

Family Literacy Guided Lesson

For

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day/
Alexander y el dia terrible, horrible, espantoso, horroroso

NY State Learning Standards

Learning

Standards

Related to English

Language Arts

Standard 2:

Students will listen and speak for social interaction.

Students will use oral language for effective communication

with a variety of people. They will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people.

About the Book

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day / Alexander y el dia terrible, horrible, espantoso, horroroso

Judith Viorst, author and Ray Cruz, Illustrator

Alexander woke up with gum in his hair, tripped over his skateboard and accidentally dropped his sweater in the sink. That was just the beginning! Poor Alexander has one of the worst days ever. Judith Viorst tells an amusing story of a young boy whose day just keeps getting worse. The story is told from Alexander's point of view, giving the reader insight into what makes such a terrible, horrible, no good and very bad day.

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The Language/Literacy Connection

Using the Many Modes of Communication to Work Through Problems and to Express Your Emotions

Most everyone has had one of *those* days, a day when everything that seemingly can go wrong does! You wake up in a bad mood and have a difficult time getting out of it. Daily challenges frustrate and anger you. It may be hard to get out of the rut of feeling like everything around you is bad and horrible. Children also have these kinds of days. The challenge is to teach children appropriate ways to communicate their frustrations and negative feelings. Expressing feelings through speaking and writing is an appropriate way for children, as well as adults, to work out problems. Preventive strategies and humor are among the many modes of communication that can lead to positive end results.

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Early Childhood Education-Infant/Toddler Level

Let's Take a Look at the Problem

PLS-4 Skills

Auditory

Comprehension

15. Responds to no-no

22. Understands inhibitory words

Expressive

Communication

22. Uses five to ten words

23. Uses vocalizations and gestures to request toys or food

Before the Visit

Gather Needed Materials

- ♦ A small child-safe mirror

Prepare Lesson Props

None

Looking in the Mirror

- ♦ Make your grumpy face while looking in the mirror. Say: *This is my grumpy face.* Make other faces. For each face use a word to describe the expression. *This is my silly face.* Or, *this is my sad face.*
- ♦ Say to the parent: *Babies enjoy looking at themselves in the mirror. If you sit in front of the mirror and make faces, he/she may imitate the faces you make. Toddlers may try different facial expressions on their own. It can be fun to watch! Let's see what (child's name) will do on his/her own and what faces he/she will imitate.*
- ♦ Have the parent hold the child in his/her lap so they can look in the mirror together. Have them make different facial expressions. Use language to describe the faces.

During the Visit

- ♦ With the parent and infant sitting together read or look at *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day / Alexander y el dia terrible, horrible, espantoso, horroroso.* The concept of this book is rather mature for young children, but toddlers may be amused by Alexander's facial expressions. Point to pictures that show Alexander looking upset to help illustrate how grumpy he feels.
- ♦ Say: *(Child's name), look at Alexander, he looks so grumpy! This is the face I make when I'm grumpy.* Make a grumpy face. If the child is a toddler, ask to see his/her grumpy face. Ask the parent to show his/her grumpy face. Make and label other facial expressions.

Learning Appropriate Behavior

- ♦ Say: *When (child's name) is upset, what does he/she do?* After the parent responds, let him/her know that (most likely) his/her child's actions are typical.
- ♦ Say: *Many children who do not yet have the language to communicate use physical means such as hitting and biting to express anger. There are strategies you can use to avoid or change these behaviors. Thinking ahead to prevent a conflict is one of them. For example, when a playmate is coming for a visit put away (child's name) favorite toys to avoid an argument.*
- ♦ Say: *Think of a situation that is frustrating to (child's name). What can you do to help (child's name) cope in a positive way?*
- ♦ Discuss a specific situation and specific strategies the parent can use.
- ♦ Say: *An important strategy is to teach (child's name) to use words to express anger and frustration. He/she can say, "I'm mad!" or "No" to another child or in a situation that is frustrating. A good way to teach (child's name) to use words to express feelings is to model using words when you are angry. Another technique is to consistently tell (child's name) every time he/she does a specific thing that is against your rules and to tell him/her "no" sooner rather than later.*

Early Childhood Education-Preschool and School Age Levels

Think About This...

Before the Visit

PLS-4 Skills

Auditory

Comprehension

- 37. Makes inferences

Expressive

Communication

- 42. Uses words to describe a physical state
- 46. Completes analogies

Gather Needed Materials

- ♦ Paper to write out responses
- ♦ Pen or pencil and colored markers
- ♦ Child safe scissors
- ♦ Glue stick
- ♦ Large piece of construction paper
- ♦ Magazine pictures of people with different expressions (happy, sad, angry)

Prepare Lesson Props

- ♦ Consider possible answers to the questions below
- ♦ Cut out magazine pictures of people with different expressions

During the Visit

- ♦ With the parent and child sitting together, read *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* / *Alexander y el dia terrible, horrible, espantoso, horroroso*. If the parent is a reader, ask him/her to read the book to the child. While reading, encourage the child to look at Alexander's expressions. Ask leading questions to engage the parent and child in a discussion about the book. *What do you think was the worst thing that happened to Alexander? Where did he want to move? What do you do when you're mad at someone?*

Brainstorm

- ♦ Say: *Let's figure out other ways to solve some of Alexander's problems. How could Alexander, his mother, or his teacher handle things differently? How could some of Alexander's problems be prevented?* Focus on a few problems. For each problem, discuss what happened in the book, then discuss a way the problem might have been prevented or handled differently. For preschoolers, choose two or three situations. For school-age children, choose four or five situations. If the child and parent are writers, have them write out their ideas.

1. *What could Alexander have done so he wouldn't have tripped on his skateboard?*
2. *What could have made Alexander feel better at breakfast?*
3. *What could have been done or said to make Alexander feel better during the ride to school?*
4. *What else could Alexander have done when his friend, Paul, said that Alexander was only his third best friend?*
5. *What else could Alexander have done when his brother called him a crybaby?*
6. *What could have been done so that Alexander might not have gotten into so much trouble at his father's office?*

Some suggestions for problem solving are:

- ♦ Be preventative! Plan ahead to avoid problems.
- ♦ Use words rather than physical means to express anger! Say "I'm mad" and explain why.
- ♦ Use humor to lighten the situation.
- ♦ Ask an adult to help in certain situations.

Make an Emotions Collage

1. Look at the cut out pictures and separate them into categories: happy, sad, and angry.
2. Use a marker to draw lines that separate the paper into three sections.
3. Label the top of each section: HAPPY, SAD, ANGRY.
4. Glue the pictures in the appropriate categories.

Parenting Education Activity

How We Can Help

All children experience times of frustration and anger. How they behave at these times and how people around them react can lead to a worse situation or can make the situation better. The focus of this lesson is to discuss techniques for parents to utilize when a child is upset.

Infants

Babies cry to express displeasure of one kind or another; they may be hungry, sleepy, bored, have a wet diaper, or be in pain. Their cries let parents know something is needed. It's important to **respond to his/her cries** and try different ways to satisfy his/her needs. Change his/her diaper. Give a bottle. Rock and cuddle. Give an interesting toy to play with. If your older baby becomes focused on one thing that seems to frustrate or anger him/her, distract his/her attention away from the problem to something new. Chances are, he/she will forget about whatever was causing him/her all the trouble.

Toddlers

Be preventative!

Do something ahead of time to avoid the possibility of a conflict. This is a great way to keep things going smoothly. Help your child **use his/her words**. Rather than letting your child use physical means to solve frustrating situations, give him/her words to use to express feelings. Say to your child, "You can say 'I'm mad!'"

Preschool-Age

Continue to use **preventative** strategies and have your child **use words** to express feelings. Teach your child to **make choices**. Offer choices that you can live with such as: *Do you want juice or milk? Do you want to ride your bike or play on the swing? Do you want Mom or Dad to read a bedtime story?* Offering acceptable choices lets your child be in control of the final decision, but lets you be in control of the possible alternatives. Teach your child **different ways to express feelings** such as singing, dancing, and drawing how he/she feels. A different activity can change a bad mood to a good mood quickly!

School-Age

School-aged children are capable of listening to **reasoning** and of reasoning through some problems on their own. Reasoning is when you explain *why*. Why you have certain rules, why you make certain decisions, why you feel the way you feel, etc. If a child understands the reason behind a decision, he/she may be better able to cope with the situation.

Practicing Problem Solving Techniques

Use the above techniques, and suggestions to discuss the following scenarios:

1. Mary was catching up on her laundry while her six-month old baby daughter, Janie, was taking her morning nap. Suddenly Janie began to cry. *Why might Janie be crying? What should Mary do?*
2. Ten-year old Lucinda came home from school very excited that her new friend, Terisita, had invited her to spend the night this Friday. Lucinda's mother had never met Terisita or Terisita's parents and did not feel comfortable letting Lucinda spend the night. *What could Lucinda's mother say to her daughter to lessen her daughter's disappointment of not being able to spend the night?*
3. José's best friend, Samuel, was coming over to play for the afternoon. José's dad knew that his four-year old son had one new game that he really wanted to play with Samuel. When Samuel came over, Samuel had no interest in playing the game. José was very sad and wanted Samuel to go home. *What could José's dad do to help the situation?*
4. Vicky's two-year-old birthday party was last week, and Vicky had received a new doll she loved. Her cousin, Lisa, is coming over to play. Lisa loves to play dolls. *What can Vicky's mother do ahead of time to prevent a squabble between the cousins over Vicky's new doll?*

Interactive Literacy Activities Between Parents and Their Children

Express Yourself

There are many different ways to express yourself: talking, singing, making faces, even drawing and dancing.

Here are some activities for you and your child to express emotions in many different ways.

Sing a Song About Feelings

Sing *If You're Happy and You Know It* in a new way by substituting your own words.

If you're mad and you know it stomp your feet.

If you're mad and you know it say I'm mad.

If you're sad and you know it say boo-hoo.

If you're sleepy and you know it stretch and yawn.

Rewrite the Title

Write a new title for Alexander when he has a great, happy day. Use many adjectives.

Make Faces

Sit in front of a mirror with your child. See how many different faces you can make. Make happy faces, sad faces, mad faces, surprised faces, sleepy faces, scared faces, silly faces, etc.

Act it Out

Play house or school with your child and let him/her be the parent or teacher. Pretend to be mad about something and see how your child tries to solve the problem as the parent or teacher. Give suggestions for what he/she could do to help you.

Dance Your Grumpies Out

Music has a magical effect. It can change a mood very quickly. Play music your child enjoys and dance your grumpies out!

Draw It!

When your child is feeling angry or is in a bad mood, give him/her crayons or markers and paper to draw a picture about how he/she is feeling. The first picture may actually "look" angry, but if your child enjoys art activities, this may quickly change his/her mood around!

Write It!

If your child is a writer, encourage him/her to write in a "diary." This gives your child an opportunity to express emotions privately through writing.

Write a letter with your child to a family member or friend. Write about how you feel about the season, an upcoming holiday or celebration, what's going on in the world, etc. Younger children can draw pictures to include with the letter.

Adult Literacy - ABE Level

Being Thankful

- ⋮ There are times when people feel angry or frustrated and become focused on those negative feelings.
- ⋮ Instead of looking at the negative things, take a minute to look at the positive things.

.....

With the adult, discuss the positive things in his/her life. Discuss not only big things, such as family, friends, a job that's going well, a planned vacation, or a personal success. Also discuss little things that occur everyday and may be taken for granted such as fresh vegetables to eat, a good cup of coffee, a favorite book to read, a favorite piece of clothing, a kiss hello/goodbye from a child or significant other, etc. After you have discussed these, if the adult is a writer, have him/her write a list of at least 10 items that he/she is thankful for. If the adult is not a writer, write the list for him/her.

I am thankful for...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Adult Literacy - GED Level

A Gratitude Journal

People face challenges throughout their lives. When faced with a challenge, you have a choice. You can focus your energy on negative things and let that influence all aspects of your life. Or, you can draw strength from the positive or good things in your life. One way to look at your life in a more positive way, both in good times and in difficult times, is to write in a gratitude journal.

Use an inexpensive ruled notebook, a decorative journal, or some paper kept together in a folder. Whatever you choose to use will work to make a journal. Write the date at the beginning of each entry and write three things that you are thankful for on that day. Think of the little things that make you feel good during the day, for example, a good-morning hug from your child, a good cup of coffee, a phone call from a friend, the sun shining through the kitchen window, finding a coin in the parking lot. You'll be surprised how much doing this can change your outlook each day!

Sample journal entries:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| April 5th | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Madeline's good morning hug2. Roberto's phone call in the afternoon just to check in3. The letter from Victoria4. Alison drew me a beautiful picture of a kite |
| April 6th | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A beautiful sunny day2. 30 minutes of quiet to read a book to my child3. Meeting Pam for coffee |
| April 7th | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Fresh fruit for breakfast2. Roberto made me a wonderful dinner3. Alison and Madeline both cooperated while we went shopping |

Adult Literacy - ELL Lesson

Expressing Emotions

Teach English words that the learner can use to describe emotions.

Introduce Vocabulary

Vocabulary

- ♦ Sad
- ♦ Happy
- ♦ Angry
- ♦ Scared
- ♦ Tired
- ♦ Surprised

Expressions

- ♦ I am
- ♦ I feel
- ♦ He or she feels

Lesson

Props

- ♦ Magazine pictures that illustrate the following emotions: sad, happy, angry, tired, scared and surprised.
- ♦ A hand mirror

- ♦ Show the magazine pictures that illustrate the emotion *sad* to the learner. Say: *He (she) feels sad. How does he (she) feel? He (she) feels sad.* Ask again: *How does he (she) feel? Motion to the learner to repeat: He (she) feels sad.*
- ♦ Repeat the procedure 3 times.
- ♦ Use the same procedure to introduce the remaining vocabulary words.

Mirror Reinforcement

- ♦ Hold the hand mirror. Make a sad face in the mirror. Say: *I feel sad.* Give the mirror to the learner. Say: *I feel sad.* Motion to the learner to make a sad face in the mirror. Ask: *How do I feel? I feel sad.* Ask again: *How do I feel? Motion to the learner to repeat: I feel sad.*
- ♦ Repeat the procedure 3 times.
- ♦ Use the same procedure to reinforce the other vocabulary words.

Show Me

- ♦ Lay the magazine pictures on the workspace. Say: *Show me sad.* Motion to the learner to point to the picture that illustrates *sad*.
- ♦ Use the same procedure to reinforce the other vocabulary words.

Yes/No Questions

- ♦ Lay the magazine pictures on the workspace. Point to one picture and ask: *Does he (she) feel sad? Motion to the learner to respond: Yes, he (she) feels sad. Or, No, he (she) feels _____.*
- ♦ Continue asking yes/no question to reinforce vocabulary.