



Educator Guide

Preschool, 3-5 years old



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The Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids Pre-K Project makes important mental health skills available to every preschool child in the State of Ohio.

The resources available through this project seek to:

- Provide preschool children with age-appropriate foundational skills
- Provide adults with strategies they can use to promote social-emotional development in early childhood

The evidence-based video series for preschool children is comprised of five videos along with this Educator Guide. These videos are centered around the following five areas:



Understanding Feelings

Learning to label and accept emotions while identifying healthy expressions of these feelings and coping with uncomfortable feelings



Being Brave

Facing healthy challenges to build resilience



Using Your Words

Fostering language to communicate needs, resolve conflicts, and build deeper connections



Being a Good Friend

Providing social skills to build valuable friendships



Having Big Feelings

Improving self-awareness and decision-making

Implementation Guidance

This video series can easily be viewed in individual classrooms or with small groups of preschoolers. Here are a few suggestions for how to make this delivery option effective:

1. Utilize a designated time, such as circle time, each day of the week to show one content area of the video series.

This option allows preschoolers to learn and practice a new skill each day of the week. Educators can use videos, characters, stories, and songs as a way of introducing and reinforcing skills. The activity sheets provide practice and visual cues to reference for preschoolers to promote skills and behaviors.

2. Utilize a designated time, such as circle time, once a week to show one content area of the video series.

This option allows preschoolers to learn and practice skills in the curriculum in five weeks. The benefit of this option is that it gives educators a week to reinforce the learned skill before moving on to a new skill. We know that preschoolers learn best through repetition via different modalities of learning, including verbal, visual, tactile, and auditory. Following the video content, educators can reinforce skills through the activity sheet, singing the songs related to each video content during the week, setting up natural activities where preschoolers can practice the skills, and reading related books.

3. Utilize a designated time, such as circle time, one day each month to show one content area of the video series.

This option allows preschoolers to learn and practice skills in the curriculum over a period of five months. Each month could be a designated theme of the curriculum and after watching the content video, educators can create activities and reinforce specific skills related to that content area. This option provides a longer period for preschoolers to learn, practice, and absorb skills within each individual content area. Educators and preschool students have the opportunity to take a deeper dive into how to integrate the skill they've learned into daily or weekly practices over the full month.

In addition to the curriculum being implemented during the school day, the most effective way of generalizing new skills is to practice and have them reinforced in multiple settings. Therefore, the curriculum would ideally be shared with caregivers to provide caregiver-guided opportunities to engage with the materials at home. Caregivers can learn skills with their children, create opportunities to practice skills at home and in community settings, and provide positive feedback when children utilize these skills. This holistic approach provides optimal success in integrating social-emotional skills for preschoolers.

Integration Guide

Educators and the school setting play an important role in helping preschoolers learn and practice the skills introduced in the Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids Pre-K Project. This guide provides helpful tips for introducing and reinforcing the content from each video in the classroom.

The student-teacher relationship and climate of the school is paramount in setting the foundation for preschoolers' social-emotional development. This is especially important during these formative years as it sets the tone for their continued experience in school. Preschoolers thrive when educators provide space and opportunity to feel connected, accepted, and validated. By practicing the skills in this curriculum together, we can make our communities more healthy, thriving, and vibrant.



Understanding Feelings

KEY POINTS

- All emotions are normal, healthy, and important because they provide preschoolers with information about themselves and their environment while connecting them with others.
- Preschoolers learn to label their emotions. They also learn that we can feel more than one emotion at a time, and that there are different expressions related to emotions.
- As our hedgehog friends sing, **“Feelings happen everyday. Feelings happen, they’re okay.”**

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Help increase preschoolers’ emotional awareness by describing and validating their feelings. For example:
 - “ “I can see you jumping up and down, which tells me you may be feeling excited.”
 - “It’s okay to feel mad. I understand that.”
- Give your full attention (listen), repeat back what the emotion was that they shared (reflect), and validate them by saying you understand (connect).
- Model and narrate how you are feeling to help reinforce emotion language and normalize that feelings are okay.
- Highlight emotion language through songs, characters in stories, and everyday interactions in the classroom.
- Provide visual cues of different emotions to allow another option for identifying and labeling emotions, where students have the opportunity to point to and show what they are feeling.
- Provide positive feedback when students in the classroom use emotion language to describe how they feel.



Using Your Words

KEY POINTS

- There are a lot of big challenges in the preschool years and guiding children to use language to express themselves is a foundational skill.
- All feelings are okay to feel, it's what we do with them that matters. At this age, kids sometimes react impulsively. This is normal and provides opportunities to discuss ways to communicate and resolve minor conflicts.
- In situations where there may be conflict or big feelings, find ways to help your students use words to express what they are experiencing, what their preferences may be, and what they need in the moment.
- As our hedgehog friends sing, **“You can use your words!”**

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Visual cues and reminders are extremely helpful at this age. Providing a cue in the classroom that reinforces “using your words” can be helpful.
- Model using your words to describe how you feel, what your preference is, and what you may need.
- In situations where there is conflict or high emotion, use it as an opportunity to pause and patiently help students use their words to describe what they feel and what they need.
- Through songs and stories, reinforce the use of words that are helpful in situations. Words can be used for difficult moments and moments of joy.
- Provide positive feedback when students in the classroom use their words to express their experience, preferences, and needs. For example:
 - “Good job using your words to ask for the crayons.”



Having Big Feelings

KEY POINTS

- Everyone feels big and intense emotions sometimes and that's okay.
- Everyone has impulsive urges that are caused by big feelings. The key is to ride out the urge and wait for these feelings to lessen in intensity.
- There are many things your students can do for their big feelings to help turn down the intensity.
- As our hedgehog friends sing, **“Big feelings, they come and they go.”**

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Before moving into problem-solving mode, start with validating your students' emotional experiences.
- In your classroom, provide designated space for your students to calm down and use different strategies to help with their intense emotions.
- When students are calm, brainstorm different healthy coping skills to help with big feelings, including squeezing a stress ball, giving your favorite stuffed animal a hug, drawing, blowing bubbles to take deep breaths, or taking deep breaths while counting to three.
- Provide positive feedback as you notice when your students are identifying big emotions and utilizing healthy strategies to help them “come and go.”
- Model opportunities when you might use healthy strategies to ride out the wave of big emotions.

Being Brave

KEY POINTS

- Preschoolers have many experiences that naturally make them feel nervous or scared.
- Validate that it's normal to feel scared and nervous when trying new things at first.
- Preschoolers feel emotions in their bodies and recognizing the physical sensations related to feeling scared is helpful.
- Even though a student's feelings may be telling them a situation is scary, as long as they are safe, encourage them to "be brave" and give it a try. We can help children build confidence and resilience and make the situation feel less and less scary with practice.
- As our hedgehog friends sing, **"A little bravery every day makes the scared go away."**

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- When students are expressing feeling scared when approaching new situations, supportive statements that include validation and encouragement are key. For example:
 - “ I know this feels scary and I also know you can do it. I'm here to help.”
 - “It's okay to feel nervous and I know you can take a brave step.”
- It can be helpful to preview a plan of what to expect when starting new activities. It is especially helpful to pair this with visuals or relevant books.
- If the initial step in approaching a situation feels too scary, think of a "plan B" that is a more doable step that gets you a bit closer to the end goal.
- Model and encourage coping skills when feeling scared or nervous, like taking a few deep breaths or using positive statements like "I can do this!"
- Provide immediate positive feedback when your students take brave steps and remind them that the more they practice the less nervous or scared they will feel.



Being a Good Friend

KEY POINTS

- These formative preschool years are where students learn foundational social skills for making friends, engaging in teamwork, and being a good community member.
- Being a good friend takes practice and learning about friendship behaviors can help them connect with their peers and community.
- There are specific behaviors that can contribute to being a good team member and friend, including compromising, helping, being flexible, listening to others, sharing, and taking turns.
- As our hedgehog friends sing, **“It’s always good to be a good friend because being a good friend is great!”**

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Create opportunities in your classroom where students get to learn and practice teamwork and friend-making behaviors. This can include helping to build something together, having to share a specific toy, or creating a situation where students need to ask for help.
- Model and narrate opportunities where you are engaging in friend-making behavior.
- Highlight ways in which characters in books use specific friendship behaviors and ask students if they can identify what they noticed.
- Provide visual cues or use the hedgehog song as a cue to reinforce and reference specific friendship and teamwork behavior that is helpful.
- Designate a particular skill that everyone is going to be practicing and encourage students to point out when they see their peers doing it.
- Highlight and provide positive feedback when your student is engaging in friend-making behaviors in the classroom.

Activity Sheets

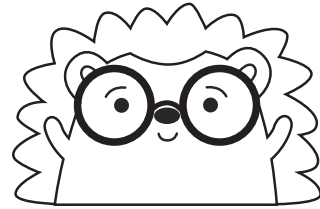
On the following pages you'll find activity sheets that can be practiced in school or at home to reinforce these five skills. Full color poster versions have been provided for posting in the classroom.

Understanding Feelings

🎵 Feelings happen every day. Feelings happen, they're okay. 🎵

Below are our hedgehog friends with different feelings faces.
Match the feeling word to the hedgehog face.

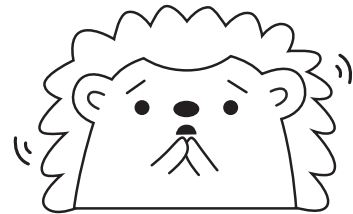
Sad



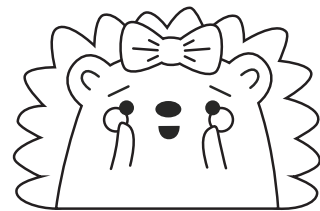
Mad



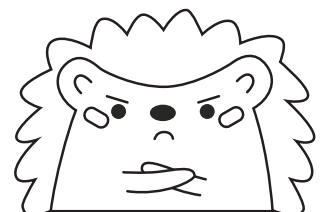
Happy



Scared



Surprised



Understanding Feelings

♪ Feelings happen every day. ♪
Feelings happen, they're okay.

Happy

Mad

Scared

Sad

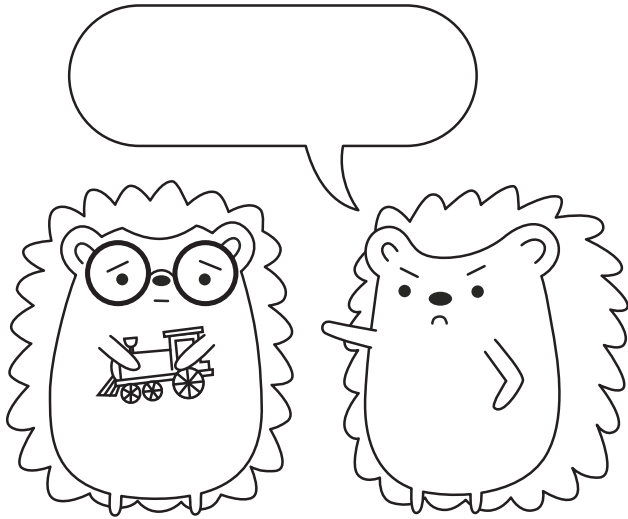
Surprised



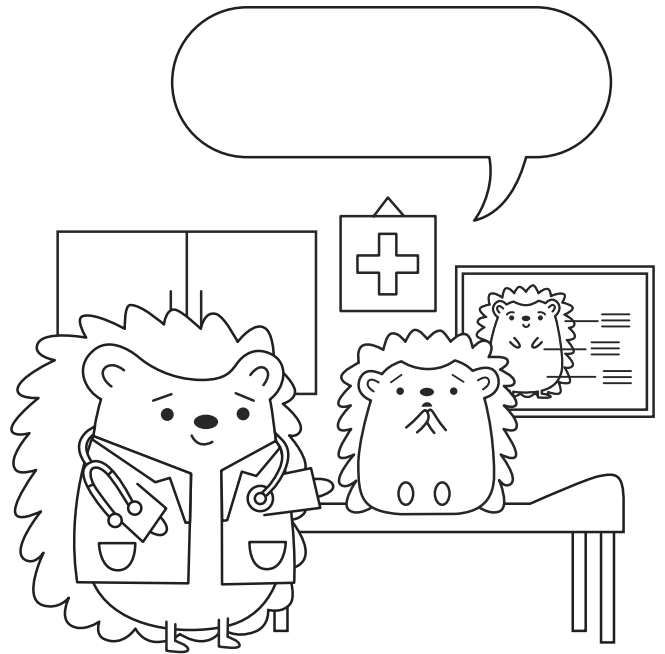
Using Your Words

♪ You can use your words! ♪

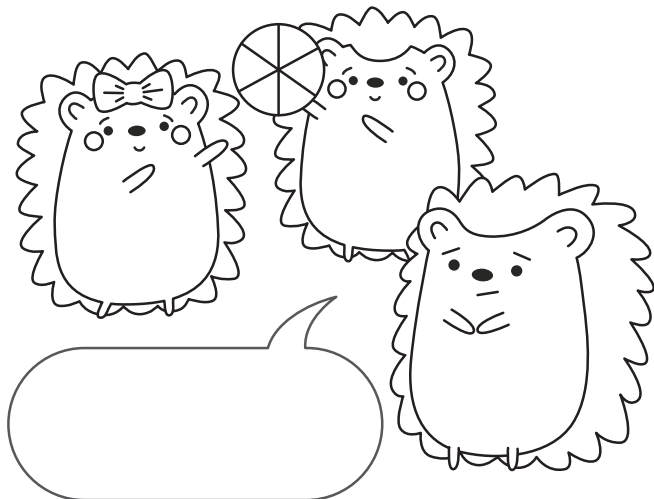
Take a look at the hedgehogs in different situations below.
Think about what words the hedgehog can use in that situation.



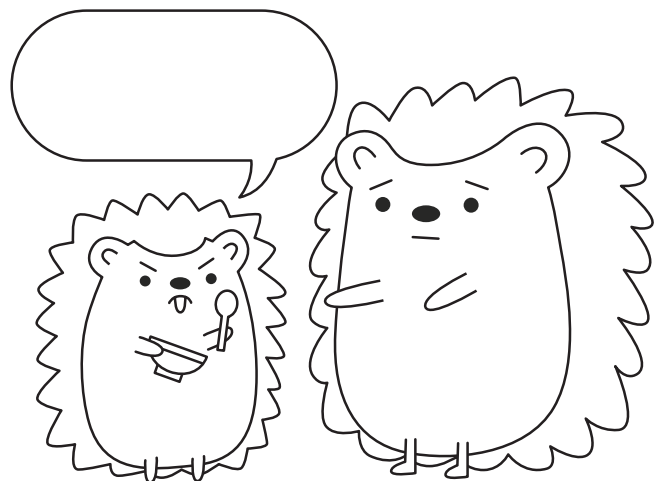
The hedgehog is mad at the other hedgehog for taking their toy.



The hedgehog is nervous at the doctor's office.



The hedgehog is nervous to join the other hedgehogs playing.

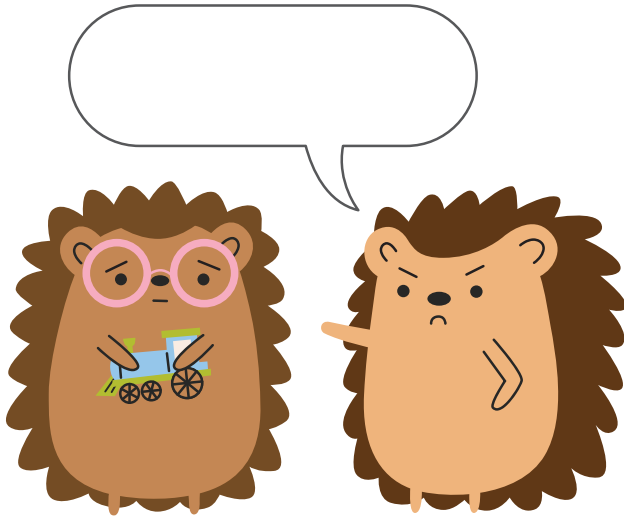


The hedgehog does not like the meal.

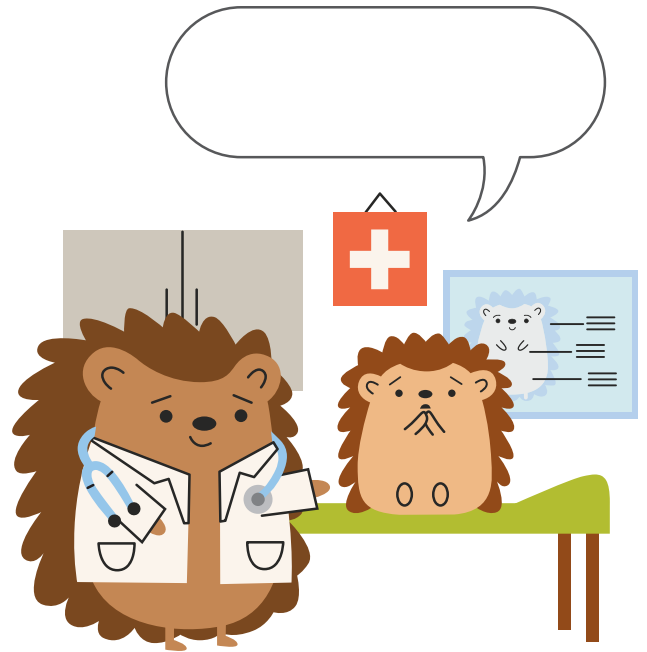
Using Your Words

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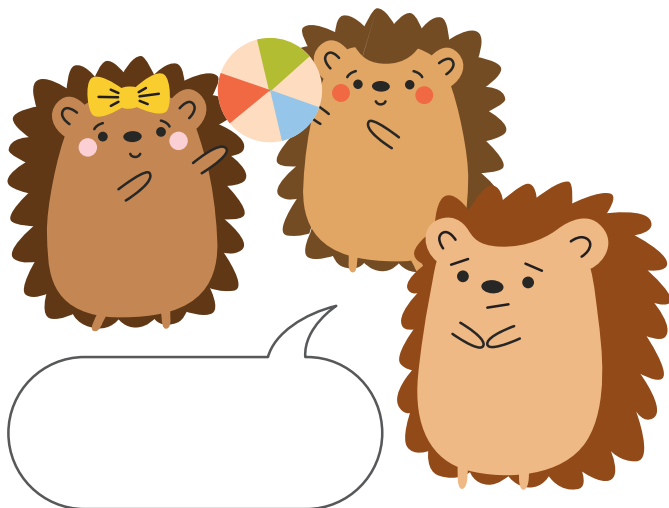
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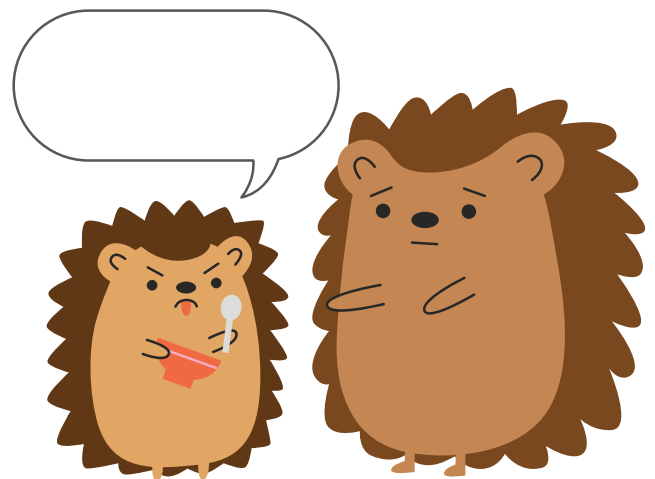
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The hedgehog is nervous to join the other hedgehogs playing.



The hedgehog does not like the meal.

Having Big Feelings

🎵 *Big feelings, they come and they go.* 🎵

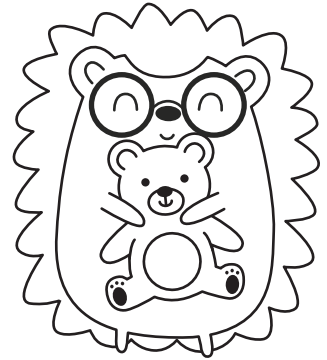
Below are a variety of skills YOU can use to help with having big feelings.
Think about a time when you could use each of the skills below.



Count to three



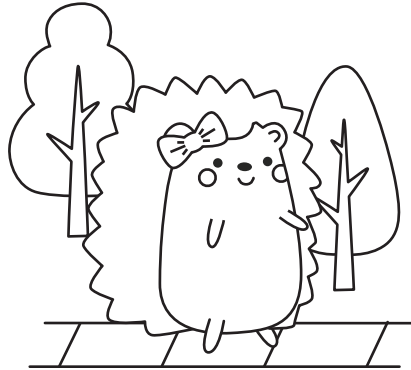
Take a deep breath



Hug a stuffed animal



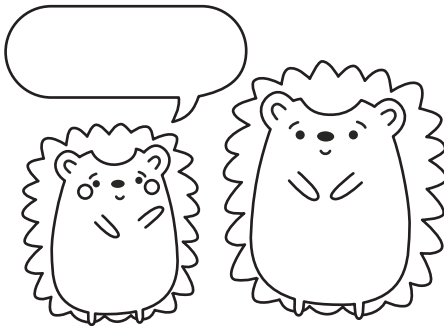
Draw or color a picture



Take a break or walk



Listen, dance, or sing to music



Talk to a trusted grown-up



Get a drink of water

What do you like to do when you have big feelings?

Having Big Feelings

🎵 *Big feelings, they come and they go.* 🎵

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Think about a time when you could use each of the skills below.



Count to three



Take a deep breath



Hug a stuffed animal



Draw or color a picture



Take a break or walk



Listen, dance, or sing to music

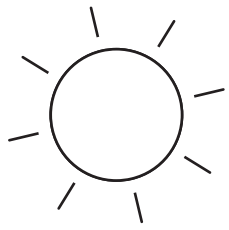


Talk to a trusted grown-up



Get a drink of water

What do you like to do when you have big feelings?

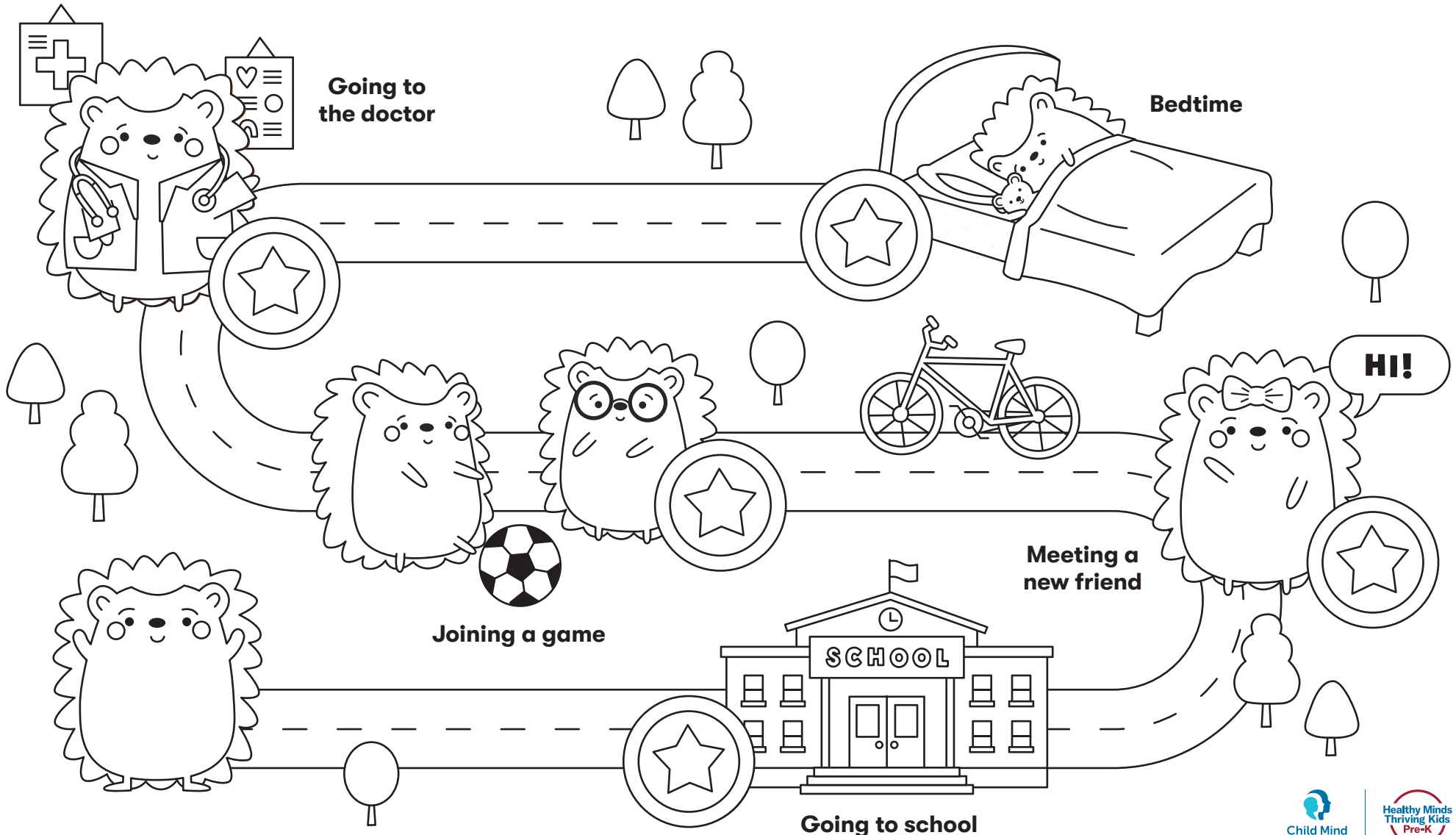


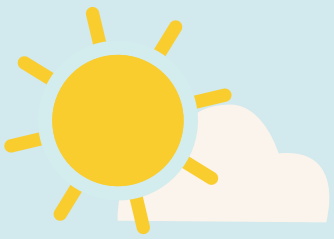
Being Brave

♪ A little bravery every day makes the scared go away. ♪



Trace the hedgehog's steps through Hedgehog Land to collect bravery coins by doing things that may make them feel scared. Color in the bravery coins as you go!





Being Brave



♪ A little bravery every day makes the scared go away. ♪

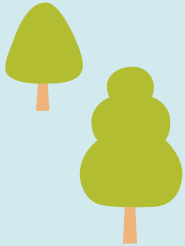
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Going to the doctor



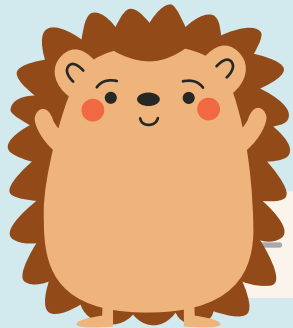
Bedtime



Joining a game



Meeting a new friend



Going to school



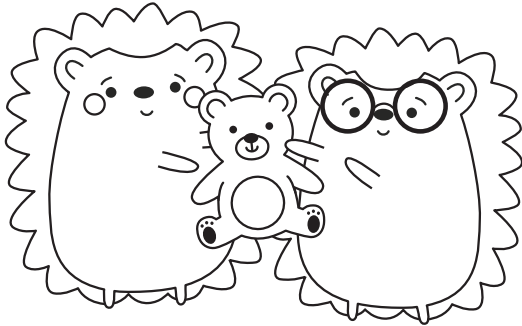
Being a Good Friend



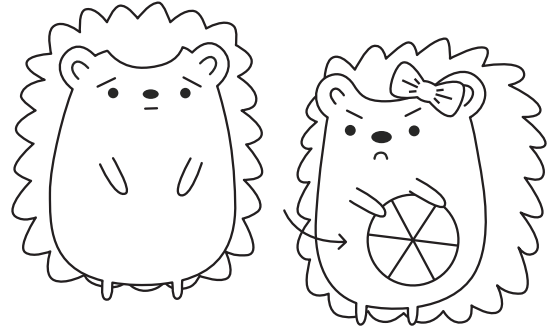
*It's always good to be a good friend
because being a good friend is great!*



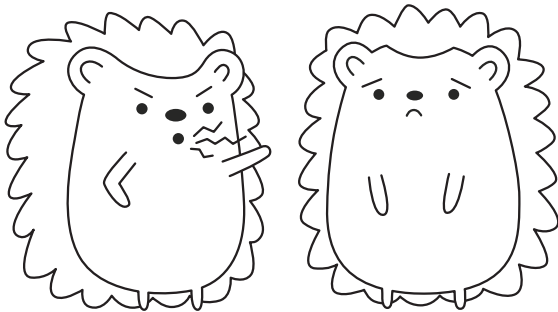
Below is a picture of different situations with our hedgehog friends interacting with each other using helpful or unhelpful friendship behaviors. Color the helpful friendship behaviors.



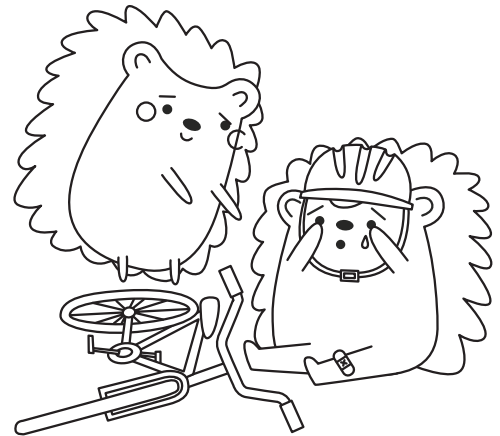
Sharing toys



Taking a toy

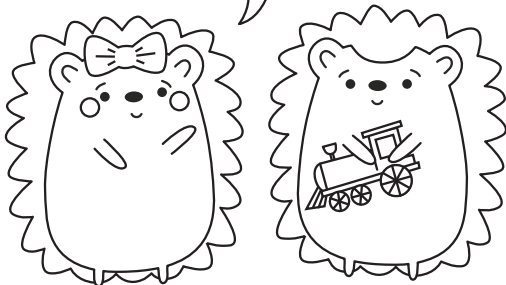


Yelling at a friend

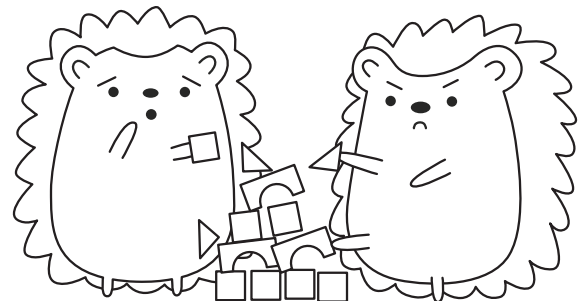


Helping someone

CAN I HAVE A TURN?



Using your words



Knocking something over on purpose

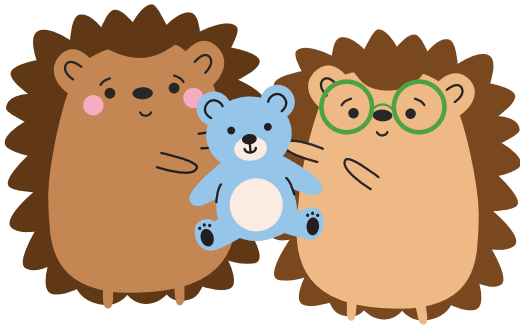
Being a Good Friend



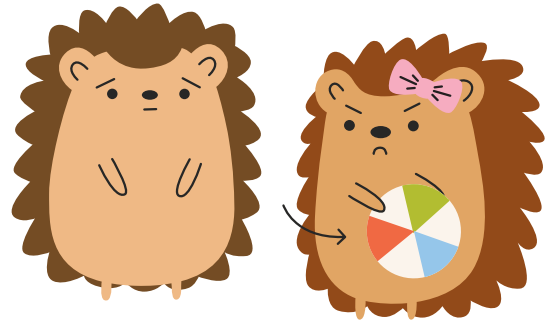
*It's always good to be a good friend
because being a good friend is great!*



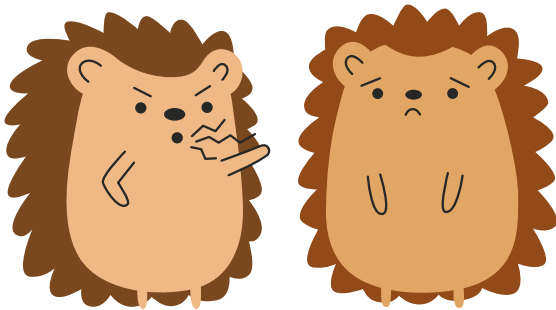
Below is a picture of different situations with our hedgehog friends interacting with each other using helpful or unhelpful friendship behaviors. Circle the helpful friendship behaviors.



Sharing toys



Taking a toy

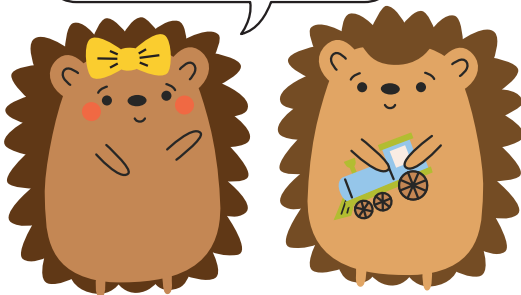


Yelling at a friend

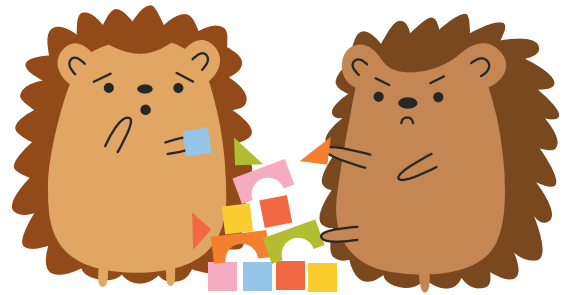


Helping someone

CAN I HAVE A TURN?



Using your words



Knocking something over on purpose