

Lesson 7: Accidents

Concepts

The understanding that some actions are accidental, rather than intentional, is an important part of perspective taking.

Accepting responsibility for an accident can help prevent others from assuming it was intentional.

Language concepts: *accident, mean to, on purpose*

Objectives

Children will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of *accident*.
- Know what to say when they do something by accident.

Materials


You will need the following:

- Impulsive Puppy
- Slow-Down Snail
- List of situations drawn from children's lives (see Pretend and Practice)

Notes to the Teacher

This lesson will help children understand that some actions are accidents. This may make them less likely to jump to conclusions. When children assume that others behave toward them with hostility, they are more likely to respond aggressively. This is particularly true of children who are more frequently aggressive than others, even when the situation is ambiguous.

Apologizing is covered in this lesson. An apology helps clarify the situation for the hurt child. Children may need extra help understanding that when they accidentally hurt someone, apologizing is an appropriate and caring action.

 Play "The Caring Song" during the week so that you and the children become familiar with it.

Warm-Up

Puppy and Snail want to tell us about something that happened yesterday.

Snail: Well, I was carrying my snack to the table, and Puppy was right behind me.

Puppy: Snail suddenly stopped and we bumped into each other. I dropped my snack on the floor. Use sad tone. It went everywhere. Use angry tone. I was just about to get mad at Snail. Then Snail explained.

Snail (use apologetic tone): I said, "I didn't mean to make you drop your snack. I saw something shiny on the floor and stopped to look. It was an accident. I'm sorry. You can have some of my snack."

Puppy: I wasn't mad at Snail anymore. I understood what had happened. But I was sad that I couldn't eat my snack.

I'm so glad that Snail explained what happened and apologized for the accident. Good-bye for now, Puppy and Snail. Thanks for coming to visit.

Story and Discussion

Sometimes things happen that we don't mean to happen. Today we will talk about what to do when you do something by accident.



James

Darnell

Show photo. Darnell was running through the playground and not looking where she was going. She ran into James, who fell down and hurt his arm. This was an accident. She didn't mean to knock him down, but James doesn't know it was an accident.

1. How do you think James feels? (Hurt, mad.) How can you tell? (He's holding his arm. He's frowning. The situation.)
2. How do you think Darnell feels? (Sad, sorry.) How can you tell? (She is looking at James. The situation—she didn't mean to do it.)
3. Did Darnell mean to hurt James? (No.) Did she mean to knock him to the ground? (No.) How can we tell this from the picture? (She stopped to see if he is okay. She is looking at him.)

It was an accident. An *accident* is something that wasn't meant to happen. Accidents are not done on purpose.

4. If Darnell pushed James on purpose, would it still be an accident? (No.)
5. What can Darnell say or do now? (Say she's sorry. Say it was an accident. Ask if he needs help.)

Sometimes we do things to other people that we didn't mean to do. Remember what happened to Puppy? Snail didn't mean to make Puppy drop the snack on the floor. When accidents happen, it's important to say "I didn't mean to" or "I'm sorry. It was an accident."

Pretend and Practice

Everyone has accidents. Now we're going to play a game to practice what to say when we do something by accident.

Model for children. Fill in the name of a child to personalize the following. Let's pretend that I accidentally bumped _____ with a chair as I moved it. I could say "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. It was an accident. Are you okay?"

Have children practice. Adapt, replace, or add scenarios to make them relevant.

Have each child come and stand beside you and face the group.

Pretend that you tripped and spilled juice on _____. What makes this an accident? (Didn't mean to. Tripped.) What could you say?

Pretend that you stretched out your leg while reading a book, and _____ tripped over it. What makes this an accident? (Didn't mean to.) What could you say?

Wrap-Up

Sometimes things happen by accident. Today we learned that it's important to let someone know when you didn't mean to do something.

Transfer of Learning

Encourage children to generate alternative explanations for why something happened. When appropriate, prompt children to say "I didn't mean to" or "I'm sorry. It was an accident." Give Hearts to children who respond appropriately to an accident.

Additional Activity Ideas

LITERACY LINK



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1. Have children draw pictures of accidents and dictate a sentence about them. Make these into a book for the classroom.

LITERACY LINK



2. Provide materials for children to create a supply of notecards—for personal or general use—decorated with words or drawings that convey apology. Be available to transcribe children's messages. A written apology can convey a sincere message when children can't find the words to say "I'm sorry."

Second Step Skills and You

Make a point of considering all the alternatives before deciding whether an action was intentional. Choose a set of note cards—or make your own cards—to send an apology when the need arises.

