

Head Start Family Newsletter

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

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Helping Your Child with Social Skills

For one reason or another, some children do not develop social skills as easily as others. They may earnestly seek peer relationships and then, having endured rebuffs, if not downright cruelty, retreat to the safety of home, family, and their own company.

There is probably nothing so painful for a parent as the rejection of his child. Parents need to take the long view of social problems and to map out a plan to solve them quite as carefully and thoughtfully as they would consider academic or health problems. There are guidelines which, if followed, will help these children if the parent is willing to take time and initiative.

Social Milestones

All children go through definitive phases of social development. The infant or very young child plays alone quite happily, babbling to himself and occasionally sharing a treasure with mother or father. If another child wanders onto the scene, he is likely to get clonked with a block or pushed out of the circle of play.

Next comes the period when a child is able to play with one other child, and this includes an element of adjustment to the idea of sharing, of taking turns, of going "first" or "last."

Look What We're Learning

Themes-

Thanksgiving/Nutrition

Five Senses

Forest Animals

Community Helpers-

Forest Rangers/ Chef

Opposites/Hard & Soft

Nursery Rhyme-

Three Little Kittens

Holidays and Special Events

Thanksgiving

Native American Heritage

Color- Brown

Shape- Triange

Number-3

Alphabets-P & R & L

Bus and Pedestrian Safety



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Westville

Timothy G.-1

Jamyah M.-1

Kayla D. 10

Madison D.-11

Jeremiah C.-30

Chipley

Shayna P.-3

Clinton H.-10

Luis S.-18

Sierra P.-11

Walton

Marianna P.-1

Asia M.-10

Darriel M.-26

Ethan T.- 26

Chautauqua

Andy V.-7

Brandilyn R.-12

Kiya S.-21

Group Play

Group play, for some reason, seems to hold a greater possibility for disaster than one-to-one play. Children tend to "gang up" and take sides. But this, too, can be circumvented if the parent is creative and innovative. Nothing is quite as effective as a quick and attractive change of subject. (It's called an ace in the hole!) "Who wants to help me bake cookies?" or "Who knows how to wash a car?" will work wonders.

Inappropriate Language

Youngsters sometimes experiment and use language inappropriately, including highly unacceptable profanity, the meaning of which they probably don't know. How to handle such situations? Firmly and immediately! Letting it go until a later time means that the correction will lose its punch and impact. What is needed is a strong (without anger) statement-e.g., "That is not the way we speak in our family." That is all that is necessary and makes it possible to correct the child without "putting him down" in front of his friends.

Inappropriate Action

The same principal applies as above. Pushing, shoving, hitting or outright inappropriate "pranks" need to be handled on the spot. No lecturing. "I'm putting you in your room because you shoved Tommy" may be all that is necessary. No "Why did you do that?" et cetera, which only belabors and clouds the situation and misdirects the thrust of the corrective action. Yes, there will be times when your child had to take defensive action-and you can deal with such situations by curtailing interaction with a specific youngster who may indeed be taking advantage of your child's vulnerability.

Working with the Teacher

All of the social interaction you have provided for your child will spill over into the school situation, and you can be sure that teachers will be very grateful. (Too often the child reaches the classroom totally untutored in social relationships, and the teacher is expected to do the job.) Most teachers will react favorably to a request for a conference on social needs. This is the time to explain what you have tried to do on the home front. You can discuss your child's needs for a special friend. After becoming familiar with the personalities of the youngsters in class, perhaps the teacher can arrange to team your child with another child of similar disposition and interests in terms of seating, play-pairs, playground-pairs and even walking to and from school. To return the favor, you may want to volunteer for special events (class parties, plays, et cetera) for your child's class.

During the period of social growth there will be minor triumphs, but the road will undoubtedly be rutted with an occasional major disaster. Parents should not be disheartened. Children tend to have spurts of physical, intellectual, and social growth laced with periods of holding their own or even periods of regression.

The key words are structure and fun, with simplicity. The key attitudes are warmth and optimism.

Special Needs Children

Children with ADHD and learning disabilities may need extra help in developing social skills. The impulsivity and the short frustration tolerance of an ADHD child can lead to poor peer relationships. Children with poor attention and concentration fail to tune in to the social cues in their environment and thus don't learn social skills through experience. Children with learning disabilities may have difficulty processing information from the social environment or have difficulty with self-expression.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING