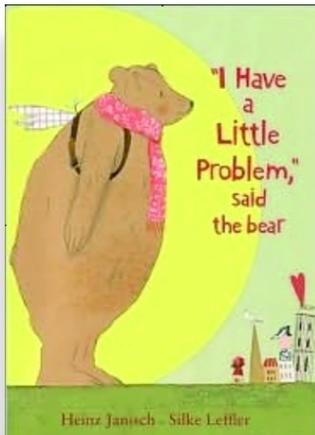


Book Nook

Using Books to Support Social Emotional Development



“I Have a Little Problem,” Said The Bear

By Heinz Janisch
North-South Books

“I Have a Little Problem,” Said The Bear follows a troubled bear as he tries to find someone to listen to his problem. He visits everyone from an inventor to a doctor to find someone who will listen, but everyone is quick to provide a solution before they even listen to his problem! They give him a pair of wings, vitamins, and bear boots—but none of these solve the bear’s problem. Finally, the bear finds a good listener in an unexpected friend, and solves his problem (that he is afraid of his dark cave). Children will not only enjoy the story, but also will learn the importance of listening. (Ages 3-5)

Examples of activities that can be used while reading *“I Have a Little Problem,” Said the Bear* and throughout the day to promote social and emotional development:

- Discuss the idea of listening with the children. Ask what it means to be a good listener. Ask children if they ever tried to tell someone something and felt like they were not listening to them. How did it make them feel when no one listened? Did they feel frustrated, angry or maybe even sad? Ask the children to think about how it feels when someone does listen to them. For example, how does it feel when they are trying to tell their teacher something and the teacher stops what she is doing and listens to them? Do they feel happy, understood and important? Tell the children that you are going to read a book about a bear with a problem. Ask them to listen carefully so they can figure out what the bear’s problem is.
- Make a large cut-out of a bear similar to the one in the book. As you read through the story, have each child pretend to be one of the characters that gives the bear a solution to his problem. Make cutouts of each solution (wings, a scarf, a hat, vitamins, a charm necklace, glasses, honey, and boots) that can be attached to the bear cutout using Velcro or magnets. As you read each section of the story, children can place their props on the bear. Remind children that they will have to be good listeners as you read, so that they know when to give the bear their solution. You could also have one of the children pretend to be the bear and use “real” props for the children to put on the “bear.”
- To give children more practice with thinking of good solutions to problems, create an activity where children match a problem with a solution. First, remind children how the bear in *“I Have a Little Problem,” Said the Bear* had trouble solving his problem because no one knew what it was! Introduce the problem solving steps from the CSEFEL website (www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel). Provide pictures of different problem scenarios along with pictures of appropriate solutions that can be matched. For example, feeling hot/cold (warm/cool clothing), being hungry/thirsty



(food/drink), being sleepy (taking a nap) or being afraid of the dark (night light). Using the problem solving process, help children identify what the problem is by looking at the pictures and then choose an appropriate solution.

Reading the same book for several days in a row is a great way to provide opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to develop a sense of competence and confidence, which is an important part of social and emotional development. They become able to turn pages, point at and label pictures, talk about the story, predict what will happen next, learn new vocabulary words, talk about their own experiences in relation to the story and even make up their own story! Try reading *"I Have a Little Problem," Said the Bear* for several days in a row and use some of the ideas, activities, and teaching opportunities listed below to enhance social and emotional skills.

Listening

Small Group: Play "telephone" with a small group of children. First remind the children that they will have to be good listeners, just like the fly in *"I Have a Little Problem," Said the Bear*. Then explain that you will whisper something to one child, and that he or she will pass along the message in a whispering voice to the next child. The message will travel to all of the children, and the last one will announce the message out loud. Be prepared that it might take a few tries before a message travels clearly through every child.

Music: Remind children how they learned to be good listeners when they read *"I Have a Little Problem," Said the Bear*. Then tell children that you are going to play a musical game that will help them practice being good listeners. Gather many different musical instruments, or anything that makes noise. You could use cans or jars filled with dry rice or beans, jingle bells, maracas, pots/pans/drums, sticks, etc. Make sure that each instrument you choose has a distinct sound. First, tell the children what each instrument is, and then let the children demonstrate the sound that it makes. Hide behind a screen or put your arms under a blanket as you use one of the instruments. Have children use their good listening skills to figure out which instrument you are playing. Let each child take a turn picking an instrument and having other children listen closely to guess what it is.

Movement: Choose songs that involve listening to the words in order to know what motions to use. Before you start, remind children that they will need to listen closely to the words so that they know what actions to do. Classic songs like "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" work well. Also, many children's CD's have great songs that involve following directions (Try "Knuckles Knees," "My Ups and Downs," "Hands are for Clapping," "Poison Ivy," and "Toe Leg Knee" by Jim Gill). Do the motions with the children as you listen to these songs. After listening to each song several times, children will build confidence and will know which motions to do all on their own! Remind the children that the reason they know what to do is because they are being such good listeners!

Dramatic Play: Have children pretend that they are the bear and shopkeepers. Create different scenarios where the bear has different problems (has a cough, has cold feet, is hungry, can't see) and must find a certain person (the doctor, shoemaker, chef, eye doctor) to help him. In this version, the shopkeepers have all learned to listen to what the problem is before they offer an answer. The bear can explain his problem, and then each shopkeeper can decide if they are the one to help. Let each child take turns being either the bear, or different shopkeepers. Use dress-up clothes and props to make playing even more fun.