

Preschool Activity Guide

The Pennsylvania One Book 2021 "Many Books, One Pennsylvania Community" Program engages young children, families, and caregivers to read, explore, and play with special emphasis on emotional resilience and wellness. The purpose of this guide is to provide activity ideas for librarians and caregivers to use with young children.

Art

Glitter Jars

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts
 - 16.1.PK.A – Distinguish between emotions and identify socially accepted ways to express them.

Glitter can help us learn about emotions.

Materials:

- Baby food jars or other small glass jars with a lid
- Water
- Glitter



Directions:

- Fill each jar almost all the way with water.
- Put a big spoonful of glitter in each jar.
- Reseal the jar with the lid.

- Have everyone shake their jar to make the glitter swirl around. You may wish to use this script from [PositivePsychology.com](https://www.positivepsychology.com):

“Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you’re stressed, mad, or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That’s why it’s so easy to make choices that don’t work out well for yourself or others when you’re upset – because you’re not thinking clearly. Don’t worry; this is okay and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too).”

- After setting the jar down and letting the glitter settle:

“Now watch what happens when you’re still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you’re calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer. Deep breaths during this calming process can help us settle when we feel a lot of emotions.”

Questions:

- How does the glitter make you feel?

Extensions:

- How many different ways can you shake the glitter in the jar?
- Can you shake the jar for different emotions (examples may be: shake the jar hard and fast for anger, swirl the jar for when you have questions)? Is there a way to shake the jar to make the glitter seem happy?
- This is a messy activity, but give everyone a handful of glitter (confetti if you want a little less mess) to throw up in the air. How is this different from the glitter in the jar?

Feelings Spinner

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Social and Emotional Development – Student Interpersonal Skills**
 - 16.1.PK.A – Distinguish between emotions and identify socially accepted ways to express them.
 - 16.3.PK.B – Recognize there are socially acceptable ways to behave in different places.
- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - 9.1.V.PK.B – Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art.

Materials:

- Two paper circles about the size of a dinner plate (Option – use two paper plates)
- One brad paper fastener
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers



Directions:

- Using a crayon or marker, draw lines to divide one of the circles into four equal pie pieces.
- Write an emotion on each pie piece. Use happy and sad in two of the sections. The other emotions may be angry, scared, silly, or whatever emotions you are working on.
- Have the child draw a picture for each emotion. For example, happy may be a smiley face or something else that makes the child happy.
- Divide the second circle into four equal parts and cut out one of the four pie pieces.
- Place the second circle on top of the first and attach them together using the brad paper fastener.
- The child can now spin the top plate to show the emotion they are currently feeling.
- An example of this activity can be found at the bottom of this [Cockburn Library blog post](#).



Extensions:

- Use the feelings spinner whenever you want to talk about feelings. For example, after reading a story, ask the child to show what emotion they are feeling. When it is time to go to the park or leave the park, use the spinner. Be sure to talk about the emotion chosen. If a child is sad to leave the park, talk about how it is normal to feel sad when it is time to leave the playground but that you will come back another day.

Not a Box

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - 9.1.V.PK.B – Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art.
 - 9.1.V.PK.E – Use imagination and creativity to express self through visual arts.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.A – Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- ▶ **Approaches To Learning Through Play – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - AL.3.PK.C – Use materials and objects to represent new concepts.

Pretend play can be a way for children to express what they are feeling when they don't know the right words to use. Pretend play can be a way for children to problem-solve. Pretend play helps children imagine beyond what is in front of them and expand their minds. For example, letters represent sounds; they aren't actual sounds. Learning that things can represent something else can all start with pretend play.

Materials:

- A large box (children are small, so a box that held copy paper can be perfect)
- Crayons, markers, and anything else you want to decorate the box
- Optional: Plain white paper and glue or tape to cover the design pre-printed on the box



Directions:

- Read *Not a Box* by Antoinette Portis together. In this book, a small rabbit pretends that a box is everything from a race car to a mountain.
- “Pretend this is not a box. What do you think it is?” Start a conversation about all the things the box can represent. Is it a car? Is it a refrigerator? Is it a really big telephone?
- Once you decide together what the box represents, decorate the box to fit your imagination.
- Be sure to spend time playing with your new car, fridge, phone, etc.

Questions:

- Ask questions along the way. For example, if the box is a car, what does a car need to run?



Group Art

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - 9.1.V.PK.B – Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.A – Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning Through Play – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - AL.4.PK.C – Attempt problem-solving activities to achieve a positive outcome.

Creating a work of art together builds a sense of community. For young children, it also helps them learn how to share and work together. People can do this activity as a family unit. A group of children can also work on this at the same time or at different times if distance is needed.

Materials:

- A large sheet of blank paper (butcher paper that can cover a table works wonderfully). This activity can also be done by placing a large piece of paper on the floor.
- Crayons or markers

Directions:

- Start with a theme. For example, tell everyone to create a garden together.
- Let the drawing begin.

Questions:

- What do we need to create a garden?
- Are there fun make-believe things we can add to our garden?
- If one child starts “invading” another child’s drawing space, what can you create together?

Extensions:

- Read a book about gardens together. A great example is **My Garden** by Kevin Henkes.
- Do the project again without a theme. Or let the group come up with their own theme.
- Bring the activity outside with chalk and decorate a sidewalk together. Every child can work on their own square, or everyone can work together.



When Does the Sound Stop?



PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.C – Respond to what a speaker says to follow directions, seek help, or gather information.

This activity is included in the literacy section because listening skills are a part of literacy. We use our ears to learn new words. When we listen to a story being read aloud, our brain translates what we hear into the story. This, in turn, works on story comprehension. Work on that skill with a self-awareness activity. If children have hearing or other sensory difficulties, give options like touch or sight.

Materials:

- Something that can make a strong, steady noise
 - Examples:**
 - An electronic keyboard that can hold a note as long as you are holding down the key
 - A fan (Some make an obvious noise when they are turned on; some are a little more subtle.)
 - A white noise machine (Or use YouTube. An example is this [rain sound on YouTube](#).)



Directions:

- Play a little bit of the sound for the children so everyone knows what they are listening for.
- Ask everyone to sit in a comfortable position and invite children to close their eyes with an option to look downward with eyes open.
- When they can no longer hear the sound, they should raise their hand. (Or do the reverse and raise their hand at the beginning of the activity and lower it when the sound can no longer be heard.)

Questions:

- Did you hear anything new after the sound stopped? (You can be amazed what you hear when you are focusing so hard on listening.)

Extensions:

- Try doing the same activity, but use volume control to lower the sound until it can no longer be heard.



Mindful Moments for Kids

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - 9.1.M.PK.B – Respond to different types of music and dance through participation and discussion.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.C – Respond to what a speaker says to follow directions, seek help, or gather information.
- ▶ **Social and Emotional Development – Student Interpersonal Skills**
 - 16.1.PK.A – Distinguish between emotions and identify socially accepted ways to express them.

Kira Willey released a CD with 30 one-minute mindfulness exercises. These quick exercises help children learn to deal with emotions, develop self-awareness, and release energy. Check out or purchase the CD or access many of the tracks via YouTube. This is another example of how listening skills are a big part of literacy.

Materials:

- Access the tracks on the CD via the physical CD or YouTube (search for “Mindful Moments Kira Willey”)

Directions:

- Use one or more of the exercises each day. Favorites include:
 - “Bear Breath” – Learn briefly about hibernation and practice breathing slowly.
 - “Rainstorm” – Build up the weather from a gentle breeze to a quiet rain to a thunderous storm and back down again. This is a simple exercise for releasing some energy and following directions. Be sensitive to children who are afraid of storms or have been in a weather-related event.
 - “Stop & Go” – Speed up your movements with the song, freeze, take a deep breath, then do it again. A great song for working on self-control.
 - “Get Your Grumpies Out” – Feeling a little grumpy or angry? Make a grumpy face, then blow all those feelings away. Everyone can use a little help with controlling emotions, and this does so on a child-friendly level.

Questions:

- How do the songs/activities/exercises make you feel?
- Do you have a favorite song? How can we do the same exercise with that song?

Extensions:

- So many of the activities in this collection lend themselves to extension activities. Read a book about hibernating bears after using “Bear Breath.” Go outside and look for bees after “Be a Bumblebee.” Continuing with the theme of the one-minute activity will help many children remember it for later use.



Storytime Routine



PA Early Learning Standard

► Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts

- 1.1.PK.A – Practice appropriate book-handling skills.

Setting up a routine for reading together helps children with social and emotional learning. When you sing the same quiet song together, or sit in the same cozy spot, you are helping their bodies and brains associate that time and energy with reading. Making sure that the area is comfortable (the temperature is right, the seat is soft, a loving adult is snuggled with them) adds to the sense of happiness while reading. In a classroom environment, it might not be possible to snuggle every child or some children might prefer to not be touched. This is a wonderful opportunity for children to sit with their favorite stuffed animal and listen to the story together. Try to plan to read together each day at approximately the same time. The body will become accustomed to the routine and will use the time for gentle healing.

Materials:

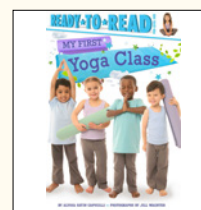
- A book or many books. (Remember that reading the same book multiple days in a row is comforting for many children. They know what is going to happen next and gain confidence and satisfaction in their knowledge of the story.)
- Whatever your particular routine needs (see below for ideas).

Directions:

- There are a million possible routines that you can set up for reading time. Here are just a few examples:
 - Does the child attend storytime at a local library? Sing the opening song together.
 - Does the child (and adult) need to get out some wiggles first? Put on a happy song and dance around before settling in with the book.
 - Does the child love to play in the bath? Read to them while they splash and play imaginary things with bath toys.
 - Set up a reading space with pillows and blankets so you can curl up together.

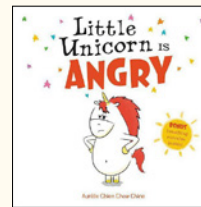
Books to Share

We all know that books are full of fun stories to share with young children. There are also a growing number of books about emotions, mindfulness, and yoga to share with preschoolers. Try any of these titles or ask at a library for more ideas. If you are reading a book about yoga, try some of the poses together. If you are reading a book about emotions, ask what makes children happy, sad, mad, etc. Books can spark all sorts of discussion.



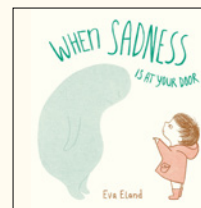
My First Yoga Class. Alyssa Satin Capucilli. Illustration, Jill Wachter. Simon Spotlight, 2017.

This particular title is also good for children who are learning how to read.



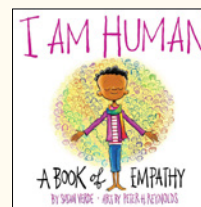
Little Unicorn is Angry. Aurélie Chien Chow Chine. Little, Brown and Company, 2019.

This title is part of a series that includes stories about the unicorn being scared, sad, and shy.

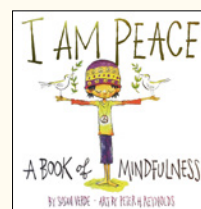


When Sadness Is At Your Door. Eva Eland. Random House, 2019.

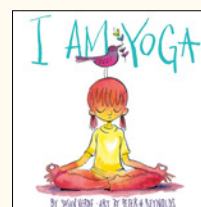
This is a gentle look at how to manage sadness and accept it.



I Am Human: A Book of Empathy. Susan Verde. Illustration, Peter H. Reynolds. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2018.



I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness. Susan Verde. Illustration, Peter H. Reynolds. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2017.



I Am Yoga. Susan Verde. Illustration, Peter H. Reynolds. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Turn on Your Spidey-Senses



PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Scientific Thinking and Technology and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - 3.1.PK.A.9 – Participate in simple investigations about living and/or nonliving things to answer a question or to test a prediction.

Humans have five senses: sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch. This is a great opportunity to teach the science of the senses along with the idea of being present and mindful.

Materials:

- Nothing needed besides the human body

Directions:

- Ask everyone to pause and turn on their “Spidey-Senses.” Take time to observe what is around them.
- What do you hear? (It may be good to suggest that children close their eyes for this portion.)
- What do you see?
- Can you smell anything?
- Ask everyone to stick out their tongue. Does the air taste like anything?
- How does the air feel on your skin?



Extensions:

- Go to a new location. Perhaps a new room in the building, a park, or a playground. Repeat the activity. Does anything smell the same? What new scents are there? Does the air feel different? Do this during a warm rain to talk about how it feels on your skin.
- While on the topic of superheroes, try the Superman or Wonder Woman pose together:
 - The Superman: this pose is practiced by standing with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out to the sky, stretching the body as tall as possible.
 - The Wonder Woman: this pose is struck by standing tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips.
 - After holding the pose for 10 seconds, ask children how they feel.

Safari Walk

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Scientific Thinking and Technology and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - 3.1.PK.A.9 – Participate in simple investigations about living and/or nonliving things to answer a question or to test a prediction.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.A – Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - 1.5.PK.C – Respond to what a speaker says to follow directions, seek help, or gather information.

Observation is a powerful skill in science. This simple activity is a way to combine that skill while learning about the animals around us and building empathy. The ability to look for tiny animals requires children to focus, which is a skill that can be strengthened.

Materials:

- A safe outdoor area to walk around

Directions:

- Ask children to look for animals as you are walking together. Make sure to look for everything from tiny ants to boisterous puppies to birds in a tree.
- When you find an animal, stop to talk about it. What do you think the animal is doing right now? For example, where do you think the ant is walking to? Are there other ants around? Are they working together? What do you think the ant is feeling right now?

Extensions:

- After returning from your walk, talk about the animals that you saw. What animal was the noisiest? What animal was the most colorful? What animal was your favorite, and why?
- Find a book with one of the animals from your walk to read together.



I'm a Line, I'm a Circle

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Mathematical Thinking and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - 2.3.PK.A.1 – Identify and describe shapes.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - 10.4.PK.A – Demonstrate coordination of body movement in active play.

Reinforce knowledge of shapes by making shapes with your body or with friends. This activity also allows children to gain awareness of their body and the space around them.

Materials:

- A large, comfortable space to stretch out
- Clear images of shapes (square, circle, triangle, rectangle, etc.)
- Optional: Camera
- Optional: This book can give you inspiration for making shapes with your body. It is filled with photographs of children and their friends making shapes together.

Watch This! A Book About Making Shapes. Godwin, Jane. Illustration, Hilary Walker. Scribble, 2018.



Directions:

- Lead the children through making various shapes with all or parts of their body. Show them a shape image and allow children to be creative in making that shape. For example, they can make a circle with their arms or a triangle using their fingers. All shapes are made out of lines; stand straight and tall to be a single line. Lie on the floor together to be the sides of a square or rectangle. Make a star by having five people sit foot to foot.
- Optional: Take photographs of the shapes the children make so they can compare their shapes to the images you have provided.

Questions:

- What shapes can you make by yourself?
- What shapes need more than one person?
- What is your favorite shape? Why?

Extensions:

- After making shapes, go outside and see what else you can make with your body. Can you be a rock? What about a tree?



Help the Animals Across the River

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Approaches to Learning Through Play – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - AL.1.PK.A – Explore and ask questions to seek meaningful information about a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks.
 - AL.1.PK.C – Engage in complex play sequences with two or more children.
 - AL.4.PK.C – Attempt problem-solving activities to achieve a positive outcome.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - 10.5.PK.A – Use hands, fingers, and wrists to manipulate objects.



Water play is fun. Water play with a purpose can help teach engineering and problem-solving skills along with empathy.

Materials:

- Shallow storage tub
- Water
- Small plastic animals
- Plastic blocks or rocks from your yard

Directions:

- Put a small amount of water in the tub.
- Tell the child that the tub is a river and that the animals need a way to get across without getting wet.
- Let the children figure out a solution. Perhaps they build a bridge with the blocks or the rocks.
- Pretend to have the animals cross the bridge. Do they have to jump from block to block? Do they have to climb over some areas?

Questions:

- What are some other ways the animals could cross the river?

Extensions:

- How can you test other ways to cross the river? For example, can you build a raft out of popsicle sticks?

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