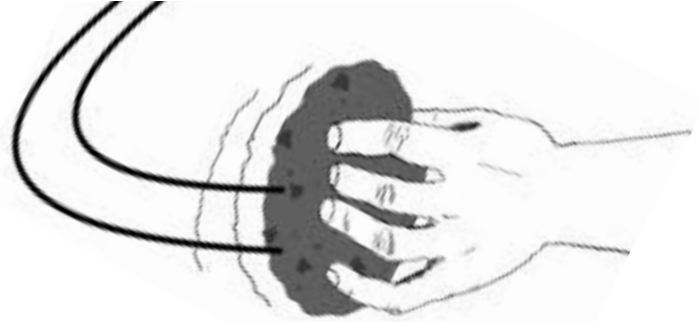


# Examples of Social Problem-Solving Classroom Activities



## Ages 3-4:

### Learning to Share

*(Using a "teachable moment" to show how to get along)*

1. If one goal for children is to share things in play or work spaces without conflict, use puppets and a toy truck to show what can happen when the puppets don't know how to share (they fight, one gets hurt and cries, they say they won't be friends).
2. Next, role-play with the puppets how to think out loud and learn to take turns playing with the truck.
3. Model the IDEAL problem-solving step using the puppets to teach children how to think when solving a problem. Ask the music teacher or parent volunteers to make up a song to teach the steps in the model. Have the puppets teach the children the steps through the song.

Don't do something to someone that you would not want done to you. Use dolls to show the concept of not doing things to hurt someone. Using the dolls, expand the concept from hurtful acts to hurtful words.

3. Use the IDEAL problem-solving model and act out excluding a child with hurtful words. (If we stop and think, we would not want to be left out, so let's act by knowing that our class rule is: Don't Say 'You Can't Play'.)
4. Reinforce these skills by using specific comments to recognize children using positive social skills in the classroom or on the playground.

## Being Told "You Can't Play"

*(Using dolls to teach empathy for how someone else might feel using the Golden Rule)*

1. Teach the concept of good touch, hurtful touch. Have children tell you what good touches they like (hugs, back rubs). Have them tell you what bad touches they don't like (pinch, push, punch). Explain that people feel pretty much the same about the kinds of touch they like and don't like. Tell them they should not give a touch that hurts to anyone.
2. Explain this is called the Golden Rule:

## Ages 5-6

### Responding to Teasing

*(Using skill-streaming model to teach a social skill)*

First talk about what teasing is and give examples.

1. Skill selected. How to respond to teasing?
2. Model. Stop and count to five. Think about your choices:
  - Ignore it. Turn or walk away.
  - Say how you feel. (I feel sad because you want to hurt my feelings.)

- Give a reason for the person to stop.  
(Please stop teasing me, I am doing the best I can.)

Teacher should model all three choices through role-playing.

3. Role-play. Children practice acting out all three choices, using a prop to play the role of the other child.
4. Feedback. Walk around as children role-play, and give praise and instruction.
5. Reinforcement. Encourage children to use what they have practiced if they are teased.

### **Don't Bully Me**

*(Using an open-ended story to practice problem solving.)*

1. Read this or use a real classroom tale about someone who is a bully.

*Nugyen is in first grade. His dad and uncle went to the baseball game and brought him a baseball cap, his first big league cap. He was so proud of it he wanted to wear it to school. On the school bus, an older girl, Leigh, grabbed his cap and started throwing it around the bus, saying, "Baby has a baseball cap. What do you all think of that." Several more girls joined Leigh in making fun of Nugyen and tossing the cap. When they got off the bus, Michele, another girl, threw his new cap on the ground and Leigh stepped on it, getting it muddy. Nugyen picked it up and ran into the building with tears of sorrow and anger running down his face.*

2. Talk about what a bully is. Describe a bully as someone who does bad things to scare or hurt people over and over. Ask how they can tell when a bully is around. Ask anyone to tell about a time

someone bullied them. Ask how being around a bully makes you feel. Talk about the kinds of things bullies do. Talk about the difference between teasing and bullying. Ask if a bully gets away with bullying, what might the bully do?

3. Write IDEAL on the board. Review the model.
4. Ask the children what Nugyen should do.
5. Talk about how when people are angry, they should "stop, calm down and think" before they ACT.
6. Explain that sometimes you will want or need to get help from an adult to decide what to do.
7. Talk about who could help a child with a bullying problem.
8. The next day, select a children's book about a bully to read to the children. Talk about what the bullied child in the story did. Ask if there were other things that he or she could have done to deal with the situation.

### **Ages 7-8:**

#### **Responding to Disrespect**

*(role-playing to learn skills)*

1. Talk about how people show respect for one another. Role-play with a child some situations that show respect. Have children partner to role-play something they think shows respect. Select several pairs to demonstrate their respectful actions to the class. Talk about things that show disrespect.

Include name-calling, sticking out a tongue, making faces, mimicking, putting a fist up to someone's face, grabbing something from someone, butting in line, taking more than a fair turn, interrupting someone who is speaking, taking another person's belongings, destroying something that belongs to someone on purpose, excluding someone from the group, making fun of someone's speech, looks, language, clothes or family. Read the following scenario to the class:

*Tim is small for his age. Two boys in the lunch-room push him and call him rude and disrespectful names like "shrimp" and "tiny Tim." After school, Tim sees the two boys use a sharp stone to print in big letters on the sidewalk in front of the school, "Tim is a shrimp." Tim is very angry at the two bigger boys and wants to do something to get even.*

Let's think about what Tim could do.

2. Talk about what disrespect means and how teasing can be a form of disrespect when it involves name-calling. Ask the class to give several examples of other types of disrespect.
3. Review the IDEAL problem solving process.
4. Ask the class: "What are some things Tim could do or say to the disrespectful boys?" List them.
5. Go over the list and have children cross out any ideas that are not healthy, safe, respectful, or legal.
6. Let each child think about what he or she would do or say. Choose someone to role-

play with you the role of Tim responding to the disrespect.

7. Give all children a chance to role-play the role of Tim with a partner. Choose several groups to role-play. Compliment them and identify and correct inappropriate behavior. Have them repeat the role-play with corrections.
8. Have the children draw a picture of someone showing respect for someone else. Give them some ideas. (Offering help to someone; saying something polite like "please, excuse me or thank you"; saying something nice to a friend or person in the family, taking turns, playing fair.) Have the children show and tell about their picture.

### **Avoiding Violence**

*(guided discussion to apply problem solving thinking skills)*

1. Review the IDEAL decision-making, problem solving steps. Talk about why thinking before acting rather than reacting is important to avoid a fight. Talk about how good problem solving prevents violence. Ask the children to tell you what violent situations they could avoid with good problem solving.
2. Read this scenario to the class, or ask a teacher to use a real fight scenario that happened in her class.

*Maria was proud of the Mexican pottery water jar she brought to school to show the class. It was given to Maria by her grandmother before she died. It was so special to her; she always kept it on the little table by her bedside.*

*The last thing her mother said before she left for school that day was, "Maria be careful with your special gift." She carefully placed it in her desk at school. While she was sharpening her pencil, Marco reached into the desk to look at the pretty object. She saw him holding it as she turned around. "Stop Marco, put it back," Maria shouted. This so startled Marco, he dropped the vase and it broke into two big pieces. Maria flew at Marco in a rage, punching him in the face so hard she made his nose bleed.*

3. Have the children answer these questions about the scenario.
  - Why was Maria angry (identifying the problem)?
  - Did Maria have a right to be angry (acknowledging feelings)?
  - Did Maria's attack on Marco solve the problem (acting on her solution)?
  - What else could Maria have done (determining solutions)?
  - What should Maria do now (evaluating the solution)?
  - Was there anyway Maria could have prevented her problem from happening (learning from the experience)?

**Closure: Next Steps**

1. Create a list of prosocial behaviors that children need to work on using problem solving. Through modeling, practice, and reinforcement, work on reducing the frequency and intensity of the problem behavior in the class.
2. Develop individual student problem-solving plans for one or more students. Communicate to all of the child's teachers

and family the plans to teach children how to apply the IDEAL model to improve the student's behavior. Chart progress, and reward effort and improvement.

3. Use parent conferences as opportunities to teach the problem-solving model to parents for use with their children when problems arise outside of school.
4. Encourage other staff to adopt a problem-solving model to teach problem solving to all students.
5. Send home a letter telling families what children have been learning at school about solving problems. Include some ways in which families can help model problem-solving skills at home.
6. Teach children a calming activity like taking deep breaths, counting, or picturing something beautiful to try at home when they are angry.
7. Use children's literature as a springboard to talk about ways of handling conflicts. Select the book where a character is faced with a conflict. Read the book up to the point of conflict. Ask students questions. (How are the characters feeling? What do you think the conflict is about? What are ways the characters could solve their problem? What way do you think the characters will choose?) Finish reading the story, and then ask children to describe the solution and tell whether or not they think it was a good one. Ask them, "Why?" "Why not?"

