

Learning Gentleness Through a Story

As mentioned in the last issue, stories are effective means to help children understand the virtues and learn how to apply them in their daily life. The following story extracted from the resource materials of *The Virtues in Us™* Children's Character Education Program, can be used by parents and teachers to teach children 4-7 years old about the virtue of gentleness. The depicted situation could happen in any school or home environment and can easily be turned into a learning opportunity.

This story is best dramatized with props to make imagination vivid. Reflective questions enhance understanding of the feelings, thoughts and behaviors. By encouraging positive thoughts and emotions in the child, the educator augments positive behavior.

Preparation: Toy blocks; a marker and a doll to represent Cara, the main character. Relate the story using different tones of voice to dramatize the dialogues and convey emotions. The suggested questions and activities are inserted in the text in italic.

Cara Learns Gentleness

Cara was often very kind to others. She loved her classmates very much. She would get so excited about having play time with her friends that she could hardly sit still while her teacher, Ms. Lee, was talking.

After giving an important lesson, Ms. Lee announced, "Okay everyone, you may now have fifteen minutes of free time in the play room." Cara was so excited that she jumped up, and ran into the play room. First, she went with Jacob and Mona to make a tower out of blocks. They worked patiently, and soon the tower was very high (*patiently make a tall tower with your child*), but not long after, Cara lost interest in stacking blocks.

She decided to create a funny game, and stack blocks on Mona's head. (*Put the blocks on child's head*) "What are you doing?" Mona cried. She pushed the blocks off her head, and they fell straight into the magnificent block tower. The tower toppled, and all that was left was a pile of blocks. (*let them drop with a loud splash smashing the magnificent tower you had just built together. Q. How do you think the children felt when they saw the tower of blocks they had made toppled?*)

"You know Cara, I think Jacob and I can build the block tower by ourselves," Mona said. "Please go and play with someone else."

Cara sadly walked off. She had never meant to hurt anyone. She was just trying to be funny. She gazed across the room, and saw Layla and Jordan coloring. She walked over, and asked if she could join them.

"Sure," Layla answered. Cara happily sat down, and began drawing a picture of her

family. After a while, Jordan called her name from across the table.

“Cara, may I borrow that blue marker next to you?” She was so happy to share the marker with Jordan that she threw the marker with more force than she had intended. The marker flew straight for Jordan’s face, and bounced off his nose. (*Throw the marker towards the wall/couch and then pretend it has hit your nose and cry with pain. Then ask, “how did Jordan feel after being hit?”*) Cara was horrified as she watched Jordan’s face turn red and his eyes begin to stream with tears. (*Q. How did Cara feel when she saw her good friend Jordan hurt?*) Ms. Lee came over.

“Jordan, what are those tears for?” Ms. Lee exclaimed.

“Cara threw a marker at my face!” Jordan cried.

“Come with me Jordan. Let me take a look at your nose.”

Cara felt very sad about what she had done. Jordan was her dear friend, and she didn’t want him to be in pain. She was only trying to play with him, not hurt him. She ran to a closet where no one would see her, and buried her face in her hands. (*Hide the doll representing Cara behind a nearby object, burying her face in her hands*).

Pretty soon there was a knock on the door, and Ms. Lee poked her head in.

“Cara, what are you doing in here?” She asked.

“I’m sorry Ms. Lee! I never meant to hurt Jordan. I feel so sad.” Cara cried.

“Come out here Cara, and let me talk to you.” (*Crawl Cara out of her hiding place*).

Cara slowly crawled out of the closet, and sat at a nearby table with Ms. Lee.

“I know you were only trying to share with Jordan,” Ms. Lee said softly, “but sometimes you get so excited that you forget to practice a virtue that is very important when playing with friends.”

“What virtue is that, Ms. Lee?” Cara asked.

“The virtue of gentleness. If we become too rough in our play, often someone gets hurt. We must always be careful to practice kindness with our friends by playing softly and gently. What should you have done instead of throwing the marker to Jordan?”

“I should have handed it to him,” Cara answered. (*Practice gently handing over the marker*). As she said this, she realized that there had been many times that day that she had not practiced gentleness. She realized that stacking blocks on Mona’s head was not a very gentle or kind thing to do, and jumping into Tina’s arms was not very gentle either.

“If we do not practice gentleness when we are playing with our friends, “Ms. Lee

continued, “then our friends may be afraid to play with us. They may be afraid that we will play too roughly, and hurt them.”

“You’re right Ms. Lee! I was playing too roughly today! Do you think Jordan will give me a second chance?” Cara asked.

“I’m sure he will, Cara. You can go and apologize, now.” Ms. Lee walked Cara to the corner where Jordan was sitting.

“Jordan, I’m really sorry about hitting you with the marker. I really didn’t want to hurt you. I was only trying to share, but I got too excited, and played a little too roughly.” (*Practice apologizing*).

“It is okay Cara. Just be gentler next time.”

From that day on, Cara was very careful about practicing gentleness. She was still excited about playing with her friends during play time, but now her friends were excited about playing with her too. (*Continue to play, sing and talk on the theme of gentleness*).

Additional Questions:

The following questions could be used to lead to a deeper dialogue with children on how to positively respond to someone who is not showing gentleness. After all, wrong doing is often a matter of ignorance that can be remedied with appropriate education. If we can teach our children to have positive thoughts and feelings about others, we can expect their behavior to be positive.

Q. 1. How do you think Mona felt when Cara built the flight of blocks on her head? How could she have changed her emotions and her response positively? (Sample Ans. Cara I do not like it when you put blocks on my head. Please be considerate and gentle.)

Q. 2. Did Jordan show gentleness with Cara?

Story from: The Virtues in Us resource materials

Questions and presentation ideas: Mozhdeh Mohajer

Pictures: Courtesy of The Family Learning House