

her than others. Red light friends often bring out the Huggs in us.”

Now play a new version of the game Red Light Green Light. “When I say ‘Green light,’ shout out names of students who would be good choices to sit near.” Not everyone will say the same names. “When I call ‘Red light,’ shout out names of students who might be distracting for you.” (Shouting out in unison keeps this game fun and shame-free.)

To wrap up, students who wish can bravely name students they know they get silly with. Public acknowledgements help some students remember to make better choices down the road. And all you have to say to guide your students is, “I see two red light friends sitting near each other.” (Reassure students that red light friends like each other so much that they can’t keep focused on the lesson.)

● RESPONSIBLE Activity 2

Oops, You’re Too Close

PRACTICE Respectfully asking for space

Materials: Huggtopus

Animate Huggtopus to be wiggly and giggly and happily invading students’ space in an overly friendly way. Call “Freeze.” Ask students how the “space invading” felt. Some students will talk about not liking it when Huggs was all over them.

“Do you think Huggtopus was trying to annoy people? Or was she just excited, silly, and getting carried away? Raise your hand if you sometimes get silly like Huggs. Nod your head if you’ve noticed it can bother people.”

Have students use Huggtopus as a puppet to invade your personal space. Show how to keep a positive connection with Huggtopus by using

friendly eyes and voice, hold your hand up between you and the classmate, and simply say, “That’s a little too close.” When Huggtopus moves back to give you space, smile and thank her so she knows you still like her. Ask students:

“What did I do with my face that made you sure I still liked you?”
(Friendly eyes and smile.)

“What did I do with my voice that made you sure I still liked you?”
(You didn’t sound mean or yell.)

“What did I do with my hand that let you know I needed more room?”
(Held it up in a stop position gently.)

“Why did I say thanks?”
(To make sure the person knows we are still friends.)

“Why did you want to move and give me more room?”
(Because you asked nicely.)

Reverse roles so students can practice using a kind, shame-free way to let Huggtopus know she is too close. Ask your students why it makes a difference that they use a friendly face and voice when asking for more space. (It makes others know that you like them; it doesn’t make them feel sad or scared.)

Students with social-emotional challenges who have sensory sensitivities can become overwhelmed when their personal space is invaded. They may benefit from having one sentence memorized to use when someone gets too close to them. They may need repeated practice using the script in different social settings. The script should be short, assertive, and easy to understand like “May I have some space, please?” or “Please give me some space.”