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Social Emotional Teaching Strategies

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The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early

Administration for Children & Families

Child Care Bureau

Head Start Bureau

Module 2	Social-Emotional Teaching Strategies

Learner Objectives

- Participants will understand when and where the most effective "teachable moments" are related to social skills and emotional regulation.

- Participants will understand why rules are essential for early childhood classrooms.

- Participants will be able to identify the criteria for developing rules with young children.

- Participants will be able to identify friendship skills and how to teach them.

- Participants will be able to define emotional literacy and identify five activities that build "feeling vocabularies."

- Participants will understand why children need to learn to control anger and handle disappointment, and will be able to identify strategies to teach anger management skills.

- Participants will understand the importance of teaching problem solving and will be able to identify the four stages of problem solving.

Suggested Agenda

I.	Introduction	(15 min.)
II.	Identifying the "Teachable Moments"	(15 min.)
III.	Positive Relationships as an Essential Foundation	(10 min.)
IV.	Friendship Skills	(120 min.)

    A. What Behaviors Lead to Friendship?
       1. Play Organizers
       2. Sharing
       3. Helping/Teamwork
       4. Taking Turns
       5. Giving Compliments
       6. Knowing When and How to Give an Apology
    B. Setting the Stage for Friendship
    C. Strategies for Developing Friendships
       1. Modeling Principles
       2. Modeling with Video
       3. Modeling with Puppets
       4. Preparing Peer Partners
       5. Priming
       6. Direct Modeling
       7. Reinforcement

V.	Emotional Literacy	(30 min.)

    A. Enhancing Emotional Vocabulary
    B. Identifying Emotions in Self and Others
    C. Emotional Regulation
    D. Empathy

VI.	Controlling Anger and Impulse	(30 min.)

    A. Recognizing Anger in Self and Others
    B. The "Turtle Technique"

VII.	Problem Solving	(30 min.)

    A. Recognizing When You Have a Problem
    B. Learning the Problem-Solving Steps
    C. Problem-Solving Activities

VIII.	Dealing with Common Peer Problems (Teasing, Bullying, etc.)	(15 min.)

Materials Needed

- ☐ Agenda
- ☐ PowerPoint or Overheads
- ☐ Video Clips
  - 2.1: Play Organizing Skills
  - 2.2: Sharing
  - 2.3: Being Helpful
  - 2.4: Giving Compliments
  - 2.5: Problem Solving
  - 2.6: Superfriend
  - 2.7: Teasing Shield

- ☐ **Handouts**
  - 2.1: PowerPoint Overhead Handout for Each Participant
  - 2.2: Building Positive Relationships with Young Children
  - 2.3: You've Got to Have Friends
  - 2.4: Enhancing Emotional Vocabulary in Young Children
  - 2.5: Feeling Faces
  - 2.6: Helping Young Children Control Anger and Handle Disappointment
  - 2.7: Turtle Technique
  - 2.8: Problem-Solving Steps
  - 2.9: Solution Kit
  - 2.10: Activity Matrix
  - 2.SE: Session Evaluation Form

I. Introduction
(15 minutes)

(Handout 2.1)

3-7

Introduce Module **(Slide 1)**.

A. Share Agenda **(Slide 2)** and give **Handout 2.1** (PowerPoint Slides). Go over the agenda with participants.

   1. Indicate when breaks will occur, etc.

   2. Show **Slide 3** (CSEFEL Key Principles). Review the CSEFEL key principles with the participants. Refer to the Facilitator's Guide for additional information on the CSEFEL key principles.

   3. Show **Slides 4 and 5** (Learner Objectives). Review the learner objectives with the participants.

   4. Show **Slide 6** of happy girls hugging.

   5. Show **Slide 7** (CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid). Tell participants that we are at the third part of the pyramid. Have the participants share the key points they remember from the first two parts of the pyramid.

II. Identifying the "Teachable Moments"
(15 minutes)

A. Show **Slide 8** (Identifying the Teachable Moments).

B. Describe a typical challenging behavior as it happens in the classroom or child care. For example, a boy is playing with blocks and doing fine. More children come to the block area, and the boy and another child want the same block. When the other child grabs the block, the boy hits the child and takes the block away (red arrow).

   1. Point out that it is at the crisis (red arrow) that teachers often try to teach new social skills.

      a. Generate ideas about what teachers or child care providers might say (e.g., "Use your words." "Hitting is not okay." "Say you're sorry." "Ask nicely if you want something." "Get an adult if you need help." "Calm down.").

      b. Discuss how these are all great social skills lessons—but the problem is that it is not a very effective teachable moment.

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2. Describe the reasons why it is not a very effective teachable moment.

   a. The challenging behavior already happened.

   b. The child is upset and agitated.

   c. The challenging behavior worked with little effort.

   d. The child may find a "lesson" from the teacher reinforcing.

3. Ask "When are effective teachable moments then?" (Answer: At the green arrows at the left-hand side.)

4. Highlight that you will spend today presenting effective teaching strategies to teach young children friendship skills, following rules and directions, increasing emotional vocabulary, ideas for controlling anger and impulse, problem-solving skills, and ideas for dealing with common peer problems.

III. Positive Relationships as an Essential Foundation
(10 minutes)

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(Handout 2.2)

A. Show **Slide 9**. Reiterate that teaching social skills requires a solid foundation of a positive relationship between the teacher and child.

B. Present the metaphor, adopted from the work of Carolyn Webster-Stratton, of a "piggy bank" to illustrate "making deposits" as a way of building positive relationships (Webster-Stratton, 1990).

C. Ask participants to recall the strategies they learned in the prior workshop.

D. Quickly recap some of the strategies, emphasizing the power of play in building positive relationships. (e.g., talk about things children do at home during play, actively engage in children's play, participate as a play partner, sit at children's level, joke and laugh with children, play on their level, spend time with children doing what they love to do).

E. Provide participants with **Handout 2.2** ("Building Positive Relationships with Young Children" Article).

IV. Friendship Skills
(120 minutes)

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(Handout 2.3)

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Provide participants with **Handout 2.3** ("Friendship Skills" Article). Show **Slide 10** (Friendship Skills).

A. **What Behaviors Lead to Friendship?** Show **Slide 11**. Several discrete behaviors that young children engage in during play with each other are directly related to having friends (Tremblay et al., 1981). That is, children who do more of these behaviors are more likely to have friends. These specific behaviors include the following (please note that each slide is organized around strategies that teachers can use to promote the development of these specific behaviors—e.g., rationale, describing the behavior for children, demonstrating right and wrong ways, allowing opportunities to practice these skills and promoting these skills throughout the day):

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(video clip 2.1)

   1. *Play Organizers.* Show **Slide 12.** With preschoolers, play organizers are usually "Let's" statements, such as, "Let's play trucks." Often these "Let's" statements are followed by suggestions about roles (e.g., "You be the driver.") or specific activities (e.g., "Roll it to me."). Show **video clip 2.1** (Play Organizing Skills).

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(video clip 2.2)

   2. *Sharing.* Show **Slide 13.** Sharing takes many forms among preschoolers. Children with friends request in the form of, "Can I have some paint" and they also oblige share requests from peers. Show **video clip 2.2** (Sharing Skills). Show **Slide 14** (Turn-taking).

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(video clip 2.3)

   3. *Being Helpful/Team Players.* Show **Slide 15.** Assisting also takes many forms at the preschool level. Children can help each other onto or off of an apparatus; they can tell or show a friend how to do something; or they can assist someone in distress. Show **video clip 2.3** (Being Helpful).

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   4. *Taking Turns.* Show **Slide 16** of girls being helpful. In addition to engaging in these discrete behaviors, the formation of friendship is equally dependent upon two patterns of interaction.

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a. First, it is necessary for children to be reciprocal in their interactions. Reciprocity has two dimensions. Initially, children need to be responsive to the social bids of others. Also, over a period of time (say several months), it is important that there be a relatively equal number of occasions that each member of a friendship dyad starts an interaction.

b. In addition to reciprocity, friendship patterns of interaction are also characterized by the length of interaction occurrences. That is, friendship pairs engage in longer episodes.

5. *Giving Compliments.* Show **Slide 17.** Although these behaviors do not often occur among preschoolers, they tend to have a powerful effect on the formation of friendships. Preschoolers compliment one another's successes, buildings, and appearances. **Show video clip 2.4** (Giving Compliments).

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(video clip 2.4)

6. *Knowing When and How to Give Apologies.* Show **Slide 18.** Learning when and how to give apologies, just like learning how to give compliments, can have a positive effect on the formation of friendships. Children begin to learn how to pay attention and be more responsive to their friends' feelings.

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B. **Setting the Stage for Friendship.** Show **Slide 19.** Prior to beginning instruction in friendly behavior, adult caregivers need to attend to five elements of the classroom or child care.

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1. An inclusive environment where children with disabilities are meaningfully included in natural proportions is critical to setting the stage (Guralnick, 1990).

2. The presence and preselection of cooperative use toys and materials increase the opportunities for social interaction. Cooperative use toys are those that naturally lend themselves to two or more children playing together.

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3. It is necessary to examine all daily routines and embed social interaction instruction and practice opportunities throughout the day.

4. In order to ensure that social interaction instruction gets the necessary attention, adult caregivers need to include social interaction goals and objectives on a child's IEP/IFSP. Although these goals are likely to be the most critical for the child's later development, they often do not appear on IEPs or IFSPs (McConnell, McEvoy, & Odom, 1992), perhaps because many assessments do not include these skills as test items.

5. Most importantly, adult caregivers need to devote energy toward creating a climate with an ethos of friendship. When you walk into a classroom or child care where an adult has successfully created this climate, you see adults giving time and attention to children when they engage in friendly behaviors, you hear adults talking nicely to one another, and you hear children supporting one another's friendly behavior. Overall, you get a sense that friendship is the ultimate goal. Ask participants what else teachers can do to promote this ethos of friendship.

C. *Strategies for Developing Friendships.* Show **Slide 20.** Setting the stage is a necessary element of supporting children's developing friendships. However, some children will require systematic teaching in order to develop the skills that lead to having friends. This instruction often includes modeling appropriate behavior and providing practice opportunities with feedback.

1. *Modeling Principles.* Modeling can include adults or peers demonstrating the friendship skill, or video-based modeling with short vignettes of children engaging in friendly behavior (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). Often, it is effective to model both examples and non-examples followed by opportunities for correct responding. There are three guiding principles of effective role-play modeling strategies.

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a. Use invisible support, that is, call on the child who you are confident will model the skill appropriately before calling on a child who will need more support.

b. Sometimes when children are modeling the friendship skill in front of their peers, they can get carried away with being silly or inappropriate. It is important to give children another chance and more support so that they are successful in demonstrating the skill positively. This approach allows them to receive positive reinforcement from the teacher for doing the skill.

c. Because role-plays typically involve only one or two children at a time, it is necessary to plan ways for the rest of the children to be actively engaged. Strategies for including children who are not involved in the role-play include having them give a thumbs up for friendly behavior and a thumbs down for unfriendly behavior; patting themselves on the back if this is a behavior they do; clapping when the role-play is over; saying "ready, set, action" before the role-play begins; or having a Popsicle stick sign with a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other (children show the happy face when the behavior being modeled is friendly and the sad face when the behavior being modeled is unfriendly). It is also important to keep track of who has had a chance to role-play and ensure that all of the children in the class get a turn during the week.

2. *Modeling with Video.* The use of video to help model friendship skills can be very effective with young children. Video-based modeling is particularly effective for several reasons.

a. Videos can capture real-life examples of children using friendly behavior. These examples can be used to generate discussion about the friendly behavior and the context in which it is used in the video. Also, these examples can be used as a

standard with which to compare the children's practice attempts. Video vignettes can also display non-examples. These vignettes can be used to teach children to discriminate between friendly and unfriendly behavior and prompt children to develop and share alternative behaviors and solutions if initial ideas are not effective.

b. Video clips can be frozen (paused), and children can be prompted to attend to the often fleeting salient features of the friendly behaviors and the context in which they occur. Children can also make predictions about "what will happen next" when the child featured in the video uses a friendly or unfriendly behavior.

c. The video format is particularly powerful in engaging and keeping children's attention.

3. *Modeling with Puppets.* Similar to video, puppets are very engaging to young children.

   a. Since the play of preschool children often involves fantasy, puppets, in essence, join children in this fantasy world while modeling positive friendship skills.

   b. Because adults are in control of the puppet, the puppet can always be a responsive play partner. The puppet can model friendly play and, when appropriate and planned, can model non-examples. Puppets in the image of children are particularly effective because they provide a proximate model. That is, children are more likely to emulate the behavior of models that look like themselves.

   c. Additionally, some children will disclose more about their feelings and friendship problems to puppets than to adults, especially if adults are historically not seen as trustworthy by the child.

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4. *Preparing Peer Partners.* When typical children are assisting their peers with special needs to acquire friendships skills, it is necessary for them to learn to suspend social rules in order not to feel rejected. In the usual course of events, interactions between typical children are usually quite reciprocal. If someone asks nicely to play, they usually get a positive response. On the other hand, as children with special needs begin to acquire peer interaction skills, they often reject the social overtures of their peers and they seldom initiate play.

Using role-play and rehearsal strategies, there is a well-researched set of procedures for teaching typical peers to be persistent with their social behavior while their peers with special needs are becoming more fluent. For example, adults model peer rejection, provide verbal feedback ("That's what might happen when you ask kids to play."), and then provide a behavioral alternative that they reinforce ("If that happens, try again"—"good, you tried again.").

Often it is helpful to utilize a "buddy system" when trying to increase the friendship skills of children. Right before a free-play period, children are assigned to a buddy role, meaning that they begin free play in some planned play activity with a certain child. In utilizing a buddy system, there are several rules to follow.

a. It is important to always have two or more buddies for each child with special needs. This arrangement helps to keep the play interesting for the socially competent children, and it helps to create the conditions for maximizing the number of diverse play ideas.

b. It is important to rotate buddies for several reasons:
   • First, rotating buddies helps to ensure that children have the opportunity to engage in friendship skills with the widest variety of playmates.

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- Second, rotating helps to avoid buddy-burnout, a condition in which children come to respond negatively to their helper role because they always play with the same individual.

c. One can optimize the buddy system by pairing the most popular and liked children with those who need the most help. This type of pairing can lead to other children simultaneously helping their peers because the "cool" kids are doing it.

d. At the end of a play period, children should receive specific praise for being buddies—praise that specifically enumerates the friendly ways they interacted with their assigned partner.

5. *Priming.* Adult caregivers can increase the likelihood of children using friendship skills with specific priming strategies. For example, prior to a free-play period, teachers can ask children who they are going to play with; they can ask what specific toy or material they are going to share; and they can provide practice opportunities. A practice opportunity might include, "Hey, Josh, let's pretend I am Cody and you are going to ask me to play trucks." Josh would then practice asking, with or without adult prompting, and the adult would provide reinforcement or corrective feedback for Josh's social initiation to play. Other play ideas include the following.

a. Teachers can increase the duration of peer play by providing suggestions or prompting role reversals.

b. Expanding play ideas can occur by suggesting new ways of playing with the materials, new ways for dramatic play to unfold, and new ways of including more children in a game or activity.

c. When a child care provider notices that children are disengaging from play with one another, he or she can prompt the children to reverse dramatic play roles ("How about you be the mom now and she is the baby?"). This strategy can reengage children in the play sequence and lead to more lengthy social encounters.

6. *Direct Modeling.* Another way to keep children engaged in friendly play is to directly model desired behaviors as a play partner. When adult caregivers notice that children are becoming less engaged, they can join the play group and provide specific models of friendly behavior. For example, a parent might join two children who are playing together and begin to share the materials available.

7. *Reinforcement.* Although it is important to reinforce children for their friendly behavior, it is also the case that the effective use of reinforcement requires ongoing attention to several key factors.

a. Timing of reinforcement delivery is crucial. As long as children are engaged in friendly behavior, it is a good idea to withhold reinforcement. Although this approach may seem counterintuitive, evidence suggests that adults' delivery of attention to children at play can have the immediate effect of terminating their play. Given this fact, it is more advisable to comment on children's friendly play shortly after the fact.

b. When commenting on children's friendly play, it is essential to describe the specific friendly behavior(s) that you observed. Instead of saying, "You're playing so nicely together," say, "You are taking turns and saying nice things to each other." This descriptive commenting provides children with specific feedback about what they are doing well.

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c. For many children, adult caregivers may need to provide lots of reinforcement early on. Once children start to use their friendly behaviors, however, adults need to begin the process of slowly removing their specific feedback from the ongoing play. The goal is not to remove all adult reinforcement, but to provide sufficient opportunity for friendly play in and of itself to become reinforcing.

d. Show **Slide 21** of girls being friendly at a water table. Ask participants whether there are any questions about facilitating friendship skills.

V. Emotional Literacy: Identifying Feelings in Self and Others (30 minutes)

22
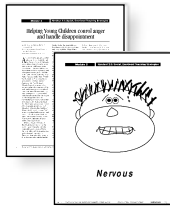
(Handout 2.4 and 2.5)

23-32

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A. Enhancing Emotional Literacy

1. Show **Slide 22.** Describe how feeling vocabulary is related to emotional regulation. **Provide Handout 2.4** ("Enhancing Emotional Vocabulary in Young Children" Article) and **Handout 2.5** (Feeling Faces).

2. Discuss why it is important to increase children's feeling vocabulary to include more complex feeling words. This increased vocabulary allows children to make finer discriminations among their own and other's feelings, which in turn allows them to be better interpersonal communicators.

3. Have participants list feeling words for preschoolers, then show **Slides 23 to 32.** Explain the importance of teaching preschoolers feeling words that go beyond the basics (happy, sad, mad).

4. After they have generated their "feeling word" lists, ask them to count up the number of positive and negative feeling words. Tell participants to focus on both positive and negative feeling words.

5. **Show Slide 33.** Describe ways you can teach young children different feeling words (additional resources and ideas can be found in Handout 2.4).

a. direct teaching—(e.g., use pictures or photos of feeling faces with the appropriate affective labels)

b. indirect teaching—(e.g., provide emotion labels as children experience various affective states – "you're happy" - "you're frustrated")

c. use children's literature – (e.g., use children's books to label feeling faces with children – many books are written explicitly about feelings and contain numerous feeling words (see Handout 2.4 for a list of some examples of children's books featuring feeling faces and words)

d. use of songs and games – (e.g., sing songs like "if you're happy and you know it,,,". Teachers can add new verses to this song as you introduce new feeling words – if you're mad and you know it, use your words "I'm mad")

e. play "how would you feel if?" – (e.g., talk about or have children act out typical situations that happen when children are together and then talk about "how would you feel if this happened to you?")

f. checking in – (e.g., children can "check in" each morning by picking a feeling face picture that best depicts their affective state and sticking it next to their name. Children can be encouraged to change their feeling faces throughout the day as their feelings change.)

g. feeling dice and feeling wheels - (e.g., make feeling dice by covering milk cartons with paper and drawing different feeling faces on each side. Children can toss dice; label the feeling face and describe a time they felt that way.)

B. Identifying Emotions in Self and Others

34-37

1. Show **Slides 34 to 37.** Describe ways to teach young children how to recognize feelings in self and others by paying attention to facial and body cues, by listening to how someone sounds, and by asking someone how they are feeling.

C. Emotional Regulation

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1. Show **Slide 38** (Identifying Feelings in Self and Others). Present two feeling words that we don't typically teach young children but that are very powerful. Those are "tense" or "stressed" and "calm" or "relaxed."

39-40

2. Explain that young children are often told to "calm down" but are not aware of what this means. First, they need to be taught the distinction between "tense" and "calm." Show picture cards of "tense" and "calm." Describe how you can teach these concepts with the tin man (**Slide 39: Tense**) and Raggedy Ann doll (**Slide 40: Relaxed**) activity (Webster-Stratton, 1990).

    a. Then describe how you get children from tense to relaxed. One way is by taking three deep breaths. Emphasize that these need to be very deep belly breaths (like you are blowing out birthday cake candles).

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    b. Describe the relaxation thermometer activity for children (Webster-Stratton, 1990) (**Slide 41**).

        i. The relaxation thermometer is used to teach children to calm down.

        ii. Children can decorate the thermometer with pictures of feeling faces from "happy" and "relaxed" in the blue (or cool) section of the thermometer—all the way up to "angry" or "stressed out" in the red (or hot) section of the thermometer.

        iii. The adult can then ask children to describe a recent conflict and together with the child retrace the steps that led to the angry outburst.

        iv. The adult writes down the child's actions, thoughts, and words that indicated an escalating anger pattern (e.g., thinking "He always takes my toys," yelling, kicking).

v.   Then the adult discusses with the child the thoughts, words, and actions that the child can use to reduce his or her anger.

vi. As adults retrace the steps of the angry outburst, they help the children identify the place where they were aware they were getting angry.

vii. This place is marked as the "Danger Point" on the thermometer. Once children have established their danger points, they give it their own name (e.g., chill out, cool down, code red, hot engine, etc.).

viii. This code word can be the adult and child's signal that anger or stress has reached the threshold, which triggers the use of an agreed upon calming strategy, such as taking three deep breaths.

D. Empathy

1. Show **Slide 42** (Identifying Feelings in Self and Others).

2. Ask participants to define empathy. Empathy is the identification with and understanding of another's feelings and situation.

3. Ask participants how they might encourage empathy in young children. Talk about the use of storyboards as potential teaching tools. With storyboards, teachers have large paper dolls without mouths. An assortment of different feeling faces (happy, sad, mad, nervous, excited, etc.) is available. The teacher then tells a story about the boy/girl paper doll and pauses to allow the children to identify the feeling the paper doll might be experiencing.

4. Show **Slide 43.** Emphasize the "key concepts" about feelings for young children.

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VI. Controlling Anger and Impulse
(30 minutes)

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(Handouts 2.6 & 2.7)

A. Recognizing Anger in Self and Others

1. Show **Slide 44.** Describe how aggression and inadequate impulse control are perhaps the most potent obstacles to effective problem solving and successful relationships in childhood.

2. Aggressive children are more likely to experience peer rejection and continued social problems for years afterwards.

3. Evidence also suggests that aggressive children are more likely to misinterpret another peer's or person's intentions as hostile or threatening.

4. Therefore, it is important to teach young children effective ways to control their anger and impulse in conflict situations.

B. The "Turtle Technique"

1. Provide **Handout 2.6** (Helping Young Children Control Anger and Handle Disappointment) and **Handout 2.7** ("The Turtle Technique").

2. Show **Slide 45.** Describe how to teach children to recognize anger in themselves.

   a. Ask participants how they feel physically when they are upset or angry.

   b. Point out that children feel anger in different ways—just as we do.

   c. Describe how an activity like "Feeling Fingerprints" (Elias & Clabby, 1989) can help children to identify the physiological sensations of feeling anger.

   d. For this activity, teachers trace children's bodies on large pieces of butcher paper. After their bodies are traced, the children can color and decorate "themselves." Then, the teacher provides the children with stickers made from address labels that have feelings printed on them (e.g., mad, frustrated, disappointed). The children

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then are asked to place the sticker on the part of the body where they experience that feeling. This activity helps them focus and begin to understand their personal physiological sensations to anger.

3. This understanding is their first step in learning to control anger and impulse.

4. Next, describe the "turtle technique." The turtle technique was originally developed to teach adults anger management skills and later was successfully adapted for school-age children (Schneider, 1974). Since then, the turtle technique has been adapted and integrated into social skills programs for preschoolers (Kusche & Greenberg, 1994, Webster-Stratton, 1990).
    The basic steps of the turtle technique follow **(show Slides 46-49).**

    a. Recognizing that you feel angry. **(Slide 46)**

    b. Thinking "stop." **(Slide 47)**

    c. Going into your "shell," taking three deep breaths, and thinking calming, coping thoughts: "It was an accident. I can calm down and think of good solutions. I am a good problem solver." **(Slide 48)**

    d. Coming out of your "shell" when calm and thinking of some solutions to the problem. **(Slide 49)**

5. In essence, the turtle technique seeks to help children learn to replace aggressive acts with a more effective and efficient behavioral alternative.

6. Teaching the turtle technique to young children can happen at large and small group times. A turtle puppet is helpful and keeps children engaged during the lesson.

    a. The teacher can begin by introducing the turtle to the class. After the children get a chance to say hello and perhaps give a gentle pet, the teacher shares the turtle's special trick for calming down.

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b. The turtle describes a time he got upset in preschool (selecting an incident familiar to the children is best). He demonstrates how he thinks to himself, "STOP," then goes into his shell and takes three deep breaths. After he takes three deep breaths, he thinks to himself, "I can calm down and think of some solutions to solve my problem." At this point in the process, the turtle technique is also utilized to illustrate that when he is calm, he comes out of his shell and is ready to problem solve peacefully.

c. To create a sufficient level of intervention intensity or practice, the teacher can then invite the children to practice the turtle's secret. Children can "go in their shells" as a group and together take three deep breaths. Then an individual child can model the "turtle technique" in front of the class. Practice in small group activities can include making paper-plate turtles with moveable heads and arms that "go in their shell." Children can then rehearse the steps with the paper-plate turtle.

7. Show **Slide 50.** Ask participants whether they have any questions about teaching young children to control anger and handle disappointment.

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VII. Problem Solving
(30 minutes)

A. Recognizing When You Have a Problem

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1. Show **Slide 51.**

2. Discuss that when presented with interpersonal problem situations, some children, or all young children in some situations, find it difficult to think of alternative responses besides aggression. We want children to learn problem solving steps, to be able to think of alternative solutions, and to learn that solutions have consequences.

52-55

3. Present the problem-solving steps that are appropriate to teach young children (show **Slides 52 to 55**).

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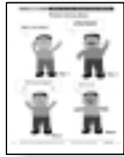
(Handout 2.8)

4. Provide **Handout 2.8** (Problem-Solving Steps). Explain that this is an overview of the problem solving steps that you will be discussing next.

B. Learning the Problem-Solving Steps

1. Preschool-age children can effectively be taught problem-solving skills (Shure & Spivack, 1980, 1982; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997).

2. Children learn problem solving step by step. Some published problem-solving curricula have as many as 11 steps, but that is too many for young children.

3. Four essential problem-solving steps are feasible for young children to learn and act on.
   - What is my problem?
   - What are some solutions?
   - What would happen next?
   - Give the solution a try!

4. What is my problem? Children should be taught to pay attention to their feelings as a first step in problem solving.

5. When they are experiencing a negative emotion (e.g., anger or frustration), this feeling is the cue that they have a problem. This is why teaching young children an emotional vocabulary is an essential prerequisite skill to being an effective problem solver (see Joseph & Strain, 2002a; Webster-Stratton, 1999).

6. After children recognize that they have a problem, they next need to describe the problem. Adults and/or puppets can model the problem for children. Children can practice by looking at cards depicting a problem and describing what the problem is. Initially, children will need guidance to reframe defining the problem as the other person's problem ("They won't let me play.") to their problem ("I want to play with them."). This reframing, although subtle, will help children generate more appropriate solutions.

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(Handout 2.9)

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7. What are some solutions? Young children need help generating multiple alternative solutions to interpersonal problems. A lot of time should be spent directly teaching children alternative solutions to common problems and having children generate solutions independently. At this point in the instructional process, the key is to teach children to generate as many solutions as they can think of rather than thinking of a solution that will work best. Describe how young children need to spend time learning to generate alternative solutions. Provide **Handout 2.9** (Solution Kit).

8. What would happen next? Show **Slide 56**. After children have experience generating multiple alternative solutions to problems, they can begin to evaluate consequences. This strategy can be communicated to children in terms of "What would happen next?" Three questions can guide a child's decision to determine if the consequences would be good or bad:
    - Is the solution safe?
    - Is the solution fair?
    - How would everyone feel?

    Understanding consequences can best be taught to children through role-plays. Children can generate a solution to a problem and then act it out with a puppet. The teacher can then prompt the child to think: Did anyone got hurt? Was it fair? How did you feel? How did the other person feel?

    Give it a try! At this step, children are taught to act on the best solution that they generated. They are also taught what to do when a solution doesn't work. When a prosocial solution doesn't work, children can draw upon the other solutions they generated earlier that they believe will have positive consequences.

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Problem-Solving Activities (Slide 57). Several activities can be planned to reinforce problem-solving skills.

a. Adults can "planfully sabotage" or "problematize" activities throughout the day and encourage children to generate solutions. For example, the teacher can bring one apple to the table for snack and say, "Oh my goodness! We have a problem. There is only one apple and five kids—what can we do?" The teacher can then encourage the children to generate as many different solutions as possible.

b. Adults can play "What would you do" with children. To play, the teacher thinks of and writes down numerous problems on slips of paper. These slips are then put in a bag and passed around the circle until the music stops. The child who is holding on to the bag when the music stops selects a problem that an adult can read for the child. The child can then think of as many solutions as possible. He or she may even consult the "Solution Kit" if necessary.

c. Children can make their own solution kits by drawing different solutions to problems they have had. Some children may want to color pre-drawn solution cards.

d. Adults can select children's books that feature characters who are having some kind of problem. The teacher can pause reading and ask children to generate solutions to the problem. Then, as the teacher reads on and the children learn how the character solved the problem, they can determine if it is a good or bad solution.

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C. **Supporting Young Children with Problem Solving in the Moment** (show **Slide 58**). Adult caregivers can keep in mind five steps as they assist young children in the problem-solving process: (1) anticipate problems, (2) seek proximity, (3) support, (4) encourage, and (5) promote.

1. Anticipate problems.

   a. Expect problem situations to arise in your classroom. When over a dozen youngsters are in a room with few adults and limited materials, it is natural for problems to occur.

   b. There will also be certain situations when the teacher can predict there will more likely be a problem. For example, there is a new dinosaur toy in the block corner, and the teacher anticipates many children will want to play with it. Or the teacher notices that a boy in her class has a scowl on his face when he gets off the bus—which last time meant a very troublesome day.

   c. When teachers anticipate problems, they are available to support children when a problem occurs.

2. Seek proximity.

   a. When a teacher is aware that a problem may ensue, seeking proximity is key.

   b. This strategy is not necessarily to prevent the problem from occurring, but instead is to be close enough to begin prompting a child through the problem-solving steps.

   c. When the teacher notices a child getting agitated and upset, she can cue the child to "calm down" by remembering the Turtle Technique (see Joseph & Strain, 2002b).

   d. Once a child is calm and the teacher is in a proximal distance to support, the child will be ready to problem solve.

3. Support.

   a. Young children will need support from the teacher to remember the problem-solving steps and to stay in the situation.

(continued)

b. Children who feel they are not skilled at problem solving will be prone to flee the situation.

c. So, sometimes support means keeping the child physically in proximity to the other child or children involved.

d. Support also means prompting the child through the problem-solving steps. This prompting can be done with the added support of visuals depicting the problem-solving steps.

e. These visuals can be placed strategically around the room to remind children of the steps when an adult is not available.

4. Encourage.

a. It is almost a certainty that even good solutions don't work all of the time. So, children need to be encouraged to keep trying at generating alternative solutions.

b. When children cannot think of any more solutions, they can be prompted to look through a "solution kit." The solution kit provides children with picture cues of various solutions to interpersonal problems. Show examples of some solution cards.

c. Children will need support to remain in the situation and to keep trying in the face of adversity. After each try, it is essential that an adult praise a child's efforts ("Wow! You have thought of two really good solutions! I know you have some other ideas.") and encourage them to go on ("Boy, this is a tough problem, and you have thought of so many good solutions. You are such an amazing problem solver. What else can you think of?").

5. Promote.

   a. The last task to supporting a child's "in the moment" problem-solving efforts is to reinforce the child's success. This kind of promotion can be done in informal and formal ways.

   b. Informally, teachers can give children high-fives, thumbs-up, a wink, verbal praise, hugs, and so on.

   c. Formally, teachers can plan mini-celebrations when a child has done a great job of problem solving. These mini-celebrations send a clear message to all of the children in the class that peaceful persistence at problem solving is valued.

   d. It is not long after a teacher focuses on promoting problem solving before you see children supporting, encouraging, and promoting each other's efforts.

6. Show **video clip 2.5** (Problem Solving). Point out the teacher's strategies to keep the child engaged in the problem-solving process (lots of encouragement to keep trying, asking other children to help).

(video clip 2.5)

7. List several ways to reinforce problem solving in the classroom. Show **video clip 2.6** (Super Friend).

(video clip 2.6)

VIII. Dealing with Common Peer Problems
(15 minutes)

A. Show **Slide 59.** Discuss how all children will most likely be faced with teasing or bullying some time in their young lives. Teaching children alternative responses to these common peer problems can help them when they are in tough spots.

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B. Discuss alternative responses to being teased and ask how the participants might teach these skills to young children (neutral times; puppets to bring in situations that have been occurring in the classroom, on the bus, or on the playground; model the skill; have children engage in guided practice; cue children to use strategy when situations arise).

(video clip 2.7)

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(Handout 2.10)

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C. Show **video clip 2.7** (Teasing Shield) and discuss what strategies the teacher used. How could it have been more effective?

D. Show **Slide 60** (Key Points). Review the key points with participants and ask whether they have any questions.

Provide participants with **Handout 2.10** (Activity Matrix). Ask participants to identify times during the day during which they could embed social skills learning opportunities. Challenge participants to identify 30 social-emotional learning opportunities a day.

Show **Slide 61.** Describe the "Teaching Pyramid" and highlight the proportion of time spent in each section. Note that the smallest section relates to intensive, individualized interventions.

Video Credits
Educational Productions, www.edpro.com

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