage dramatic play with the masks.

- "Wild things" puppets are easily made using socks and all kinds of intriguing items for decorating: fabric scraps, yarn, buttons, glitter, sequins, or pipe cleaners. Encourage children to make their own puppets or design a set for the dramatic play area.
- This story is an inspiration for children to write or tell their own creative stories. Use any of the following ideas to get started:

Did Max ever return to the land of the "wild things?"
What happened, or why not?

Pretend Max landed on a different island. What
would Max find there?

If you could live in a different land, what would it
be like?

Recording the stories they tell in answer to such questions is
fun and promotes further language development.

Your Notes:

THE RUNAWAY BUNNY: LOST AND FOUND

- Benefits:** This hide-and-seek story gives children a warm example of love and acceptance.
- Materials:** The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown, Harper and Row Publishers, 1942. Props based on the story, such as carrots, rope, watering can, or fishing pole minus hook.
- Groundwork:** Preread the story, considering the soothing effect of your voice and the repetition of phrases.
- The Experience:** Read and discuss the story. "The little bunny's mother looked for him and found him, no matter where he went. This was one way she showed him how much she loved him. What are some of the things we do to show family members or friends that we love them, no matter what?" (Hugs, helping with chores, picking a summer bouquet, saying "I love you" in words or sign language, making a present, etc.)
- For an active and fun conclusion to this discussion, set up dramatic play based on events in the story. Some children can become runaway bunnies, crocuses, sail boats, or birds. Others can become gardeners, the wind, or tall leafy trees who, when they are reunited, show how much they care.
- Reflections:** It is important that the little bunny could imagine running away without really doing it - that his mother playfully joined in his fantasy, providing security and acknowledgement.
- Variations:** If you ever "ran away" with a funny or interesting result, share your experience with the children. Prompt them to imagine where they would go if they could safely "run away." What would their secret hiding places be? What would they want to do when they came home again?

BLUEBERRIES FOR SAL: A REGIONAL TALE

Benefits: This story about blueberry picking in Maine exposes children to an unusual regional and local custom.

Materials: Blueberries For Sal by Robert McCloskey, The Viking Press, 1948. Teddy bears and dolls to recreate the story, large boxes or a sheet thrown over a table to serve as the mountain, a metal pail, beads or real blueberries for sound effects.

Groundwork: Set the scene in a way that will enable you to read the story and manipulate the props with ease. You may want to have blueberries on the menu.

The Experience: Introduce the story by asking how many have ever gone blueberry picking. Who has eaten blueberries, blueberry muffins or pancakes? Explain that the story is about a young girl their age who lives where blueberries grow and who goes to pick some with her mother.

When you're finished reading, allow time for the children to reenact the story using the props. Have "blueberry and blue" activities for those who are waiting a turn: a cooking project using blueberries, blue paint at the easels, or blue water at the water table. If possible, plan a berry-picking field trip. Make berry jam as a group project when you return.

Reflections: Although most children may not have had the specific experience of picking blueberries with their parents, many will have other special times with family or friends to talk about and reflect upon. Encourage their recollections and find props that might help them act out their own stories.

Look for books native to your region. They can help children reaffirm their connection to familiar settings, occupations, and customs.

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING: FEELING A POEM

Benefits: This illustrated version of a famous poem can be a sensory experience for children.

Materials: Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening by Robert Frost and illustrated by Susan Jeffers, E. P. Dutton, 1978. A large sheet of paper, water colors or chalk in pastel shades.

Groundwork: Save this book for a snowy day, or the day after. Hang the large sheet of paper on a low wall or bulletin board.

The Experience: Gently, softly read this poem to the children. Be sure to share the beautiful illustrations with them. Afterwards, go for a quiet walk in the snow. If possible, walk through a section of woods. Encourage the children to use their eyes and ears. What do they see? What can they hear? When you arrive back at your classroom, write a group experience story on the large sheet of paper. Using art materials, give each child the opportunity to illustrate the group's story.

Reflections: Other than in finger plays and nursery rhymes, poetry is often absent from the preschool classroom. How unfortunate for the children, as well as the teachers! Explore the poetry section of your library and local book stores. You will be surprised by what you find.

Variations:

- While outside on a winter day, allow the children to make snow angels. Perhaps even show them how, yourself. Lie on the ground, moving your arms and legs to create an angel shape.
- Using sleds with ropes attached, children can take turns pretending to be the horse pulling the sleigh.
- Other books of poetry to experience:
A Child's Treasury of Poems edited by Mark Daniel, Dial Books, 1986.
A Very First Poetry Book compiled by John Foster, Oxford University Press, 1984.

Where The Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein, Harper and Row, 1974.

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod by Eugene Field, illustrated by Susan Jeffers, E. P. Dutton, 1986.

Catch Me. And Kiss Me And Say It Again by Clyde Watson, Philomel Books, 1978.

Father Fox's Pennyrhymes by Clyde Watson, Thomas Crowell Co., 1971.

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children selected by Jack Prelutsky, Random House, 1983.

Your Notes:

I WAS SO MAD: A "FEELING" DISCUSSION

Benefits: This book takes a realistic approach to "What makes you mad?" and "What can you do about it?".

Materials: I Was So Mad by Norma Simon, Albert Whitman & Co., 1974.

Groundwork: Young children are just beginning to be aware of the many different feelings they have, and they need to learn that those feelings are OK. It is how they act on them that is either acceptable or unacceptable. Children need models of how to respond to or express feelings in acceptable ways.

The Experience: Plan plenty of time to read and discuss this story. Limiting the group to five or six children allows everyone the opportunity to be heard.

The story presents different situations which can make someone feel mad. Discuss these situations. "Have you ever had that happen to you? How did you feel?" Help the children identify their feelings - rage, sorrow, jealousy, crankiness. Encourage them to give their feelings accurate names. There are many words besides "mad, sad, or glad" which can describe a child's feelings about a particular event. Ask "What did you do? What else could you have done?" End with the song.

Reflections: Every day children experience a wide range of emotions. At this age, they are continually trying out different ways to express their angry feelings. Sometimes their behavior is acceptable; other times it is not. Often, young children do not have the mature vocabulary to describe and express their feelings to others.

Take time to communicate individually with the child who seems to be angry a lot, or the one who seems to have very real things to be angry about. This book may help them learn to use words, rather than aggressive behavior. It provides a model for talking about anger, what caused it, and ways to resolve the problem.

BUBBLE, BUBBLE: MAKING UP THE WORDS

- Benefits:** Each child will interpret this wordless picture book differently.
- Materials:** Bubble, Bubble by Mercer Mayer, Four Winds Press, 1973. Liquid dish soap, glycerin (buy at any drugstore), pipe cleaners, a tape recorder.
- Groundwork:** Make bubble soap by mixing water, liquid dish soap, and glycerin. The glycerin makes the bubbles stronger.
- The Experience:** Working with a group of no more than five children, have everyone sit so they can easily view the illustrations. You will want to explain that a "wordless" book is one in which the pictures tell the story. Ask them to quietly "read" the pictures as you turn the pages. Then go back to the beginning and have the children read the story out loud to you. Allow plenty of time for each page. Make no corrections, encouraging each of them to use the picture's clues to put the story together.
- When you're finished reading, bring out the bubble soap and pipe cleaners. Fashion bubble blowers from the pipe cleaners and have fun blowing bubbles. You may want to do it outside where there is more freedom to be messy.
- Reflections:** This is an excellent book for promoting expressive verbal language and building vocabulary.
- Variations:**
- Record the children's "reading" of the story on tape. They love to hear themselves when the tape is played back and it enables them to listen to their story again and again.
 - While blowing bubbles, have the children pretend it is magic bubble soap. Encourage them to make up their own Bubble, Bubble story.
 - Challenge their imaginations by having them develop a sequel to this story. A lead-in question might be: "What happened to the sea serpent?"

SAM: BAKING TARTS

Benefits: Sam is a frustrated young boy with whom many children can identify.

Materials: Sam by Ann Herbert Scott, McGraw Hill, 1967. Pie crust dough, several jams or fresh fruits for tart fillings, cooking utensils.

Groundwork: Preread the story. This book works best with a small group of children, no more than six. Set up an area and the ingredients for making tarts.

Even though you do this experience with only a few children, you will probably want tarts for everyone. Using prepared tart shells or making turnovers, will simplify preparation.

The Experience: Gather for the story in a quiet area. Read slowly to allow time for the group to absorb the story line and ask questions. Then turn to the tart-making activity. Have each child roll their own crust, choose their own filling, and fill the tart shell.

While the tarts are baking, talk about the story. "Why was Sam so sad? Why was everyone in his family too busy for him? What did Sam do to get their attention? Does crying always get you what you want? How else could Sam have let his family know how he was feeling? What could Sam have done until someone could play with him? What things do you enjoy doing by yourself?"

THE SNEETCHES: CONSIDERING OUR DIFFERENCES

Benefits: These imaginative and hilarious creatures help children consider how it feels to be different and begin to accept differences in others.

Materials: The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss, Random House, 1953. Blue star shapes cut from self-adhesive paper. On a warm spring or summer day, use nontoxic face paint instead.

Groundwork: Be sure to preread this story a couple of times before presenting it. As Dr. Seuss uses nonsensical words and a rhyming style, it pays to get the feel of his stories beforehand.

The Experience: Introduce the book to the children. If they are familiar with other Dr. Seuss titles, mention them. Draw their attention to the cover. Pass out the blue stars and have the children put them on. "Does having the star on change you? How?" Have them take the stars off. "Does not having the stars change you? How?"

Randomly divide the group of children. One half will wear the stars; the other half won't. As you read, change the stars according to the story. Ask again if having or not having a star makes a person different. If the stars change, how do they feel about their friends then? Finish the story. Allow the children to continue wearing their stars.

As you talk about whether wearing the stars makes a difference, avoid being judgmental. Acknowledge children's responses, incorporating them as you discuss how it is fun for each person to be different. "It is the differences in our friends that usually draw us to them." Give examples. For instance, one child's sense of humor may be especially appreciated. Another child may be caring and gentle, while still another usually has good ideas for what to do next. Remember to include differences among the teachers and other adults in the discussion.

THE OX-CART MAN: LEARNING ABOUT HISTORY

Benefits: When combined with hands-on experiences, historical fiction presents valuable knowledge of the world and introduces the concept of life "long ago."

Materials: The Ox-Cart Man by Donald Hall, The Viking Press, 1979.

Groundwork: Preread the story to decide which activities you want to make available to the children after the story.

The Experience: Without dwelling too much on the concept of time, introduce The Ox-Cart Man as a story about what life was like years ago. Read the story. Afterwards talk about how the homes, clothes, ways of getting food, and means of transportation were different from those of today. Refer back to the book's illustrations as you talk. There are a variety of hands-on activities you can arrange for the children to do and observe.

- Set up a trading post and introduce the concept of trading goods or bartering. Use classroom materials. "How many blocks will you trade for this fireman's hat?"
- If possible, visit a beekeeper, maple syrup farm, weaver, candlemaker, broom maker, or other craftsperson. Try some of these activities in your classroom.
- Read this book in the spring, before planting seeds or a garden with the children.
- Sample raw and cooked foods, using apples, turnips, cabbages and maple syrup.
- Construct a cart and let children take turns being the farmer, his family, and the ox. Try this outside using a wheelbarrow or garden cart.
- Find an old feather pillow. Open it up and feel the feathers. Are they all the same? Have fabric squares ready for everyone to make a small feather pillow of their own.

- Find out what an ox is. How does it differ from a cow?

Variations:

Other books of historical fiction to experience:

Thy Friend Obadiah by Brinton Turble

Obadiah the Bold by Brinton Turble

On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed into Town by Arnold Lobel

The Sweet Patootie Doll by Mary Calhoun

Anno's Counting Book by Mitsumasa Anno

Your Notes:

LOOK AGAIN!: FIGURING IT OUT

- Benefits:** The rich, visual experience of this book stimulates children's imaginations and problem-solving skills.
- Materials:** Look Again! by Tana Hoban, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1971.
- Groundwork:** This is the exception to the rule of prereading a book before presenting it. You'll want to share the fun and be surprised along with the children.
- The Experience:** The book itself is a hands-on literature experience. Gather a group of children together and, page by page, discover the whole object after viewing a small part of it. Leave the book out for the children to read again and again. Even though they remember the surprise on each page, the game of discovery continues to intrigue them.
- Reflections:** Is This a Baby Dinosaur? by Millicent E. Selsam is another excellent book similar to this one.
- Your Notes:**

NO SUCH THINGS: CREATING FANTASTIC ANIMALS

- Benefits:** The silly animals in this nonsense story have a magical way of bringing out humor in preschoolers.
- Materials:** No Such Things by Bill Peet, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983. Magazine pictures of animals, glue, paper.
- Groundwork:** Collect animal pictures from magazines, such as Ranger Rick, and cut them up, separating the body parts. Make sure to have many examples of each body part: heads, feet, legs, hands, arms, and body trunks.
- Reread the story several times to catch the rhyming rhythm and practice the imaginative animal names.
- The Experience:** Because these animals are so silly and funny, take the time to get to know and enjoy them. As you read this story, talk about the animals, their names, what they look like, and what they are doing in the story.
- Invite the children to design their own make-believe, silly animals by using the animal body part pictures, paper, and glue. Afterwards, each child can tell about his creation. Does it have a name? What makes one child's animal different from another's? What can it do? Crawl? Jump? Hang by its tail? Sing? Stand on its head? What does it eat?
- Reflections:** Bill Peet's The Whingdingdilly is similar to No Such Things. It is a more involved story, which takes at least twenty minutes to read. Dr. Seuss has also written many books with make-believe animal characters. Share some of these, too.
- Variations:**
- Display the silly animal pictures made with magazine cutouts. Some children may want to draw or color imaginative animals.

HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON: DRAWING A STORY

- Benefits:** Harold and his crayon introduce children to the storytelling process and give them opportunities to express their hopes, needs, and fears.
- Materials:** Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson, Harper and Row Publishers, 1955. A large sheet of paper (at least 3' by 6'), purple markers or crayons.
- Groundwork:** Hang the large sheet of paper on the wall, low enough so the children can easily reach the top.
- The Experience:** As this book is small, gather a small group of children. Introduce them to Harold as the boy who tells us a story by drawing his adventures. After reading the story, give each child a purple crayon and designate a part of the paper for her. Encourage children to draw their own adventures. As a child is drawing, or after she is finished, write down her story near the drawing. It's very helpful to have an extra adult or two available to assist.
- The Experience:** This is an experience that improves with repetition. At first, children tend to draw one picture and tell a story about it. Ask, "What happened then?" and "Why don't you draw that, too?" You will help them draw more involved adventures. Remember that some children prefer to retell an experience they have had, while others enjoy making up truly outrageous tales.
- Reflections:** When using a book from a series, it is often helpful to have one or two of the other books available. There are more Harold books. Offer to read them later on.
- Variations:**
- This also can be a group drawing. Gather the children in front of the paper. As they take turns, sketch in a path for the adventure. Include their descriptive phrases and label the path accordingly. Have each child be responsible for illustrating part of the adventure. If children choose to work by twos, encourage their cooperative effort.

- Use this experience on an individual basis with a child who is excited or fearful about an upcoming event. Encourage the child to draw what she is feeling, what has happened, or what she thinks will happen. Acknowledge the feelings behind her drawings without criticizing them.

Your Notes:

REGARDS TO THE MAN IN THE MOON: SPACE TRAVEL

- Benefits:** The trip into space on IMAGINATION 1 allows children to feel confident to be anyone, try out ideas, and live out fantasies.
- Materials:** Regards to the Man in the Moon by Ezra Jack Keats, Four Winds Press, 1981. Large boxes, markers, paints, a wide selection of dress-up clothes and accessories.
- Groundwork:** Set up an area of the room with ample space for each child to construct an IMAGINATION 1. Make sure the boxes, markers, and paints are easily accessible. You may want to cover the floor with newspapers.
- The Experience:** After reading the story, invite everyone to make an IMAGINATION 1. Allow plenty of time. When the paint is dry, get out the dress-up clothes and other dramatic props and let imaginations run wild.
- Reflections:** Young children are intrigued with outer space. Provide them with useful information. Follow up this book and their play with facts on planets, stars, meteors, and the sun. They can then incorporate the real into their make-believe play.
- Variations:**
- Instead of each child having her own box, use an empty appliance box for several children to work on. Encourage co-operation and joint decision making.
 - Make a permanent IMAGINATION 1 for your center. Working with small groups of children, build a wooden box for a space vehicle. Paint it, decorate it, and use it over and over again. You may want one for the playground, too.
 - Write down some of the journeys the children take in their space ships. Be sure to leave room for them to illustrate their stories.
 - When your dress-up area has become a bit "old hat" and needs some spark, this is a good experience. Collect some new dress-up materials, particularly items that might suggest

space exploration - big work or snowmobile boots, heavy gloves, and sports helmets.

Your Notes:

1. 2. 3 TO THE ZOO: A COUNTING EXPERIENCE

Benefits: This hands-on experience builds children's counting skills and understanding of number concepts.

Materials: 1. 2. 3 To The Zoo by Eric Carle, Philomel Books, 1968. Large-size construction paper, a variety of art materials.

The Experience: With a small group of children, probably no more than six, read the story. Take plenty of time to explore each page. Count the animals, point out the written numeral, and talk about the train at the bottom. When finished, invite the children to make their own number books.

Have each child fold several sheets of construction paper in half. Then assemble them in book fashion. Encourage those who can write their numbers to do so; help those who cannot. Each page should have one numeral and the corresponding number of objects. The objects can be drawn on or cut and glued, and the possibilities are endless. Each child will approach such a project differently, depending on temperament and ability. Encourage the children to talk and share their ideas with one another.

Reflections: Keeping pages together in "book" form can be a problem, particularly since many children want their books to look "like a book." Staples are one easy solution. Another way is to keep a large darning needle and a skein of yarn on hand. A length of yarn "sewn" through the folds of paper and tied on the outside makes a quick and easy finishing touch.

Many children will not know or be able to write numerals yet. Use sponge prints to help them begin to understand number concepts. "How many are there? One. That's right, one." This will probably be a gradual process for most children. Encourage such activity when the child shows interest, but don't push.

Variations: • Using a large assortment of stickers, help the children place

the correct number of stickers on each page. If possible, have them choose one type of sticker per page. For example: on the "1" page, one star sticker; on the "2" page, two dog stickers, etc.

- "Print" the number of objects needed on each page. Make printing pads by folding a couple of sheets of paper toweling into 4 x 4 squares. Pour out just enough paint to wet the paper towel square. For printing objects, use fruits (oranges and grapefruits make very interesting prints) or vegetables cut in half, sponges cut into a variety of shapes, or commercial printing stamps.
- Make color, alphabet or shape books in a similar fashion.



THE THREE BEARS: A SEQUENTIAL STORY

- Benefits:** This classic fairy tale offers children opportunities to examine family relationships, fearful feelings, and a variety of thinking concepts.
- Materials:** A blonde doll, a small table or tablecloth, three different-sized teddy bears, bowls, spoons, chairs, beds or blankets. Have available The Three Bears, retold by Paul Galdone, Seabury Press, Inc., 1972.
- Groundwork:** Your role in this experience is as a storyteller. Read the story several times, so it will be fresh in your memory. You need not remember the tale word for word. Simply be familiar with the action sequences. It is the way you retell the story that makes it special and unique for the children. Often preschoolers will be quick to point out "that's not the way the story goes." Explain that it is fun to hear and tell the story a new way every time. Later you can invite them to retell the tale, perhaps creating another version.
- Set the scene and tone for your story presentation. Lay out your props, putting the dishes on the table and arranging the chairs and beds.
- The Experience:** Gather the children in a semicircle around your "stage." As you retell the story, manipulate the bears, Goldilocks, and the props accordingly. Place emphasis on the Great Big Bear having the largest bowl, spoon, chair and bed, as well as a louder, deeper voice. Do the same for the other bears.
- Often young children will spontaneously participate in the counting, matching, and size repetitions, as well as each character's dialogue. Encourage them as they become a "chorus."
- At the end of the story, put the bears and props in an area where small groups of two or three can experiment with retelling or enacting the story. Also, have the book in the classroom for the children to look at.

Reflections: Although Galdone's version uses size terms to describe the bears, you can choose papa, mama, baby or other family terms to emphasize these relationships.

This story presents a wealth of concepts to explore: counting, one-to-one correspondence, matching sizes, and sequencing.

- Variations:**
- Serve porridge for lunch or snack. Or, have the bears' meal match your menu for the day.
 - Retell the story with puppets instead of the doll and teddy bears. Use old socks or make stick puppets with felt and tongue depressors.
 - Use paper grocery bags to make masks of the four characters. Leave these in the housekeeping area for dramatic play.
 - Make felt board pieces of the characters and props, or buy them from a commercial source. Be sure to emphasize the different sizes. Retell the story by passing out all the pieces to the children for them to add at the appropriate times. Leave the pieces out during free play. A group could present the felt board version to the rest of the class.
 - Several children may wish to dramatize the story for the class. Help them put it together, but follow their lead. Let it be their version of the story.

SOME GOOD BOOKS: FOR PARENTS

Here are some books that preschoolers enjoy. You may want to look for them or others by these authors in your local library. Book stores can order them if you want one for a special present.

Bears In The Night by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House)

Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes by Marguerite de Angeli
(Doubleday and Company)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle (Collins Publisher)

The Snail's Spell by Joanne Ryder (Fredrick Warne)

Where The Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (Harper and Row)

The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper and Row)

Blueberries For Sal by Robert McCloskey (The Viking Press)

Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening by Robert Frost and illustrated
by Susan Jeffers (E. P. Dutton)

I Was So Mad by Norma Simon (Albert Whitman and Co.)

Bubble, Bubble by Mercer Mayer (Four Winds Press)

Sam by Ann Herbert Scott (McGraw Hill)

The Sneetches by Dr. Suess (Random House)

The Ox-Cart Man by Donald Hall (The Viking Press)

Look Again! by Tana Hoban (MacMillan Publishing Co.)

No Such Things by Bill Peet (Houghton Mifflin Co.)

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson (Harper and Row)

Regards to the Man in the Moon by Ezra Jack Keats (Four Winds Press)

1, 2, 3 To The Zoo by Eric Carle (Philomel Books)

The Three Bears by Paul Galdone (Seabury Press)

RESOURCES

These adult resource books may help carry out the goals of the Experiencing Literature Section:

Butler, Dorothy. Babies Need Books. New York, N.Y.: Antheneum, 1982.

Cullinan, Bernice and Carolyn W. Carmichael, Editors. Literature and Young Children. National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.

Huck, Charlotte. Children's Literature in the Elementary School. New York, N.Y.: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

Oppenheimer, Joanne, Barbara Brenner and Betty D. Boegehold. Choosing Books for Kids. New York: Ballantine Books, 1986.

Ross, Ramon. The Storyteller. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1980.

Taylor, Denny and Dorothy S. Strickland. Family Storybook Reading. Hunemann Educational Books Inc., 1986.

Trelease, Jim. The Read-Aloud Handbook. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1982.

APPENDICES

USING OBSERVING SKILLS FOR LIVING

The Observing Skills for Living checklist was designed to guide teachers as they work to promote mental health in young children. It is a thinking tool for teachers, not an evaluation tool for children. Based on the goals of the **AS I AM** curriculum, it can help you consider a specific child or the class as a whole. Use it to guide your selection of experiences or to prepare for discussions with parents, co-workers, and consultants.

Observing Skills for Living helps teachers record some of the specifics of children's mental health growth. Teachers who used it found that they began to look at child development in a new way. The checklist highlighted behavior that might have gone unnoticed and prompted them to be specific about how a child's behavior had changed. Their recommendation is to use it after a child has been in a program for a month, and again four months later. One teacher commented, "If I had used this last year I would have noticed Diane's lack of self-awareness much sooner."

Observing Skills for Living requires careful use. The checklist format represents a broad range of developmentally appropriate behavior, but necessarily limits the amount of information you gather from an observation. Be aware that you may miss some important behaviors. The checklist provides space for additional descriptive information.

Each child's Observing Skills for Living profile will reflect individual strengths and weaknesses. Over time, it is normal to see both growth and regression. When sharing this information with parents, be sure to explain that the children are not expected to accomplish all these skills.

OBSERVING SKILLS FOR LIVING

Directions for Use: As you use this checklist, remember that there is a broad range of normal behavior reflecting a child's development and temperament. Observing Skills for Living can give a general picture of a child's present and emerging mental health skills. It is inappropriate, however, to expect that he will necessarily accomplish all of the listed skills.

Child's Name: _____ **DOB:** _____

BEING:

CODE:

- O = Often
- S = Sometimes
- I = Infrequently Or Never
- U = Unable To Observe At This Time

Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Play Includes: large motor equipment classroom and outdoor areas moving body freely			
Recognizes Self In Photo			
Identifies Self By Name (note names used)			
Can Describe Physical or Personal Characteristics			
Can Make Positive Statements About Self			
Explains Own Likes and Dislikes			
Makes Routine Transitions Easily			

Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Can Assert Wants and Needs Without Aggression			
Has Growing Awareness of Male and Female Roles			
Practices Regular Health Routines (cleans hands and teeth, eats balanced meals, exercises regularly)			
Talks About Growth Process With Understanding			
FEELING: CODE: O = Often S = Sometimes I = Infrequently Or Never U = Unable To Observe At This Time			
Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Play Includes: a wide range of props a variety of roles dramatizing life events expressive use of creative materials			
Can Leave Parent Or Caretakers Without Fussing			
Can Maintain Self-Control In Difficult Or Unfamiliar Situations			
Trusts At Least One Adult Or Child In Classroom			

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Can Ask For Assistance When Needed			
Can Discuss Anxieties And Fears With Adult			
Can Participate In Conversations About Feelings			
Chooses Quiet Relaxing Activity/ Rest When Needed			
Can Express Anger In Appropriate Ways			
Expresses A Range Of Emotions With: body language behavior verbally			
Responds To Humorous Situations With Laughter			
RELATING: CODE: O = Often S = Sometimes I = Infrequently Or Never U = Unable To Observe At This Time			
Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Play Includes: solitary parallel group interaction			
Responds To The Presence Of Other Children			

Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Maintains Friendship(s) With Peers			
Has Warm Relationship With One Or More Adults In Classroom			
Can Make Eye Contact When Spoken To			
Can Understand And Follow Class Rules And Routines			
Can Listen To What Other People Are Saying			
Can Show Sympathy For Living Beings			
Joins In Group Activities			
Can Demonstrate Co-operative Behaviors, Such As Sharing, Helping, And Turn Taking.			
Can Resolve Conflicts Non-Violently			
Shows Awareness Of Family Members And Their Roles			
Can Demonstrate Awareness And Acceptance Of Individual Differences			

THINKING:

CODE:

- O = Often
- S = Sometimes
- I = Infrequently Or Never
- U = Unable To Observe At This Time

Skill	Code	Date	Behavior/Comment
Play Includes: imaginative use of open-ended cognitive materials (blocks, sand, water, other construction materials) closed-cognitive materials (puzzles, lotto, other games) spontaneous talk			
Can Remain With Age-Appropriate Task Until Complete			
Tries Hard And Can Accept Mistakes/ Frustrations As Part Of Learning Process			
Asks For Favorite Stories			
Remembers Past Events			
Helps Plan Activities			
Can Make Choices When Asked			
Welcomes Opportunities For Field Trips			
Shows Pride In Accomplishments			
Can Verbalize About Self And Feelings			
Can Use Understandable Language			

BEING CROSS REFERENCE

SECTION CONTENT:

CURRICULUM GOALS:

Know who they are
Feel capable
Use bodies to express self
Identify and accept feelings
Nonverbal and verbal expression
Learn coping skills
Listen and communicate with others
Skills for relationships
Value living beings
Exercise imagination
Build knowledge and thinking skills
Understand and use language

In Your Classroom

Teacher's Role

Book About Me

Book About Me: For Parents

Name Games

About Movement

Dancing Statues

Here's Where I Sit

Whipping Up Snacks

If I Were An Animal

Featuring Me

How I Look When

About Sexuality

Our Growing Bodies

Little Women, Little Men

The Shadow Dancer

About Praise

Three Cheers for Me

Three Cheers: For Parents

Bash, Mash, Smash

About Temperament

Me, Myself, and I

X	X	X										
X	X	X										
X	X		X	X					X		X	
X	X		X	X					X		X	
X						X	X	X		X		
X	X	X		X					X			
X		X							X			
X	X					X						
	X									X		
		X		X				X	X	X	X	
X	X							X		X		
X		X		X					X			
X												
X			X	X		X			X			
X	X		X						X	X	X	X
		X					X					
X	X											
X	X		X	X								X
X	X		X	X								X
	X	X		X	X				X	X	X	
X			X	X				X				
X	X		X		X							

DIRECTIONS: Find appropriate experiences and related information to help you achieve your mental health goals by using these cross reference charts.

FEELING CROSS REFERENCE

SECTION CONTENT:

CURRICULUM GOALS:

Know who they are

Feel capable

Use bodies to express self

Identify and accept feelings

Nonverbal and verbal expression

Learn coping skills

Listen and communicate with others

Skills for relationships

Value living beings

Exercise imagination

Build knowledge and thinking skills

Understand and use language

Feeling In Your Class

Teacher's Role

About Feeling Words

A Look At Our Feelings

Weather Dance

About Puppets

New Friends

New Friends: For Parents

When I Got Lost

Boa Constrictor

Fearful Fantasies

About Relaxation

Cloud Nine

Pacemakers

Pacemakers: For Parents

About Self-Expression

Painting

And How Did He Feel Then

Teacher Gets a Shot

Seeing Red

Body Feelings

			X	X	X						
			X	X	X						
			X	X							X
X			X	X		X					X
		X		X					X		
				X			X		X		X
	X		X	X			X		X		X
			X	X		X			X		
			X		X	X					X
	X		X	X	X				X		
X			X	X	X				X		X
X		X	X		X						
					X				X		
		X			X				X		
X					X						
		X	X	X					X		
	X			X					X		X
			X	X	X						X
	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
			X	X	X	X	X			X	X
X		X	X	X		X					

RELATING CROSS REFERENCE

SECTION CONTENT:

CURRICULUM GOALS:

Know who they are

Feel capable

Use bodies to express self

Identify and accept feelings

Nonverbal and verbal expression

Learn coping skills

Listen and communicate with others

Skills for relationships

Value living beings

Exercise imagination

Build knowledge and thinking skills

Understand and use language

Relating In Your Classroom

Teacher's Role

Getting Along

About Touch

Signed With Love

Reaching Out

Mixing, Munching, and Mopping Up

Menu Making

About Music

"I'm a Member of the Band"

People Are Different

Family Week

Teachers of Life

I Can Do It

I Can Do It: For Parents

About Listening

And Then . . .

Who Is Gone?

Who Is Gone?: For Parents

About Resolving Conflicts

Punch and Crunch

X	X					X	X	X			X
						X	X	X			
						X	X	X			
		X		X	X	X	X				
		X		X		X				X	
							X	X		X	X
	X					X	X			X	
X	X					X	X			X	
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	X	X				X					
						X	X	X		X	X
X						X	X	X		X	X
X							X	X		X	
	X					X	X			X	
	X					X	X			X	
						X	X	X			X
						X	X	X	X		X
							X	X		X	
							X	X		X	
			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

THINKING CROSS REFERENCE

SECTION CONTENT:

CURRICULUM GOALS:

Know who they are

Feel capable

Use bodies to express self

Identify and accept feelings

Nonverbal and verbal expression

Learn coping skills

Listen and communicate with others

Skills for relationships

Value living beings

Exercise imagination

Build knowledge and thinking skills

Understand and use language

In Your Classroom

Teacher's Role

Here, There and Everywhere

About Cognitive Skills

Sorting Ourselves Out

The Community Classroom

Blocks

What To Do?

Words, Words, Words

About Television

I Think . . .

I Think . . . : For Parents

One of Our Number

About Reading Aloud

Rabbit's Problem

My Story

Feelings and Decisions

Feelings/Decisions: For Parents

And In My Pocket

Colors

About Fantasy

Doing the Unexpected

	X								X	X	X
X	X								X	X	X
X									X	X	X
	X						X			X	X
X						X				X	X
						X		X		X	X
X	X				X	X		X	X	X	
X	X					X	X			X	X
				X					X		X
									X	X	X
X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X
X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X
	X	X								X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
								X	X	X	X
X	X			X					X	X	X
X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X
X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X
									X	X	X
										X	
X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X

EXPERIENCING LITERATURE CROSS REFERENCE

SECTION CONTENT:

CURRICULUM GOALS:

Know who they are

Feel capable

Use bodies to express self

Identify and accept feelings

Nonverbal and verbal expression

Learn coping skills

Listen and communicate with others

Skills for relationships

Value living beings

Exercise imagination

Build knowledge and thinking skills

Understand and use language

Introduction

In Your Classroom

Teacher's Role

Bears in the Night

Book of Nursery ... Rhymes

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

The Snail's Spell

Exp. Lit. at Home: For Parents

Where The Wild Things Are

The Runaway Bunny

Blueberries For Sal

Stopping By Woods

I Was So Mad

Bubble, Bubble

Sam

The Sneetches

The Ox-Cart Man

Look Again!

No Such Things

Harold and the Purple Crayon

Regards to the Man

1, 2, 3 To The Zoo

The Three Bears

Some Good Books

X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	X	X				X				X	X
		X		X					X	X	X
X		X				X		X	X	X	X
		X				X		X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X	X					X		X
			X			X	X		X		X
	X	X	X	X						X	X
	X	X							X	X	X
X			X	X	X	X	X				X
	X		X		X	X	X		X		X
	X		X	X	X	X	X				X
			X			X		X			X
	X							X	X	X	X
	X					X			X	X	X
	X			X		X			X	X	X
X			X	X		X			X	X	X
		X				X			X	X	X
	X									X	X
			X	X	X		X		X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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