

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.

I was there Sit in a chair and then get up to sharpen a pencil. Ask a volunteer to take your chair or put a Kimochis™ character in the empty seat. Then model how to call that student's name, use the communication tap and eye contact to convey the message: "Excuse me, I was there." If the student hasn't moved, use the words and then model saying "Thank you" when the person moves. Reverse roles so your students can practice this helpful communication tool. At the end of the show, always create time to consider when and where in real life your students can picture themselves using this new tool.



Key 2

Use a talking tone of voice instead of a fighting tone of voice.

While verbal and written communication skills are important, we know that nonverbal behaviors make up a large part of our daily interpersonal communication: 30% tone of voice, 60% body language, 10% words. Therefore, it is vital to understand and master Key 2. The way students use their tone of voice when they feel upset will make the situation either better or worse. It will make the problem bigger or smaller. Use this language with students when their tone is not positive. Ask, "Will that voice make your problem bigger or smaller?"

ACTIVITY 1

Talking vs. Fighting Voice

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Some students may be unaware or unable to monitor (hear or feel) and regulate (use a talking tone vs. a fighting one) their tone of voice. This lesson will activate student awareness of the importance of their tone of voice and body language in communication. Do you want to listen to someone who yells and gives you mean looks?

Early Childhood Before the role-play, ask an adult in the classroom to stand up when they hear you use a fighting voice and stay in their chair when they hear a talking voice. Model this several times, then ask the students to do the same when they hear your voice. Do this routine enough times so the majority of students understand. Then give Cloud or Cat to a student to do a role-play. Whisper a short phrase ("That's mine"; "It's my turn"; "Move"). Then ask students to use the Kimochis™ character to say the words in a fighting or talking voice. The other students stand when they hear the fighting voice.

Catch it and name it when a student uses a talking voice—acknowledge their effort! When you hear a fighting voice, name it with, "Oops, I hear a fighting voice. Try a talking voice instead. Thanks."

Elementary Tell your class to stand up when they hear you use a fighting voice and to stay seated when you use a talking voice. Once your students can hear the difference, give Cloud or Cat to a student. Ask the students to say something through the characters using either a talking or fighting voice. The class stands when the Kimochis™ character uses a fighting voice.

Wrap up this activity by inviting students to share their experience with their own ability to monitor and regulate their tone of voice when they feel emotional. Ask students who believe they could work on their tone of voice to go to the front of the class. Remind students this activity is not to shame, blame or punish. It is an opportunity to demonstrate self-awareness. Ask each student how they would like their classmates to remind them if they forget to use a talking voice when feeling upset. Students can create a plan that works best for them. Offer suggestions like having friends gently call their name with a smile or say "Hey" to suggest there is no reason to yell. Allow students to practice