

# Activities to Promote Social and Emotional Health of Toddlers

**Activity Title:** Puppet Talk

**Age Range:** Toddlers

**Purpose of Activity:** Acting out scenes that are either make-believe or loosely based on children's own lives helps them to work through the beginnings of conflict-resolution, or simply stated, they start to understand the problem-solving process. Children use behaviors for a reason. Adults who are observing children closely in dramatic play may begin to see these roots of behavior played out in the stories children tell. Pay close attention to begin to help your child on the way to becoming a life-long problem-solver!

**Materials:**

Any materials to make puppets: Brown paper bags, old socks, paper plates, craft sticks, crayons, markers, markers, old magazines, tape

**Steps:**

- 1.) Using the materials you have available, make a puppet with your child. If you are using a paper plate or brown paper bag, use crayons and markers to make various facial features. You can also look through magazines and cut out faces or other pictures.
- 2.) Make many different puppets with your child over time until you have a nice collection so the puppets can interact.
- 3.) Tape a paper plate puppet to a craft stick. Put your hand inside the brown paper bag or sock.
- 4.) If puppet play is new to your child, you might first use puppets to make up a story of your own. During your story, be sure to talk about your feelings, behaviors, and actions.
- 5.) As you act out stories, enjoy your child's reactions. Make the puppets give him kisses and hugs.
- 6.) Set loving limits. "Please touch the puppets gently. We took our time to make them look so special!"
- 7.) Tell your child about his reactions – "You are afraid of the fish!" "You really like getting high fives from the Elmo puppet."
- 8.) As your child get a little older and gains confidence in his puppet play, you can make the stories more meaningful by talking about problem-solving between the characters. "How do you think these two puppets can solve this problem?" Getting your child started in brainstorming solutions will help when real behavioral concerns arise that must be addressed and worked through.
- 9.) Help your child use his homemade puppets to put on a show based on the stories he tells you.

Activity adapted from "Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure: 50 Activities to Promote Resilience in Young Children", by Nefertiti Bruce and Karen Cairone, with the Devereux Center for Resilient Children, 2011, North Carolina: Gryphon House, Inc.