



Character Development:

Cooperation & Problem Solving

for Pre-K and Kindergarten

Starfall Character Development is a supplementary program to implement throughout the school year in order to foster positive social interactions and create a warm and welcoming learning environment.



This module is an excerpt from the Starfall Character Development Program.

If you have questions or comments, please contact us.

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Cooperation & Problem Solving

Learning to cooperate involves thinking about the wants and needs of others, and to a certain degree, letting go of your own wants and needs in order to formulate a compromise upon which both parties can agree. Cooperation is a skill that must be taught to young children, but they must first be developmentally ready. For example, while four-year-olds may enjoy working on activities and tasks cooperatively, three-year-olds will most likely not yet understand why they should take turns or share materials.

The activities included in this module have been created to address friendship, classroom behavior and management, sharing, problem solving, decision-making, and self-control. As you present the lessons and activities, encourage the children to work together and assist each other. Ask questions to focus their awareness on others and how they may assist, such as Susie can't find her crayons, what can we do to help her find them? Provide toys that require cooperation, and most importantly, model cooperative behavior by working together with children and discussing their actions and yours as you are doing them.

Problem solving skills are needed in order for children to learn to solve their own problems, and help build self confidence. Possessing problem solving skills contributes to success in school and can often be the difference between success and failure.

As with many other character development skills, problem solving skills are best learned by watching adults. Provide assistance by first helping the children identify that there is a problem and by presenting all sides of the issue at hand. Help the children to then work together to determine realistic and workable solutions.

It's important to remember that children between the ages of 3 and 7 find it very difficult to see things from another person's point of view. The activities included provide opportunities for young children to consider the fact that others may have different perspectives and to practice looking at issues from different points of view.

Book Suggestions

- *Bat's Big Game* by Margaret Read MacDonald
- *David Gets in Trouble* by David Shannon
- *Duck and Goose* by Tad Hills
- *Franklin Plays the Game* by Paulette Bourgeois
- *Hands Are Not for Hitting* by Martine Agassi
- *I Play: A Book about discovery and cooperation* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Join In and Play* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Share and Take Turns* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni
- *Talk and Work It Out (Learning to Get Along)* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *The Crayon Box that Talked* by Michael Letzig
- *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires
- *Voices Are Not for Yelling* by Elizabeth Verdick
- *What If Everybody Did That?* by Ellen Javernick
- *Words Are Not for Hurting* by Elizabeth Verdick

Starfall Books & Media

- *A Tale of Two Little Engines* as retold by Marc Buchanan
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* as retold by Marc Buchanan
- *The Little Red Hen and other Folk Tales*, "The Little Red Hen," "Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup," and "Chicken Little"
- Writing & Observation Journals

Lessons

Joy Jar

Health, Safety & Environment

Identifies consequences of not following safety rules

Social/Emotional Development

Begins to understand that actions have consequences

Demonstrates willingness to be flexible if routines must change

Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution

Recognizes and accepts responsibilities

Review the classroom rules, and discuss how following the rules the class decided upon creates peaceful and joy-filled classroom.

Remind the children that when others don't follow the rules people can get hurt, and the class can't do fun activities if children don't cooperate.

Introduce the Class Joy Jar. Explain that when the teacher or others notice that everyone is following the rules you will put a (marshmallow or other object) in the jar. When the jar is filled, the class can vote on an appropriate reward.

Ask the children to determine if the following situations (or other situations you create) are examples of following the rules or not following the rules.

State the situation. If it is an example of following a rule, the class stands and says, joy jar! If it doesn't follow the rules, a volunteer explains why. Remind the children that very often, the purpose of a rule is to keep us safe.

- Everyone lines up quietly to go outside. (Joy Jar!)
- It's time to clean up and all the children work together to clean up. (Joy Jar!)
- It's time for children to come to the rug and all the children run to the rug. (Safety problem—someone could get hurt.)
- We have to change our schedule and can't have outside time. Everyone cooperates. (Joy Jar!)
- Children are fighting over who gets to be first. (Safety problem—we need to find a peaceful solution.)
- Snack is over and everyone cleans up. (Joy Jar!)

Materials

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | List of classroom rules
(See Respect & Responsibility for Classroom Rules activity) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Large plastic jar or see through container labeled "Our Joy Jar" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Small edible objects such as marshmallows, cubes, jelly beans (depending on the season or size of the jar - objects may change throughout the year) |



Friendship Quilt

Discuss friendships the children have made in school, and explain that friends help each other and try to understand each other's feelings. Volunteers share times they have tried to help or understand their friends and their feelings, or times their friends have helped and understood them.

Explain that children in a class become friends and they help each other and try to understand each other's feelings. Today they will create a Friendship Quilt. Indicate the quilt (or photo of a quilt) and discuss.

The children illustrate themselves and print their names on their illustrations, then you place the illustrations together to form a Friendship Quilt to demonstrate they are all friends.

Encourage the children to use realistic representations of their personal attributes such as hair and eye color. Assist those who have difficulty. When the illustrations are complete, display them together on a wall as a quilt.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	One 8" x 8" drawing paper square for each child
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils
<input type="checkbox"/>	Optional: Quilt or photo of a quilt



Social/Emotional Development

Engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with trusted adults and children such as cooperating, compromising and turn-taking

Recognizes the emotions of peers and responds with empathy and compassion

Responds to or uses words to demonstrate knowledge of personal information (e.g., hair, color, age, gender or size)

Handprints Mural

Play *Starfall.com: Sing-Along Volume 2, Track 14, "Happy and You Know It."*

The children sing along and perform appropriate actions. They think of the many things they can do with their hands. Lead them to understand that there are things they can do with their hands that help other people and there are also things they can do with their hands that hurt others. Volunteers identify ways their hands can hurt others and ways they can help. Assist them to conclude that hands should be used to help, not to hurt.

Explain that when we use our hands to help others, it makes them feel happy and it makes us feel happy too. They closely examine their hands.

The children create handprints on mural paper using finger paint or large washable ink pads. They write their names near their handprints. Discuss how the individual handprints together form a beautiful mural, just as individual children are all part of one beautiful class.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finger paint or large washable ink pads
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Starfall.com: Sing-Along Volume 2, Track 14</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water, paper towels
<input type="checkbox"/>	White mural paper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crayons

Health, Safety & Environment

Identifies consequences of not following safety rules

Identifies self as a unique member of a group (e.g., class, school, family or larger community)



COOPERATION & PROBLEM SOLVING

Let's Play!

Surprise the children and explain that today you will change the way you do things. Today the children get to play! Choose six or so different play areas or materials such as play dough, a play farm, doll house, art, construction, table toys, puzzles, etc.

Indicate the photos of these play areas across the top row of a pocket chart. Draw (or allow volunteers to draw) names from a basket and randomly arrange them under the play area photo headings.

The children play in their assigned areas for a period of time. Notice children who work cooperatively and those who still choose to play alone. Encourage the children who seem unwilling to play with others in their play areas, and assist in their integration into the group.

While the children play, rearrange the names on the chart.

It is important that prior to your signal to stop playing and begin cleaning up, that you ring a bell and give a "five minute warning" letting children know they need to begin to disengage from their areas and prepare to change activities.

Ring a bell to signal clean up time and gather the children together to determine their next play areas. Continue as time allows.

Materials

- Basket with children's names
- Pocket chart
- Photos of "Play Areas"
- Bell

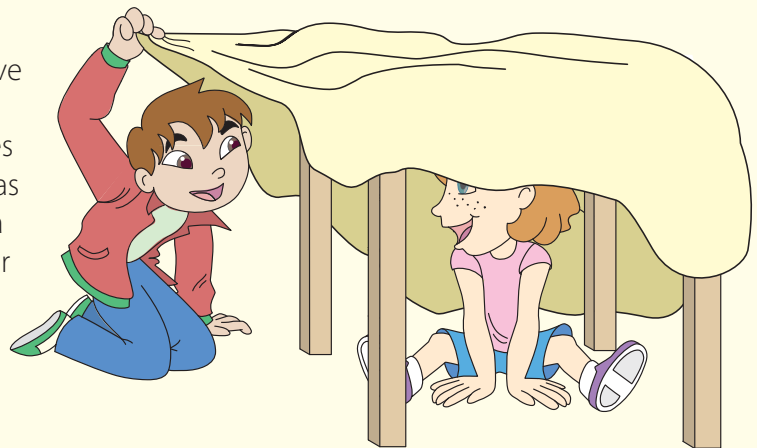


No Toys Free Play

Explain to the children that they will have free play, but all of the toys are off limits! They aren't allowed to play in any of the learning centers or with any toys. The children will have to use their imaginations and work together. They may use the chairs, tables, towels, blankets, and/or sheets.

Questions to address before the children play:

- What happens if you can't think of anything to do? (Think of activities you've done before, like songs we have sung or games we have played.)
- What happens if your friends don't want to play with you? (Find someone else to play with.)
- What happens if you have a problem during your play time? (Use strategies to solve problems such as stop and discuss or ask a teacher or other adult for suggestions, etc.)



Materials

- Towels
- Blankets
- Sheets

Approaches to Learning

Attends to tasks for brief periods of time

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenge

Social/Emotional Development

Demonstrates willingness to be flexible if routines much change

Engages in associative play and begins to play cooperatively with friends

Increases attention to preferred activities and begins to attend to non-preferred activities

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Social/Emotional Development

Demonstrates willingness to be flexible if routines must change

Engages in associative play and begins to play cooperatively with friends

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, pausing occasionally to ask what the children think will happen next and explain why.

When you have finished reading tell the children that they will help the bears solve their problem and indicate a sheet of chart paper.

Partner the children to discuss each of the following questions one at a time. After a reasonable amount of time partners share their responses with the class. Decide which responses to add to the chart paper.

Ask:

- What was the bears' problem? (List on the chart paper what children identify as the problem.)
- What could the bears do to solve the problem? (Write responses.)
- What might the bears do to make their cottage safer?

Divide the class into two groups. Each group works together to plan how they will act out the story. The children should work together to assign parts and decide what they would like to use for props. Assist when necessary.

The groups alternate between acting out the story and being the audience. Remind the children that when they are the audience group they should sit quietly, pay attention to the acting group, and use good listening skills.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Goldilocks and the Three Bears</i> by Marc Buchanan
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chart paper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Markers

Social/Emotional Development

Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Takes the perspective of others and responds appropriately

Uses words to communicate personal characteristics, preferences, thoughts and feelings



Little Red Hen Story (2-Day Plan)

Approaches to Learning

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges

Social/Emotional Development

Increases attention to preferred activities and begins to attend to non-preferred activities

Persists at individual planned experiences, caregiver-directed experiences and planned group activities

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Recognizes preferences of others

Part 1

Read and discuss *The Little Red Hen*.

The children recall the characters in the story as you write the character names side-by-side on a sheet of chart paper (hen, duck, turkey, goose). Volunteers take turns to retell the story in their own words.

Reread the story and ask the children to “chime in” on familiar phrases.

Ask:

- How do you think the little red hen felt?
- How would you feel if no one would help you when you needed help?
- What might you have done to solve the problem of no one helping make the muffins?
- How would the story have been different if the duck, turkey, and goose helped the little red hen?

Save the chart paper for Part 2.

Part 2

Indicate the chart paper from Part 1.

Explain that the children will sign up to be characters in the story, and they will work together to act out one of the two stories: the original story or a story in which they will help the little red hen.

The children write their names under the characters they would like to portray and identify which story they would prefer to act out, Story #1 (the original story) or Story #2 (the revised story). Place a #1 next to children acting out the original story and a #2 for the revised story.

Note: Be sure to give those children who have a difficult time attending to non-preferred activities or need support a chance to sign up first so they can choose between the original story or the revised story.

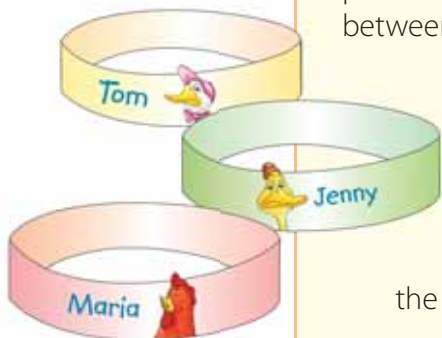
Group the children so that there are at least one hen, duck, turkey, and goose in each group.

Each group works together to create their own play. When the children are ready they perform their version of the story for the class. Assist the groups that are not performing to practice appropriate audience skills as the group performs.

Celebrate by having muffins!

Materials

- The Little Red Hen and other Folk Tales*
- Paper strips about 2 inches wide to create headbands for each child
- Pencils, crayons
- Chart paper, marker
- A muffin for each child



Keep It or Let It Go

Indicate the pot with water, the large strainer and the uncooked pasta as you discuss the need to strain pasta after it has been cooked and before you eat it. Discuss the reasons why. Demonstrate straining the pasta and ask what happened to the water when you put the pasta in the strainer.

Explain that our brains or minds are like the strainer. Lots of different thoughts go into our brains. Some of them are helpful and good, but some are sad and we don't want them there. Lots of times the sad thoughts will drain out of our brains like the water without us having to do anything to let them go. Some thoughts come and go. But sometimes thoughts get "stuck" in our brains.

Discuss thoughts that are good to be stuck in our brains such as happy thoughts, remembering a birthday, playing with a friend, a visit from grandparents, and so on. Explain that these are thoughts we want to keep!

Distribute Writing & Observation Journals, pencils, and crayons. Instruct the children to think of a happy time that is stuck in their brains, illustrate it, and use inventive spelling or kid writing to write about it. Circulate and ask the children to share their writing. Do "adult" writing beneath their attempts.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pot with water
<input type="checkbox"/>	Large strainer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncooked pasta
<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing & Observation Journals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pencils, crayons

Social/Emotional Development

Engages in agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion)

Recognizes and names own emotions



Peace Quilt

Each child illustrates his or her face and writes his or her name on a muslin cloth square. The squares will be used to create a quilt by sewing them together and adding a layer of batting and a cloth backing.

Gather the children to share their quilt squares while sitting in a special chair. Remind the children observing that it is important to be respectful while others are sharing, and to give compliments.

Note: Some children may have difficulty transitioning to this part of the activity. Invite these children to present their quilt squares with classmates.

Explain that these squares will become the class peace quilt. Someone will take all of the individual squares and sew them together. Show the quilt sample or photo. Compare the individual squares forming a quilt to the individual children forming a class.

Discuss how all of the children are special and together they are a classroom family. If one of them has a problem with someone, gets in an argument, or someone hurts his or her feelings, he or she will get the peace quilt, sit on it, and the two of them will talk out the problem together. When they are finished they will work together to put the peace quilt away. Provide a special basket or area in the classroom to place the peace quilt.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	12"x12" muslin cloth square for each child
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fabric markers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who can sew
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quilt sample or photo

Approaches to Learning

Attends to tasks for brief periods of time

Social/Emotional Development

Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution

Increases attention to preferred activities and begins to attend to non-preferred activities



**Social/Emotional
Development**

Engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with trusted adults and children such as cooperating, compromising and turn-taking

Shows kindness to others

Uses words to communicate personal characteristics, preferences, thoughts and feelings

**Social/Emotional
Development**

Engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with trusted adults and children such as cooperating, compromising and turn-taking

Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)

Identifies self as a unique member of a group (e.g., class, school, family or larger community)

Persists at individual planned experiences, caregiver-directed experiences and planned group activities

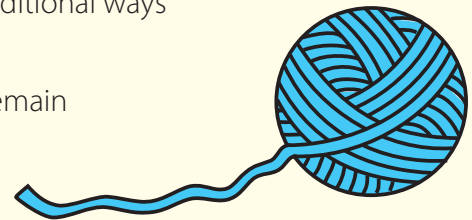
Yarn Friendship Circle

Gather the children in a large circle and sit with them. Hold one end of the ball of yarn and pass it to the child next to you. As you pass the yarn say something nice to or about the child, such as you are sitting so quietly, you are so kind to others, I like how you play with your friends, or I hope you have a great day today.

The child holds a piece of the yarn and passes the yarn ball to the next child, saying something nice to or about the child. Continue until all of the children have had a turn and the yarn ball comes back to you.

Explain that the class is like a family. The children are connected because they are all part of one class. Discuss additional ways a class is like a family.

Sing "The More We Get Together." The children remain seated and sway back and forth as they sing.



Materials

- Starfall.com: Sing Along
- Volume 2, Track 45, "The More We Get Together"
- Ball of yarn

Pair and Share

This lesson may be used as a one- or two-day activity.

Pair children you feel might be able to work well together. Write the partners' names on an index card and the number 1 or 2 next to the each child's name. The number will indicate the order in which they will share.

Briefly discuss the children's family members. Distribute the Writing & Observation Journals, pencils, and crayons. The children illustrate their families. As they work, play soft music and circulate to write the family members' names under the illustrations.

When the children are finished, introduce or review the meaning of pairs. For children who may not be familiar with the term, use the example of a pair of socks or shoes. Explain that the children will work in pairs to share their family illustrations.

Rules for partners:

- Each child says hello to his or her partner.
- The partners take turns sharing family illustrations beginning with the child in the pair with a #1.
- Encourage the children to ask their partners questions and to compliment them on their illustrations.

Materials

- Writing & Observation Journals
- Prepared index cards
- Pencils, crayons

Build a Box Design

Partner the children and explain that they will be working on a creative project. Together the partners will decorate a box in any way they would like. Some children may need encouragement and support to engage in this activity and may find it difficult to work with others to complete this project. Provide support if needed.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	One box for every two children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crayons, markers, construction paper, glue

Note: If you have larger boxes, divide children into groups of 3 or 4.

Indicate the boxes and art materials the children will use. Explain that this is a project that will require cooperation and discuss what that means. The children must decide together how they would like to decorate the boxes. Explain that partners will meet first to discuss their ideas. After an appropriate amount of time, stop them and ask:

What if your partner or a person in your group would like to decorate the box one way and you don't agree. How will you solve the problem? (Discuss acceptable ways to compromise.)

What will happen if you get frustrated and want to give up? (You need to keep going, or persevere, to get the job done.) Remind the children to use positive self-talk strategies like saying I can do this, This will be fun! or I can always ask for help.

Remind the children that if they need help they can raise their hands and an adult will help.

Partners work on their projects. Circulate to assist when needed.

When all of the children are finished, partners take turns sharing their completed projects. Classmates ask questions and give compliments.

Approaches to Learning

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges

Uses positive self-talk as a strategy

Social/Emotional Development

Engages in associative play and begins to play cooperatively with friends

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Recognizes preferences of others

A Tale of Two Little Engines (Two Part Plan)

Materials

- A Tale of Two Little Engines
retold by Marc Buchanan
- Chart paper
- Markers
- One toy for each child (part 2)
- Engineer hat (part 2)

Approaches to Learning

Uses positive self-talk as a strategy

Social/Emotional Development

Begins to understand that actions have consequences

Demonstrates confidence in own abilities and expresses positive feelings about self

Persists at individual planned experiences, caregiver-directed experiences and planned group activities

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials, actions

Recognizes preferences of others



Part 1

Read *A Tale of Two Little Engines* and discuss answers to the following questions:

- How do you think the little red engine felt when it couldn't make it up the mountain?
- How do you think the little red engine felt when the shiny new engine and grand old engine would not help?
- How do you think the little red engine felt when the little blue engine said it would help?
- Do you think the little red engine was scared or do you think it was brave?
- Did the little red engine ever give up? Why not?
- Why do you think the little blue engine stopped to help?
- What did the two little engines chant together as they were climbing the mountain?
- Why do you think the two little engines were able to get to the other side of the mountain?
- How would the story be different if the little red engine had just decided to give up?

Explain that the red and blue engines used "self-talk." Remind the children that self-talk is telling yourself positive things that help you believe you can do things. Review or introduce examples of self-talk such as *I think I can. I can do this. I'm strong. I can learn this.*

Lead the children in a discussion about things they could not do when they were babies but CAN do now, such as *I couldn't sing my ABCs* or *I couldn't walk or run.*

Indicate a sheet of chart paper. Each child thinks of something he or she couldn't do as a baby but can do now. Include the child's name next to his or her comment.

Part 2

Divide the children into two groups. One group will be the actors and the other group will be the audience. The groups will switch for a second dramatization.

Indicate *A Tale of Two Little Engines: Together they could!* Discuss the story's setting and look through the story to locate the characters needed in order to do a dramatization.

Assist the children to determine what else is needed in order to act out or dramatize the story.

The children should realize that you need actors to be the little red engine, the little blue engine, several cars with toys, a shiny new engine, and a grand old engine. The remaining children will be the audience and will help with the chants, "I think we can! I think we can!" and "I knew we could! I knew we could!" Practice the chants with the audience prior to the dramatization.

Read the story as children dramatize. The groups switch roles and repeat.

Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup

Indicate "Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup." Read the story, pausing to discuss as you read. Make sure the children understand the characteristics of a good friend and allow them to ask questions. Explain that good friends are kind to each other and they try to understand how their friends are feeling and respond as necessary.

Discuss how Mr. Bunny was a good friend and that his friends were very kind to him. Ask the children to identify what nice thing they did for him.

The children think of kind things they could do for their friends and you list them on chart paper. Write responses followed by the children's names to encourage them all to share. For repeated responses add only the children's names. Read the responses aloud.

Encourage the children to notice how their friends are feeling and to practice doing kind deeds for each other today. Explain that when we do kind things for others it shows that we care about them. Doing kind things for others helps us feel good too!

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>The Little Red Hen and other Folk Tales, "Mr. Bunny's Carrot Soup"</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chart paper, marker

Social/Emotional Development

Expresses common courtesy and respects the rights of others (Says please, thank you, helps a friend, shares, etc.)

Recognizes and identifies feelings and emotions of characters in stories or real life situations

Recognizes the emotions of peers and responds with empathy and compassion

Shows kindness to others



**Social/Emotional
Development**

*Begins to understand
that actions have
consequences*

*Engages independently
in simple social problem
solving including
offering potential
solutions and reflecting
on the appropriateness
of the solution*

**Social/Emotional
Development**

*Engages in and
maintains positive
relationships and
interactions with trusted
adults and children
such as cooperating,
compromising
and turn-taking*

*Identifies self as a unique
member of a group (e.g.,
class, school, family or
larger community*

*Recognizes preferences
of others*

**Character
Development**

What Would You Do?

Read and discuss “Chicken Little” then have the children take turns to retell the story in their own words. Remind them that when Henny Penny thought the sky was falling, all of her friends believed her. Foxy Loxy asked some very good questions.

Volunteers recall what Foxy Loxy asked:

- Do you see the sky falling?
- Do you hear the sky falling?
- Do you feel the sky falling?

Lead the children to discuss what would have happened if Chicken Little had just looked around to see what really struck him on the head. Chicken Little used his sense of touch when he felt the leaf. What other senses could he have used to check if the sky was falling?

Partner the children to use their problem solving skills to think of solutions to the following examples, and/or create other examples that apply to your classroom situation. Partners take turns to discuss their solutions with the class.

- Let’s pretend your crayons are missing. Before you look for them, you tell the teacher that someone took them. Then you find that your crayons rolled off the table and they are on the floor under your chair. What should you do? What have you learned?
- Your mother finds your new pants torn and she blames you for playing too roughly and tearing them even though you weren’t playing roughly. You have to stay in your room and can’t play. How do you feel?
- You can’t find your toy car and you blame your brother. You run to your mom and tell her what your brother has done. Your mom tells you she put it away so that no one would trip over it. How do you feel?

Discuss how Chicken Little didn’t use his senses to learn if the sky was really falling.

How would the story be different if Chicken Little used his senses and looked around to see what happened?

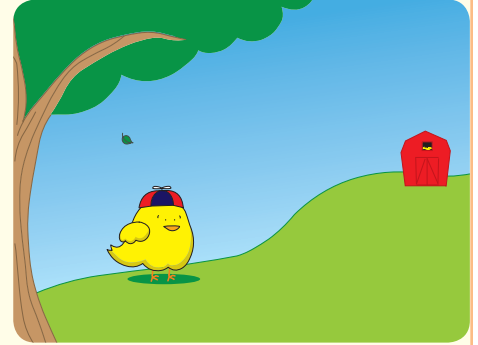
The Friendship Ball Game

Gather the children in a circle on a rug or the floor. Introduce a ball as the Friendship Ball. Explain that the Friendship Ball will help the children get to know each other better.

The children take turns saying their names and the names of their favorite learning centers, then they roll the ball to a friend. Model the procedure then roll the ball to a child. Continue until all of the children have had a turn.

Materials

- The Little Red Hen and other Folk Tales, “Chicken Little”



Materials

- Soft ball

Working Together

Indicate a teacher-created structure, and explain that you will divide the children into groups of three who will work together as teams to recreate structures that look exactly like it.

Create groups of children who don't usually play together so the children have to adapt to and compromise with others. Provide each group with a set of building materials or blocks. Explain that they should look closely at your structure, and they must work together to create their own that looks just like it. You and your assistant(s) should be available to help the children through this process.

When the groups are finished building, they share their structures with the class. Have groups discuss how they felt during the process.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher-created structure built with blocks or other building material
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enough blocks for groups to recreate the structure

Problem Solving Techniques for Teachers and Parents

Young children need to be taught how to solve their problems peacefully. Introduce them to these five steps which will help identify their problems then solve them peacefully.

- How do you feel? If a child is frustrated or angry, engage the child in deep breathing techniques to help him or her calm down.
- What is the problem? If the child cannot identify the problem ask why he or she feels angry or upset.
- What are possible solutions? Ask the child to identify ways he or she might solve the problem. Assist with additional possible suggestions if necessary.
- What would happen if you tried this? Discuss with the child what might happen if he or she tried to solve his or her problem in a specific way. Discuss whether it is a safe way to solve the problem and/or if it is a fair way to solve it.

Try the solution. Ask the child to try the chosen solution. Then ask the child if that solution solved the problem. If it does not, discuss another solution for the child to try.

Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	None

Approaches to Learning

Attends to tasks for brief periods of time

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges

Social/Emotional Development

Engages in associative play and begins to play cooperatively with friends

Persists at individual planned experiences, caregiver-directed experiences and planned group activities

Approaches to Learning

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenges

Social/Emotional Development

Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution

Manages and exhibits behavioral control with or without adult support

Role Playing Problem Solving

Materials

Puppets or dolls

Social/Emotional Development

Engages independently in simple social problem solving including offering potential solutions and reflecting on the appropriateness of the solution

Recognizes and identifies feelings and emotions of characters in stories or real life situations

Plays with peers in a coordinated manner including assigning roles, materials and actions

Takes the perspective of others and responds appropriately

The children role play a scene in which one puppet or doll does not share his or her toys with others.

Then discuss the following questions:

- How do you think the puppet or doll feels?
- What might the problem that caused that feeling (s) be?
- How do you think they might solve their problem peacefully?
- What do you think will happen if they tried this? Is it safe? Is it fair?
- Did this work or do you think they need to try a new solution?

Balloon Game

Materials

Large inflated balloon for each two children (may also be played with 1 balloon)

Optional: Timer

Approaches to Learning

Attends to tasks for brief periods of time

Demonstrates increasing independence and willingness to try new challenge

Social/Emotional Development

Persists at individual planned experiences, caregiver-directed experiences and planned group activities

Partner the children and distribute one balloon to each pair. When you say “go” the partners use their hands, elbows, feet, knees, heads, and so on, or they blow on the balloon to keep it from hitting the floor. Explain that it is important for partners to cooperate with each other in order to keep the balloon in the air.

You may time each pair to determine who can keep the balloon in the air longest.

Note: If you only have one balloon, children partner and take turns playing in the center of the group.