

... "bite size"
news from
your HSB
Regional
Behavior
Specialists



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OH, Behave!

Tips for a Successful Circle Time Every Time!



Tip of the Month:

Circle time doesn't have to mean sitting down. Allow children to stand and dance to help get the wiggles out! Doing this will help their minds and bodies be ready to focus!

Connect with us!

Check out [Tucker's NC Nest](#) on Pinterest!

Follow OhBehaveTips on [twitter!](#)

Join our new online community by clicking [here!](#) By joining Social-Emotional Connections, you will have the opportunity to network, post questions, and share resources with other early childhood professionals in NC!

Open our latest public resource, a growing library shelf of virtual binders that include archived issues of the HSB newsletter, *OH, Behave!*, a collection of Disaster Response Resources, and a binder of scripted stories for classroom use! Click [here](#).

Circle time, also known as group time, is a regular part of the daily schedule in every early childhood classroom. We, as teachers, know to prepare and plan for it. But, do we know why we have circle time? If we hope to conduct a successful circle time, it is helpful to know the purpose behind it.

Circle time is an essential part of the preschool day! It is a time for important social interactions among young children. It helps develop positive relationships between kids through engaging, fun, and interactive activities. During circle time, children come together as one group to share and practice social skills. Children thrive on routines and schedules. Circle time is a daily predictable event they can count on. In preschool, we strive to get children prepared for school. Circle time is extremely beneficial for school-readiness! It also sets the tone for the day by discussing what is going to happen and what is expected. Children can practice listening skills, waiting their turn, social and emotional literacy, following directions, self-regulation, language development, and a sense of community. All of these skills can be learned just from gathering together in a group! The possibilities of what can be learned from circle time are endless and can be enhanced by what is being taught to the group at any given meeting.

Whether you are a new teacher or one that has been teaching for a number of years, reviewing tips for a successful circle time is always helpful. Below are tips and reminders to ensure the children in your class get the most out of group time:

- Create an individual spot for each child to call their own during circle time. This automatically initiates a conversa-

tion about boundaries and personal spaces.

- Plan group time activities that encourage children to participate and take an active role.
- Morning circle time is the perfect opportunity to go over the daily visual schedule and prepare children for what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure.
- Remember, circle time can occur more than once per day. Add an afternoon time — especially for older children.
- Start with an activity that is inviting and grabs interest. For example, "what do you think is inside this box?"
- Circle time is the perfect time to teach something new that the entire class of children need to know. But, keep in mind that children learn and develop on an individual basis. No two children are exactly alike and, therefore, should not be expected to learn the same things at the same time in the same way. Be adaptable and flexible.
- Don't take it personally if your thoughtful and well-planned activity doesn't take off. Remember you can try it again another day.
- Empathy can be taught by acknowledging the children who are not present at school that day. Mention each child by name that is absent and wish them well and/or indicate they are missed. By doing so, you are also demonstrating that each child is an essential part of the classroom community. [Here](#) is a video by Conscious

Discipline that illustrates how to easily make a "Wish Well Board".

- Follow the interests of the children and listen to what the children have to say. Be sure each child feels equally a part of the group.
- Be reasonable with your expectations. Most preschoolers have an average attention span of two to three minutes per year of age. For example, the attention span of a three-year-old is approximately 6 to 9 minutes.
- Be mindful that children are naturally wigglers and squirmers. Make allowances for this within your group activities. For example, for children that can't seem to focus, consider giving them a fidget toy. Fidgets are self-regulation tools that help with attention, calming, and active listening.
- Don't force a child to participate or join the group. If a child is not interested in participating, have an alternate quiet activity available nearby where supervision can still occur. Keep the child close enough to where they can still hear and see what is happening within the group and you might be surprised by how much they retain!
- Be sure children understand what is expected of them during circle time. Check out these three supports— **Circle Time Rules** and **Circle Time Mini-Schedule** (visual supports) and a social story called, "**What Do We Do In Circle?**" from National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) [here!](#)

Ask The Behavior Specialist!

Question: I have a little girl in my preschool room who is stuck on one friend! She follows this friend around all day, wants to be near her at all times, and mimics everything she does. Her grandad told me that she talks about this friend a lot at home. When her favorite friend misses a day of school, she engages with the other children, but only slightly. Currently, I'm just using redirection and distraction to try to get her to engage with others but she finds her way right back to her favorite friend after just a few minutes. If I persist and don't allow her to re-engage with her friend, she seems to shut down and is reluctant to do anything else. What else could I try?

Answer: Thank you for your question. Relationships like these make children feel safe and secure, but your concern for her social skills is understandable too. You might try strategies like peer-partnering where you could select opportune times of the school day to pair particular children together for certain tasks or activities, being careful to partner her with a friend who is more outgoing and expressive. You could also use classroom jobs as a strategy. For example, you might make a couple of your classroom jobs a two-person task and make sure she is paired with an unfamiliar friend. Making her the classroom greeter or kindness recorder are other ideal jobs that provide opportunities for her to interact with multiple children throughout the day. The key is to try to make it feel as natural as possible. You can point out similar interests, characteristics, or skills that she has with other peers and invite them to share about what they have observed. At the family board, you could point out similarities between her family and those of her classmates such as number of siblings or pets. Circle time is another wonderful opportunity that you could support friendship building skills by incorporating stories that highlight the value of friendship, diversity and differences.

In each issue you will find a new card to help you build your very own "Calming Choices" Card Set for your classroom.




When I am upset, I can...

DRAW WITH SIDEWALK CHALK



For durability and repetitive use, print on cardstock paper and laminate.

Social Emotional Teaching Strategies Technical Assistance (SETS TA)




Are you interested in learning how to prevent challenging behaviors in your classroom through intentional teaching practices designed to embed social emotional development in young children? It is free! To learn more and enroll, contact your local regional NC Healthy Social Behavior Specialist! **Hurry, as spaces are limited!**

Play tip

Playing with the same materials or in the same center day after day is actual good news! Repeated use of an area or materials builds crucial neuro-pathways of attention, focus and deeper play narratives. Let the children repeat play!

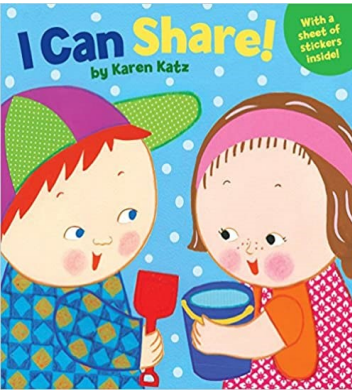
fairy dust teaching

Do you have a question you would like to see answered in our column? Feel free to email it to AskTheBehaviorSpecialist@gmail.com. We will keep your identity private. Your question is probably one someone else needs answering, so ask away! Your time is appreciated!



For more inspirational context, check out the website for Fairy Dust Teaching [here!](#)

Social/Emotional Book Nook



With sturdy pages ideal for toddlers and two's, this book written by Karen Katz is a fun way to learn one of the most difficult social skills—Sharing! *I Can Share* is a 'Lift-the-Flap' interactive book. Each page shows a different scenario that is solved by sharing. **Note:** The latest version of this book comes with a page of stickers!

As an extra bonus, teachers can find a book nook accompaniment which will help with lesson planning on teaching how to share based on this specific book! Check out the book nook [here!](#)

