

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## WORKING TOGETHER

What do  
we mean  
by working  
together

As children grow, they develop more of an awareness of others and learn to care more about other people. As part of this, they learn that their words and actions affect others, for example, when sharing their toy or passing a ball. Children benefit from having opportunities to learn about and practise cooperating with others throughout the day.

Why is it  
important

Working together helps to support the development of children's cooperation skills. These skills help to build trust, empathy and a sense of belonging. Providing opportunities for children to share, take turns and work together as a team helps them to form healthy relationships and a sense of being part of a social group.

### Sharing and taking turns

Learning to share and take turns is part of playing cooperatively with others. It also teaches children about compromise and fairness. Children learn a lot from watching what adults do so it helps to demonstrate turn-taking and sharing with others throughout the day. Children need opportunities to practise this skill, for example, through arts and crafts activities.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce the concept of sharing and taking turns using puppets
- Roleplay scenarios with set roles (e.g. shop keeper and customer)
- Play boardgames and encourage children to take turns

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Puppet Role Play! Show two puppets playing together. Scenario 1: the puppet is not sharing their toys with the other puppet. Scenario 2: the puppet shares their toys with the other puppet. Discuss what is happening in both scenarios and how the puppets might feel.
- If children have difficulty sharing toys/ books/materials, use a timer to measure fair turns, giving children lots of praise when they pass the object to the next child!
- Arts and Crafts! Give a group of children a limited amount of arts and crafts material. Let them know why you have given them fewer resources. Support children in sharing the materials and taking turns if necessary.

#### Tip

Notice and praise children when they share and take turns throughout the day.

### Team work

Providing opportunities for children to work together as a team helps them to learn how to cooperate and work towards a common goal. By working together, children learn to express their needs and desires as well as hearing and respecting the needs and desires of others.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how to work with others
- Use art and craft projects and games to encourage discussion and team work
- Discuss how children feel when they work well with others

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Team work! In pairs or small groups, children share, take turns, chat and cooperate to build the tallest tower they can! How tall can it get before it falls?
- Making faces! While one child draws or sticks the eyes onto a face, their partner waits patiently to add the nose, before then taking turns to add the mouth, ears and other details, working alongside each other to create a team face!
- Frog friends! Children hop like frogs to music and then they must find a lily pad (e.g. a hoop or mat) to jump on when the music stops. With each round, remove a lily pad and encourage children to work together to make sure all the frogs are safe!

#### Tip

It might be easier for some children to work in pairs than in groups. As children develop their cooperation skills, they can practise working in small groups of two, three and four children to encourage more discussion and compromise.

### Being helpful

Children are never too young to learn the joy of helping others and being helpful at home and in their early years setting. Children benefit from discussing the different ways they can help others at school and at home. Practicing helping others throughout the day encourages kindness.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce different ways of helping through discussion and use of books and songs
- Role play to practise helping behaviours
- Use visual tools, such as a 'Ways to be Helpful' poster

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Superheroes! Children pretend to be a superhero and make themselves as big as they can by stretching as far as they can! *"How can you help others when you are a superhero?"*
- Let's Talk! *"You are so helpful today! What sort of things do you help with in your house? How do you feel when you help your family? Can you think of any other ways you can be helpful at home?"*
- A teddy visits children but doesn't know their way around! Children can helpfully show teddy their important places. *"You are all being so helpful to teddy! When everyone helps this is a very happy place to be!"*
- Tidy Up Rhyme Time! Children can practice helping by tidying up their toys while singing a helping song or saying a rhyme. *"1,2,3, who are we? We are tidy friends, can't you see? Helping others, having fun! Tidy friends, tidy friends, we're number 1!"*

### Asking for help

It is important for children to know how to confidently ask for help. By giving children the phrases they could use to ask for help, and helping them identify who they might turn to for help, children will feel more secure in their ability to seek help when needed.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use books and songs to start discussions about how different people can help us
- Use role play and games to practise asking for help

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When a child needs help, for instance when zipping up their coat, playing on a swing or reaching to put the last block on top of a tower, prompt them to ask another child or an adult: *"Can you help me, please?"*
- When reading or telling a story, encourage children to think about who they could ask for help. *"This is a predicament! Who would you ask for help if this happened to you? That's a great idea!"*
- Support Team! Each child gives a sticker to people who they think are part of their support team, like friends, teachers and teaching assistants and tell them what makes them brilliant helpers! *"Our support team is a team of brilliant people who help us through lots of different bits of our lives... Who is part of your support team at home?"*