



INTERNATIONAL KINDNESS RESET

Connect with Kindness adaptation strategies for preschool teachers:

1. **Themes:** Use the themes, words, and concepts from children to guide all your thinking and instruction for each theme. For example, Theme #2 is about creating objects, actions, or places of beauty through aesthetics and/or nature. As you think about these lessons, let the theme guide you in making the adaptations. Can a three-year-old identify something pretty/pleasing, or beautiful in nature? Can they learn how to relax under a tree and then talk about what they heard and saw? Can they learn that listening to the birds is relaxing? Yes, with practice.

Are all themes age-appropriate? Yes, if the teachers adapt them to meet the developmental and emotional needs for their age-range of the children, using the words from children as the guide, but not necessarily the content of the lessons. The easiest themes to adapt are the first five; themes six and seven are the most challenging for students of any age. If endeavoring to teach the last two themes with young children, we recommend keeping the ideas “close to home”. For example, Theme #6 is about kindness, exemplars, and heroes. Most young children would identify a family member as being their hero, or they may select a firefighter or a police officer; both work for the conceptual ideas in the lessons. We suggest always adapting the lessons using what children see and know in their current sphere of knowledge, starting with self and fanning out. For example, self, family, school, church, neighborhood, community, city, etc.

Teachers should be mindful of the content in Themes # 6-7, as some of the concepts from the lessons may be inappropriate for young children and cause them to worry, become anxious, or stressed. For example, the Kindness Boost for theme seven asks the teacher to read a story about someone losing their home due to a fire, which may be inappropriate for the children in their classroom, even though this book is recommended for children up to age six. The teacher should ask themselves: will a child be triggered to be concerned or stressed about themselves/family/neighbors because of this content? If yes, do not use the content.

2. **Mini-Kindness Boosts/Kindness Boosts:** We recommend that the teacher use the mini-kindness boosts and kindness boosts to frame most of their lessons in the beginning, replicating them with slightly different iterations. For example, in Theme #1, cheering up, entertaining others, and showing compassion or concern is a theme you could spend a lot of time on. The mini-boost teacher-generated

lesson for this theme could be modified; for example, the cheer-up parade could be done multiple times in different parts of the school for different people throughout the entire week, with lots of discussion afterward. As the lesson iterates, children could add things to carry, like smiley pictures or stuffed animals. Then, for the next week, the teacher could focus on compassion or concern, like putting a bandage on a stuffed animal and asking the children how they would show the teddy bear they are concerned about them, first, with the teacher modeling, but then with each child showing compassion and concern for the teddy bear. They could then show compassion or concern by drawing a picture of the bear. The following week, the teacher could identify someone who needed to be entertained, like doing a short class dance or chanting for another teacher or classmates.

3. **Teacher-Generated Lesson Ideas:** Use and modify the teacher-generated lesson ideas for the mini and kindness boosts. Perhaps thinking of a similar but different idea, allowing children to pick one. This will help them have a voice.
4. **Learning Examples:** Some learning examples will need to be explained, but we have found that children of all ages love watching or hearing about other kids, so they are engaging and motivating. It is okay just to copy what the child in the learning example is doing. If it is writing something down, the child can draw instead or have the teacher write it down.
 - a. **Support:** Provide children with additional scaffolds and supportive ideas to grasp and understand a learning example or watch a video. Read aloud, write for them, etc.
5. **Expand:** Expand the number of minutes needed to conduct each lesson by at least $1/3^{\text{rd}}$. This will enable you to reach more of the goals of the lesson. Make sure that when teaching the lessons, you do so in consecutive minutes instead of allowing for gaps of time between the action and the reflection so the children can better recall their feelings. It might be helpful to take photos of the children while they are doing the activity to show them later so they can recall and/or label how the activity made them feel.
6. **Reinforce Learning through Modeling and Restating:** Using a teacher's aide, a volunteer, or even another child, model as much of a reflective discussion as possible. Because expressive language is still developing, ask children to draw (instead of writing or even saying) how the activity made them feel or how it made other people feel. Consider conducting the reflection and higher-order thinking questions 1:1, using only one question. Modify the questions as needed making sure that you always reflect on them with your students. Then, repeat the reflections as a result of the action throughout the day to reinforce the learning at a deeper level and to draw the children back into the activity so they can recall what they did and better connect their feelings with the actions.

7. **Focus on Understanding the Feelings of Self, then Others:** Be sure to focus on each child's feelings and then feelings that they notice in others as the key springboard for more thinking. Through practice and labeling, children begin learning how to articulate and label their own feelings; once this is consistent, they can start noticing the feelings of other children in their classroom, and through practice, they can begin to understand that they may not all have the same feelings. Try keeping a feelings chart after activities with visuals as a way for the children to see their feelings along with the feelings of others.
8. **Rapid Changes:** We know that young children develop rapidly and bounce back and forth between having periods of disequilibrium and equilibrium, making early childhood education pedagogy challenging. What may be developmentally appropriate one day is temporarily inappropriate the next! This means that you may need to pause teaching new lessons and simply reinforce the lessons you have previously taught until the children are ready to move forward again.

Check typical for children of this age attitudes and ways of behavior.
(From Gesell Institute, www.gesellinstitute.org)

