

GROUP ACTIVITIES for Preschoolers

A PIECE AT A TIME

PURPOSE: to help children identify facial, body, and situational clues to emotions.

AGE: 3-4+

SETTING: small or large group

MATERIALS: corrugated cardboard (approximately 9" x 12"), a sharp knife, four or five small beads, superglue, and an emotion picture file with selections illustrating sadness, loss, and happiness mounted on 8-1/2" x 11" tagboard.

ACTIVITY

1. Make a template from the corrugated cardboard. Cut four or five holes of different shapes in various locations on the cardboard. Glue a bead on each piece of cardboard cutout. Replace the cutouts in the spaces (like a puzzle).
2. Cover one of the pictures from the emotion picture file with the template.
3. Reveal the picture to the children by removing one template piece at a time. Encourage the children to talk about what is happening in the picture.
4. Repeat with another picture.

MOVING AWAY

PURPOSE: to help a child who is moving away cope with the sense of loss.

AGE: 2-1/2+

SETTING: large-group storytelling arrangement.

MATERIALS: an easel with large sheets of paper and markers.

ACTIVITY

1. When a child in the group is going to move, have the children share personal experiences about moving.
2. Interview the child who is moving. Draw pictures on the easel of things she will miss, things she likes about her current home, school, and town.
3. Help the children share memories of good times with the child who is moving.
4. Talk about the feelings of sadness and loss the children are experiencing. But also talk about the happy feelings associated with the good memories and with the excitement of the move.
5. Reassure the children that it is okay to have both sad and happy feelings at the same time.

WARM FUZZIES/COLD PRICKLIES

PURPOSE: to help children recognize and discuss happy and sad times in their lives.

AGE: 4+

SETTING: children sitting on the floor in a large circle.

MATERIALS: a yarn ball, nylon or metal scouring pad, and a tape or record of relaxing instrumental music.

ACTIVITY

1. Share with the children happy experiences (warm fuzzies) and sad experiences (cold pricklies) from your childhood. Share how you felt during these times.
2. Tell the children that they are going to play a "feeling" game. Ask them to think quietly in their minds about warm fuzzies or cold pricklies.
3. Show the children the yarn ball (to represent a warm fuzzy) and the scouring pad (a cold prickly). Talk briefly about how some of our experiences are like a warm fuzzy yarn ball and some are like a cold prickly scouring pad. Give examples.
4. Have the children sit next to each other in a circle and pass the yarn ball and scouring pad around the circle while the music is playing.
5. Stop the music. The person holding the yarn ball when the music stops shares a warm fuzzy while the person holding the scouring pad shares a cold prickly. An example of a cold prickly might be a friend moving away. A warm fuzzy might be going to Grandma's house. The children could share personal experiences if they want to. Be prepared for different interpretations of the same event. One child's "warm fuzzy" may be another child's "cold prickly". Children might need to express and talk about these feelings.
6. Repeat a few more times so other children can share.
7. End the game by reminding children that both happy and sad feelings are a normal part of life and that it is okay to cry when you feel sad.
8. Respect the children's right to privacy and do not force them to share personal experiences.

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