

Tips and suggestions to support the social-emotional needs of SPF families

### *Helping Students Navigate Peer Relationships*



#### ***Here are ways to help at home today:***

- **Talk regularly** - Ask open ended questions & use follow up questions to the responses. (Asking questions helps more than offering advice or opinions right away).
- **Validate their feelings first** - It can help for your child to feel heard and understood. Try saying things like "That sounds really hard for you to deal with," "It makes sense that you're upset" or "Tell me more."
- **Model appropriate communication** - If you have conflict or a disagreement at home, this is a good opportunity to model for them how to talk it out, apologize and make up. You can also model empathy at this time.
- **Practice talking about their feelings and brainstorm solutions** - Many times helping your child make a plan and practice how they will talk to their peer (just like you would make a plan and practice in extracurricular activities) will give them the confidence and skills to address things appropriately. (See more about exactly what to say on the next page).

#### **HOW CAN I HELP ENCOURAGE POSITIVE PEER RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY CHILD?**

The elementary years are a time of great social development for your child, as they begin to select their friends based on common personality traits or shared interests. This is also a time when children begin to care about being popular. It's good to talk to your child about this and encourage them to try to choose good friends. Explain to them that true friends like and accept them for who they are, and that they should focus on nurturing those relationships, regardless of how popular those friends may be. You can help by fostering time with positive peers outside of school. We believe that the power of play dates helps strengthen their play together, navigate interpersonal struggles in a safe/private way, and builds social skills that they bring back to school with them.

Your child's desire to be a part of a group is growing and the influence of peers is strong. Peer pressure can be both a positive and a negative influence. It can be a good thing, for example, if your child's friends encourage them to resist bad behavior or be kind to others, but it can also influence them to act in ways that they may not be comfortable with. Your child may need your guidance when they are faced with conflicts between loyalty to the group and fairness to outsiders. Partly, it's because your child is still learning their own values and ideas. At this age, they are most concerned about not disappointing their friends when they are with them. You can help by using Active Listening to hear them out first. They will be more open to hearing and practicing your family values if they feel like you understand.

# Caregiver's Corner

## Newsletter

Tips and suggestions to support the social-emotional needs of SPF families

Setting the foundation early for navigating peer relationships can ultimately lead to strong peer connections as children grow. The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning lists some skills that are useful for interacting with peers and building social relationships. Here are the skills and how to foster them at home:

**Getting a friend's attention:** this is a great one to model when requesting their attention. You can also teach them to use the phrase "excuse me" or teach the "tap tap" (one finger, two taps on the shoulder) to get someone's attention.

**Sharing objects:** To strengthen sharing, do activities that are great for two or more- work on a puzzle, play a board game or bake cookies together. When finished — the puzzle is finished or the cookies are ready to eat — talk about how great it was to share that activity with them.

**Asking peers to share objects:** Children learn best about sharing when they witness sharing behavior. So, share your slice of cake with them or allow them to try on your hat.

Help them see you share with other people as well. For example, "I'm going to share my favorite scarf with my friend," or, "My friend asked for my cookbook, so I shared it with her."

**Providing a play idea to a peer-** This is also a great time for modeling. When at the playground or even at home, show them how you make suggestions to others. Even more helpful. show them how to react if the other person rejects your idea. For example, "Ok, I'm still going to go to Target, maybe you can join us another time."

**Saying something nice to a friend:** Often times our children are more concerned about what peers are doing wrong than acknowledging when they do something right or well. Talking to them about thinking before they speak- "Is it honest?", "Is it kind?", and for older kids "Is it necessary"?

## COMMUNICATING WITH I-MESSAGES

Interpersonal struggles and successes are rooted in communication.

Misunderstandings that aren't addressed lead to strong feelings. Many times we won't address the person directly because we aren't sure what to say or how to say it in a way that feels safe. "I" message or "I" statement is a style of communication that focuses on the feelings or beliefs of the speaker, rather than thoughts and characteristics that the speaker attributes to the listener. Click on the I-Statements image for the language you and your child can use to practice resolving conflict (or to use when there is one).

Person 1

I feel:

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When:

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Because:

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What I want/Need is:

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Person 2

What I heard you say is:

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In the future I/We will:

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...(Then switch roles)

# Resources

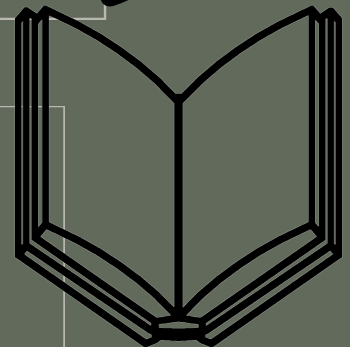
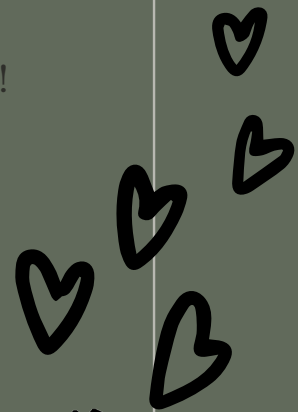


## ONLINE RESOURCES

Do you find yourself trying to navigate the world of online activities and apps with your child? Are you seeing that your child is having conflict with friends through these platforms?

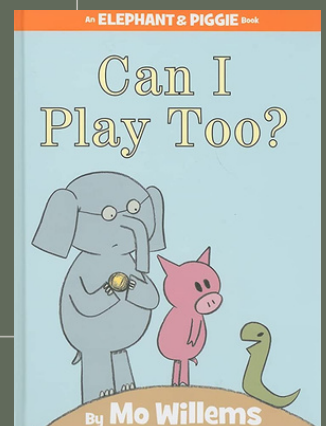
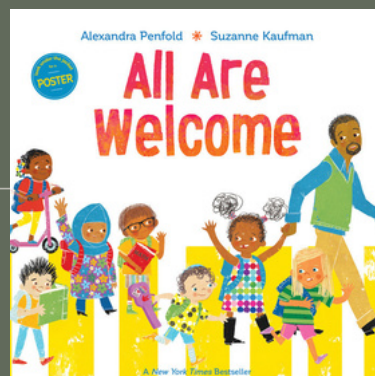
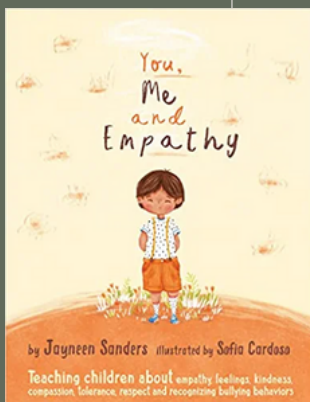
We can all use help navigating this new online world and also this new space where conflict can arise!

Checkout Common Sense Media's "Parenting, media, and everything in between." Click on the title or the common sense graphic and explore what they have to offer!



## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

The topic of interpersonal conflict can be daunting for parents and students alike. Start the conversation by introducing your child to some literature on the subject. These stories are told from the perspective of kids ranging in ages.





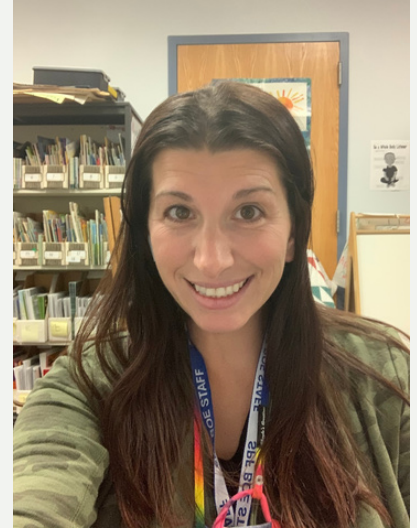
## MEET THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE SPECIALISTS



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