



# 3

## Will You Be My Friend?

### Helping Children Develop a Positive Self-Image and Master the Art of Getting Along With Others

**S**o much in life depends on our own self-image and how we get along with others. To be successful we must have the ability to relate well to people. Children need to have interpersonal experiences in order to develop the social skills they will require to function successfully as adults in the business world, personal relationships, and society in general.

*We must all learn to live together as brothers.  
Or we will all perish together as fools.*

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

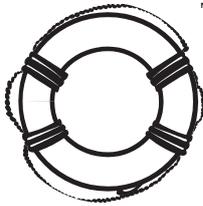
## 35. Foster a positive self-image

### I CAN'T DO THAT

Three-year-old Terry would come into school and stand around until someone came over, unbuttoned her coat, and helped her take it off. When it was time to go outside she was overwhelmed with the thought of having to put on a jacket. She made no attempt to do it herself, but instead just waited around until some adult would lend assistance. While the coat business was not serious, it was indicative of an "I can't do anything" mental attitude. This reliance on adults extended to the bathroom where Terry would sit on the seat calling out, "Someone come wipe me."

I responded to Terry's call by suggesting that she do it herself. "I can't do that. Granny says I'm too small," she responded. A look of amazement came over her when I challenged her remark and said, "I think you're a big girl. You can do it yourself." Terry was delighted with that statement. She managed the task at hand. I encouraged her to tell Granny that she was a big girl now and could do things herself.

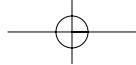
### HELP!



Terry came from a troubled family. Mom and Dad were in the process of getting a divorce, and Grandma was raising Terry while Mom was at work trying to earn enough money to keep food on the table.

In an understandable attempt to shower the grandchild with attention and loving care, the grandmother was inadvertently having a negative effect. Terry was developing a very poor self-image, and thought she was too incompetent to do anything. This extra dose of care was ruining her self-confidence.

Children who have a poor self-image and feel incompetent develop a defeatist attitude. They must be encouraged to try new tasks, and be willing to risk failure on occasion, in order to grow and flourish. The second grader who says, "I can't read, I can't do math, I can't . . ." learned an attitude of failure and incompetence from somewhere. We need to be careful that we don't create quitters.



Support children, show confidence in their abilities, and if they fail, let them know it is okay, they just need to try again.

*It is hard to fail but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.*

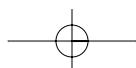
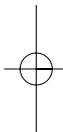
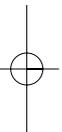
—Teddy Roosevelt

### ASK YOURSELF:



Do you try to foster a positive self-image in children by encouraging them to be as independent as their skill level permits?

Do you treat failure as a normal occurrence that happens to everyone, and teach children not to let it discourage them?



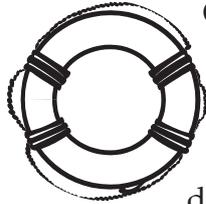
## 36. Caution parents about the dangers of being too indulgent

### A ROYAL PRINCESS

Xiao Chen was raised on a small farm in China. She shared some interesting observations with me about her homeland. "Capitalism has come to China in a big way. Some people say money is the new god." She also commented on the impact of the government's policy to limit families to just one child. She told stories of children who never have to share toys or a parent's lap with a brother or sister. These children never have to be quiet because the baby is sleeping, never have to wait for a brother to be ready before going out to play, never have to negotiate to decide who sits where at the kitchen table or what TV show to watch. They do not have to learn to take turns and are constantly given treats by doting grandparents. I wonder what these children will be like when they grow up. It will be interesting to see what the policy of one child per family will have on the social fabric of Chinese society.



### HELP!



One does not have to be the parent of an only child or financially well off to be guilty of spoiling a child. Parental behavior that consists of being too indulgent, not setting limits, rarely saying "no" to a child's requests, or never requiring her to delay gratification can cause the child to develop a distorted sense of entitlement. Overly permissive parents can negatively impact a child's future ability to function successfully with others in society. In an article discussing what happens to kids developmentally and emotionally who have everything they want, psychologist Mary Pipher says, "They're set up to be narcissistic, spoiled, not inclined to work hard, and with impulse-control problems."

How children are treated in their early years will have an effect on their future relationships with supervisors, coworkers, friends, peers, and mates. We need to help parents understand that if they treat a child like a princess, she may grow up with an unrealistic image of her place in society. The rest of the world may not be as willing to pay homage to her royal highness.

### ASK YOURSELF:



Do you counsel parents on the serious negative effects of being overly indulgent and not setting limits?

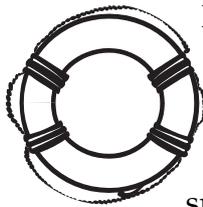
## 37. Find something positive to say about each child

### HORSE SENSE



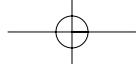
Whenever I had an idea or suggestion my mother would smile broadly and say to me, "See, you have horse sense." Not exactly the attribute I wanted to brag about to friends and neighbors, but privately her opinion of my special talent served me very well. I tried to live up to her perception of me, and worked hard to think of new and better ways to do things. My reward of a big smile from my Mom and a "See I told you so, you have good horse sense" was always treasured. I came to believe I could be successful and do well in school or anywhere as long as I approached things with old-fashioned horse sense.

### HELP!



It makes all the difference in the world when a child feels good about herself. In every child we should find positive things that we can acknowledge and support with regularity. Highlight some positive attributes that she can cling to and develop. It could be such things as, "You are thoughtful, smart, persistent, generous, considerate, friendly, or always nice to be with." Having horse sense is good too, but I would like to suggest calling it common sense.

Children develop their self-image from the feedback they get from the adults they come in contact with. If adults thoughtlessly laugh at a child or say negative things like, "You're just dumb, bad, or [the one I dislike the most] no good," the child will eventually come to believe the label. She will define herself as bad or dumb and start to live up to the negative label. Who can blame her? After all, it is what Mom, Dad, or her older brothers and sisters say to her all the time. By talking negatively about the child they wind up unintentionally reinforcing the very traits they thought they were rejecting.



*Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.*

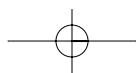
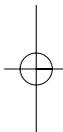
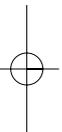
—Mother Teresa

### **ASK YOURSELF:**



Do you find something positive to reinforce in each child?

Do you avoid using negative labels?



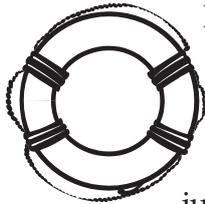
## 38. Provide activities that involve cooperation

### GETTING TO KNOW YOU

I can still remember going to Girl Scout camp all by myself. I was terrified. I did not have a friend or even know someone to talk to.

As adults you probably have gone to a social event or meeting where you knew only a few people and hunted them down as your first priority upon arriving. Even for adults, being alone with strangers can be awkward and stressful.

### HELP!



In the beginning of the school year try as soon as possible to help the children interact with one another. As part of my first music lesson, I do a jumping song. Then I tell the children to jump holding hands with someone else. There is no better way to get young children to interact than giggling and jumping around together. I do the song several times, asking the children to select different partners to be with each time.

Other opportunities for cooperative interaction are:

- ★ Have children pretend to be rowboats with partners for the song "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."
- ★ When doing the song/finger play "Eency Weency Spider," have each child provide one hand to do the spider movement.
- ★ In the following finger play about a bunny that jumps down a hole, have one child use his fingers to be the bunny and the other child use her fist to make the hole.

Here's a bunny with ears so funny  
 (Hold up two fingers to make bunny ears)  
 And this is his hole in the ground  
 (Make a hole with fingers of other hand)  
 At the first sound he hears, he wiggles his ears  
 And then hops into his hole in the ground  
 (Use motion of bunny jumping into a hole)

Provide activities throughout the day that help children learn to work together cooperatively. We should not limit ourselves to doing these types of activities only in the beginning of the school year. They are important, and we should do them often throughout the year.

### **ASK YOURSELF:**



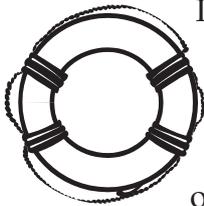
Do you provide cooperative play activities all year long?

## 39. Encourage the children to interact positively with all their classmates

### PLAY WITH ME

In the beginning of the school year, four-year-old Connie spent most of her time happily interacting with other children in the dramatic play corner or at the art table. Alice, who joined the class in November, also enjoyed dramatic play and art activities. It is logical to think that interaction between Connie and Alice was inevitable, but it wasn't. As a matter of fact, Connie would promptly leave any activity as soon as Alice approached. Connie started to spend an unusual amount of time sitting by herself looking at books. Her behavior seems hard to understand, until I mention the fact that Alice was confined to a wheelchair.

### HELP!



It is not unusual for young children to feel awkward or even afraid of dealing with children who have special needs. They often have irrational fears and misconceptions about these children, the challenges they face and the equipment that they use. These issues need to be addressed, and opportunities for positive interaction arranged. Mainstreaming presents a good learning opportunity for both the child who has special needs and all the others in the classroom. With proper guidance, children can learn to be accepting, caring, and helpful.

- ◆ The teacher's role is crucial. She is the role model. Through her actions and words the children in the class will come to accept the child who has special needs.
- ◆ Children who have special needs should be encouraged to participate in all classroom activities to the best of their ability.
- ◆ Encourage children to accept the child who has special needs as an equal—someone whom they can help but should not treat like a baby.

### ASK YOURSELF:



Do you role model acceptance of the child who has special needs?  
Do you address the children's natural curiosity about children who have special needs and the equipment they use?  
Do you help children get to know and interact with all their classmates, rather than just a few of them?

## 40. Arrange opportunities for children to help one another

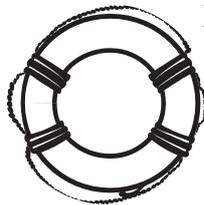
### SNOW GEAR

While I consider myself somewhat of an expert on zipping zippers and putting on boots, I still find getting a group of young children suited up for winter outdoor activities a major chore. It is not unusual to spend as much time getting the children into their ski pants, boots, coats, hats, and mittens as they actually spend outdoors playing. Other than putting on gloves, for me the two greatest challenges are:



1. To convince children that it is in fact easier to zip zippers or button coats BEFORE putting on their mittens.
2. Struggling to get the boots on a child who seems to have legs made of spaghetti, while simultaneously trying to keep the child who is completely suited up from getting into mischief. It always seemed unjust to me that the children who hardly have the self-control to sit on a chair somehow have the motor control to don hats, boots, and jackets in the wink of an eye.

### HELP!



Rather than having the early dressers just sitting around waiting for the others, challenge them to be helpers. Ask the children with the skill to put on boots or fasten zippers and buttons to help the other children get dressed.

This is a good social experience. Think about just how much cooperation is involved in getting a boot on someone else's foot. The child who needs help learns to seek as well as accept it from peers. The child with the skill learns how to offer help and gets to use the skill in a positive way. The responsibility and pleasure of helping others is a wonderful social lesson. However, I expect you will still need to remind everyone that mittens are the last thing we put on before walking out the door.

### ASK YOURSELF:



Do you arrange for situations where children can help one another?

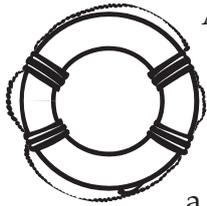
Do you encourage children who can do something to help those who can't?

## 41. When developmentally appropriate, provide an atmosphere that encourages sharing

### IT'S MINE!

The water table in the two-year-old class had become a battle zone. Crying, shoving, and a tug-of-war between Olivia and Kobe over the one and only pitcher was not something the teacher had anticipated. Water table activity usually has a calming effect on young children, but that was definitely not the case this day.

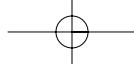
### HELP!



Anyone who deals with children under the age of three should quickly realize that sharing is just about impossible for them. After all, the credo of a two-year-old is, "It's mine, mine, mine!" They believe that anything they see or touch is theirs. Therefore, try not to ask the impossible of them. While a large pitcher is a good item for a water table, if you do not have several of them, it can create a problem. A generous supply of cups and spoons would be better. When dealing with the very young child, we must be sure there are enough materials on hand for everyone to feel satisfied, or we run the risk of having a lot of unhappy children who are grabbing and arguing over equipment.

Once past this stage, children can and should learn to share. When the children are developmentally ready, think about ways to provide an atmosphere that encourages sharing:

- ★ When doing a project involving paste in a four-year-old class, do not put out a portion of paste for each child. Put out half as many as you think they will need, and encourage the children to share the paste.
- ★ You can also encourage sharing when using play dough. When a child joins the group already at the table, ask for volunteers to share with the new child. Some will give miniscule portions (it is all they can manage at this point), but fortunately there will usually be a few who are more generous. Of course, as the adult you should heartily and very publicly approve of how nicely they are sharing. (For emergency circumstances keep some play dough in reserve just in case you run into a group of cheapskates.)



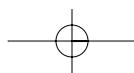
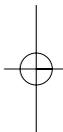
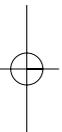
## ASK YOURSELF:



Do you provide a generous amount of material when dealing with two-year-olds?

Do you have developmentally appropriate expectations regarding a child's ability to share?

Do you, when developmentally appropriate, provide an atmosphere that encourages sharing?

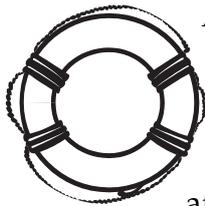


## 42. Be a positive role model

### ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE LOVE

Joey a short, stocky three-year-old, just loved to wrestle. Whenever Joey wanted to play with the other children he would tackle them to the ground. He always had an engaging smile, even when he appeared to be attacking the other boys in the class. Unfortunately for Joey, the other children did not interpret this as a friendly gesture. They soon grew tired of being knocked about and hurt, and I was tired of it as well. The children gave Joey a wide berth and avoided playing with him.

### HELP!

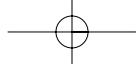


As I chatted about this situation with Joey's mother, she became rather upset. She could not understand this behavior; he was such a smiley, loving little guy. I asked her how she showed affection to her son, and she said that she would hug, kiss, and hold hands. I then asked how Dad showed affection to Joey. The question caught her by surprise, but her answer was key. Dad was "a man's man." Joey already knew all about baseball, basketball, and football. She said Dad was very affectionate with Joey; they were always rolling around on the floor and playfully wrestling together. I asked if Dad ever touched Joey in a gentle way. The answer was no. It seemed that in Dad's scheme of things it was okay for a man to kiss or hug a woman; however, men could do only rough-and-tumble play to show affection to other males. No wonder Joey was so busy tackling all his peers. That was his role model.

Children observe and model behavior patterns. How adults relate to others, resolve disputes, deal with stress, and show respect and affection are all being closely observed.

*Example is not the main thing in influencing; it's the only thing.*

—Albert Schweitzer

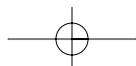
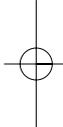
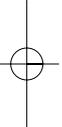


## ASK YOURSELF:



Are you a positive role model?

Do you keep in mind the fact that children are always observing you and your interactions with parents, staff members, and other children?



## 43. Give children the opportunity to resolve disagreements by themselves

### PLAYING REFEREE

As a youngster I played stickball on Willoughby Avenue in Brooklyn. The ball field was the middle of the street. One sewer cover served as home plate, the next one down the street was second base. The tires on cars parked halfway between home plate and second base served as first and third base. We played our game as traffic allowed. When the light was red we could get a few players up at bat, when the light turned green we had to abandon the field and wait for the next traffic light cycle.

Choosing the captains for each team was the first order of business. One of the captains was usually the person who owned the ball and stick that we used as a bat. The other team captain was selected by playing “one potato-two potato” or flipping a coin.

Once the game got started there were frequent disputes over judgment calls that needed to be made:

Was the ball fair or foul?

Was Joe safe at first or out?

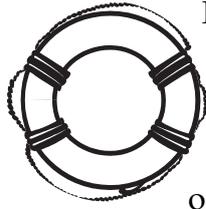
Was the ball hit long enough (out of the ball park) to be a home run?

Some of the lessons learned as a result of the way we resolved our disputes were:

- ★ The owner of the ball said, “It’s my ball and I’m safe or I’m going home and taking my ball with me.” (There is power in ownership.)
- ★ An older, bigger guy would yell loudly, “I was safe” while making a fist with a threatening gesture. (There are bullies.)
- ★ Sometimes a group of three or four would band together to take a position against one of the bullies. (There is strength in numbers.)

If all this bickering did not resolve the conflict, there was always the option of a “do-over” or of flipping a coin. We all understood that playing the game was what we really wanted to do, and we would work out whatever problems arose in order to continue the game. While I didn’t realize it at the time, Willoughby Avenue stick ball games provided an incredible learning opportunity in social dynamics.

## HELP!



I encourage children, as much as possible, to learn how to resolve their problems on their own. If the children are reasonably satisfied with the outcome, I do not interfere. I try to avoid playing referee. By personally experiencing these give-and-take situations, and living with the results of their dispute resolution skills, children learn to deal with others.

*Adults who rush in too quickly to resolve a disagreement deprive children of the opportunity to develop critically important interpersonal skills.*

## ASK YOURSELF:



Do you step in to resolve disagreements prematurely, or do you monitor the situation and allow children to try and resolve their disagreements on their own?

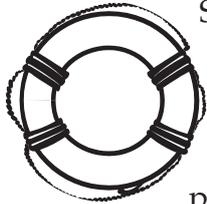
## 44. Provide materials that encourage positive social interaction on the playground

### GIVE ME A LIFT?

One of the most popular activities on the playground is going for a ride in the wagon. When children sit cramped together in a wagon and wait to be pulled, all sorts of negotiations are involved in the seating arrangements, as well as who will be strong enough to pull the wagon. If the load is too heavy someone has to volunteer to get off, or the children may eventually figure out that someone can push from the back while at the same time someone else pulls the handle at the front of the wagon. A great deal of coordination and cooperation is involved in just getting the wagon to move at all.



### HELP!

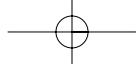


Staff members should not be too willing to pull the wagon and give rides. Yes, sometimes we should join in, but after a while we should encourage the children to work together to give one another rides and to take turns as passengers or pullers. Of course, there are some children who always want to be the passenger, and sit there like a prince or princess, but after a few turns the pullers usually just walk away. They leave the passenger stranded, thereby providing a good object lesson about taking turns.

When purchasing outdoor equipment try to choose a few things that foster cooperative play. I think wagons or tricycles with platforms for passengers are much better choices than individual tricycles.

To create opportunities for cooperative interaction outdoors you can provide a few props to foster dramatic play. Have items available to suggest:

- ★ A car wash
- ★ Garage
- ★ Gas station



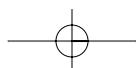
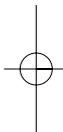
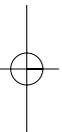
- ★ Toll booth
- ★ Café
- ★ Airplane
- ★ Bus or train station
- ★ Delivery truck
- ★ Fast food restaurant drive-through window

### **ASK YOURSELF:**



Do you provide materials on the playground that encourage positive social interaction and cooperation?

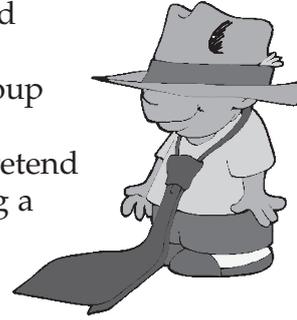
Do you pull the wagon filled with children, or do you encourage children to cooperate and pull it themselves?



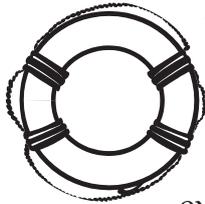
## 45. Stimulate but do not dominate dramatic play

### KNOW WHEN TO LEAVE

Ms. Hollywood, teacher of the three-year-old class, loved dramatic play. You could usually find her sitting in the housekeeping area. She would always attract a large group of children who busily prepared her favorite food, or otherwise followed her directions. They would go on pretend trips, have weddings, and always appeared to be having a great deal of fun. The participation was high, and dramatic play seemed to be a great success when she was there.



### HELP!



Good teachers are like magnets. Wherever they go in the classroom, children follow. The wise teacher uses this natural magnetism to attract children and then help them get started in activities. By role modeling in dramatic play, we can suggest to the children some of the possibilities they might explore. However, if the teacher overstays her visit she will wind up directing and dominating the play.

The adult should stimulate an interest and then gracefully fade out of the picture so the children have the opportunity to explore and flourish. The best learning occurs when the children are left on their own. That is when the children's ideas will come forward.

Dramatic play teaches many things beyond vocabulary and some facts about a pretend post office or supermarket. This is where the children really learn social skills and how to deal with their peers. Compromise, leadership, accepting the ideas of others, or walking away from something you don't like or can't control are all experiences that children can grapple with during dramatic play. The best place to hone social skills is in the dramatic play area.

You should not spend all of your time interacting with the children. Stepping back and observing is also an important part of a teacher's job. You can learn a lot just by watching. Regular, frequent observations will help you identify the developmental level of each child, as well as his interests, strengths, and weaknesses. You should then use this knowledge to develop your lesson plans.

### ASK YOURSELF:



Do you dominate and control dramatic play by your presence?

Do you withdraw as soon as possible from the activity so the children can play independently?

Do you encourage dramatic play as a way for children to develop social skills?

Do you regularly spend time observing the children so you can assess their progress, and prepare lesson plans to fit their needs and developmental levels?

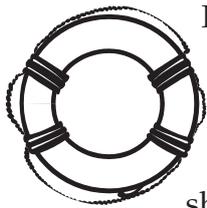
## 46. Give children the privacy and freedom they need for dramatic play

### I'M GOING TO BE A MOMMY

Our class had spent the last several days talking about doctors. The children had stethoscopes, X rays, facemasks, bandages, and other materials to use in their dramatic play. In all my years of working with young children, the following happened only once, and once was probably enough for me.

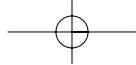
Julie, a four-year-old, could almost always be found in the dramatic play area. Her favorite ensemble, which she put on over her clothes, was a bright red lace and satin floor-length dress with matching high-heeled shoes and all the jewelry her little body could carry. One day as Julie was playing with one of the dolls she lifted up the red dress, placed the doll on her stomach, and then pulled the dress down and declared that she was going to be a Mommy. Later, Billy came over and noticed the bulge under the dress. He asked, "What's that?" Julie explained she was going to be a Mommy. Billy asked if he could be the doctor. Julie agreed and promptly lay down on the carpet. Billy carefully lifted the dress, removed the doll, considerately pulled the dress down and presented the doll to Julie. This game became all the rage, and soon I had five or six pregnant-looking four-year-olds wandering around my classroom and a shortage of dolls. The director wanted to know just what I was teaching.

### HELP!

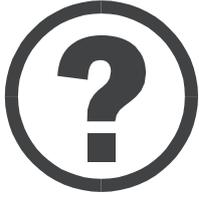


I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you that Julie's mother was pregnant. Julie was using dramatic play to try to understand what was happening in her life. Dramatic play can help children work through important issues and understand more about themselves and life in general. We should be sure to provide an environment that gives children both the privacy and the freedom to explore through dramatic play.

- ◆ Be sure the dramatic play area has a large safety (shatterproof) mirror for the children to use.



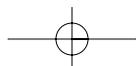
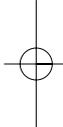
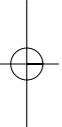
## ASK YOURSELF:



Do you encourage the use of dramatic play to help children work through their concerns and ideas about the world?

Do you give children the privacy and freedom they need for dramatic play?

Do you maintain a nonjudgmental attitude about the children's dramatic play?



## Try This

Design cooperative projects, such as:

- ☆ Painting a large box
- ☆ Painting or decorating a large mural
- ☆ Decorating a stage for puppets
- ☆ Building a totem pole made out of containers that each child has decorated
- ☆ Preparing food
- ☆ Fixing up the room for a holiday
- ☆ Planning a picnic

Do cooperative projects on the playground:

- ☆ Build a snowman
- ☆ Make a big pile of leaves
- ☆ Make a leaf man
- ☆ Dig a big hole
- ☆ Clean up the playground
- ☆ Plant a garden
- ☆ Make a scarecrow

Do cooperative movement activities, such as having two children walk from one location to another:

- ☆ Holding one hand facing forward
- ☆ Holding two hands facing each other
- ☆ Holding two hands back to back
- ☆ With a large pillow between them and their hands behind their backs
- ☆ Carrying a cup filled with water on a tray