

# **SNIP Training Toolkit Part 6**

## **Let's Play: Activities that Strengthen Peer Relationships**



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## Let's Play! Activities that Strengthen Peer Relationships

Many children need more than unstructured free time to master social skills. They also need guidance about which social behaviors to emulate. One way we can help children to learn and develop social skills is by using interactive games. Kids learn best when allowed to apply and practice what they're taught in a playful, non-threatening environment. Incorporating games into lessons is an excellent way to do that.

What are important skills for children to master? Research shows us that children with Cooperation, Participation, Validation/Support, Sportsmanship, and Conflict Resolution skills have an easier time making and keeping friends. Some examples of skills that fall within these categories are:

### **COOPERATION**

- Turn-taking
- Sharing toys/materials
- Considering multiple perspectives
- Negotiating compromise

### **PARTICIPATION**

- Staying with the group
- Following directions
- Joining play
- Paying attention to the game or activity
- Waiting

### **COMMUNICATION**

- Saying what you mean
- Understanding what someone has told you
- Making appropriate observations and comments
- Asking appropriate questions
- Active listening
- Noticing and interpreting facial expressions and body language
- Sharing humor
- Making and responding to requests

### **VALIDATION - SUPPORT (Friendly-Fun-and-Nice)**

- Giving positive attention to another person
- Giving compliments.
- Smiling
- Having an awareness of other's feelings
- Offering support or suggestions to a friend who has a problem

### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

- Congratulating the winner
- Shaking hands and saying, "Good game."
- Knowing what to do when you make a mistake
- Cheering for everyone on your team
- Supporting the team with your attention
- Maintaining composure when you lose

### **KEEPING YOUR COOL**

- Grinning
- Making a joke
- Keeping your voice calm and quiet
- Expressing anger and frustration appropriately
- Self Regulation
- Self-Reflection Processes

Many children naturally gain these skills as they mature. While children develop at their own pace, which may differ slightly from child to child, we know that relationships with consistent, caring adults as well as access to early experiences and environments that allow children to practice these emerging skills can go a long way towards encouraging their positive social emotional development. The following are a number of activities that promote important social skills: from giving compliments and staying in line to negotiating a compromise with peers, and helping out a friend in need.

## Friendship Pie

This idea is from the book, *Including One Including All* by Leslie Roffman and Todd Wanerman. They created a system of including children with special needs into their program that is relationship based.

- The children and teachers decided on some kind ways they wanted to treat each other.
- They listed those ways on the outside of the pie:

\*Say “yes” and welcome friends to play

\*share

\*Keep everyone safe, their bodies and their feelings

\*Help each other-friends & teachers

\*Give compliments, or put ups vs. put downs, say nice things

- They put a sticker on the compliment pie every time someone acted in one of the agreed upon ways.
- When they got to 100 stickers they had a dance party.



**Materials Needed:** Large paper or Poster-board, Markers, Stickers

**Time it Takes:** Initial activity 30 minutes, then ongoing

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL (It depends on which kind friendship behaviors you decide to focus on.)

**Ages:** Pre-K through Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Use pictures representing the actions in addition to text. Keep the skills simple/more concrete for younger children. For older or more socially advanced children you can use more advanced/abstract friendship behaviors and stars or check marks instead of stickers.

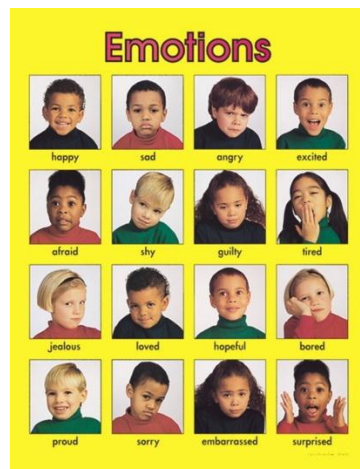
## Guess the Feeling...Identifying and Responding to Emotions

People who are good at interpreting facial expressions can better anticipate what others will do and how to interact with them. They are also more “pro-social,” or helpful towards others. This game allows children to work on the social skills of empathy, self expression and reading body language. Like classic charades, this game gives children the opportunity to use social skills such as perspective-taking and reading body language.

**Part I:** Players draw slips of paper with emotions written on them (or pictures of expressions portraying emotions) from a container, and try conveying—without using any words or sounds--the chosen word to their classmates. The rest of the kids must guess the emotion being portrayed. Aside from using non-verbal communication skills, kids converge and interact socially as they try guessing the word correctly.

**Part II:** Once someone has guessed the correct emotion, choose a student to approach the charades actor and “react” appropriately to the emotion being portrayed.

As the actor and “reactor” leave the “stage, encourage the other students to compliment and high-five them. Walk students through the steps of the game first and model the first round.



**Materials Needed:** Feelings Flashcards (photographs of people making different facial expressions)

Ideally, try to use multiple models for each emotion. Your collection should include expressions of: happy, sad, scared, angry, disgusted, and surprised as well as other emotions you know your students may be dealing with. Alternately, you can use feeling names written out on scraps of paper.

**Time it Takes:** 15-30 minutes or the amount of time you have.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** As you are teaching Part II of the game, model the appropriate response first or brainstorm options as a class before the chosen student approaches the charades actor. Use lanyards/name tags that the students wear to delineate the roles (actor, reactor)

## Feelings Matching

Here's a game that can be played individually or as a group. The idea is to match each facial expression card with a situation that might evoke the emotion. For the game to work, you'll need to create a second set of cards, each depicting an emotion-evoking situation. The images can come from a number of sources. If you're artistic, you can draw your own. Alternatively, stage and photograph "live" scenarios. Using your students as models can be a very effective way of engaging them in the game, or use free photos or clip art you can find on the web. Whichever approach you take, make sure the action in the picture is easy to interpret. Here are some ideas for scenarios:

- A person receiving a gift
- Someone running from a threat
- A foot being stepped on
- An ice cream cone that has fallen on the ground (rendering it inedible)
- A tower created from toy blocks being kicked over
- A child sharing
- A person receiving a high-five
- A person being snubbed or ignored by others
- Some situation cards may evoke multiple emotions.

Students take turns picking a scenario card, and then choosing the feelings card with the "matching" emotion. OR they pick a feelings card and then choose a scenario card that represents the emotion shown. Either way, encourage them to share with the group why they made the match. Walk your students through the steps of the game first and model the first round.



**Materials Needed:** Feelings Flashcards (photographs of people making different facial expressions)

Ideally, try to use multiple models for each emotion. Your collection should include expressions of: happy, sad, scared, angry, disgusted, and surprised, as well as other emotions you know your students may be dealing with.  
Scenario Flashcards

**Time it Takes:** 15-30 minutes or the amount of time you have.

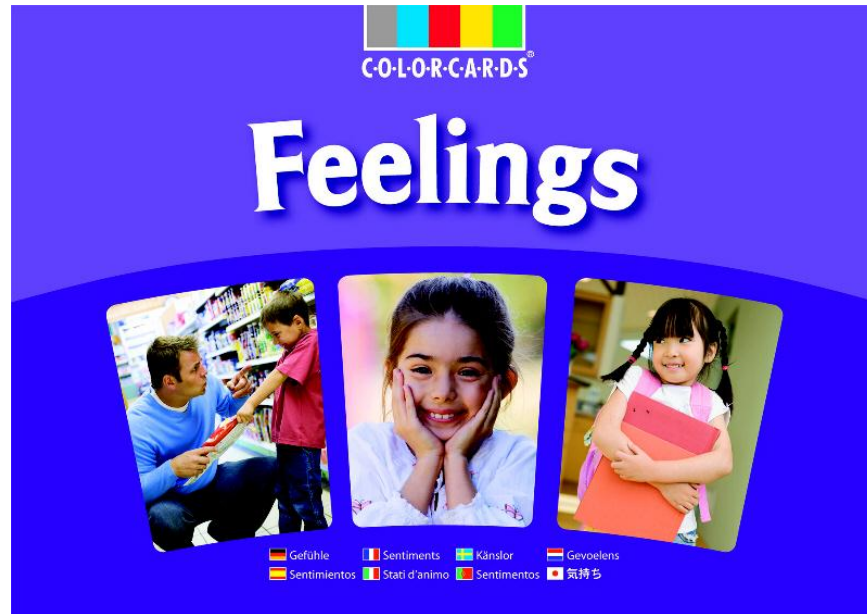
**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through

**Hints for Modifying:** Limit the field of scenario choices depending on the needs of each student.

## Explaining Facial Expressions

In this simple game, players take turns picking a card from the deck and inventing a reason for the facial expression displayed. For example, if the player picks a card with a woman showing disgust, the player might say “She just stepped in dog poop.” This can also be played as a collaborative game where the students work together to create a scenario/story to go with the emotion. Walk students through the steps of the game first and model the first round.



**Materials Needed:** Feelings Flashcards (photographs of people making different facial expressions)  
Ideally, try to use multiple people/examples for each emotion. Your collection should include expressions of: happy, sad, scared, angry, disgusted, and surprised, as well as other emotions you know your students may be dealing with.

**Time it Takes:** 15-30 minutes, or the amount of time you have.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Provide younger students, or students who need additional support with pre-written activities (or picture scenarios) to choose from. Add the element of collaboration for older/more advanced students

## Make the Statue Laugh

Strong social skills involve the ability to practice self control. In this version of a classic game, one kid plays "It" as all other kids freeze like statues. The "It" kid performs actions, without touching the statues, to make the "frozen" kids laugh, making funny faces, doing a wild dance or making funny noises. The first kid to laugh becomes "It" for the next round. If the "It" kid performs genuinely funny actions and "frozen" kids restrain from bursting into laughter, they successfully show self control. Variations: have all the kids lie on the ground and remain quiet and still. When they move, they are out. The last child to move is the winner. Or set it up so the whole class wins if everyone stays still for a pre-determined period of time. Have the whole class congratulate each other on whatever their level of success! Walk students through the steps of the game and model the first round.



**Materials Needed:** None

**Time it Takes:** 15-30 minutes, or the amount of time you have.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Display visuals remind the "statues" what they are trying to do (ex: keep body still, stay quiet) and the "It" kids what they are trying to do (ex: be silly, make others laugh) Remind students of these goals before each round and throughout the game if necessary.

## Play Skills and Problem-Solving Role Play and Practice

Children can come up with the greatest solutions. When children own the problem solving process they are more apt to follow through with the solutions later on because they will remember solutions better if they come up with them themselves. In this activity, we give children the opportunity to come up with the solution to a problem they face in your program. Imagine some common problem scenarios in your room. Some examples are:

- Two children trying to sit in the same chair
- A child who is upset
- Two children wanting the same toy/object.
- A child with too much or too little energy
- Two children disagreeing

Present a “common problem” scenario to your students and brainstorm potential solutions. Decide as a group the best one or two ways to handle this problem. Then choose actors for each of the roles, set the scene, and take a video of the children role playing the problem and the first solution. Switch actors for the second solution. Remember to applaud your actors and have them take a bow! These solutions end up being representations of the social, play, and self regulation skills we are trying to teach. You can use the videos periodically and proactively, to review and practice these skills before problems arise.



**Materials Needed:** iPad or Camera

**Time it Takes:** 45-60 minutes per problem

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** If you do not have access to video, use a camera or have the students draw pictures of the problems and solutions. Consider providing example images, or drawings of the scenarios you present to your children to support their understanding of the problem they are being asked to solve.



## Problem Solving Wheel

Visual Supports can be helpful reminders when kids are already escalated. In those moments, verbal communication can be overwhelming and difficult to process for some children. This visual support is a useful tool to remind children of their options when they come across a problem. Personalize this tool by starting with a blank wheel and filling in the potential appropriate actions together as a group. Foster accountability and build community by encouraging students to compliment and congratulate each other when they see a friend making an appropriate choice when faced with a problem.



**Materials Needed:** Paper, Images of potential solutions, and Markers, OR a large copy of this or similar image

**Time it Takes:** 15-20 minutes initial introduction, then ongoing use

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Modify images and solutions to be age appropriate. Carry a small version with you and post large versions where conflicts are most likely to occur.

## Following Directions/Self- Control Games

Games such as Follow the Leader, Simon Says and Red Light, Green Light teach kids to listen and follow rules. In order to allow children the opportunity to also practice giving clear directions, reverse the roles and let them call the commands. These games were designed to help children practice paying attention, following directions, remembering rules, and demonstrating aspects of self regulation. To teach them, walk students through the steps of the game and model the first round.

- **Simon Says/Opposites Game**

You can play the classic version of Simon Says, or try this alternative: You ask students to: “Listen to my directions and do what I say, but don’t let me trick you with what I do.” For example, you say: “Touch your nose,” while you touch your ears. Can they fight the urge and focus only on your words? It can be tough initially, but will get better with practice! These games require kids to focus on what is important and resist what is likely their first impulse. **Materials Needed:** None

- **Follow the Leader**

Have kids line up behind a leader and follow her through an obstacle course. Kids must stay in line, and take turns as they pass through each section of the course. Alternately, the leader can move around a clear space and the followers simply can copy her actions. **Materials Needed:** None

- **Orange Light, Purple Light**

Like Red Light, Green Light, a teacher acts as a “stop light” by standing at the opposite end of the room from the children. The “stop light” holds up different colors to represent stop and go. In this twist, you can use different colors or shapes, such as purple for “go” and orange for “stop” or a yellow square for “go,” and a yellow triangle for “stop.” Children can also take turns being the stop light!

**Materials Needed:** Construction Paper



**Time it Takes:** The amount of time you have

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through early Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Use visuals to reinforce your directions, and the roles of the games (ex: “LEADER” name tag or lanyard for the leader, Simon or the “stop light” to wear).

## Following Directions/Self- Control Games (continued)

Here are a few more games designed to help children practice paying attention, following directions, remembering rules, and demonstrating aspects of self regulation:

- **Drum Beats**

Try using drum beats to represent different actions that children can do while sitting (e.g., clapping or stomping) or while moving around the room (e.g., walking or dancing). For example, children walk quickly to fast drumming, slowly to slow drumming, and freeze when the drumming stopped. You can also change it up and ask students to respond to opposite cues (walk slowly to fast drum beats and quickly to slow drum beats). **Materials Needed:** Drum

- **Sleeping Children**

In this game, the circle leader sings, “Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping.” Once children are pretending to sleep, the circle leader says, “And when they woke up... they were [monkeys]!” Children wake up and pretended to act like monkeys. The circle leader then repeats the song and suggests other animals. Children who are pretending to sleep are called on to give suggestions for other animals. You can make this more complicated by showing 3 different colored circles (ex: red, blue, and purple). On the red circle would be a picture of a snake, on the blue circle was a picture of a butterfly and there was no animal on the purple circle. When it was time to wake up, the circle leader points to one of the circles and the children act out the animal on that circle. Pointing to the purple circle (the circle with no picture) allows the leader to choose any animal. After a few rounds, you can remove the pictures and children have to remember what animal was on each circle.

**Materials Needed:** Construction Paper, Markers

- **Freeze**

In a normal game of Freeze, music plays and children dance and jiggle until the music abruptly cuts off and the children freeze in place. But in this Tools of the Mind version, as the music plays, the teacher holds a picture of a stick figure in a certain pose above her head. The children are supposed to observe the position of the figure without doing it, and when the music ceases, they assume that position and that position only. The important part of playing the Freeze game this way is the practice of controlling impulses by observing the stick figure without immediately doing as the stick figure does. This helps then when they're older, she says. Later in life, if they get angry, instead of punching or yelling, they're able to stop themselves. **Materials Needed:** Music, Images of stick figures in various poses



**Time it Takes:** The amount of time you have

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through early Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Visuals to represent the elements of Freezing (still body, quiet mouth)

## **Collaborative, Improvisational Storytelling**

To play this cooperative game, put a set of feelings cards face down on the table. Then players decide together on some story elements must appear in the story (e.g., an arctic wasteland, a lemur, and a banana). The goal is for the players to take turns making up the narrative, building on each other's ideas and (eventually) making use of all the required story elements. To begin, first player picks a card, and starts the narrative. He can take the story into any direction he likes, but he must incorporate the emotion depicted on the card. After a minute or two, the next player picks a card and continues the narrative. Players continue to take turns until they have used all the required story elements and reached a satisfying conclusion.



**Materials Needed:** Feelings Flashcards

**Time it Takes:** 15- 30 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Elementary through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Consider making a story element deck as well, so that children have visual reminders of the elements they are supposed to be including in the story. Modify story elements to be age appropriate.

## Collaborative Construction

Group construction projects present kids with opportunities to pay attention to each other's efforts, communicate, negotiate, and cooperate! Consider discussing and agreeing to roles (ex: truck driver, foreman, architect, taper, etc) to help students plan how to contribute. Before you begin this activity, review problem solving/conflict mediation strategies with your students. Include time at the end for the group to reflect on the experience of working together.



**Materials Needed:** Building Supplies (Blocks, Legos, Play Doh, Cardboard etc.)

**Time it Takes:** Depends on the scope of the construction project

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Keep activities (length, scope and materials) age appropriate

## Cooperative Ball Games

Ball passing games help kids successfully interact with each other in the name of a common goal. Without interruption or dropping a ball, kids hit, kick or toss a ball back and forth. To keep the ball moving back and forth, kids anticipate their partner's actions, and make accommodations based on those actions. How long can two (or more) kids keep a ball "in play?" There are many variants of this game. You can kick the ball, toss the ball, or hit the ball back and forth (as in volleyball). But the basic idea is the same: Players move the ball back and forth without dropping it or interrupting the rally. Success depends on anticipating and accommodating each other's actions. Encourage team spirit, supporting each other and achieving common goals, by being very clear about the goal of working together.



**Materials Needed:** Ball(s)

**Time it Takes:** 10-15 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Create the extra role of a "cheerleader," who cheers and supports the other players to do well. Then, have the players rotate through each role.

## Plan a Party

Through this activity, children learn the importance of negotiation and compromise by planning a mock birthday party, or a real party for your classroom. Individually, kids mull over choices regarding activities, the lunch food and type of cake. Once kids identify their favorite and least favorite options, they come together and see what they agree on. Kids must come to an agreement about what to eat for lunch, what activity to engage in, and what sort of cake to have. You can also include elements like music and decoration colors. Before you play, make an identical set of cards for each participant. Each set should include choices for the elements students are planning:

- Cards depicting several different choices of lunch food, including some quirky options (e.g., cards for “pizza,” “peanut butter and jelly,” “noodle soup,” “fish pancakes”).
- Cards depicting several choices of activity (e.g., “roller skating,” “listening to music”, “playing outside,” “going to the beach,” “mountain climbing”)
- Cards depicting several different kinds of birthday cake (e.g., “chocolate cake with vanilla frosting,” “yellow cake with chocolate frosting,” “white cake with vanilla frosting,” “carrot cake with cream cheese frosting).

To play, each kid looks over the cards and identifies his favorite and least favorite options. Then kids can try to see what they agree on. Can they negotiate an agreement? Help kids understand the nature of compromise: They might not be able to agree on their favorites. But maybe they can arrive at an acceptable plan by eliminating options that people really dislike.



**Materials Needed:** Activity/Food/Cake Choice Cards (1 set for each student)

**Time it Takes:** 30- 60 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Limit the amount of choices for younger children, pair images with text on the choice cards. Practice the steps of compromising before beginning the activity, and post reminders of the steps that students can access during the activity.

## Draw Your Day

Planning requires a lot of energy from the prefrontal cortex. In the Vygotskian-based Tools of the Mind approach, children are encouraged to create a play plan before engaging in the day's activities. This simple process encourages future-orientation, and requires children to think before doing, a key aspect of impulse control.

Encouraging planning can be as simple as asking your student what they want to play next and asking them to describe what they'll do. It could mean taking a few minutes to talk about/plan what your students want to do with their upcoming quiet time, recess, or trip to the library. Turn it into a written plan by discussing the plans, writing your student's dictations if necessary, and encouraging her to draw a picture to complete the planning process.

Go a step further and help older children plan their day, creating a picture schedule or written schedule to help them see how they can have time to do both what they need to do and want to do by following a plan. When distractions arise, simply remind them of what they're choosing NOT to do and ask if that's the choice they want. This simple exercise helps reinforce an internal locus of control and encourages them to focus on what they want most over what they want now (the epitome of impulse control!).



**Materials Needed:** Paper, Markers, Crayons, or Colored Pencils

**Time it Takes:** 5-25 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Provide a planning template for students to fill in. Provide images of activities for them to choose between.



## Ice Breakers and Brain Breaks

Ice Breakers can be used to introduce a group to one another, or to deepen the connections between students that already know each other. They can help students to identify personal characteristics and to recognize commonalities within the group.

- **Activity Blocks**

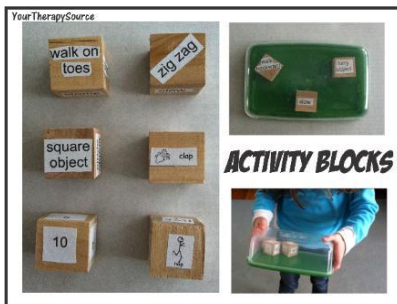
Create activity blocks for a quick brain break in the classroom. Use these blocks as a movement activity to break the ice in a new group or before your students get too wiggly to focus. Choose students to roll the blocks and lead the activity! **Materials Needed:** Cardboard, paper, tape

- **Name Game**

It is helpful for kids to learn the importance of capturing a person's attention before speaking to them. For this game, kids sit in a circle, with one child taking a ball. The child with the ball says the name of another child in the circle and rolls the ball to him. The child receiving the ball in turn says the name of another child in the circle and rolls the ball to her. Play continues in this manner, with kids learning to address the person with whom they wish to speak to. **Materials Needed:** Soft, Foam Ball

- **I Like My Neighbor Who....**

Arrange students into a circle where one person is in the middle. The person in the center of the circle begins the game by saying "I love my neighbor especially my neighbor who..." She completes the sentence with a piece of information that is true for her. Example: "I love my neighbor, especially my neighbor who was born outside of state, loves to play basketball, has a pet, is an only child, etc."). As soon as she is finished with the statement, everyone (including the person in the center) who this applies to moves from their cone to an empty cone that is not right next to them. The person who remains in the middle begins a second round of the game. **Materials Needed:** None



**Time it Takes:** 10-20 minutes, depending on the size of your group

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Remember to take student mobility into consideration

## Say Something Nice

Many people have trouble gracefully accepting compliments and may not give compliments easily. Learning these two social skills is important; compliments are a way of initiating and deepening relationships. They are great conversation starters and a way to show appreciation for others. For this activity, have the students sit in a circle and give one player a soft foam ball. That player throws the ball to another child, who has to say something nice about the person who just threw the ball to her. For instance, the students can say anything from "You have a pretty smile" to "You tell funny jokes." Continue the game until all of the students have had a compliment given to them by their classmates. Before you begin the activity, practice some compliments with the group.



**Materials Needed:** Soft Foam Ball

**Time it Takes:** 10-20 minutes, depending on the size of your group.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K- Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:** Provide compliment templates and reminders for children to use as examples to draw from if they get stuck.

## Giving Flowers

Begin the game by dividing the group into two teams. Line up the teams on one side of the classroom a few feet apart from each other. Select one player from each team to sit in a chair on the opposite side of the room. Give the first players in each team a bouquet of fake flowers. When you say "Go," the first player runs to his teammate sitting down on the opposite side of the room. He hands her the flowers, saying, "These are for you," and switches places with her, sitting down in the same chair. She races back to the team and hands off the flowers to the next player in line, saying, "These are for you." The player who receives the flowers has to say, "Thank you," while the giver has to respond, "You're welcome." The first team to have had all its teammates sit in the team's chair wins the game.



**Materials Needed:** bouquet of flowers

**Time it Takes:** 10-20 minutes, depending on the size of your group.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K- Elementary

**Hints for Modifying:**

## Acts of Kindness

Before the game, think of several different scenarios that represent kindness or meanness. Examples include "A boy gives his mom a hug" or "A girl makes fun of her friend." Sit the students down and tell them a scenario, adding more details if you like. Ask the students whether the situation represents an act of kindness or an act of meanness. If a child thinks she has the answer, she raises her hand. You can choose to run the activity as a contest and give out points for correct answers, or as more of a discussion, encouraging students to come up with alternatives to the actions in the mean scenarios. If you choose to do a contest, the first child who gives the right answer receives a point. After presenting several of these situations, the player with the most points wins the game. The "winner" chooses a way for everyone in their class to be kind to them (ex receiving high-fives, compliments, etc)



**Materials Needed:** None

**Time it Takes:** 10-20 minutes, depending on the size of your group.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K- High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Adapt the scenarios and the depth of conversation to the ages of the students. Consider printing out photos representing the scenarios to support visual learners.

## **Speaker, Listener, Observer**

Listening involves paying attention, asking questions, and reflecting back what someone says. When you practice active listening, the other person in the conversation feels heard. One popular method of teaching active listening assigns people to one of three roles: A speaker, a listener, and an observer. The speaker is instructed to talk for a few minutes about something important to him. The listener attends quietly, providing cues to the speaker that she is paying attention. When the speaker is finished talking, the listener also repeats back, in her own words, the speaker's points. The observer's job is to evaluate the speaker and listener. Did the speaker stay on topic? How did the listener indicate that she was paying attention? After the observer shares his observations with the others, the players switch roles and try again.



**Materials Needed:** None

**Time it Takes:** 20-30 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

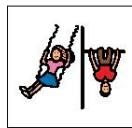
**Ages:** Elementary through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Provide visual reminders of the responsibilities of each role.

## Social Stories

A social story describes a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. Social stories were initially developed for use with children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, but can be helpful for teaching social skills to all children. The purpose of a social story is to give clear, concise information for appropriate behavior in a specific social situation. Social stories can also be made into social videos. These can be very useful for students because they can be viewed over and over again. This helps to reinforce the skills being taught and can ease anxiety for students. The videos can have text and voiceover so students can listen to the instructions while watching the videos. Some students could be included in the making of the video and even star in their own video. Social videos are especially good for supporting students in new situations, such as a first day at a new school or program. These stories or videos are then read/shown to the student multiple times preventatively to help them prepare for the chosen situation before they encounter it. Keep it simple and positive-focus on the behavior you are hoping to see!

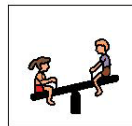
### Playing



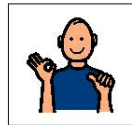
Sometimes I like to play with other kids.



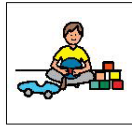
I can ask them, "Do you want to play with me?"



If they say "yes", I can play with them. I will have fun.



If they say "no", it's ok.



I can ask someone else or play by myself.

Tracy Boyd, 2009

**Materials Needed:** Paper, Images, Pen or Computer (for text), Video device-if making a video social story

**Time it Takes:** 20-30 minutes to make, 5-10 to use.

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

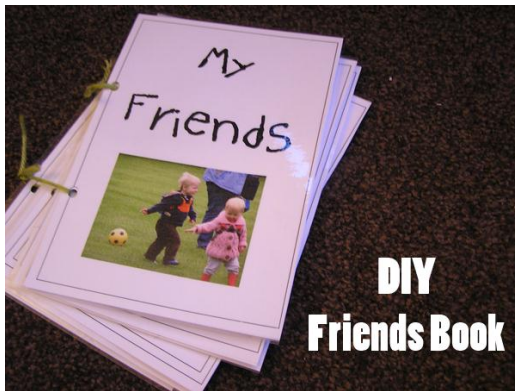
**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Use images, and language level appropriate for the age and comprehension ability of your student.

## Friend Book

Make a “Friend Book”. Encourage each child to share three things about themselves (e.g. favorite color, number of siblings, favorite activity), and write it on a page. Glue a picture of each child on their page. Let the students decorate their pages with drawings and stickers. Afterwards, photocopy the book so every child has a copy to keep. If you don’t have access to a copier, make just one book to keep in the classroom for all of the kids to look through. This activity encourages learning about others and finding commonalities.

An alternate activity would be to have each child make an “All About Me” Book, that they will share with the class during a circle time meeting. Leave room in the back of the book for the other kids to leave positive, kind comments (like a yearbook)



**Materials Needed:** Paper, photo of each child

**Time it Takes:** 15-25 minutes

**Skills This Builds:** COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION, VALIDATION - SUPPORT, SPORTSMANSHIP, KEEPING YOUR COOL

**Ages:** Pre-K through High School

**Hints for Modifying:** Provide Images paired with text for younger students to use to talk about themselves, a field of choices for students who might need it, and be sure to ask age appropriate questions for each group of students.

## Let's Play! Activity Resources

### Social Skills Building Activities

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=76838288>

[http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6675942\\_games-develop-social-skills-kids.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6675942_games-develop-social-skills-kids.html)

<http://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/interactive-games-teach-kids-social-skills-7883714.html>

<http://www.parentingscience.com/facial-expressions-for-kids.html>

<http://nspt4kids.com/parenting/building-social-skills-through-play-dates/>

[http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6623662\\_preschool-games-kindness.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6623662_preschool-games-kindness.html)

### Executive Functioning

<http://www.therapyandlearningservices.com/3/post/2012/09/activities-for-strengthening-executive-function.html>

<http://notjustcute.com/2011/11/02/want-to-give-your-kids-an-advantage-build-executive-functions/>

<http://www.theinclusiveclass.com/2012/05/25-easy-ways-to-improve-executive.html>

### Brain Breaks

<http://yourtherapysource.com/videoblocks.html>

### Self Regulation

<http://www.yourtherapysource.com/selfregulation.html>

<http://www.toolsofthemind.org/extendedcampus/toolsofthemind/about/selfregulationactivities.shtml>

[http://www.themotorstory.com/The\\_Motor\\_Story/Blog/Entries/2010/11/8\\_Classroom\\_Activity\\_of\\_the\\_Week\\_Activities\\_to\\_Enhance\\_Self\\_Regulation.html](http://www.themotorstory.com/The_Motor_Story/Blog/Entries/2010/11/8_Classroom_Activity_of_the_Week_Activities_to_Enhance_Self_Regulation.html)

[http://www.themotorstory.com/The\\_Motor\\_Story/Blog/Entries/2010/11/1\\_Classroom\\_Activity\\_of\\_the\\_Week\\_Vestibular-Proprioception\\_Organizer.html](http://www.themotorstory.com/The_Motor_Story/Blog/Entries/2010/11/1_Classroom_Activity_of_the_Week_Vestibular-Proprioception_Organizer.html)

[www.cdd.unm.edu/ecspd/.../SelfRegulationTipsandStrategies.pdf](http://www.cdd.unm.edu/ecspd/.../SelfRegulationTipsandStrategies.pdf)