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## Welcome Back!

We all know that the return to school after an extended break can be challenging. Add in the snow days many of us have experienced and we've got ourselves a chaotic start to the semester!

Hopefully we're back in the swing of things now and able to return to a regular routine. Disruption of a child's routine can be difficult to bounce back from- for the child and the teacher. As we jump into the new semester, let's reexamine challenging behavior and why it might be happening in our classrooms.

### Reframing Behavior

All behaviors serve a purpose. Everything we do is carried out to accomplish a goal. The same is true of challenging behaviors in children. They are typically being used to communicate a message or meet a need. **Many times, these behaviors occur when children do not have the social or emotional skills to**

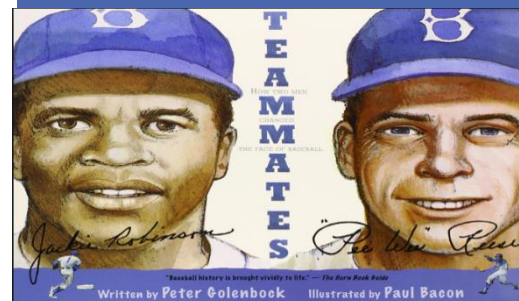
**appropriately express what is going on inside them.** As adults, sometimes we "shut down" when we feel overwhelmed, or give short answers when we are stressed, or even cry. In all of these scenarios, it is the behavior that communicates the message, rather than language. Think about a child who is having difficulty sitting still or staying focused. In the recent weather we've had, he may be saying, **"I've been cooped up too long!"** Other simple messages may be, "I'm tired," "I'm hungry," or "I need to do something more stimulating."

As adults it takes a lot of self-awareness to really realize what we are feeling in a specific moment and use our words to communicate. **If it's hard for us, it's really hard for children.** However, they can do it, and we can set them up for success by teaching them social emotional language and modeling self-regulation.

## Pyramid Model Quarterly Newsletter

A framework for promoting the social emotional development of young children

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# Black History Month

Celebrate the diversity of your school and classroom with books and activities that tell powerful stories of history and promote empathy and compassion among our students. Listed below are some of our favorites.

## TEAMMATES

Teammates is a book by author Peter Golenbock that tells Jackie Robinson's story as the first African American Major League Baseball player. It contains real pictures from the time period and includes themes like courage and friendship.

Teammates has a corresponding Book Nook activity page, which is available [here](#). The activities listed are intended for older elementary aged students, but can certainly be aged down to accommodate younger minds.

Below are some questions to help younger children think through the story. These could also be adapted for other books you choose to read.

Before reading:

- Have you ever had a time when someone was not nice to you?
- Have you ever been called names because people thought you were different?
- How did that make you feel?

After reading:

- What made Jackie different from his teammates?
- How do you think it made him feel that people didn't like him because of his skin color?
- How did he have courage?
- How was Pee Wee a good friend?

Other books to consider that are favorites among Tennessee Voices staff are:

### Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman

This is the story of a little girl with a big imagination who dreams of being Peter Pan in a school play.



### Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History by Vashti Harrison

Notable women in black history are highlighted and children learn the stories of their accomplishments.

### Martin's Big Words by Doreen Rappaport

Powerful words and illustrations set the stage for children of all ages to learn about the importance of MLK Jr.'s life and its impact on today.

Check out more books that celebrate diversity at [The Conscious Kid](#), an education, research, and policy organization that promotes positive identify development in young children.

You can also head over to our Pinterest board where we have pinned more books and activities!

 TVC Early Childhood Program

## Valentine's Day and Friendship Skills

In addition to the treats and cards, Valentine's Day is an opportunity to highlight friendship skills. Consider adding one of the following activities into your classroom routine!

1. Friendship Circle- During the Morning Meeting, have students roll a ball to another child and say, "(Name of child), thank you for being my friend!". This promotes friendship language and can be aged up by asking children to name a time another student displayed friendship. For example, "(Name of child), thank you for playing with me outside!".
2. Transition Friendship Songs- To increase engagement during transitions sing one of these [fun friendship songs](#). Children can sing the song in a whisper voices as they are walking outside or waiting for all children to come to the carpet.
3. Friendship Crafts- Art projects are a great opportunity for peer engagement and partner work. During the valentine's day crafts, limit the number of supplies available so that children have to practice their sharing skills. Set them up for success by modeling how to ask for a turn, how to share, and give them the language to say "I will share after I finishing gluing one more piece," and what waiting patiently looks like and doesn't look like. Then when children correctly share, reinforce with descriptive positive feedback!

# Classroom Consultations to Support Pyramid Model Implementation

Are you wondering what to do now that you have been trained on the Pyramid Model? Did you leave the training with ideas, but aren't sure how to bring the strategies into your classroom? Or do you need some more specific support around challenging behavior? Our Classroom Consultation program can help!

So much of the professional development we receive can get lost between the training session and our daily classrooms. Without someone to support the integration of the new strategies, the new information can simply remain ideas rather than action items.

The Classroom Consultation process is teacher driven with a goal of supporting all children. This process is not evaluative or tied to any formal assessment. It begins with the teacher completing a Needs Assessment, which is a self-reflective tool to identify current teacher strengths and areas to improve upon. The Classroom Consultant works with the teacher and offers strategies and resources to increase teacher practices around the areas identified.

This service is offered at no cost to teachers at child serving centers, preschools, elementary schools, and Head Starts across Tennessee.



## For more information:

To request a classroom consultation, check out our [website](https://www.tnvoices.org) or contact Anna Arts at [aarts@tnvoices.org](mailto:aarts@tnvoices.org).

## Early Childhood Program

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Tennessee Voices for Children Early Childhood Program appreciates the work that you do and wants to provide you with ongoing support.

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