

Dream Child - Parent/Guardian Guide

Activity Ideas for Child Care/Preschool

Of course, you are welcome to simply listen to and enjoy *Dream Child* with your child. However, the ideas we've put together in the parent guide below are here to enhance the learning and enjoyment potential of the CD.

These exercises are geared towards helping your child to experience unconditional, consistent love and providing him or her with the tools to connect to themselves (breath, visualization), so that he or she will be more likely to make good choices in everyday life.

Dream Child is meant as an exploration into love, joy, relaxation (reducing anxiety), and gratitude. We invite parents to create their own questions and activities related to the CD or use some of the ideas listed below.

The questions and exercises outlined below will open your child's heart, and your own. For younger children, you may want to simplify the exercises.

Welcome Song

Learning objective - when we feel welcome toward others and focus on their comfort, our own nervousness slips away and we enjoy ourselves so much more.

The Dalai Lama wrote in one of his books that shyness and loneliness were about a lack of openness to others and/or wanting to preserve one's self image, so opening to others is a way of bringing more joy into our own lives.

1. Ask the child: How do you feel going somewhere new? (e.g. First day of (pre)school, a visit to a new friend's house, first time at a new sport class). Ask until you find something that is a little outside the child's comfort zone, so they answer that they feel a little nervous or scared (excited, nervous, etc.).

2. Ask the child: How might other kids feel when they are coming to your house for the very first time? What could we do to make our guest feel more welcome?

Make a list with your child of different things the child can do, before a child or

grown-up guest comes over. Some examples might include:

- Make a sign out of a piece of paper saying 'welcome (their name)' with a drawing around it, and tape it to your front door.
- Create a welcome card for them out of paper and crayons/felts/paint/pastels.
- Meet them at the door, give them an extra special welcome and tell them why you are happy they are here (e.g. "Hi, I am so happy you are here because I love playing with you.").
- During their visit ask them "How are you enjoying your visit? Is there anything you would like to do while you are here?"

3. Ask the child: How did it feel to do this for your guest - are you more excited about them coming or less? Do you feel more love inside or the same? What could we do to help others who may feel shy at (pre)school or a playgroup outside our home?

Brainstorm another list - here are some potential answers...

- Ask them their name.
- Notice something you like about them.
- Ask them a question (do you want to play with xxx together?)

4. Ask the child: How did you feel when you did that - did you have more fun too? Did you forget your own shyness?

The Sunshine Song (Dancing Flowers)

Learning objective - when we practice gratitude, we open up to experience the joy that is present in our lives.

According to a study done at the University of California at Davis, those that practiced gratitude regularly felt better about their lives, and were more alive and energetic. What a great experience to have regularly with your child!

Ask the child:

What do you feel grateful for today?

How do you feel when you talk about things you are grateful for?

If you were a grateful flower, how would you dance? Show me! Let's use our arms and legs to shake our leaves and rattle our stems!

Breathe In - Duchess Dove

Learning objective - when we practice breathing, it helps us stay in touch with

our own inner compass. We switch from reacting to responding and are back under our own power.

- Play a simple breathing game while listening to the song: breathe in and out, spread your arms in and out with your breath, and imagine you can fly up and down with your breath!
- Breathe in and out slowly three times - ask the child how he/she feels inside. When a child is sad, in a very gentle voice ask them if there is anything they want to share.
- Breathe in and out deeply ten times - ask the child how he/she feels inside. You can even put a stuffy on top of your belly to watch it move up and down with our breath. This will often move us from the fight or flight mode to the parasympathetic mode - basically we often feel more centred. However, if a child is agitated, sometimes this can be too much so having a good dance off first (shake), or roaring and moving like lions, before doing some deep breathing can be helpful.

I Love You - Mama Bear

Learning objective - when we experience unconditional love, we connect deeply with ourselves and others.

Practicing Self-Soothing and Self-Love:

Encourage the child to take three deep breaths and pretend she is lying in Mama Teddy Bear's arms. Ask her, can you feel Mama Teddy Bear's love? How do you feel when you are lying in Mama Teddy Bear's arms and she is singing "I Love You?" When the child is sad, lovingly allow them to experience their sadness and/or tears. Gently talk about what it feels like lying in Mama Teddy Bear's arms and how much you and Mama Teddy bear love her/him. Sing the song and they may sing along.

By allowing despair and sadness room to move through us, we create the space for joy and hope to return. What we resist, persists - so, providing a space for our child's sadness is a gift.

- Ask what your child thinks Mama Teddy Bear looks like? This can be a good time to paint or draw together.
- To express love in a fun way, take turns saying how much you love each other.... "I love you all the way to that lamp" or "I love you all the way to the clouds," with plenty of thank-yous (the thank you allows a moment to take it all in).

- Learn how to best comfort your child - have the child be Mama Teddy Bear, with another stuffed animal as their child. Child gets to be a loving big furry Mama Teddy Bear. Ask: how do you (child) hold the stuffed animal when he is sad? What do you think the animal would like you to say? What kind of voice are you using - gentle, curious...?

It is also possible to show the child it is safe and good to express anger with permission in acceptable ways.

Say “this animal is really disappointed because he/she didn't get a toy he/she wanted. Being angry is just our body telling us what we want or don't want. Let's find ways to help this animal express himself in ways that are safe for everyone.”

Many of us grew up believing that anger is wrong, when actually it is important life energy and stuffing it away shuts down our energy. The problem with anger is not the emotion itself, but when we express it without permission in unacceptable ways. We do not have to express it at the other person (though there may be a conversation needed) but the first time is just allowing the energy to flow through us with sounds or movement in the privacy of their own space. Learning young how to express anger in appropriate ways helps children to have more life energy and be more alive.

Here is an example:

- Step One - is everyone comfortable playing a game of letting out anger in a safe way? If anyone wants us to stop at any time, they say stop and we all stop right away - is everyone OK with that rule? Let's practice saying stop once. OK, let's play for 3 minutes.
- Step Two - breathe in and out like a dove. Let's do this through the whole game.
- Step Three - pick an animal like a lion or bear and pretend he is mad because he wanted to play with another animal and the other animal said he wanted some quiet time alone.
- Step Four - how would he growl.... great ...now louder and louder (60-120 seconds).
- Step Five - now stomp your feet and bang your fists on a couch or chair while growling (60 more seconds).
- Step Six - shake your body out, breath in and out and fly out your arms as wings.
- Step Seven - how do you feel inside?
- Step Eight - when the animal feels more peaceful inside, he may want to

share why he was upset and ask for what he wants. ‘I am sad because I wanted to play.... Maybe when you finish your quiet time, can we play?’

- Step Nine - would you like to do a big Mama Bear hug together?

Building on the above - after releasing anger, there is often some sadness underneath, sometimes gentleness or goodness, or sometimes there is ecstatic energy and dancing to music can be a good -- just listen to your child.

Now that you feel happy, what can you do to share your happiness and enjoy it even more? Try...

...smiling right into each other's eyes

...singing to the music you love together

...dancing together

...a big hug.

I am Light (I am Sunshine)

Learning Objective - when we appreciate ourselves, we have a source of inner strength and confidence.

Cut out five interesting shapes (triangle, diamond, etc.) from coloured or plain paper.

In each shape, the child writes one appreciation about him or herself (big heart, loving, caring, likes soccer). The parent can help with suggestions and write the words. The child can decorate by colouring or using sparkles.

Scotch tape the shapes along the wall of the child's room in a group (see the next activity for a follow-up to this). Ask the child - how do you feel when you look at that?

Shine Your Light

Learning objective - to teach the child how to make a circle of love when child is in need of support (alone, scared, feels badly).

1. Try this first when the child is feeling happy. Make a list of the people who love you no matter what. How do you feel when you think of all this love - what colour do you feel inside - do you feel warm or cold?
2. Cut out 5-10 big circles from coloured or plain paper. Ask the child who they think loves them no matter what and write the name on the circle - e.g., Mom loves Jessica, Auntie Lou loves Jessica, etc. It can be anyone living or not living, whoever the child wants (Later you can add names of people the child

loves).

3. Look at the all the people who love you on the wall. Breathe in and breath out, think of each person and how much they love you - imagine looking in each person's eyes. Now look into your own heart. Breathe all that love in. See how loved are. You are perfect inside. Imagine sunlight coming down on you and your own special star smiling at you, imagine there is an angel right beside you, protecting you and helping you. What might they say to you? Breathe in all that love.

After this, you may want to add to the picture in the child's room - put a big sun for the corner and write "the sun loves you"; a star - "your special star loves you," moon, flowers, trees, etc.

Scotch tape up the circles with the names of people who love the child all around the child's bed. Ask the child - how do you feel when you look at that? Lead the child through a guided loving visualization like the CD, so they are shining like the sun, smiling at each person they love and seeing each person smiling back at them. You may just pick one or two people for each visualization as they may feel close to different people at different times. Lead for a little while until they can do it on their own. Visualizations do not just make us feel good, they also help children build their imaginative muscles, which they can then use to solve all kinds of problems.

We are One

Learning objective/Outcome - Child learns how to make a circle of love when child is in need of support (alone, scared, feels badly).

This exercise will be most meaningful if the parent shares examples of how he/she has felt a sense of love or inner wisdom/spirit in his/her own life. Some people are touched in moments of joy or gratitude with others, some feel it in nature, others feel it in church, others feel it during their own or others' courageous moments, other people just feel it in their body, as when you get chills when you hear a truth. There are so many ways, and this is the time to share the special secrets of your soul... to gently create the space for your child to feel that they can share what they feel.

Here are a few ideas....

Go outside and hug a tree. What does the tree feel like - does it feel strong? What may you name the tree if you gave it a name (like Anne of Green Gables did)? Can you feel its roots? Pretend you are a tree.

Tell or read a story about someone you know who showed courage or compassion or a spiritual leader and ask what makes them special? How can we feel that in our own lives?

Meditate/contemplate/pray together - give gratitude and welcome spirit/love into your world right now.

Do a healing on each other by kissing a sore and waving fairy dust on it.

Divine Light

Learning Objective - learning how to prepare ourselves for a peaceful sleep.

Say a loving affirmation or prayer for the child each night. Because our subconscious is so open to suggestion and maybe because our angels listen, it is a loving idea to say before every sleep time: 'May only divine love and divine light be with you all through the night. Enjoy peaceful loving dreams.' Check in to see how the child is sleeping.

Create a custom affirmation or prayers for the child that is special between you both, and helps create a peaceful sleep (i.e. if the child loves angels and is scared of monsters, do NOT say anything about monsters as repeating the word anchors it, instead ask that strong loving angels, fairies, or big elephants or whatever feels right protect this room and only whoever the child wants are allowed in. It is good to refocus the child and bring in light and love at the end of the affirmation). Feel the room filling with love together.