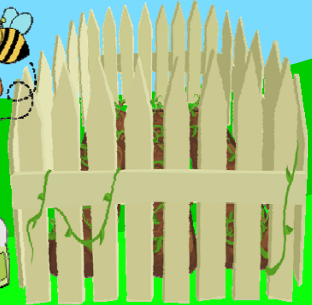


News for the Nurturing Child Care Professional

TEXAS A&M
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Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children

Volume 9, Issue 1

We have often marveled at the long hours children can spend playing with simple materials like boxes, rocks, shells, sand, or water. Our observations have led us to question the conventional wisdom of providing children with sophisticated toys. As you've probably noted yourself, children are often more interested in the packaging than in the toys themselves.

Children usually prefer play that stimulates their curiosity and gives free reign to their imaginations and creativity. We believe that one of the best ways to enhance their natural curiosity is to introduce a wide variety of the materials we call "loose parts" into their play settings.



What Are Loose Parts?

In early childhood education settings, loose parts mean alluring, beautiful, found objects and materials that children can move, manipulate, control, and change while they play. Children can carry, combine, redesign, line up, take apart, and put loose parts back together in almost endless ways. The materials come with no specific set of directions, and they can be used alone or combined with other materials. Children can turn them into whatever they desire: a stone can become a character in a story; an acorn can become an ingredient in an imaginary soup. These objects invite conversations and interactions, and they encourage collaboration and cooperation. Put another way, loose parts promote social competence because they support creativity and innovation. All of these are highly valued skills in adult life today.

Loose parts possess infinite play possibilities. They offer multiple rather than single outcomes: no specific set of directions accompanies them; no single result is inevitable. Unlike a jigsaw puzzle, whose pieces are meant to be fitted together in a specific way to make a single picture, loose parts can be joined in many ways. A scarf, for example, can become a blanket to swaddle a baby, a platform for a picnic, a fishing pond, a cover for a fort, or a veil covering the face of a bride.



Origin of Loose Parts

Children for generations have used found materials in their play from rocks and sticks to tin cans and wire. In his article "How NOT to Cheat Children: The Theory of Loose Parts," the British architect Simon Nicholson coined the term "loose parts" to describe open-ended materials that can be used and manipulated in many ways (1971). Nicholson saw people of every age as potentially creative. Environments, he believed, offer many ways for children to interact with variables such as gravity, sounds, chemical reactions, concepts, words, and people. For Nicholson, the richness of an environment depended on the opportunities it provided for making connections. "In any environment," he writes, "both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it" (30). Take, for example, a beach: it is filled with loose parts—rocks, shells, beach glass, plants, feathers. When children play in such a setting, they can move around, making use of any or all of the found objects, devising spaces and structures that can entertain them for hours. This isn't only fun but it also helps them develop higher levels of critical thinking and creativity. When an environment is rich in loose parts, children are likely to discover multiple ways to manipulate them and new ways of thinking or processing the knowledge learned by playing with the materials. Children can use flat tree cookies to serve as a sturdy base for a tall tower, stepping stones to lead them safely across an imaginary river filled with hungry alligators, a steering wheel for their race car, or a lily pad to shelter frogs. They become more creative and flexible in their thinking while satisfying their ever-growing curiosity and love for learning.



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8 Ways to Teach Children Their Address and Phone Number

1. Make a map of your neighborhood or town

We drew a map of our home and town on old packing paper. We wrote the house number on the drawing of our home, added the street name on our road, and placed the name on our town. In addition to mapping out important locations like the fire department, the children included their favorite places to eat.

2. Sing a Song

It's so much easier to memorize something to song. If you do a quick search on the internet you will come up with a variety of ideas, but you can also easily make one up on your own. We sing our phone number and address to the tune of Frere Jacques. Super easy!

3. Sequencing Activities

Write your child's address on index cards and have them place the cards in the correct order. I separated our address as follows:

- House number
- Street name
- City/Town
- State
- Zip Code

I'm planning to make a telephone file folder game to review the number with this [free](#)

[learning telephone numbers printable](#) from Spell Outloud. I will use the printable that includes the area code, laminate the numbers, and use velcro dots so we can reuse it.

4. Real Life Practice

Let your child practice dialing your phone number on a real phone. This is also a great time to give instruction on how to place a call on a cell phone since it's a bit different than a landline.



5. Use Manipulatives

We used our [abacus](#) to make our phone number. It was interesting to see our phone number this way and later we also did it with [counting cubes](#). Use letter and number magnets to practice your phone number and address too. For a longer project, you could also make numbers out of Lego bricks. Your imagination is your limit!

6. Make a Mailbox

The kids loved this activity! I recycled an empty box and packing paper into a family "mailbox". The children wrote letters and drew pictures to each other. They put our address on envelopes



and stuck them in the box. This might turn into a long term family project! If you don't feel like making your own mailbox, I think this [Melissa & Doug play mailbox](#) is cute!



7. Get Crafty

We made houses out of empty cereal boxes with our house number on them. We also made street signs to go with it. I think next time we'll try making [houses out of brown paper bags](#). For a phone number craft, you could cut a telephone out of construction paper, have children glue on numbers, and then practice dialing their number.

8. Play a Game

We played this [fun game to learn our phone number](#) last week. We'll make the grid with chalk outside and play this game for review as the weather warms up. This week I'm going to try reviewing my cell phone number by creating a phone BINGO game. Adding games to the learning process makes things more enjoyable for all of us.



www.lastingthumbprints.com

9 Ways to Get Control of a Very Difficult Class

Here is a list of some classroom management tips and techniques that have been used successfully in Kindergarten.

1. Have a (Naughty) Child Model the Correct Behavior
2. Ask Parents for "Advise"
3. Put the Child on the Phone with Mom or Dad (Immediately)
4. Have Children Earn Chips for Good Behavior in Teams
5. When Kids Respond Only to Their Parents, Sometimes They Respect the video that Their Parents May See
6. Try Teaching the classroom management routines and rules with music, stories, and puppets.
7. Back up and try it again
8. Give them structure—and lots of it!
9. Think about why the strugglers are happening—and see if any can be eliminated.

By Heidi Songs
blog.heidisongs.com

TSC Growing School Gardens

An exciting new opportunity is now available for New York and Tennessee elementary teachers. Tractor Supply Company, in partnership with the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization, is launching the *Dig It, a School Gardens Curriculum Program* in New York and Tennessee. If you would like to start a school garden, revitalize an already existing garden, or expand your garden program, applications are currently being accepted for classroom programs to begin in February 2016.

Application Deadline:

January 1, 2016

Award Notification:

January 31, 2016



Celebrating Holidays in Early Childhood Programs

Holiday celebrations can be wonderful opportunities for children to learn about the traditions and values that are cherished parts of people's lives. But many early childhood professionals wonder what holidays to celebrate in the program or classroom and how to respect the cultures represented by all children. Many parents, too, wonder why programs celebrate specific holidays or why they discourage any celebration at all.



celebrating one's own holidays. Children may participate as "guests" in holiday activities that are not part of their own cultures.

Every group represented in the classroom is honored (both children and staff). This does not mean that every holiday of every group must be celebrated or classrooms would be celebrating all the time! It does mean that once families and programs have decided on what holidays to celebrate, none should be treated as if they are "unusual." Children should recognize that everyone's holidays are culturally significant and meaningful.

NAEYC believes that decisions about what holidays to celebrate are best made together by teachers, parents, and children. Families and staff are more comfortable when both have expressed their views and understand how a decision has been reached. The important thing for all to remember is that when planning holiday activities, the rules of good practice continue to apply: Are the activities meaningful to the children? Are their needs and interests being met? Is the activity a valuable use of children's time?

Activities demonstrate the fact that not everyone in the same ethnic group celebrates holidays in the same way. Families may provide examples of their own unique traditions.

Curriculum demonstrates respect for everyone's customs. If children are observing different holidays at the same time, the values and traditions of each child's culture should be acknowledged.

Teachers may survey families at the beginning of the year to determine what holidays to celebrate. They may even ask the children to create their own holiday to help them learn the concepts that underlie such valued traditions. In any case, holiday celebrations are just one way for programs and families to work together to create developmentally and culturally appropriate learning experiences.

Parents and teachers work together to plan strategies for children whose families' beliefs do not permit participation in holiday celebrations. Families should take part in creating satisfactory alternatives for the child within the classroom.

Focus is on meaningful ways to celebrate holidays without spending money. Families may find certain holidays stressful due to the amount of commercialization and the media pressure to buy gifts. Teachers can help by showing children that homemade costumes and gifts are very special, and celebrating can be joyful without gifts.



Here are some signs of good practice in celebrating holidays:

Parents and teachers ask themselves why children should learn about this holiday. Is it developmentally appropriate for those in the group? Why is it important to specific children and families?

Activities are connected to specific children and families in the group. This helps children understand holiday activities in the context of people's daily lives. Children should have the chance to explore the meaning and significance of each holiday.

Children are encouraged to share feelings and information about the holidays they celebrate. This will help them make the distinction between learning about another person's holiday rituals and

Additional Resources:

Hunt, M. 1995. Let there be light! Lighting up the holidays for young children. *Young Children* 51(5): 79-81.

McCracken, J.B. 1993. Valuing diversity: The primary years. Washington, DC: NAEYC. #238.

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What's in Season?

Choosing fruits and vegetables that are in season is a great way to stretch food dollars. Learn about these fruits and vegetables that are fresh and in abundance at:

<https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/features-month/whats-season>

- Bananas
- Grapefruit
- Lemons
- Mushrooms
- Onions and Leeks
- Oranges
- Pears
- Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes and Yams
- Turnips
- Winter Squash



Have you ever wondered what is for dinner after a long day of work, errands, or afterschool activities?

We know we could drive through another fast-food restaurant to save time, but is that meal meeting the nutritional needs of your family?

The Dinner Tonight program was developed to provide busy families with quick, healthy, cost effective recipes that taste great. Not only does the Dinner Tonight program provide recipes, it also gives you weekly video demonstrations on cooking tips and techniques, nutrition topics, menu planning basics and information on healthy living.

Our goal for the Dinner Tonight program is to improve the health and wellness of Texans through nutrition education. We are so excited to help you get you started on preparing your dinner tonight.

Visit to dinnertonight.tamu.edu sign up for weekly emails, info on recipes, cooking schools and more!

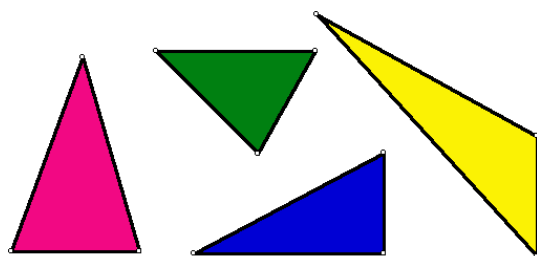
Tips for Teachers to Incorporate Math Skills

Teaching Tips for Number and Operations

- Count throughout the school day.
- Use a variety of materials including math manipulative and real-world objects.
- Incorporate counting into all centers.
- Give experience with the concept of zero.
- Ask good questions such as, “How many more do you need to have five?” or “You started with six and ate two. Without counting again, can you tell how many you have?”

Teaching Tips for Shapes and Attributes

Children need to see many different types of triangles—equilateral (three equal sides), isosceles (two equal sides), scalene (no equal sides) and right (one 90° angle) - in various orientations.



THESE SHAPES ARE TRIANGLES

Teaching Tips for Measurement and Shapes

- Use a variety of hands-on materials such as cubes, blocks, links, pan balance, straws and playdough.
- Take Shape Hunts around the classroom. Use correct mathematical terms to identify shapes and their attributes. For example, when a child finds a rectangle, count the number of sides and corners then mark the rectangle with an index card that says “rectangle.” See which shapes are the most common in the school environment.
- Take Measurement Hunts where children take off one shoe and use it to find objects that are the same length, longer or shorter than their shoe. You may even use blocks to find the capacity of the shoe, then find objects that hold more or less than the shoe.

Graph of the Day Suggestions

Ideas for two-category graphs

(as well as any YES or NO question)

Which of these two colors is your favorite?

Toss a penny. Did it land on heads or tails?

Does your first name have an E, yes or no?

How do you feel today, happy or sad?

Which flavor of gum do you like better, grape or strawberry?

Ideas for three category graphs

Would you rather drink apple, orange or grape juice?

Are you wearing pants, shorts or a skirt?

Are your shoes fastened with velcro, laces or nothing?

Do you like your potatoes mashed, fried or baked?

Do you like books about animals, kids or aliens?

Do you like strawberry, chocolate or vanilla ice cream best?

Helpful Websites for Preschool Mathematics Teaching

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

www.nctm.org/Classroom-Resources/Browse-All/

Offers: Lesson plans searchable by grade and content area, math games and interactive children can use independently, link to the NCTM Pinterest page.

Collaborative for Children

<https://www.collabforchildren.org/educators/online-courses>

Offer: Online courses for professional development in preschool mathematics

PBS Parents

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/math/>

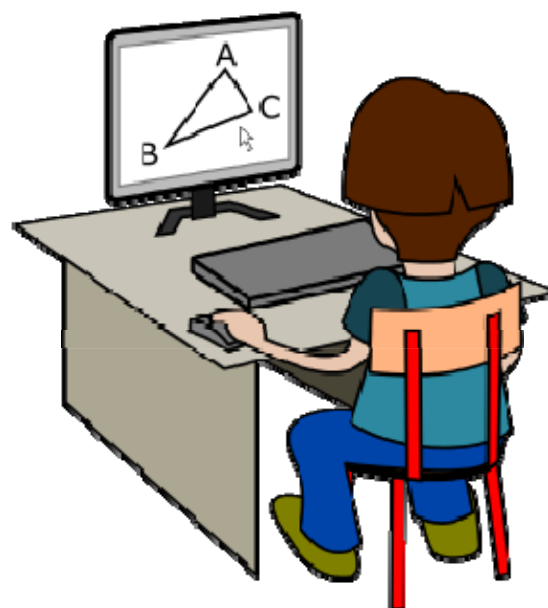
Offers: Math teaching tips for teachers and parents, interactive for children, games, and lesson ideas

Resources for Early Childhood

<http://rec.ohiorc.org>

Learning Experiences/?topic=1&

Offers: Lesson plans searchable by age and content area. Correlates to Ohio’s early childhood standards, but many objectives mirror those found in the Texas PreK Guidelines.



How a Child Might Describe Having an Allergic Reaction

Children have unique ways of describing their experiences and perceptions, and allergic reactions are no exception. Precious time is lost when adults do not immediately recognize that a reaction is occurring or don't understand what a child is telling them. Children have unique ways of describing allergic reactions. What have you heard?

Some children, especially very young ones, put their hands in their mouths or pull or scratch at their tongues in response to a reaction. Also, children's voices may change (e.g., become hoarse or squeaky), and they may slur their words.

The following are examples of the words a child might use to describe a reaction:

- "This food is too spicy."
- "My tongue is hot [or burning]."
- "It feels like something's poking my tongue."
- "My tongue [or mouth] is tingling [or burning]."
- "My tongue [or mouth] itches."
- "It [my tongue] feels like there is hair on it."
- "My mouth feels funny."
- "There's a frog in my throat."
- "There's something stuck in my throat."
- "My tongue feels full [or heavy]."
- "My lips feel tight."
- "It feels like there are bugs in there." (to describe itchy ears)
- "It [my throat] feels thick."
- "It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue [throat]."

If you suspect that your child is having an allergic reaction, follow your doctor's instructions and treat the reaction quickly.

source:<http://www.foodallergy.org/symptoms#howachild>



Ten Creative Ways to Calm An Angry Child

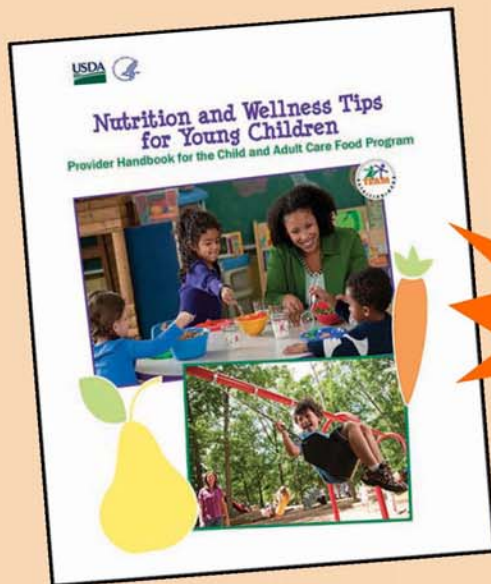
Kids can become angry and frustrated just because they're kids and don't know how to handle their emotions yet. This can come from simple things like not getting exactly what they want. You may experience signs of anger. Some kids naturally have a more aggressive bent. However, other kids have true reasons to be angry. This often stems from division in spouse relationships. It can also be an evil being done to them - the evil can be physical or verbal. Sometimes there might be issues with other children at school or relationships with siblings. Maybe there are frustrations because of struggles in learning or developing. Try to get to the root of it. Please try to not live in denial about the roots. If it is something that is being imposed on them because of the relationship with your spouse, please try and fix it. It affects your kids more than you know. If it's something external, help them. However, we need to be willing to tell our children that their feelings of anger should not be kept inside and pent up. They need tools to express it. Try and not let these activities become a reward for aggressive or angry behavior. If you can catch them quickly before it turns negative and preemptively strike, that's the best idea.

1. Smash Play Doh
2. Go Outside and Yell
3. Get a Big Piece of Paper and Some Crayons and Let them Scribble Aggressively
4. Let them Throw Wet Sponges Against a Wall
5. Give Them a Whole Bucket of Tennis Balls and Let Them Throw Them as Far as They Can
6. Let Them Run and Pick Up Those Same Tennis Balls
7. Encourage Them to Use Words to Express Anger
8. Have them Draw a Picture of Why They are Angry or How they Feel
9. Have them Go Outside and Stomp or Jump
10. Turn on Soft Music

Again, try and get to the root first!



October 4, 2012 www.meaningfulmama.com



Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children:

*Provider Handbook for the
Child and Adult Care Food Program*

**Available
Now!**

What is the handbook?

It is a series of tip sheets to help child care providers meet current wellness recommendations* for children ages 2 through 5 years old. By using the tip sheets when planning meals and activities for children, providers can incorporate key recommendations and best practices into their menus and daily schedules.

How can the handbook help child care providers?

- ◆ Ideas for meal planning, shopping, and food preparation
- ◆ Tips for creative menus
- ◆ Hints for meeting meal pattern requirements
- ◆ Practices in serving food safely
- ◆ Activities for hands-on learning
- ◆ Suggestions for active play
- ◆ Success stories from providers
- ◆ Links to additional resources

Where can I find the handbook?

Available on the
Team Nutrition Web site's
Resource Library:

TeamNutrition.usda.gov

FREE!

Handbook topics include:

- ◆ **Build a Healthy Plate With:**
 - Fruits
 - Vegetables
 - Dry Beans and Peas
 - Protein
 - Whole Grains
 - Milk
 - Less Salt and Sodium
 - Options Low in Solid Fats
 - Less Added Sugars
- ◆ **Make Water Available**
- ◆ **Practice Food Safety**
- ◆ **Promote Active Play**
- ◆ **Limit Screen Time**
- ◆ **Practice Choking Prevention**
- ◆ **Handle Food Allergies**

* From the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* and *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education, 3rd Edition*.



U.S. Department of Agriculture ■ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/library.html

USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.



Continued from page 1.

The Value of Loose Parts

Children prefer loose parts. Anyone who has watched children play with toys or playground equipment knows that they quickly tire of things with a sole purpose. Once they've mastered the key function of an object—pushing the button to make a figure pop up or climbing a ladder, for example—they are ready to move on. The intrigue and the challenge are gone. In other words, children make their play choices based on how much variability those materials offer. A stick is a richer choice than a slide because it can become a fishing pole, a spoon for stirring a concoction, a magic wand, or a balance beam for snails. Loose parts offer almost numberless variables, prompting children to create their own stories.

With so many materials available for ECE classrooms, you need to make choices that maximize children's development and make sense financially. Today, teachers are often expected to provide classroom materials out of their own pockets. Happily, loose parts can often be had for free, and they offer a bonus: they encourage you, and the children's parents, to reuse, renew, and recycle. Write a note to the children's families asking them to collect potentially rich materials around their homes to add to the classroom. Provide a list of suggested items (small boxes, jar lids, buttons, fabric). Also, post your list in the classroom or distribute it at school events.



Loose Parts Support the Curriculum

Loose parts offer many possibilities for open-ended learning. Especially in ECE programs where standards and ditto sheets are threatening to take over, advocate for loose parts as they support the acquisition of skills that children are required to demonstrate when they enter kindergarten.

Math

Children acquire their first math skills and numerical concepts when they manipulate small loose parts, like blocks and bottle caps, by sorting and classifying, and combining and separating them. They learn one-to-one correspondence when they make connections among loose parts. Once they begin integrating loose parts into their games, you commonly hear them start to count and see them arranging the parts in specific sequences, patterns, and categories by color, type, number, and class. Loose parts lend themselves to classification. The concept of measurement becomes clear when children play with tools like cups, sticks, funnels, and sifters. Measurement, equivalency, balance, spatial awareness, conservation, and logical classification are precursors to higher mathematical skills that loose parts readily support.

Physical Science

Loose parts help children investigate and actively construct ideas and explanations about physical properties of the nonliving world. Children gain deeper knowledge of how things work when they can experiment with stacking boxes, tubes, and bottles. They can also test multiple hypotheses involving gravity, force, weight, distance, and height with these materials. Children learn that things move in many various ways (motion) through playing with loose parts that can be pulled and pushed to start, stop, or change their movement. Wooden boards, gutters, and balls help them investigate inclines and gravity. Prisms and open-ended materials that are transparent, translucent, or opaque on a light table or overhead projector help children experiment with color, shadows, and reflected or refracted light.

Language and Literacy

Loose parts promote language development when children use them as props to engage in rich conversations and storytelling with peers and adults. Describing the items they manipulate, children can test new, complex words and engage in productive arguments that increase their critical-thinking skills. They make connections between loose parts, the books they have read, and the stories they have heard. They use loose parts to plan and draw their ideas and interactions. Ample, continuous use of loose parts helps children improve their memories, vocabularies, and literacy.

Art

Children often express their ideas and feelings through art. An open art studio offers them tools and materials for telling their stories. Adding loose parts to the art area can enhance their creativity and help them extend their ideas and questions. When loose parts are added to your art center, they offer children invitations to draw, sculpt, collage, explore, and extend their ideas. Such opportunities shouldn't be confined to the art area though. Fill your indoor and outdoor settings with open-ended resources to encourage creative expression everywhere. Children's sense of beauty can be as easily seen in their arrangements of sticks lined up side by side, wooden planks propped symmetrically against a lodge, rock mosaics laid in sand, and pinecones arranged in spirals.

Movement and Music

Music and movement captures children's attention and hearts. Movement for children mostly takes place through self-directed, self-initiated play as they freely move their bodies. Movement possibilities with loose parts such as scarves, hoops, and ribbons are endless, and provide opportunity for children to improvise. Musical play often means hitting items as hard as possible to see how they sound, and loose parts offer almost limitless opportunities to explore sounds that can be exuberant, random, noisy, and chaotic or quiet, gentle, and focused. Almost all children will naturally have the ability to interact with music.

We hope that you are inspired by this book to add more loose parts to children's play. When you provide loose parts and have an open mind about how they may be used, the children will surprise and delight you with what they create and learn.

This article is excerpted from Chapter 1: Daly, Lisa, and Miriam Beloglovsky. 2015. *Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children*. Minnesota: Redleaf Press.

Read the book!

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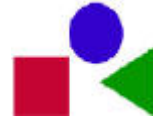


Roll those Big Dice

This is a fun activity for toddlers where they can learn their shapes and colors while having fun tossing big boxes around the room. You'll need a couple of medium size square boxes. Wrap each box with white paper or wrapping paper turned inside out. Then print the shapes below. Cut them out and tape/glue them to the 6 sides of the dice. Have your students roll each die and tell what shape/color is on top. They'll love tossing the big boxes around!

Supplies Needed:

- 2 medium size square boxes (they don't have to be exact squares)
- White paper, or wrapping paper
- Tape or glue
- Printer and paper (if you don't have a printer, see the Tips below)



Tips/Suggestions:

- If you don't have a printer you can just draw the shapes on the dice or cut them out of construction paper.
- For the older toddlers you can have them help you with wrapping the box and putting the shapes on each side. You can also practice learning what a pair is when they get two of the same shape.
- For more durability, use contact paper over the cutout shapes to affix them to the box.



Egghead Plant Starters



1. Ask the students what plants need to grow. Explain that plants need water, light, nutrients, and air to grow.
2. Explain to the students that they will be planting alfalfa seeds. Alfalfa is a flowering plant that is most commonly harvested as hay to be used as livestock feed.
3. Show the egghead plant starter example to the students. Explain that they will be creating eggheads to start their alfalfa. Give each student an empty, rinsed eggshell. They will use the permanent markers to draw a face on the shell and write their name on the opposite side.
4. Show the students how to spoon soil into the eggshell. Use a water spray bottle to moisten the soil before planting half a spoonful of alfalfa seeds. Spoon a small amount of soil on top, enough to cover the seeds.
5. Explain to the students that the alfalfa seeds will germinate in about one week. In order to germinate, the seeds will need warmth and moisture. Ask the students how they can help the seeds get the warmth and moisture they need to germinate. The students can moisten the soil with a water spray bottle three times a day and keep the eggheads near a sunny window so the sunlight can warm the soil.

6. Once the plants are growing, they will need water, light, nutrients, and air to grow. Ask the students how they can meet the needs of their plants. They can water their plants and keep them in a sunny place. The soil will provide nutrients, and the plants will use the air that is in the classroom.
7. Show the students movements to represent the needs of a plant. To represent water from rain, the students will start with their hands raised high over their heads and then wiggle their fingers as they lower them to the ground. To represent light from the sun, the students will make the shape of a circle above their heads with their arms. To represent nutrients from the soil, the students will pat the ground with their hands. To represent air, the students will breathe in air, close their mouths, and puff out their cheeks.
8. Sing the song "Dig a Hole" with the students. Ask the students to make the movements they learned when the song says water, light, nutrients, and air.
9. After about three weeks, the alfalfa will have grown into a nice head of hair for the egghead, and the plants will need more space. They will be ready to transfer to a garden. The plants and eggshells can be transferred together. The eggshells will add the nutrient calcium to the soil. Calcium benefits cell growth in plants. Before transferring the plant, crush the eggshell to help it break down faster in the soil.

utah.agclassroom.org

13 Helpful Phrases You Can Say to Calm an Anxious Child

"I AM HERE; YOU ARE SAFE."
Anxiety has a way of making things look worse and feel scarier than when we are not feeling worried. These words can offer comfort and safety when your child is feeling out of control, especially if they are at the height of their worry.

"TELL ME ABOUT IT."
Give your child room to talk about their fears without interrupting. Some children need to have time to process through their thoughts.

"HOW BIG IS YOUR WORRY?"
Help your child verbalize the size of their worry and give you an accurate picture of how it feels to them.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TELL YOUR WORRY?"
Give your child room to talk about their fears without interrupting. Some children need to have time to process through their thoughts.

"CAN YOU DRAW IT?"
Many kids cannot express their emotions with words. Encourage them to draw, paint or create their worries on paper.

"LET'S CHANGE THE ENDING."
Anxious children often feel stuck in the same pattern without a way out. Help them see different options by telling their story, but leaving off the ending.

"WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU KNOW ABOUT (FILL IN THE BLANK)?"
Some children feel empowered when they have more information about their fear (especially things like tornadoes, bees, elevators, etc.).

"WHICH CALMING STRATEGY DO YOU WANT TO USE?"
Work proactively to create a long list of calming strategies your child enjoys. Practice them during the day, at random times when your child feels calm.

"I'M GOING TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH."
Sometimes our children are so worried that they resist our encouragement to pick a calming strategy. In this case, use yourself as the calming skill. Verbalize what you are doing and how it makes you feel.

"IT'S SCARY AND..."
Acknowledge your child's fear without making it even more frightening by using the word "AND." After the word "and" you can add phrases like "You are safe," or "You've conquered this fear before," or "You have a plan."

"I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR ABOUT..."
It's hard to see our kids suffer with worry. Many parents rush in to rescue their child from an anxiety-producing situation.

"WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME?"
Instead of assuming that you know what your child needs, give them an opportunity to tell you what would help.

"THIS FEELING WILL PASS."
This may be a phrase you can both use when your child is at the height of panic. All feelings pass eventually. It often feels like they will never end, you won't make it through, or it's too hard. And that's OK. Don't let your brain get stuck in that moment. Focus on the relief that is on the horizon.

Source:
This infographic was created based on a wonderful article written by Nicole Schwarz found at Lime Advertisers.com. Nicole's blog can be found at ImperfectFamilies.com.

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