"Can I Play With You?"
Supporting the Development of Children's Social Skills

Purpose of session:
The goals of this workshop are to introduce:
1. The set of social skills required for children to be able to make friends, resolve conflicts, and control emotions;
2. That after school program staff can actively support the growth of those skills.

Materials Needed:
- 8-10 single rolls of toilet paper
- Handouts
- Evaluation forms
- Dot stickers (optional)

Welcome/Housekeeping:
- Perform introductions, state the session topic, how long it will last, when/if refreshments will be served, and the location of restrooms.
- Thank the host.

Trainer Tips:
Welcome set the stage for training. Be sure to thank the host agency for providing meeting space and/or refreshments. Sharing housekeeping details such as the location of restrooms and the schedule of activities prevents interruptions during your session. Letting people know when food will be served helps participants to stay focused. Introduce any new participants or guests so all feel comfortable.

Opening Activity:
Mummy Wrap:
- Equipment: 2 single rolls of toilet paper per group.
- Instructions: One person on each team will be the mummy and each team will be given 2 small rolls of toilet paper. They will have 5 minutes to complete the game. They need to work out who will be the mummy(s) and how he/she/they will be wrapped.
  (If somebody refuses to participate that is okay. This person(s) could be your observer(s) to monitor levels of cooperation and to judge the quality of the wrapped mummies.)
**Trainer Tips:** Ice breakers are part of a good presenter's tool kit. Ice breakers can be used for introducing a topic, team building, or tension reducing activities. Be selective when choosing an icebreaker activity. In large groups ice breakers can take a long time and waste precious content time. Make sure you include a debriefing time so participants understand the purpose of the activity.

**Debrief (1st Activity):** Compliment the creative efforts of each team. Ask participants to think about the steps needed to accomplish their mummy (Who would be mummy, how to wrap, why did they start where they did, etc.). Was this decision making process challenging in any way? (Did they argue? If so, how did they resolve the disagreement?) Ask the observer(s) what he/she observed about levels of cooperation. Explain that in any group task decisions must be made. This requires a basic set of social skills. Think about the children you work with each day. Who struggles to make and keep friends? Who struggles to play well in groups? Who collapses when losing a game? How can after school staff support the development of strong social skills?

**Best Practice Guideline:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Human Relationships #5:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Staff use positive techniques to guide children's behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Staff teach children how to guide their own behavior by developing the skills need in supervised settings.</td>
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Share the handout which includes this excerpt from “Best Practices for Connecticut After School Programs.” Explain that this is an indicator of high quality practice. Today's topic will help us to improve our skills in this area.

**Lecture:** (See Handout) Working successfully in groups requires the 7Cs—a list developed by Jim and Laurie Ollhoff in the book *Getting Along: Teaching Social Skills to Children.*

1) Communication – being able to explain ideas as in “We could wrap the mummy this way because…”
2) Conflict resolution – being able to disagree without escalation of emotion. “I think it might work better if we...because…”
3) Control of emotions – modulating excitement, anger, envy. “The other mummies look better than ours. I hate this game!”
4) Confidence “We did alright!” (mastery of new skills builds confidence).
5) Curiosity – “What is this for? Why are we doing this?”
6) Coping – “The first method we tried didn’t work so we tried it another way.”
7) Community building – “I learned my coworker is a terrific mummy wrapper! Who knew?” and “I had so much fun working with this team.”

Skills build from the bottom of the pyramid up. Confidence leads to having increased control which supports the ability to master the higher skills. How can afterschool program staff support development of these 7 skills?
Group Activity Option 1:

Ask participants to form 7 groups and assign each group one of the seven skills. (A smaller number of groups could be assigned 2 skills each).

Each group is to brainstorm possible specific ways to teach that skill and write these ideas on a large sheet of paper.

Example: “The children in drama club can plan and present a series of skits on ‘miscommunications’ to demonstrate how important good skills are in this area.”

Allow approximately 10 minutes for this activity.

Post each sheet on the wall.

Distribute 3-4 stickers to each participant and instruct them to read each sheet and place a sticker next to the ideas they like the best (and are willing to try tomorrow!).

After participants have returned to their seats scan the sheets for the best liked ideas and review these aloud. Ask if anyone has additional questions for the originators of the idea.

Note: An additional piece to this activity is to ask participants for strategies that would have the opposite or negative effect on social skill development. 1) What statements or activities decrease confidence? 2) Curiosity? 3) Community building?

Group Activity Option 2:

Situations - Either as a whole or in groups discuss the following situations and determine what social skill is needed and how staff could support it's development:

1) Jason bursts into tears and upsets the board whenever he plays a game and starts to lose.
2) Maria is caught doing something she shouldn't and says "But all the kids are doing it."
3) John tells the group leader, "I asked him for the ball but he said 'no' so I took it."
4) The group takes a vote on which activity to do and Deleon does not get his choice and tells the group leader "It isn't fair!"
5) It dawns on staff that Malika always agrees to do whatever her friends want to do and seldom chooses or advocates for her own choice.
6) Michael and Evan get into an argument. Michael tells the teacher "Evan said I could use these markers." Evan says, "You didn't listen to me. I said you could use them later!"
7) The after school teacher sees James watching a group of children play an outdoor game and says, "I see you watching those guys. Why don't you join them?" James just shakes his head and continues watching.

Note: The goal in this activity is to help staff see that the cause of a child’s behavior is often related to lack of skills. Children misbehave because they lack skills or do not have a multitude of options to employ in social situations.
Debrief (2nd Activity): We already know a great deal about providing positive support to children but it is general and not focused on specific skills. When we actively plan and implement activities or strategies that target these skills we will become much more effective teachers.

**Trainer Tips:** Group work is a very effective tool. 1) It recognizes the collective wisdom of the participants; 2) the discussion of the question helps participants clarify their understanding of the concept, and; 3) figuring out ways to apply the concept increases the likelihood they will use this learning later on.

Questions to confirm transfer of knowledge 1) Think about your best friend as a child. How did you handle disagreements? How do you think you might have handled disagreements if you were adept with these social skills? 2) Think about your first experience as part of a team? What did your coach do/not do that helped you feel like part of a team? 3) As a child did you ever have the experience of being misunderstood? What steps did you take to make yourself clear? How did you cope with the frustration?

Our childhood memories are powerful. When we help children develop social skills we can give them a storehouse of positive memories and experiences.

**Trainer Tips** Reflective questions help participants to internalize the workshop content and make it their own.

**RECAP Material** ReCap:

I. Let's go back to the Mummy Wrap
   a. Discuss the 7Cs as they applied to the behavior of the teams as they dressed their mummies.
      1) Did your confidence increase as the activity progressed?
      2) What communication skills did you need to use?
      3) Did you enjoy cooperating with your group?
   b. Helping children to grow their social skills can help to make your program a safe, happy place, where kids can make friends.

II. Our goal is to be a topnotch after school program.
   a. The CT Best Practice Guidelines is the standard we want to achieve.
   b. Learning appropriate techniques for the ages and developmental stages of the children and youth we work with will help achieve the goals of quality programming.

**Ending Question** Would you like to learn more about supporting social skill development? The CT After School Network Training and Consultation Service offers an extended workshop on this topic that goes into greater depth about techniques to teach social skills.

**For More Info go:** There are many sources of information on supporting the development of social skills in children. The Ollhoff's book is very...
good and includes information on how to recognize different skills and methods of instructing social skills.

| **Workshop Evaluation** | Please ask participants to complete the Evaluation Form that is included in this kit and return these to the CT After School Network. This will help us to improve existing topics and to expand our listing. Thank you! |