

# Activities to Promote Social and Emotional Health of School-age Children

**Activity Title:** Talking About Mistakes

**Age Range:** School-age (6-10 years)

**Purpose of Activity:** We all make mistakes and can learn from them. Let's teach children how not to become frustrated or overwhelmed by mistakes, but to learn from them. Children learn to be persistent, cope, and gain a sense of pride when they learn to overcome mistakes. Problem-solving will flourish as children gain more skills to work through conflicts.

**Materials:**

*Regina's Big Mistake* by Marissa Moss (or other book with the theme of turning mistakes into successes).

Or, a game like "Jenga" where mistakes are easy to make.

Or, just a good conversation about making mistakes

**Steps:**

- 1.) Whether you are reading the story, playing the game, or just talking with your child - the following are good discussion topics and open-ended questions to help talk with your child about making mistakes, and dealing with frustration.
- 2.) Sit facing your child, smile, and make eye contact regularly. Ask your child what a "mistake" is.
- 3.) Share what you think a "mistake" is (something you didn't mean to do, a mess-up, an accident, a goof, and so on). Set loving limits: "I think "Goof up" or "Mess up" is a more appropriate way to refer to a mistake."
- 4.) Share a time you made a mistake.
- 5.) Talk about how it feels to make mistakes.
- 6.) Ask your child to help you problem-solve, "What do you think I could have done to fix my mistake?" Calmly talk about what you learned when you made a mistake and what you might do differently the next time you are in that situation.
- 7.) Ask your child how she feels when she makes a mistake.
- 8.) Talk about ways to deal with strong feelings, like frustration. Some ideas include:
  - taking a break and then coming back to the situation,
  - taking a deep breath or counting slowly to 10, and
  - cleaning up a mess or finding a way to correct the mistake.

Activity adapted from "Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure: 50 Activities to Promote Resilience in Young Children", by Nefertiti Bruce and Karen Cairone, with the Devereux Center for Resilient Children, 2011, North Carolina: Gryphon House, Inc.