

Week 25

Games and Big Feelings

OBJECTIVES: Apply learned concept of *mindful actions* to choosing, playing, and winning or losing games.

PREPARE: Bell or chime, puppets

Opening: *Hello everyone! Did anyone have a problem or a big feeling since we last met? Did you remember to use a strategy like muscle relaxation to help you calm down?*

Call on all who want to share something about using a strategy to calm down.



Mindfulness Practice

Say: *We've been learning about strategies to help us calm down. Today we're going to practice our strategy of muscle relaxation again. Remember, we're going to relax our muscles by following some simple instructions. We will need to squeeze our bodies, and then let go. When I say "squeeze your body" it means to tighten up all your muscles.*

Model closing your fists, bringing your arms in close to your body, and "squeezing" your muscles up tight while inhaling deeply. Then let go with a soft sigh. Have students practice once or twice so they know what to do.

Instruct students to get in their mindful bodies and take three deep breaths. Ring the bell to indicate the start of the Mindful Moment. After the sound stops, model placing your hands in your lap and closing your eyes.

Say: *Now we'll smell our flowers as we squeeze in (pause), and blow our petals as we let go (pause). Breathe in and squeeze.....and breathe out and release.....Let's try it one more time. Breathe in and squeeze.....and breathe out and release....and now see what you notice about how your body feels. I'll be quiet so we can focus on our bodies right now for a few moments.*

> ASCA Standards:

B-SS 9.
Demonstrate social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment

B-SMS 7.
Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem

B-SMS 10.
Demonstrate the ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities

After a period of sustained quiet, ring the bell again. After hands raise and eyes open, invite students to share what they noticed about their bodies after the muscle relaxation exercise.



Lesson

Say: *Today we are going to talk about a time when many kids (and sometimes even grownups) get really upset and forget to make mindful choices. We are going to think about and practice being mindful of our feelings and others when we are playing games.*

Explain that games such as sports, board games, and recess games like tag are all for one purpose: having fun. When people forget this, their amygdala takes over and they get very focused on winning and losing. They “flip their lids” and forget that games are for having fun. There are also other parts of games people get big feelings about, too, besides just winning and losing.

Use Paco and Brainy to model four scenarios that often occur during a game. Create your own dialogue for the following situations.

TEACHING TIP: If you have been using a puppet as indicated up to now, you are likely feeling more confident and can tackle having a puppet on each hand AND create your own dialogue as you do so. This means you are voicing three different characters: your own as the teacher and those of your two puppets. If it feels too confusing to use both Paco and Brainy at the same time, you can take on the role of one character yourself and talk back and forth with one puppet, using the examples that follow.

1. Choosing a game -- One wants to play Sweet City (like Candyland) and the other wants to play Hide and Seek.

Puppet: *My favorite game is Hide and Seek, so that's what we're going to play!*

Brainy: *No way! MY favorite game is Sweet City, and that's what we're going to play!*

Both insist on their way. If using Brainy, “flip its lid” to show getting angry.

Ask the class: *Are they having fun yet? Do you think they forgot that games are for having fun? [No, they are not having fun and yes, they forgot that games are all about having fun!]*

Then show Paco remembering that games are about fun, so he agrees to play Sweet City since it's a fun game, too and suggests that they can play Hide and Seek later. Brainy agrees.

2. Which color to use -- Once the puppets agree to play Sweet City, they have to decide which color game piece to use. Both want to use the same color, arguing that it's their favorite color so they must have it. In this example, both characters "flip their lids," and start yelling and crying about having to use their preferred color.

Puppet: *I let you choose the game so I should get to choose my favorite color, red!*

Brainy: *But my favorite color is red, too, and I ALWAYS use the red in any game I play!*

Ask the class: *Is it really important to use your favorite color in a game every time you play? Are you more likely to win if you use that color? Is the game more or less fun depending on which color you use?*

Point out that this is not necessarily using our PFC to make the best choice, since the color game piece used really doesn't change the game at all. Take some deep, mindful breaths, and think aloud about how having that color must be really important to the other puppet, and it would be a kind choice to let him have it.

Then have Brainy agree to give the desired color to Paco and choose a different color.

TEACHING TIP: Anytime the puppets or other characters you create are arguing, be sure to switch the roles so that both characters get to model "flipping their lids" and making a more mindful choice. That way, one character doesn't become the "bad one" while the other is the "good one." In reality, we all flip our lids sometimes!

3. Going first -- Now that the puppets have decided which game to play, and which color each will use, they must decide who will go first in the game.

Ask the puppets: *Who will go first? Both puppets say **Me!, Me!** and begin to argue over who will get to go first.*

Ask the class: *Are these puppets having any fun yet? Remember, games are for having fun, but Paco and Brainy aren't able to have fun because they are only thinking about what they each want, and not about playing the game and having fun together.*

Ask for suggestions on how children decide who goes first. (Eenie meenie miney moe, hip skip sky blue, and so on)

Say: *Those are all good ways to decide who goes first, but they can take a little time to do. I know a way that's even faster because it only takes two seconds to do. Then you can get started playing a game and having fun more quickly! My way is only two words long: "You can!" That's it.*

Have the children repeat the words "you can." Point out how much shorter that is than the rhymes or other ways of deciding. The longer it takes to decide who goes first, the less time there is for playing and having fun. If the game is played a second time, someone else should go first the next time.

Have Paco or Brainy model saying "You can!" and then the other puppet says "Thank you, next time you can!"

Remind the students that often the person who goes first is NOT the winner, and that going first does not mean you will win.

4. Winning and losing -- Pretend that Paco and Brainy have been playing Sweet City for a while now, and Paco is getting close to the end.

Paco says: *If I get double purple next time, I'll win. Oh wow, I got double purple!! Yes, I won! I'm the best! Whoo-hoo!* Brainy flips his lid and Amygdala screams how it didn't want to lose, it hates losing, never wants to play that game again, and so on. Talk with the children about how both puppets are not being mindful of their feelings or each other. Paco is bragging about winning, while Brainy is flipping its lid about losing.

Say: *When we come to the end of a game, whether we win or lose, the kind way to respond is just by saying "Good game!"*

After Brainy calms down (use a strategy!), ask Paco if he wants to play again. Paco says "**No way!**" because Brainy gets too stuck on losing and it's no fun to

play. Brainy points out how Paco was bragging about winning and that didn't help him feel better about losing, either.

Remind the puppets to just say "Good game." Re-do the scene:

Puppet says: *If I get double purple next time, I'll win. Oh wow, I got double purple!!*

Brainy takes a deep mindful breath and thinks aloud: *I don't like to lose, but I know it's just a game, and I can squeeze and release my muscles to stay calm. If I stay calm, Paco will want to play with me again. Maybe I'll win next time!*

Brainy says: *Good game, Paco! Would you like to play again?*

Puppet says: *Good game, Brainy! Sure, it's fun to play with you!*

Review all the choices we have when playing a game, and how we can be mindful of our own and others' feelings to make the best choice possible when: choosing which game to play, choosing which color to use, choosing who goes first, and choosing how to react when we win or lose. When we remember that games are fun, and we think about how others feel, we can have more fun playing games together!

Thank the puppets, put them away, and move on to Kindness Pals.



Kindness Pals

Explain that students will practice these skills with their Kindness Pals today while playing a simple game of Rock, Paper, Scissors.

Review these simple rules: Both children say "Rock, paper, scissors, go" and make their hands into a rock, a paper, or scissors at the word "go." Explain that rock beats scissors, paper beats rock, and scissors beat paper. Most children will likely be familiar with the game, although some may add in other symbols. Explain that they will only use those three symbols during play today. If there are students who do not know the game, be sure to pair them with a student who indicates they do know the game.

Pair up Kindness Pals, accounting for any absences, and give the following directions:

1. Sit with your pal in the listening position we've practiced: legs crossed, knees almost touching, shoulders pointing at each other.
2. Exchange friendly greetings.
3. When the teacher asks "who will go first?" both partners will say "You can!" In fact, in this game they will both go at the same time but it's good to practice saying the words "You can."
4. They will both say "rock, paper, scissors, go" and when they say "go," put their hands into one of the shapes. Changing their shape or waiting until they see their partner's shape is cheating and taking away the fun of the game. Remind them that losing is okay, it's just a game, and it's fun to play.
5. Both partners say "good game!" after determining who won, and then play again.
6. Repeat several times, until the signal is given that time is up.
7. Tell your pal goodbye and return to seats.

Closing: *The next time you play a game, try to use some of these kind choices you practiced today, and to remember that games are all about having fun. We'll tell about our games next time. See you then!*

Optional Lesson Extensions:

Books about Playing Games – Extend the concepts learned in class by reading stories about children playing games and dealing with losing, such as *Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Sportsmanship: Winning Isn't Everything* by Howard Binkow, or *Sally the Sore Loser: A Story About Winning and Losing* by Frank J. Sileo.

Class Call and Response – Use the "You can!" phrase as a call and response between teacher and students when a volunteer is needed for something that is not already assigned as a class job. For example, when the teacher wants a volunteer to show his work to the class, the teachers says "Class, who will show us your work first?" and the class says in unison "You can!" The teacher then picks someone. This eliminates everyone vying to be first and feeling disappointed when they are not chosen, by giving them a positive response and role to play. Remember, the more students practice desired skills, the more habit-forming they are likely to become!