

## MAKEBELIEFS COMIX LESSON PLANS

### SECTION 4: USING COMICS TO HELP CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

#### HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IMPROVE LIFE SKILLS

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#### Rationale:

My mantra is that all children can learn. Children with autism just learn differently. I have never met a child that I could not teach. Some of the deficits in children with autism are difficulty with speaking and expressing themselves, as well as limited skills in interacting appropriately with other children. They also need support in learning to share and play with their peers. It was a joy to discover MakeBeliefsComix.com. The comic strips created at the web site can be used as a tool to teach expressions of feelings and social skills such as sharing and turn taking.

#### Helping Young Children with Autism Learn Turn Taking

#### Objective(s):

Learners will be able to wait, share and take turns by using toys and MakeBeliefsComix strips to express themselves and display appropriate behaviors while playing.

#### Materials:

Premade large MakeBeliefsComix panel strips projected on a smart board as well as cardboard cut outs of the talking balloons for easy moving around as children engage in the sharing activity. The strips can be personalized with the names of the children, such as BOBBY'S TURN or CAROL'S TURN; preferred toys such as train, ball, doll; audible timer to be set to indicate start and end of each turn. (The timer serves as a cue to help the children transition, and can be used in almost all activities in teaching children with autism.) Use MakeBeliefsComix to create scenario of how to resolve the conflict of two children wanting to play with the ball at the same time. (See comic below.)



#### Procedure:

Explain to learners that they can play a game with a partner but each has to wait and take turn in order to play. Direction needs to be given one step at a time. Example: "Bobby it's your turn. Take the ball. Roll the ball. Get the ball. It's Carol's turn. Bobby, give the ball to Carol. Carol, it's your turn. Take the ball from Bobby. Toss the ball in the hoop, etc."

Teacher models activity. Set the timer to length of time that you would like your learners to play. Hold up the large talking balloon comic strip – MY TURN or BOBBY'S TURN or CAROL'S TURN. Teacher plays with the ball (bounce, roll, toss, kick). Teacher stops when the timer goes off. Teacher resets the timer. Teacher holds up the large talking balloon strip that says YOUR TURN or CAROL'S TURN. Teacher hands the ball to child.

Child is prompted to play with the ball. Child plays until the timer goes off. Teacher holds up the talking balloon comic strip that says MY TURN. Child is required to give up the ball. Teacher resets the timer and the game is repeated, pairing the child with a partner. Game can be expanded to incorporate more children in taking and waiting turns.

**Expansion of activity:**

Learners will be able to generalize the concept of sharing and turn-taking as they move in other activities throughout the day. Examples: waiting their turn to get a drink at the water fountain without pushing or getting upset, waiting their turn to wash their hands after painting, waiting their turn for a preferred toy that another child is using, etc.

Helping Young Children with Autism Learn How to Express Their Feelings

**Objective(s):**

Learners will be able to identify feelings such as sad, happy, tired and angry and will be able to express their feelings appropriately by using MakeBeliefsComix comic strips, pictures, signs and words. Each of the many characters offered at MakeBeliefsComix shows four different emotions - happy, sad, angry, thoughtful. Teacher can show students how to click on the characters to see different emotions expressed.

**Materials:**

Premade large MakeBeliefs panel strips projected on the smart board showing characters with different emotions as well as cardboard cut outs of the talking balloons which children can manipulate. Even if children cannot identify words as yet, introduce the written words "happy" and "sad" along with pictures of happy and sad face in the talking balloon.

**Procedure:**

This is an excellent activity to introduce during Circle Time Activity at the start of each day. This activity gives the learners an outlet to express themselves and can provide valuable information for the teacher who can make accommodations for a child who might be sad or angry. Create the large comic strips with different feelings. Teach the children to identify the different feelings by introducing the strips one at a time. Teacher can use hand over hand instructions if the children are unable or unwilling to pick up the talking balloon strips. (In hand over hand instructions, the teacher places his/her hand over the child's hand to direct child's hand in completing the task. If you are using a smart board you can do hand over hand to help the learner click on the balloon which represents his feeling, or if using a cut out help the child pick up the balloon that represents his feeling.)

Teacher sings a good morning song as learners gather for circle time. Teacher presents the talking balloon comic strips with a different feeling on each strip either on a smart board or large cutout cardboard that says HAPPY or SAD or ANGRY.

Teacher asks each child, "Bobby, how do you feel?" The verbal child can say the word as well as pick out his feeling balloon. The nonverbal child will be presented with two balloon strips. "Karen, are you happy or sad?" If child does not voluntarily point to the balloon that describes her feeling, she will be encouraged hand over hand to point to the picture that represents her feeling. Take child's hand and point to each feeling - "Are you happy or sad?" Let go of child's hand so that she may point to her feeling.

As child identifies his/her feeling, teacher acknowledges selection. For example, "Karen is feeling sad." Get the rest of the learners involved. "Who else is sad?" Acknowledge others who are sad. If the child will tolerate being hugged, you can offer a hug. Demonstrate how to give self a hug and tell children to give themselves a hug. Many children with autism can't tolerate being held or touched so you can offer some stuffed toys for children to hug. Continue to probe and question to find out other children's feeling. For example, "Is anyone feeling happy?" For the learners who identify their feeling as happy, teacher can acknowledge by saying, "I am so glad that Jack and Sophie are happy." Teacher can teach song, "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands, (snap your finger, stomp your feet etc.)" or invite children to sing if they already know it. Teacher can extend lesson to teach various emotions.

**Teacher can extend lesson to teach various emotions.**

**Follow Up Activity:**

Learners can be encouraged to express their feelings on blank comic strip balloon through painting and drawing. Praise whatever the children paint as their feeling even if it's a dot or a line. Each day they can draw or paint a different feeling which can be made into a My Feeling Book. Learners can work with teachers, too, using MakeBeliefsComix to select characters who show different emotions and then type into talk balloons next to the characters words such as "I feel happy" or "I am sad" or "I feel angry." Perhaps there is even a simple happy or sad story that can be created as a comic strip to illustrate this emotion. These comic strips can be printed out and pasted together in a notebook.

There are also special printables offered in the printables section of MakeBeliefsComix that were created for students on the Autism Spectrum that show the comic characters talking about their feelings; these can be a jumping off board for a teacher to create her own interactive comic strips. See special [Autism Spectrum Printables](#) on MakeBeliefsComix.com.

To learn how other teachers and parents use MakeBeliefsComix.com to work with children with autism, see our [Autism Resource](#) page.

[For a useful article on how comic strip generators like MakeBeliefsComix.com are used for students with autism, please read this article in \*SpecialEdConnection\*.](#)