

Social Skills for Elementary School Children: Hot Frogs Activity

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Abstract

This article will provide school counselors with an activity used in groups to assist elementary school children in identifying and naming feelings.

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Materials required:

A tape recorder and tape for music.

Five different colored plastic frogs with one feeling word taped onto each frog (i.e. angry, calm, sad, happy, afraid).

Age Group: 3rd and 4th grade elementary school children (8-10 years old).

What are Social Skills?

Social skills are the ability for one to react in a way that is accepted by society and is advantageous for all parties involved. Social skills training offer every child the opportunity to interact with other children in a group setting. It is important that all types of children are involved in such social skills groups, including children with special needs. Children are under enormous pressure today, ranging from family problems to gang involvement. As these stressors play a major role in children's lives, it is important that they are taught how to interact with those around them. The social skills group allows the children to learn new skills and use these skills at home and in the classroom.

Social skills training programs have repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness in developing a wide range of interpersonal skills in diverse populations of children and adolescents (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997). The children in the group are presented with a skill in detail, and then given the opportunity to practice the skill in the group setting. According to Goldstein, there are basic steps for social skills learning: (1) specifying the desired outcome or goal; (2) identifying the essential component behaviors of the goal

or skill; (3) stating the behavioral elements of the skills in observable terms; (4) sequencing the component behaviors in order of performance.

Hot Frogs Activity: Identifying and Naming Feelings

The Hot Frogs activity is used during week 2 of the social skills group to assist the group members in identifying feelings. The goal of this activity is: to educate group members to differentiate between feelings, learn the names of different feelings, and identify their own feelings through storytelling.

The group facilitator has the group members form a circle. Each frog is given to a member of the group at different places in the circle. The group facilitator starts the music and the frogs are passed clockwise to each group member as if they are hot. The facilitator stops the music and whoever has a hot frog has to tell a story about a time when they felt the feeling listed on the frog. For example, the group member who is holding the red frog that says angry, needs to tell the group of a time when he or she was angry. Each member with a frog takes a turn and when each group member is finished the music begins again. The activity is continued until everyone has a chance to tell his or her story about a feeling.

Potential Pitfalls

The group facilitator needs to ensure that the group has built rapport and the participants feel comfortable in sharing their stories. This activity is not one to be tried on the first or second session. A level of trust and autonomy needs to be developed between the members and the facilitator. This activity can prove difficult if the participants are not on the same level developmentally and academically. The group facilitator would need to be aware of any deficits in development or academics of the

group members in order to modify the activity so that everyone could participate. For example, if some members had difficulty reading, the group facilitator can assist the members in reading the feelings on the frogs or assign a peer mentor to help the member read the feeling on the frog and compose a story about when they felt that way.

Success of Hot Frogs

This activity assists participants in actively listening and participating in activity and open discussion about their personal experiences through feelings. The participants learn about feelings and are able to answer questions posed by other group members about their emotions and their responses to specific situations. The group members learn it is okay to express feelings in a positive and healthy way. Additionally, group members take away a sense of universality as each member of the group has felt the same way at one time or another.

References

McGinnis, E., & Goldstein, A. P. (1997). *Skillstreaming the elementary school child: New strategies and perspectives for teaching prosocial skills*. Champaign, Ill: Research Press.

Biographical Statement

Laura Fazio-Griffith received her Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of New Orleans in May of 2002. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Louisiana and a Registered Play Therapist. Laura worked for the past 6 years at a counseling and training center in New Orleans, Louisiana where she provided clinical supervision to masters' level interns as well as direct counseling services. Laura wrote and was awarded a grant by the State Department of Education in Louisiana to facilitate social skills groups to 3rd and 4th grade students in the elementary schools. Additionally, she facilitated and coordinated a girls group on self-esteem to adolescent and pre-adolescent girls in the greater New Orleans public school system.