

ACTIVITY 4

Communication Tap

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

A gentle tap on the shoulder can often be enough to “wake someone up” so they can consider what they might be doing that is upsetting. For example, if a student gently taps another because he is in the way, the student may not need to even say anything. This makes communicating the message less emotional and can lead to better cooperation.

Note Be sure that teachers and students are aware of which children might not like to be touched due to sensory sensitivities.

Early Childhood Use a Kimochis™ character to play this communication tap game. The person holding the Kimochis™ gets the attention of the person seated to their right by using the character to tap the fellow classmate’s shoulder. Using the Kimochis™ is also helpful for students who may feel shy because it’s the character doing the action.

Elementary Sit in a circle all facing the center. Begin the communication tap game by gently tapping the shoulder of the student on your right. This student then makes eye contact with you, smiles, and passes the tap on to her right. When the tap makes it all the way around the circle, send it in the opposite direction. See how fast you can get the tap to go around the circle.

Wrap up this activity by asking students when a communication tap could come in handy during the school day. Remind them that it’s a quick, shame-free, nonverbal way to say, “Oops, I was there” or “I can’t see.”

ACTIVITY 5

Practicing Predictable Situations

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Often, less is best when it comes to communication. Though the classic “I feel” message can be useful, a communication tap, friendly eye contact, a hand gesture, or a few words may be enough to politely help a classmate realize there is a minor problem. This communication habit is especially useful for girls who tend to use too many words, sometimes paired with “drama,” to resolve the simplest of situations.

Early Childhood/Elementary The following predictable situations can create daily upset feelings in the classroom. These situations interfere with valuable teaching time and can contribute to emotional stress for the teacher. These simple habits can help students get their point across with less upset.

Cut in line Have five students line up. Cut in front of one or two of the students. (You can also use Huggtopus to cut.) Remind students to consider why Huggs is cutting. Does she cut because she is being unkind? Or rather, does she cut because she has a hard time managing her excitement? When teachers and students begin to interpret negative behavior from positive assumptions, it changes the way we treat each other.

I can’t see Arrange the students in such a way that one of them blocks your view. Demonstrate your request to have the student shift out of your way with a communication tap, eye contact, smile, and hand signal. When the student politely cooperates, say, “Thanks.”

Then have the students practice the communication tap themselves while you (or Huggs) block their view. Consider with your class how polite, subtle gestures like this can be helpful during the school day. Ask students how and why the communication tap and a hand gesture may work better than speaking.