



TEACHING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS

EDITION 4

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT



IN THIS ISSUE

- Promoting friendships
- Teaching problem-solving steps
- Supporting problem-solving in the moment

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Creator: Gail Joseph
Managing Editor: Tamarack
O'Donnell

Authors: Angela Notari-Syverson,
Heather Floyd, Tamarack O'Donnell
Designer: Ceci Skolrud

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For questions or comments contact
CTmag@uw.edu

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For more great resources on this
topic, and to watch the *Circle Time
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TEACHING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND FRIENDSHIP SKILLS HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY IDEAS

ACROSS ALL AGES

The ability to act in ways that benefit others are key to building positive interactions and friendships between peers. Educators help children learn the skills necessary to develop friendships and find ways to deal with social conflicts.

PROMOTE FRIENDSHIPS

Making and keeping friends requires empathy and the ability to relate well with others. Friendship skills include sharing, helping, cooperating, comforting, making suggestions in play, giving compliments, and understanding how and when to give an apology. Educators can model these skills and create developmentally appropriate opportunities for practice throughout the day.



TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING STEPS

Conflicts happen often in early childhood environments where children are still learning to manage their emotions and behavior. Children are focused on their own needs and tend to see problems only from their own point of view. Educators can model and teach children how to negotiate solutions that work for everyone using these problem-solving steps:

- What is the problem?
- What are some solutions?
- Try it out.
- How did the solution work?



SUPPORT PROBLEM-SOLVING IN THE MOMENT

Problem-solving is hard work! Educators can help children use the problem-solving steps in the moment by:

- Anticipating social conflicts before they happen.
- Being close.
- Providing support.
- Encouraging children to generate multiple solutions.
- Celebrating success.



EQUITY MATTERS

The value that we place on friendships, and the way we go about building and maintaining these relationships, are influenced by our family culture, community, and experiences. Sometimes subtle biases can interfere with our ability to approach conflict between children with an open mind and help them solve problems in a way that is respectful and fair to all children involved. Uncovering these biases takes time and reflection.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What value do you place on friendships?
- How do you expect friends to act with each other?
- How do you feel about conflict?
- Do you listen openly to all children when there is problem?
- Is there a child that you are more likely to make negative assumptions about when a problem involves that child?

TIP: Ask a friend or colleague to video record you during a time of day when there tends to be more conflict between children. Watch the video and notice how you respond and interact with each child involved in the conflicts. Does every child receive the support and instruction that they need?

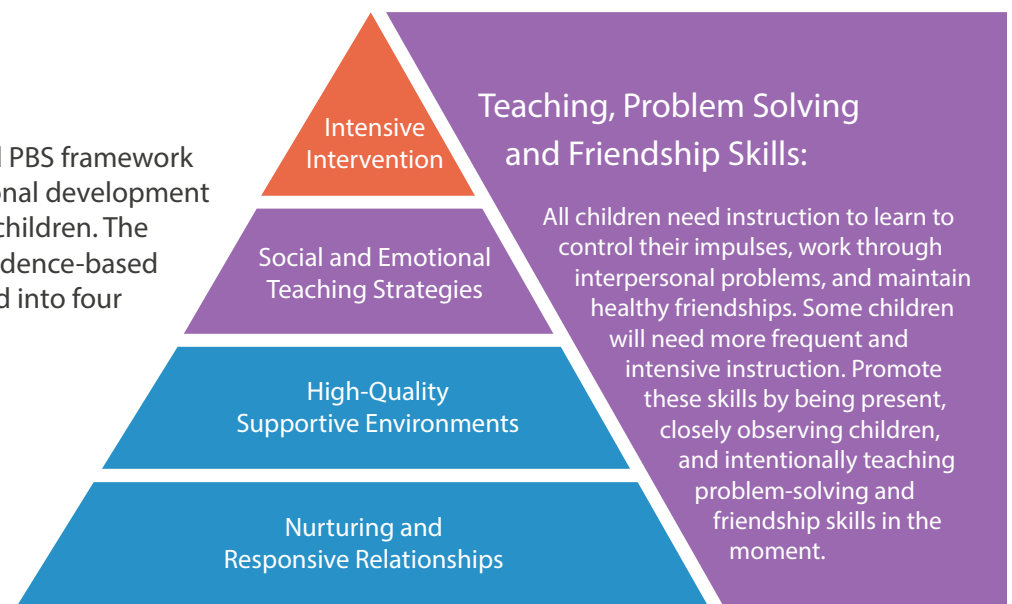
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a positive approach to challenging behavior that focuses on building social and emotional skills. PBS recognizes that all behavior communicates a message or need. Once educators understand the meaning of a child's behavior they can, together with the family, teach the child more effective ways to communicate their needs.

PBS PRACTICES

A Continuum of Support

The Pyramid Model is an established PBS framework for addressing the social and emotional development and challenging behavior of young children. The framework offers a continuum of evidence-based teaching practices that are organized into four levels of support.



Adapted from Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M., Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). The teaching pyramid: A model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children. *Young Children*, 58(4), 48-52.

LEARNING ABOUT MY WORLD

A strong understanding of each child's developmental ability allows educators to plan appropriate learning opportunities and offer support at the child's level of need.



INFANTS EARLY ON

Children who are at an early stage of social and emotional development are ready to learn how to:

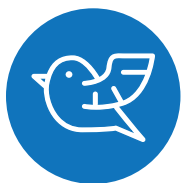
- Engage in simple back-and-forth interactions with other children and adults.
- Notice other children in distress.
- Accept adults resolving conflicts with other children.



TODDLERS EMERGING SKILLS

Children who are at an emerging stage of social and emotional development are ready to learn how to:

- Play next to another child with similar materials, mimic other children's play, practice sharing and taking turns.
- Show empathy and try to comfort children in distress.
- Make decisions and practice problem-solving with other children, with adult help.



PRESCHOOLERS INCREASING MASTERY

Children who are increasing their mastery of social and emotional development are ready to learn how to:

- Engage in cooperative play with other children, such as suggesting something to do together, including others' ideas, and following mutually agreed upon rules.
- Develop friendships with one or two preferred other children.
- Recognize and describe social problems and suggest effective solutions.

For more guidance on building relationships and supporting self-regulation in the early stages of development, refer to the following resources:

- **Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines**
(<https://www.del.wa.gov/helpful-resources/washington-state-early-learning-and-developmental-guidelines>)
- **Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework**
(<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>)



INFANTS EARLY ON



Infants show interest in other children. They look attentively at other children, touch them and look concerned when another child is crying. Educators can help infants build awareness of other children and encourage peer interactions.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Promote Friendship Skills

Infants tend to play alongside other children, rather than together. They are beginning to show preferences for some peers over others. Educators can create opportunities for infants to play side-by-side and interact with each other.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Use materials that encourage infants to interact with each other.
- ✓ Use materials that two or more infants can use at the same time.
- ✓ Talk about what infants are doing to help them build awareness of each other.

Practice Problem-Solving

As infants interact with one-another throughout the day, educators should be aware of infants' cues. Watch for situations that may trigger stress or conflict.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Be aware of infant verbal and nonverbal cues.
- ✓ Provide comfort and support to help the infant calm down.
- ✓ Describe the problem and identify some solutions.
- ✓ Model and provide support for positive interactions.
- ✓ Encourage children for their effort.

Putting these strategies into practice helps infants learn to

- Engage in simple back-and-forth interactions with other children.
- Notice other children in distress.
- Accept adults resolving conflicts with other children.



TRY IT OUT

Try out these activities and materials to promote friendship and social problem-solving skills with infants.

BOOKS

Gossie and Gertie/Gansi y Gertie

By Olivier Dunrea

This bilingual English and Spanish book is about two gosling friends. They do many things together, and they do some things on their own. Look at the pictures together. Encourage the infant to hold and manipulate the book. As you read the book, talk about the pictures the infant is most interested in. Explain that the goslings are friends because they enjoy and care about each other.

FRIENDSHIP KIT

Make a “Friendship Kit” that includes items children can use to comfort a friend. Educators can model using these items when an infant notices another child is sad or in distress. Talk about what you are doing. Encourage warm interactions between the children.

Possible Items for Friendship Kit

- Pack of tissue: Offer a tissue if a friend is crying.
- Small soft toy: Help a friend soothe with a cuddly toy.



TALK ABOUT IT

Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help children better understand social problems and how to work through them. Make comments, ask open-ended questions, and use novel words as you encourage peer interactions and help solve conflicts with infants during daily caregiving activities.



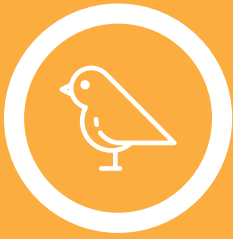
COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
<p>You're smiling! You like playing with your friend.</p> <p>Look, Natalia is watching you. I think she wants to play too!</p> <p>Chloe had that toy. Let's give it back and I'll find one for you.</p>	<p>Hmmm, it looks like you and Julian both want that toy. What should we do?</p> <p>Amal is crying. How can we help her feel better?</p> <p>I see you watching your friends. Who you do want to play with?</p>	<p>Friend</p> <p>Problem</p> <p>Help</p>	<p>Calm</p> <p>Sad</p> <p>Smile</p>

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Learn about other children who might be in their family and what kind of social problems are coming up at home. Be open to adjusting your support to include strategies that the family uses at home.

- Talk with families about opportunities their infant has to interact with other children at home and in the community.
- Ask families to share examples of how their infant initiates and responds to interactions with other children.
- Invite families to describe what they do when their infant has a conflict while playing with other children.





TODDLERS EMERGING SKILLS



Toddlers are beginning to engage in prosocial behaviors such as helping, sharing, and comforting. They can take turns in play and respond to needs and requests from other children with adult support.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Promote Friendship Skills

Toddlers join in play with other children and show preferences for particular playmates. They can show positive affections for preferred peers verbally and through gestures such as smiling, hugging, touching, and kissing.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Practice turn-taking and sharing.
- ✓ Provide guidance to help toddlers play together.
- ✓ Encourage toddlers to help each other and do things together.

Teach Problem-Solving

Toddlers are beginning to reason and understand simple consequences to actions. They are willing to modify their actions and behavior in social situations when asked.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Describe what you see the problem might be.
- ✓ Offer a solution. Explain why it's important.
- ✓ Help them try it out.
- ✓ Encourage toddlers to talk about how well the solution worked.

Support Problem-Solving in the Moment

Toddlers are increasingly interested in playing with each other. Educators should standby to support toddlers, helping them engage in positive interactions with peers and solve problems as they arise.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Observe closely—scan the environment often to see if there are conflicts.
- ✓ Move close and help the toddler choose a preferred coping strategy.
- ✓ Describe steps for solving problems.
- ✓ Generate solutions together.
- ✓ Encourage children for their effort.

Putting these strategies into practice helps toddlers learn to

- Play next to another child with similar materials, mimic other children's play, practice sharing and taking turns.
- Show empathy and try to comfort children in distress.
- Make decisions and practice problem-solving with other children, with adult help.



TRY IT OUT

Try out these activities and materials to promote friendship and social problem-solving skills with toddlers.

BOOKS

Gossie and Gertie/Gansi y Gertie

By Olivier Dunrea

This bilingual English and Spanish book is about two gosling friends. They do many things together, and they do some things on their own. Use this book to talk about things friends can do together. Make comments and ask questions to help toddlers talk about their favorite playmate and what they like doing together. Discuss how friends can also do things on their own. Expand on what toddlers say to help them share their own experiences interacting and playing with peers.

FRIENDSHIP KIT AND VISUALS

Make a "Friendship Kit" that includes items children can use to comfort a friend. Educators can encourage toddlers to use items from the kit to comfort another child who is sad or in distress.

Possible Items for Friendship Kit

- Pack of tissue: Offer a tissue if a friend is crying.
- Small soft toy: Help a friend soothe with a cuddly toy.
- Silly disguise glasses: Put these on to make a friend laugh or smile.
- Pack of band aids: Give a band aid if a friend is hurt
- Sheet of stickers: Put a sticker on a friend's hand to help them feel better.

Post Visual Supports

Use visuals supports to teach toddlers simple actions that promote friendship. Make your own or download free visuals from the Head Start Center for Inclusion (HSCI) website* (see Friendship Kit and Build Social Skills visuals).

- Ask if a friend wants a hug.
- Ask if a friend feels OK.
- Ask if a friend wants to play.

TUCKER TURTLE PUPPET AND SOCIAL STORY

Use a turtle puppet, along with the Tucker Turtle social story (CSEFEL Scripted Stories for Social Situations: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#scriptedstories>) to help children calm down so they can focus on identifying a problem and generating solutions. Teach children the following turtle technique steps. Tucker Turtle Techniques

- Recognize you feel angry.
- Think STOP! to yourself.
- Go into your shell and take three deep breaths.
- Come out of your shell when you feel calm and think of some solutions to the problem.





TALK ABOUT IT

Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help children better understand social problems and how to work through them. Make comments, ask open-ended questions, and use novel words as you encourage peer interactions and help solve conflicts with toddlers during daily activities and routines.

COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
I see that you two are frustrated and have a problem. Let's go get our solution kit for some ideas.	You're watching Alice. What is she doing?	Friend	Wait
You knocked into Lucas because you were running and didn't see him. Let's see if he is ok.	How can we help Nora find her toy?	Gentle	Upset
You're helping me put Nattie's coat on.	What else can you try?	Kind	Hug
		Share	Take a break
		Take turns	Play together

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Learn about other children who might be in their family and whether social problems are coming up at home. Be open to adjusting your support to include strategies that the family uses at home.

- Make a time to meet with the families and ask them about how their family expresses friendship and builds relationships. Incorporate this feedback into your expectations for the children.
- Encourage families to provide opportunities for their toddler to participate in play activities with other children.
- Ask families to share examples of how their toddler initiates and responds to interactions with other children.
- Invite families to describe how they intervene when their toddler has a conflict with other children.





PRESCHOOLERS INCREASING MASTERY



Preschoolers are more aware of others' thoughts and feelings. They can listen to what other children want and talk about the best way to do things together. They are capable of more complex social behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and compromise. They more readily accept rules that help people get along.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Promote Friendship Skills

Preschoolers are increasingly interested in developing friendships with one or two preferred peers. They are able to engage in group play and independently initiate interactions with peers. Preschoolers may suggest something to do together or join an existing activity.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Help children make a plan about what and how they will play together.
- ✓ Provide suggestions for initiating an interaction with other children.
- ✓ Encourage children to consider others' ideas.

Teach Problem-Solving

Preschoolers are willing to try different strategies to solve problems and show flexibility in their actions and behavior. They can plan ways to solve a problem and evaluate solutions.

Teaching Practices

- ✓ Help children identify what the problem is.
- ✓ Invite children to generate and evaluate multiple solutions.
- ✓ Help children select the best solution and try it out.
- ✓ Guide children in evaluating how well the solution worked.

Support Problem-Solving in the Moment

Problem-solving is hard work! As children attempt to solve problems, they learn that several solutions may be effective. They may test multiple solutions before the right one is found. Children need to be encouraged to persist in finding the right solution for a situation. Educators can support children in using problem-solving steps by following the five steps below.

- ✓ Anticipate social conflicts before they happen.
- ✓ Be close and help children manage their feelings.
- ✓ Provide support and reminders of the problem-solving steps.
- ✓ Encourage children to generate and evaluate multiple solutions.
- ✓ Celebrate success.

Putting these strategies into practice helps preschoolers learn to

- Engage in cooperative play with other children, such as suggesting something to do together, including others' ideas, and following mutually agreed upon rules.
- Develop friendships with one or two preferred other children.
- Recognize and describe social problems and suggest effective solutions.



TRY IT OUT

Try out these activities and materials to support friendship and social problem-solving skills with preschoolers.

BOOKS

Gossie and Gertie/Gansi y Gertie

By Olivier Dunrea

This bilingual English and Spanish book is about two gosling friends. They do many things together, but they also do other things on their own. As you read this book together, invite children to talk about things they like to do with their friends and things they prefer to do alone. Encourage children to describe what having a friend means to them and how they show a friend that they care.

FLOOR PUZZLE

Large floor puzzles encourage preschoolers to work together and practice friendship skills such as sharing, taking turns, and helping each other. Encourage cooperative play skills by helping children make a plan for how they will work together to complete the puzzle. Remind children to use the problem-solving steps if they encounter a problem.

TUCKER TURTLE AND SOCIAL STORY

Use a turtle puppet and the Tucker Turtle* social story (Use a turtle puppet, along with the Tucker Turtle social story (CSEFEL Scripted Stories for Social Situations: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#scriptedstories>) to help children calm down so they can focus on identifying a problem and generating solutions. Teach children the following turtle technique steps.

Tucker Turtle Techniques

- Recognize you feel angry.
- Think "Stop" to yourself.
- Go into your shell and take three deep breaths.
- Come out of your shell when you feel calm and think of some solutions to the problem.

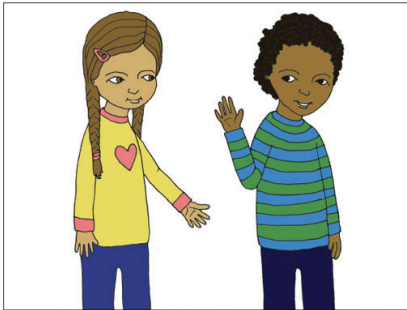


FRIENDSHIP KIT AND VISUALS

Make a “Friendship Kit” that includes items children can use to comfort a friend as well as visual supports that teach friendship skills. Encourage preschoolers to use items from the kit to comfort another child who is sad or in distress.

Possible Items for Friendship Kit

- Pack of tissue: Offer a tissue if a friend is crying.
- Small soft toy: Help a friend soothe with a cuddly toy.
- Silly disguise glasses: Put these on to make a friend laugh or smile.
- Pack of band aids: Give a band aid if a friend is hurt.
- Sheet of stickers: Put a sticker on a friend’s hand to help a friend feel better.



I can say “let’s play!”.

Teach preschoolers how to use the kit during a large or small group time. Place the kit in a visible and easy-to-reach location so children can access items independently.

Use visuals supports to teach preschoolers skills that promote empathy and friendship. Make your own or download free visuals from the Head Start Center for Inclusion (HSCI) website* (See *Friendship Kit* and *Build Social Skills* visuals.).

Possible Visual Supports to Teach, Post, or Include in Friendship Kit

- Ask if a friend wants a hug.
- Ask if a friend would like a high five.
- Ask if a friend feels OK.
- Ask if a friend would like you to get an educator for help.
- Ask if a friend wants to play.

SOLUTION KIT

Make a “Solution Kit” that includes pictures of prosocial skills and behaviors that children can try to solve a social problem. Use your own photos, drawings, or download free pictures from the HSCI website* (see Problem Solving visual supports).

Social Skill Visuals

- Wait
- Take turns
- Make another choice
- Play together
- Make a new choice
- Take a break
- Talk to an educator
- Tucker Turtle social story (HSCI visual supports and teacher tools: <http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#visual>)

Preschoolers can use this kit to help them generate multiple solutions and persist when a solution doesn’t work. Before expecting children to use the kit independently, first teach the skills and encourage children to practice using them with their peers.

*HSCI visual supports and teacher tools:

<http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#visual>





TALK ABOUT IT

Meaningful back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults help children better understand social problems and how to work through them. Make comments, ask open-ended questions, and use novel words as you encourage peer interactions, help solve conflicts, and help preschoolers solve social problems throughout the day.

COMMENTS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	NOVEL WORDS	
Hmmm, it looks like you have a problem. I think you know how to solve it, but I'm here to help if you need me.	Isa doesn't look happy about that solution. How can we make it fair for everyone?	Friend	Power
You and Manuel made a plan for using the blocks to build a road. You're both problem- solvers!	Joelle looks sad, what can you do to be kind a friend and help her feel better?	Patience	Advantage
Min was happy when you invited him to join your planting party, that was a kind thing to do.	Our first ideas don't always work. What can you do if this solution doesn't work?	Problem	Think
		Solution	Pause
		Strategy	Reflect
		Agree	Plan
		Apologize	Fair
		Collaborate	Unfair
		Respect	

PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

Families have the greatest impact on their child's emotional well-being and development. Build solid, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families. Learn about other children who might be in their family and whether social problems are coming up at home. Be open to adjusting your support to include problem solving strategies that the family uses at home.

- Make a time to meet with the families and ask them about how their family expresses friendship and builds relationships. Incorporate this feedback into your expectations for the children.
- Ask families about their children's friendships and participation in cooperative play, teams, and social activities.
- Exchange examples of friendship skills their child has shown in your program, at home, and in the community.
- Invite families to share how they support their child in solving conflicts with other children.



IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

BUILDING RESILIENCE



Caring for and educating young children is physically and emotionally demanding work. By taking time to learn resiliency practices and care for yourself, you can increase feelings of happiness and satisfaction. These positive emotions improve your ability to face daily stressors—such as challenging behaviors—with more empathy, patience, and intention. The good news is that people can start learning resilience at any time; it develops with practice.

Being optimistic can help build resilience! Here are some ways to avoid those negative thoughts that keep us awake at night.

IDEAS TO TRY

Set a personal goal or note the strategies you are excited to try.

ADDRESS THE 3 Ps

3Ps

Expressing gratitude is one approach to building resilience. Below are some ways to practice a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for the small and big things in life.

- **Permanence:** Realize that things are not always going to be this way. Be time specific. “That happened today. Tomorrow will be different.”
- **Pervasiveness:** Know that not everything went wrong. Look for something positive. “The blender is broken, but the hand mixer works” or “I didn’t keep Alex from pushing Tyra over, but I used the solution box to help Fatiha and Juan work through their struggle over a toy.”
- **Personal:** Stop taking it personally. Put things in context. “I had a bad day.” “I know how to fix it.”

HOW DID IT WORK?

Jot down what worked well and how you felt about trying it. Is there something you’d like to do differently? Note that too!
