

SOCIAL SKILLS ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION TO THE “TURTLE TECHNIQUE”



Just like adults, children experience strong emotions or feelings that become “too big” at times, especially when things don’t go the way that they expect. Adults help children regulate and manage strong emotions by modeling and scaffolding them through calm-down strategies. One strategy that children can learn and use is the “Turtle Technique.” Use of this strategy helps children gain control of their strong emotion in the moment and prepares them to be able use this (and other regulatory strategies) more independently.

In this activity, children will be introduced to and read a scripted story about Tucker Turtle to help them learn and practice the “Turtle Technique.”

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

	Children will:	Teachers will:
SOCIAL SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Manage Emotions with Increasing Independence ◆ Manage Actions, Words, and Behaviors ◆ Demonstrate Ability to Control Impulses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Acknowledge and Accept Strong Emotions ◆ Use Calm-Down Techniques ◆ Use a Cue or Visual

GET READY

MATERIALS

- ◆ CSEFEL “Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think” scripted story
- ◆ CSEFEL Turtle Technique Cue Cards
- ◆ Turtle Technique Poster (included)
- ◆ CSEFEL Feelings Chart
- ◆ Feelings Thermometer
- ◆ Tucker Turtle

PREPARATION

- ◆ Cut out the four *Turtle Technique Cue Cards* (laminates these and the *Turtle Technique Poster* if possible).
- ◆ Create a booklet of “Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think” by stapling/binding pages together.

TEACHING TIPS

BIG PICTURE	KNOW THE DEVELOPMENT	BIG PICTURE
This activity is based off of the previous two using the <i>Feelings Chart</i> and <i>Thermometer</i> , thus continuing the use of previous Intentional Teaching Practices in addition to the ones specific to this activity. Be intentional in incorporating all three resources throughout this activity to help children see how all are important and related.	Do not expect children to do the “Turtle Technique” by themselves right away! Kindergartners will need LOTS of scaffolding over time before they are able to use the “Turtle Technique” independently. It is up to you to anticipate and catch children when they are beginning to experience “big emotions” so that they can manage them before they lead to negative behavior.	The goal of using these strategies is to identify, measure, and then manage strong feelings in order to <i>prevent</i> aggressive and negative behavior. It is critical to start these strategies before the child is out of control. If a child is in the middle of a tantrum, do not expect him/her to be able to use the strategies.

EXPLORE

USEFUL VOCABULARY: calm down, deep breath/breathe, emotion, feel, emotion words

1. INTRODUCE

- ◆ Introduce Tucker Turtle and read “*Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think*” scripted story.

2. TEACH THE “TURTLE TECHNIQUE”

- ◆ Review and explain each of the four steps using the *Cue Cards*. Use Tucker Turtle to help demonstrate.
 1. **Recognize your feeling(s)**
Refer to the *Feelings Chart* and encourage children to identify the emotion that Tucker felt.
 2. **Think “Stop!”**
Practice “freezing” when seeing the stop sign.
 3. **Tuck inside your ‘shell’ and take 3 deep breaths**
Place arms over head and/or curl up on the ground, and breathe while counting “1, 2, 3.”
 4. **Come out when calm and think of a solution**
Have children brainstorm different solutions to Tucker’s problem. Make sure to identify multiple strategies (e.g., get teacher, ask nicely, ignore, share, say “please stop”, etc.).

Acknowledge and Accept Strong Emotions

“Tucker is feeling a big emotion, just like we do sometimes! He’s at the top of his Feelings Thermometer.”

“Tucker recognized that he was very, very upset. That’s how he remembered the “Turtle Technique!”

Use Calm-Down Techniques

The core component of the Turtle Technique occurs during Step 3, when children “tuck into their shell” and control/calm their bodies. Make sure to emphasize and really practice this part!

Use a Cue or Visual

Make sure to clearly draw the connection between the visual cues and their corresponding step so that children know what each cue means. That way, when a child is upset in-the-moment, s/he has a visual reminder to refer to when words are sometimes harder to listen or pay attention to.

Use a Cue or Visual

Reference the Feelings Thermometer to demonstrate how using the “Turtle Technique” can help lower an emotion’s intensity.

--

“Tucker started up here at the top of his Thermometer, but when he did the “Turtle Technique” his emotion started to get smaller and smaller until he was at the bottom of his Thermometer.”

3. REVIEW

- ◆ Say, “Today, Tucker Turtle helped us learn about a way to calm down when we are feeling upset! Who can help me remember what his “Turtle Technique” steps are?”

ADAPT

MORE CHALLENGE: Encourage children to think of times or remember instances where the “Turtle Technique” could have been helpful.

MORE SUPPORT: Keep the activity simpler by focusing solely on the “Turtle Technique” rather than also trying to incorporate the *Feelings Chart* and/or Thermometer.

KEEP IT GOING

The *Turtle Technique* will become a part of your regular routine. Below are ways to incorporate using Intentional Teaching Practices for Recognizing and Describing Emotions at different times throughout the day, as well as ways to encourage the use of the technique at home.

Remember to...

- ◆ Prompt children to identify the emotion and its cause (use the *Feelings Chart* when possible).
- ◆ Connect with the child by conveying your understanding of the intensity of his/her emotion.
- ◆ Draw attention to “Turtle Technique” visuals while practicing (i.e., poster, cue cards, scripted story).

Use Throughout the Day

Use the “Turtle Technique” as needed with an individual child when s/he is beginning to feel overwhelmed, or class-wide during times when many children are beginning to feel “big emotions.”

Use a Cue or Visual

Whenever you see a child start to become upset, draw attention to the poster and encourage him/her to practice the “Turtle Technique.”

--

“Hmm, remember what Tucker did when he felt upset? ...Let’s try the “Turtle Technique” together.”

Use Calm-Down Techniques

To introduce class-wide: “Let’s all show Tucker that we remember the “Turtle Technique!”

--

“Tucker feels overwhelmed and wants to do the Turtle Technique. Can you help him remember the steps?”

Acknowledge and Accept Strong Emotions

Be sure to emphasize that it is okay to feel strong emotions.

--

“I can see that you feel frustrated. It is hard when your drawing doesn’t turn out the way you wanted. Let’s take some Tucker breaths together and then decide what to do next.”

At Home

Encourage children and parents to continue using the “Turtle Technique” outside of school.

Use Calm-Down Techniques and Use a Cue or Visual

Encourage children to teach and practice the “Turtle Technique” at home. Have children take turns bringing home a) Tucker Turtle, b) the scripted story, and c) a *Turtle Technique Poster* (to keep at home).

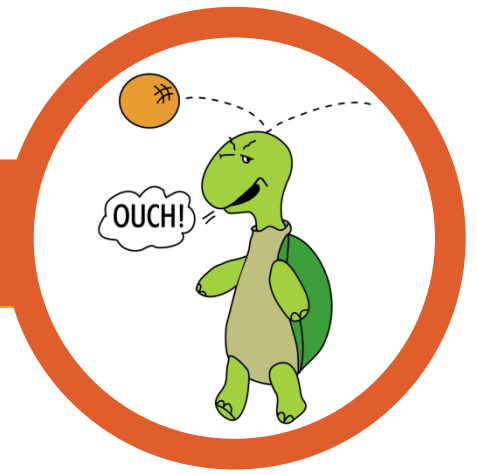
RESOURCES

- ◆ *Turtle Technique Poster*

Sources:

Graphics from *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)*.

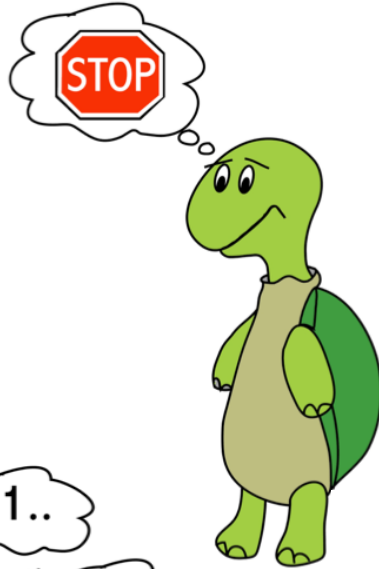
REMEMBER TUCKER TURTLE!



STOP!

When you are starting to feel upset or angry.

1



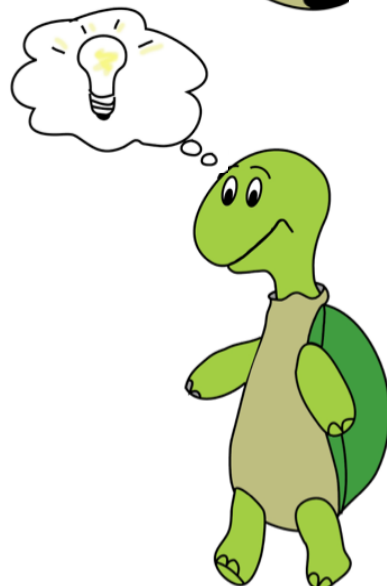
2



BREATHE!

Take 3 deep breaths inside of your shell.

3



THINK!

What can you do to help solve your problem?