



All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

“Use your words” is a popular refrain in a kindergarten classroom. The ultimate goal of preschool and kindergarten teachers all over the country (probably the world as well) is to encourage children to be careful and kind with one another. A famous book by Robert Fulghum, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten,” encourages people to go back to their kindergarten experiences and take lessons from what they learned then and use them now in their daily lives.

Use your words

When children are playing together, they often lack the ability to wait patiently for a turn or even have the language, yet, to say what they need. Children need adults to model, demonstrate and facilitate this learning constantly. The more children hear adults say, “Can I take a turn when you are done?” “Can we set a timer so I can use the doll after you?” the more the children will use this language on their own.

Treat others with kindness

Educators know that children under the age of 5, at least and often even beyond this age, really don’t have the ability to be mean. They take things from others or push another child when they are upset, but those children aren’t being mean. They might not know how to communicate their feelings in a socially appropriate way; they might not have the words to ask for a turn. Calling someone “mean” assumes a level of forethought. I, as an adult, can be mean. I try not to be, but just bear with me. If I walk up to another person and take something out of their hands, this is mean. And as an adult, I have the intellectual capability to think about my actions, plan what I am doing and then execute that plan.



Share

“You should share with your friends.” How many times have you heard this being said? Too many to count for me. But what does it mean to share? Children can learn to take turns, each having an independent time with an item, much more easily than they can share. Merriam Webster defines “share” as to partake of, use, experience, occupy, or enjoy with others. This really means that to be able to share, you have to use something together, at the same time. This is a concept and ability that doesn’t really happen until later in childhood.

Forgotten Abilities

Watch the news or better yet, watch clips from news organizations, and you will see groups of people occupying college buildings, college quads, shouting hateful slogans. While some of these protesters exhibit their ability to “use their words,” I think they just haven’t learned the meaning of the words they are shouting. The protesters are unequivocally anti-Israel. Their purpose is to intimidate the universities to divest from Israel. However, as they shout, “Free Palestine,” it strikes me as odd since the individuals who are keeping the people living in Gaza from being free, are members of the terrorist group, Hamas. Maybe they are shouting at the wrong people? And when these protesters are smashing windows and occupying buildings or keeping students from getting to their classes, they are no longer just using their words. They aren’t treating people with kindness and they certainly aren’t sharing.

I choose to believe they have just forgotten these abilities or maybe they are still working on learning them and just haven’t gotten there yet?

Maybe it is time to go back to kindergarten.

#ShabbatShalom