

Teachable Moments

The development of social and emotional skills is crucial to the success and confidence of young learners. Children's social and emotional skills are essential for school readiness and are central building blocks for cognitive development and gaining knowledge.

Therefore, in conjunction with WePlaySmart™ experiences and the Beyond the Table activities, we wanted to provide you with Teachable Moments. Teachable Moments are intentional strategies that enable educators to integrate techniques and cues into their daily interactions. These techniques are essential for scaffolding children's development of social and emotional skills. As you review the WePlaySmart Progress Monitoring Tool (and as you observe the children in your class on a day-to-day basis), you should reference Teachable Moments to find support, training, 'things to say,' and other intentional strategies that will increase the children's experiences and successes with all of the social and emotional skills provided through WePlaySmart.

As early childhood educators, you already know that every day in your classroom provides endless teachable moments. For example, suppose that Jacob is playing at the water table and you notice he has arranged the rubber ducks in order from largest to smallest. Taking a minute or two to ask Jacob open-ended questions about his work creates a teachable moment during which you also enable him to talk about seriating, among other math skills.

Teachable scenarios can extend beyond cognitive development to address social and emotional development. For example, Jacob is at the water table and his classmate Lucy wants to join him, but will not ask him if she can help with the ducks. The teacher observes Lucy's hesitation and quietly asks Jacob whether Lucy can watch him work. Jacob agrees and makes room. The teacher

looks up and signals to Lucy to come closer. She says to Lucy, "Would you like to help too?" Lucy nods. "Can you ask Jacob the same way that I did? He is really good at working here and he can help you." Lucy shrugs and quietly asks Jacob whether she can play too. He readily agrees and as Lucy steps to the table, the teacher backs away saying, "You two have fun! I cannot wait to see what you do next. If you need me, I'll be at the next center."

Although there are a number of ways this interaction could have gone, the teacher noticed Lucy's hesitation and due to other interactions the teacher has observed, the teachable moment became one of modeling and guidance.

Within this document, you will find the social and emotional skills from WePlaySmart and the Beyond the Table activities integrated within the Teachable Moments content.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT:

Teachable Moments provide a brief description of the social/emotional skill that needs attention in early childhood settings.

Tipping Points provide you with an example of what it might look or sound like when a child (children) is struggling with the skill in question.

Teacher Trainings provide you with more information about why the social/emotional skill in question is important to the overall development of young children.

Intentional Strategies are the techniques, cues, modeling tips and hints that are the bulk of Teachable Moments. These are the strategies to integrate into your daily life as an educator to increase the success of social and emotional development of your young learners.



Emotional Control

Teachable Moments for children who commonly do not recognize or identify the emotions of others or the emotions of themselves such as a child who does not respond or change her behavior after a classmate gets visibly upset due to said behavior. (A.ES.1)

Tipping Points: Children who lack the ability to identify emotions in themselves and others may be lacking in their level of **emotional control**. One example of a child not yet recognizing or identifying emotions comes from a pre-kindergarten teacher who said, "This has happened more than once, but the best example I can provide about this child's lack of emotional knowledge is that at least 2 or 3 times weekly a little boy says things to other classmates that evoke tears and anger. Each time it happens, I bring him to the child who has hurt feelings and say something like, 'Kesha has tears in her eyes and her mouth is down in a frown. You pushed her and she hurt her knee. How do you think she feels?' His reply is typically, 'I don't know.' When asked how he feels he replies, 'Do you want me to feel sad?' I need to help him recognize the different feelings he has in addition to the feelings his classmates (among other people)."

Teacher Training: Emotions that are relevant at the age and stage of your students include happiness, sadness, anger, and fear. As children grow older, additional emotions emerge (such as pride, embarrassment, and guilt). The below strategies, in conjunction with WePlaySmart and the Beyond the Table activities, help children to start to recognize feelings in others and in themselves. This is the beginning of developing empathy.

Intentional Strategies

- **Conduct class meetings with puppets so that children can act out simple scenes.** Use different tones of voice as you manipulate the puppets and the situations. For example, when the puppet shouts, "You tore the page in my book," encourage the children to guess what emotion the puppet is feeling.
- **Dramatize emotions as you read books to the children as well.** For example, use different tones of voice as you read the different voices of characters and fluctuate and intonate as the characters experience different emotions. Discuss how the characters reveal their feelings.
- Use photos, books, flashcards, and posters to **point out facial expressions and body language** associated with a variety of feelings. For example, as you look at pictures (on puzzles, posters, and so on), ask the children to determine how the people shown are feeling. Ask the children to talk about how they determined the information they surmise.
- As children become more confident in their knowledge of feelings, emotions and facial expressions, **ask questions such as, "Look at Ben's face. How is he feeling?"** "How can you tell he is feeling scared?" "How do his face and body show that he is feeling scared?"
- **Conduct simple role-play** by asking children, 'Show me how your body and face would look if...'
 - o You received a birthday gift.
 - o You caught a fish.
 - o A large dog barked at you.
 - o A friend put a worm in your hand.
 - o You see a snake in the yard.
 - o You fell down and lost your shoe.
 - o A friend knocked down your block castle.
- **Help children recognize that people may have different feelings** about the same thing and that people have different likes and dislikes. "Collin is excited when there is a thunderstorm, but Ina gets scared." "Cole likes to climb high on the jungle gym, but Owen does not."
- **Help children recognize that their feelings about a situation may change.** You might say, "Alejandro, you are feeling sad now and want to be by yourself, but in a little bit you might feel better and want to join us at circle time."
- **Create ways for children to demonstrate empathy** to others such as a "**Helping Basket**" with tissues, band-aids, a teddy bear or doll, and toy cars. The understanding is that these are tools to use so that they can help another child feel better.
- **Model empathic responses** after you identify the distress of another child (or person). For example, "Francie looks sad. She is crying."
 - o Encourage children to try to **figure out what is happening**. For example, "Let's ask Franice why she is sad."
 - o Next, **talk about what others might feel in the same situation**. For example, "Francie is sad because she tripped on the playground and hurt her elbow. When I hurt myself, I cry too."
 - o Work with the children to **evaluate the other person's needs**. For example, "What would make you feel better, Francie? Do you want a drink of water?"
 - o Try to comfort or **meet the needs of the person in distress**. For example, "Let's get a cold cloth and some water for Francie."
 - o Demonstrate pleasure at the other person's relief or comfort. For example, "Francie, you stopped crying. Are you feeling better? I'm so happy that you feel better."

Teachable Moments for children whose emotions typically do not match the intensity of different situations such as a child who cries uncontrollably each time someone takes his place in line (and other various situations). (A.ES.2)

Tiping Points: Emotional control (or regulation) is a term used to describe the ability to process and express a range of emotions, and react in appropriate ways in emotional situations. Children who engage in outbursts of negative emotions may show aggressive behaviors and are less socially competent than children who do regulate their emotions. For example, when a classmate knocks Owen's tower down, Owen tries to hit and kick his friend and cries uncontrollably for more than 20 minutes.

Teacher Training: Helping children appropriately manage and express their feelings is an important part of day-to-day classroom life. Emotional control and regulation is essential for children's overall well-being. You can teach the children in your classroom to handle their emotions in ways that validate their feelings, while fostering healthy interactions with the others. A child's ability to handle emotions appropriately can influence emotional and cognitive development.

Intentional Strategies

- Accompany the phrase, "Use your words" with **examples of appropriate words and phrases**, you want the children to use. For example, "Joshua, let's work together to think of a way to tell Isla how she can help clean the block area. Should we yell and say, "Get over here and clean!" or, "Isla, because we both played with the blocks, can you help put them on the shelf?"
- **Talk with children about cause and effect.** Begin by using words that describe cause and effect such as; if, when, after, before, next, what if, then, or and integrate these words into daily life in your classroom. For example, "When you let go of this car, it goes down the ramp fast." Or, "After we make applesauce, we will have a snack and eat it." This helps children learn the meaning of these words from real-life situations.
- **Use puppets to act out scenes** that are either make believe or loosely based on children's own lives. These types of experiences help children work through the beginnings

of conflict-resolution. Additionally, attempts to explore problem solving teach children to find more appropriate and acceptable ways to seek answers for their needs.

- Teach children **steps for problem solving** as they come upon things that upset, anger or otherwise bother them:
 - o Explain that first they should **THINK** about **what happened**.
 - o Then, they should **THINK** about **how their body feels**. (It will be necessary to review several basic feeling words with young children to help them identify some ways our body tells us how we are feeling. Help children notice that some body cues signal different feelings).
 - o Next, tell children to **RECOGNIZE the feeling**.
 - o Finally **ask children to SAY, "I feel _____."**
- **Talk with children about the different body cues** that people commonly experience depending on different emotions. **Model and role-play emotions.** Post the below examples in your classroom as some children will appreciate the opportunity to point to the words that they are feeling as the encounter problems.

Feelings and Body Cues:

Sad

Frowning
Crying
Moving slowly

Happy

Smiling
Laughing
Calm & relaxed breathing

Angry

Red Face
Frowning
Fast Breathing
Tense muscles

Scared

Big, open eyes
Heart beating fast
Quiet
Fast breathing

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