



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Dear Parent/Guardian:

Today in your child's classroom, I read the book *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae. In this book, Gerald, a gangly giraffe, wants to join in at the dance; but all the other animals make fun of him. Luckily, Gerald meets a friendly cricket that helps him *tap into his inner-self* and discover his unique talents. This story empowers young children to learn about *positive self-talk* and personal power.

The asset category for this book is Positive Identity. These assets develop a sense of self; a sense of who you are, what you can do and who you want to be. One important aspect of *personal power* is being responsible for your own behavior and feelings. Caring adults are instrumental in helping preschoolers develop an awareness of their inner-self.

To encourage positive power in preschoolers, look for opportunities that allow your child to make their own decisions. These decisions should be developmentally appropriate and will expand as your child grows. Taking ownership of these decisions teaches your child how to think for themselves, learn how to make choices and accept the consequences of the choice. Giving them this power also shows your child that you value and trust their judgment.

Try these asset building ideas to build their positive identity:

- Model *positive self-talk* out loud. Tap into the voice inside you that says: "I can do this." "I am strong and capable." "I know the right thing to do."
- Sing your thoughts and feelings out loud. Role modeling will encourage your child to sing also while playing. Singing out loud allows you to express your feelings and helps your child name different feelings she/he may be feeling.
- Create a "hall of fame" for the whole family. Set up a bulletin board or designate a wall in a room or hallway. Give each member of your family a section. Allow family members to choose things they want to post. It can be simple things that celebrate new skills learned. These skills can be in physical, social, and emotional areas. Be sure to have all family members participate to model the different things that can be posted-drawings, notes, photos, etc.
- Give your child opportunities to help around the house. Know that the task may take extra time and not be done as well as someone older. Be sure to choose developmental appropriate tasks.
- Encourage your child to learn self-help skills-dress self, button shirts, put on shoes, brush teeth, etc.
- Let your child do things their way sometimes. If they want to hold a book upside down or choose to wear mismatched clothing, let them experiment with this.
- Help your preschooler learn new skills. Break skills into small steps. As each step is mastered, verbally reinforce and celebrate this accomplishment. Take pictures as they complete each step and post on a bulletin board or hall of fame.
- Create a special time where you play one on one with your preschooler. Allow them to choose what you do during this time. Put the timer on and do not let outside things distract you.

If you would like more information about the Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten program, please contact me or visit the Project Cornerstone web site at www.projectcornerstone.org.

Sincerely,

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Project Cornerstone Volunteer

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