



Early

Learning & Education PROGRAMS

Understanding Behavior

What's Inside

- Cooperation Counts! 2
- Healthy Food Choices 3
- Make a Mind Jar 4
- Roasted Spaghetti Squash 4
- Celebrate Spring 5

Our behavior is influenced by what we learn as children about society, expectations, and consequences. As adults, we are capable of managing our own behavior, but children often need the guidance of parents and caregivers throughout their childhood and adolescence. Our goal as educators is to support children in learning to manage their own behavior in a positive and socially acceptable way, even when adults are not present. Educators can offer children guidance by providing them with an environment that builds their self-development, social-emotional skills, and fosters positive relationships by modeling effective strategies for conflict resolution and the management of emotions.



The behavior of children is influenced by their environment. For example, over-crowded and unorganized play areas may cause children to dump baskets on the floor to search for items. Create an environment that is clean and organized with shelves and baskets that easily display their contents, and well-defined areas for learning that limit the ability to run. Choose posters and display materials that inspire curiosity, support learning, and can be easily changed.

Teach children emotional literacy every day. Choose books that discuss emotions such as *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain, and encourage children to identify emotions by playing games, using puppets, or singing songs when they play.

continued on page 4

DEVELOPING RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Children need to know what adults expect from them in order to learn what is socially acceptable and develop their self-control. Take a moment to reflect on the following questions and how they influence children's behavior in your program.

- How do I establish expectations or rules for responsible behavior?
- Do I notice a difference in how children respond to rules when they participate in creating them?
- How can I use daily activities to teach the concepts of respect and fairness?





Cooperation Counts!

Children can learn about friendship, respect, negotiation, communication, self-regulation, and cooperation by playing group games. By practicing these skills, children also learn techniques for peaceful conflict resolution. Be sure to monitor participants closely in case someone needs a break, as games can sometimes push children outside of their normal comfort zone. Cooperation games can be played during transitions, or during small or large group circle time.

Toddlers, for example, can sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” as they sit on the floor, facing each other, clasping hands, and taking turns pulling and pushing to mimic rowing a boat. Once they master taking turns and their language develops enough for them to communicate needs clearly, you can increase the group size and complexity of the activities.

Preschoolers can work on cooperative games in small or large groups. Here are three cooperative games that preschoolers can play.



- Robots:** This is a game for pairs. One child is the robot and one child is the controller. The controller gives the robot movement directions. After about five minutes they can change places.

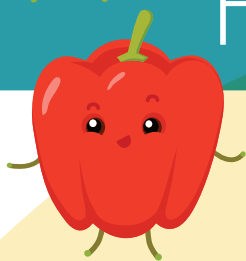
- Cooperative Musical Chairs:** This is played just like musical chairs, but the objective is for children to find a way to share the remaining chair instead of someone being left out.
- Find It:** Gather children in a group and tell them to find a particular object and touch it with their own hand, or by making a chain of hands. For example, if Maria finds the green plate first, she will touch it with one hand and hold out her other hand for someone to grasp, and so on.

Both preschool children and school age children can also benefit from cooperative board games. Allow children to create their own unique board games to extend their cooperation learning further.

Source: Adapted from the article “Cooperative Games for Preschoolers,” *Teaching Young Children*, Volume 4, Number 2 (NAEYC).



Healthy Food Choices

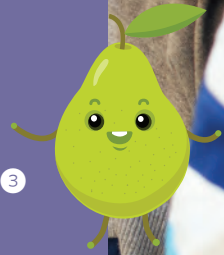
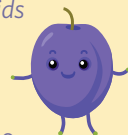


Children learn about making healthy food choices from their families and teachers. By serving children a variety of vegetables, fruits, lean meats, dairy, and other proteins, we show them what portion sizes and healthy meals look like. More importantly, eating healthy food develops their palate, which is the ability to appreciate different tastes and flavors. The palate that children develop will guide their food preferences for a lifetime, so teach them to appreciate the taste of healthy food now. For more information about nutrition, read the Children's Home Society of California brochure, *Nutrition: Healthy Eating for Healthy Children* online at www.chs-ca.org.

Offer cooking activities on a regular basis to introduce children to new foods and give them the opportunity to develop independence by preparing their own food. Start with simple recipes that do not require heat, such as a fruit or vegetable smoothie. Be mindful of potential food

allergies, and always supervise cooking activities closely. Children can wash produce, use plastic knives to cut them into large pieces, remove seeds, and add them to the blender. Children can also spread peanut butter on celery and top it with raisins, make a simple salad, or spoon yogurt onto a plate with some fresh fruit or veggies for dipping. For more activity ideas, try the book *Cooking is Cool: Heat-Free Recipes for Kids to Cook* by Marianne E. Dambra.

When you routinely involve children in cooking activities, their participation encourages them to take an interest in their own health and well-being. Teaching them simple recipes for healthy snacks, and including them in the preparation of meals, shows them that they have the ability to manage their own health. For more information about nutrition and kid-friendly recipes, visit the website <http://kidshealth.org>.



Understanding Behavior

Hang mirrors in the dramatic play area where children can make faces, or create games with pictures of different emotions. As children learn to identify their emotions, help them deal with their feelings in appropriate ways. For example, “I see you are crying and that tells me you feel sad. What can I do to help you feel better?”

Show children calming techniques, like taking deep breaths, or holding a comfort item. You can remind them of the coping skills they learn when they become upset. The book *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean is helpful when teaching children how to manage emotions. If two children are having a disagreement, help them by first making sure they are calm, and then try to facilitate their discussion as they talk it out. Keep things positive by managing behavior with re-direction (guiding a child to another area or activity) and having logical consequences (losing a privilege directly related to the behavior, such as having to leave the sand box for throwing sand).

Children are more likely to pay attention to their own behavior when they feel like a community. Build a sense of community by holding class meetings to make decisions about what the dramatic play area will be next, or to solve a problem like “what can we do so we all remember to put our jackets away?” Give children the opportunity to work on solving problems themselves, as you play the role of mediator. This will help them feel more confident and empower them to resolve conflicts.

Praising the behavior you like to see helps children understand what your expectations are, and this will lead to them regulating their own behavior. Remember to keep your mindset, and that of the children, positive by praising desirable behavior and accomplishments daily. For more information on positive discipline and self-esteem, visit our website at www.chs-ca.org and view our online interactive presentations, podcasts, brochures, and blogs.

Source: *The Power of Guidance: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood Classrooms* by Dan Gartrell (Cengage Learning, 2003).

MAKE A MIND JAR

Children can use mind jars to relax and help calm their thoughts. Explain that shaking the jar represents anxious or busy thoughts. Ask children to take deep breaths as they watch the glitter settle and feel their minds calm down.

To make a mind jar you will need:

- 8 ounce plastic bottle or jar
- 1/4 cup of corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons of glitter glue
- 3 to 4 drops of dish soap
- 3/4 cup of hot water
- 1 whisk
- 1 bowl

Put the corn syrup, glitter glue, and hot water in the bowl. Use the whisk to mix them together until combined. Pour the mixture in your bottle or jar. Put the lid on and shake it. If some of the glitter stays on top, add the dish soap and shake it again. Take the lid off and allow it to cool. Once cooled, glue the lid on and it is ready to go!

Source: Adapted from <http://mommaowlslab.blogspot.com/2012/02/science-thursday-glitter-jars.html> in December 2017.



Source: Adapted from <http://www.pbs.org/food/fresh-tastes/simplest-way-make-eat-spaghetti-squash> in December 2017.

Roasted Spaghetti Squash

Roasted spaghetti squash is a fun and healthy alternative to pasta. Once it has cooled, children can use forks to help remove the seeds and scrape out the “spaghetti” strings. One squash serves two to four people.

Ingredients

- 1 spaghetti squash
- Juice from 1/2 lemon
- Salt to taste
- 2 to 3 tablespoons finely grated parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon minced Italian parsley
- Pine nuts (optional)

Directions

1. Cut the spaghetti squash in half lengthwise.
2. Preheat the oven to 375° and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the halves of spaghetti squash on the parchment paper with the cut sides facing down. Roast it in the oven for 30 to 40 minutes (varies with size), or until it is tender.
3. Remove the squash and allow it to cool for 5 to 7 minutes.
4. Using a fork, remove and discard the seeds. Scrape out the spaghetti squash strands from both halves and dump it onto the parchment paper.
5. Sprinkle it with a few pinches of salt and squeeze lemon juice over it. Mix it together and put it back in the oven for about 10 minutes.
6. Divide the spaghetti squash onto plates and top with parmesan cheese, Italian parsley, and toasted pine nuts (optional).

SPAGHETTI
SQUASH

Celebrate Spring

With spring time comes warmer temperatures and more opportunities for children to play outside and learn. The following activities will help your child explore and learn more about nature.

SPRING FLOWER SENSORY BOTTLE

Age group: Infants

What you need: Plastic bottle with lid, handful of freshly cut flowers, glitter and/or gems (optional), clear tape, and green and blue electrical tape.

What you do: Remove the flower stems and put the flowers in the bottle. Add glitter, gems, or anything that will catch your child's attention. Fill the bottle with water and secure the lid. Wrap the blue tape around the top of the bottle to represent the sky, and the green tape around the bottom to represent the grass. Cut and securely attach white clouds to the blue tape, and green triangles (to represent grass) to the green tape. Shake the bottle and give it to your child to enjoy.

What they learn: Children learn cause and effect and increase vocabulary and language as adults describe what is happening.

Source: Adapted from <https://kidscraftroom.com/spring-flower-sensory-bottle-baby-toddler-educational-toy-activity/>

BOUNCING BUBBLES

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: Dish soap, water, granulated sugar, nature inspired bubble wands (sticks or branches and pipe cleaners), and small knitted gloves.

What you do: In a large mixing bowl, pour 4 cups of water, 2 cups of sugar, and 1 cup of dish soap. Have the children help with measuring and pouring as you make the bubble solution. Have the children search for sticks or branches in nature to use as the handle for their bubble wand. Once chosen, wrap an end of the pipe cleaner

around the end of the handle, make a circle, and then wrap the second end of the pipe cleaner around the same end of the handle. After everyone has their bubble wand, put one glove on each child. Before they dip their wand in the bubble solution and blow to make bubbles, ask the children to predict what will happen when they touch the bubbles with and without a glove on. When the children touch the bubble without the glove, it should pop. When they touch or hold the bubble with the glove, they can make the bubble bounce!

What they learn: Children learn to measure, predict, hypothesize, and also practice eye-hand coordination.

Source: Adapted from <http://alittlepinchofperfect.com/homemade-bouncing-bubble-recipe/>
<http://www.freshlyplanted.com/2014/07/nature-bubble-wands.html>

MY OWN BUG HOME

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Plastic jar, lid with holes, paint, craft foam, craft eyes, pipe cleaners, and glue.

What you do: Have children identify their favorite bug (ex. lady bug, bee, or ant). Distribute the jars and have children paint and decorate the lid with colors that match their favorite bug. The book *Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!* by Bob Barner offers great life-size illustrations and interesting facts about various bugs. Once the lid has been painted, wait for the paint to dry before gluing the eyes and two pipe cleaners above the eyes to represent the antennas. Children can also cut foam pieces and glue them on the jar as wings. Once the jar has been decorated, children can go outside and search for bugs using tweezers to pick them up and place them in their new temporary home.



Celebrate Spring

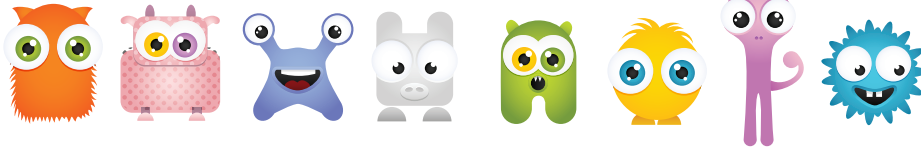
What they learn: Children learn about nature and insects. You can extend this activity by having the children count the bugs that they collect and have a discussion about who collected the most bugs, teaching children to compare and contrast.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.kidactivities.net/category/Science-Kids-Collecting-Insects.aspx>

GROW YOUR OWN MONSTER HEAD

Age group: School Age

What you need: A nylon sock, grass seed, sawdust, elastic band, plastic container, googly eyes, and decorations such as buttons, plastic beads, or gems.



What you do: Have the children fill the toe of the nylon sock with grass seed and top the seeds with sawdust, then tie the end. Have children decorate their plastic container with beads, buttons, gems, or paper before placing the nylon sock in the container with the grass seed facing upwards. Children can glue googly eyes on the nylon sock "monster head." The container will need to be topped with water regularly and after a few weeks, the grass will sprout.

What they learn: Children learn about the life cycle of grass and cause and effect. Children also learn lessons in responsibility and patience.

Source: <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/grow-a-grass-head-monster>

ABOUT CHS

For over 125 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for childcare providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

© 2018 Children's Home Society of California

If you would like additional copies of this newsletter to share with parents or other child care providers, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org/for-providers/provider-newsletter.



Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT NO. 32415

CHILDREN'S
HOME
SOCIETY OF
CALIFORNIA
www.chs-ca.org

