

Sock-Hand Activity

Understanding disabilities and fostering empathy

Lesson Objective/Goal:

This activity will help children understand what it might be like to have a fine-motor hand disability.

A disability is a condition that limits a person's body movements or mind. For example, some children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) have difficulty with fine motor movements using their fingers or small muscles in one or both hands. (You may want to refer to the glossary at the back of the book, "Calvin's Crazy Boots" by Kim Pfeiffer).

You will need:

- *Two small children's socks for each child. The socks should fit tightly when worn on children's hands like mittens.
- *One pencil/crayon and 2 sheets of plain white paper for each child
- *Small objects to pick up. Examples: pencil, paper clip, rubber band, cup, spoon, or small toys such as blocks, linking cubes, balls, or cars. Have a variety of objects available for each group.

Set the stage:

- *What do you think it would be like if one of your hands couldn't move well?
- *What could cause your hand to NOT work the way your brain wants it to? (cold weather; broken bone; playground injury; brain injury like stroke or cerebral palsy; etc.)

"When the body doesn't move how the brain tells it to move, it's called a **motor disability**. Today, you're going to try moving your hand with a disability. Your hand will be disabled because it will have a sock covering it."

Activities:

1.) Help children determine which hand is their **strong hand**. This is the hand the child uses to hold a pencil, use a spoon, or throw a ball. Explain how for some this is the right hand, and for others it is the left hand.

Play a game asking them to follow commands with the strong hand. Example, "Raise your strong hand in the air; Touch your nose with your strong hand; wiggle the fingers on your strong hand; etc."

Remind children that their strong hand will be the hand needed for the activities. You can invite children to mark a small X on this hand with a washable marker.

2.) Divide children into pairs or small groups. Ask children to place a snug-fitting sock over their **strong hand**. Invite the children to experiment drawing a picture, writing their name, and folding a piece of paper while wearing the sock on their hand.

3.) Invite children to try picking up and playing with objects using the sock-hand. You may challenge them to specific tasks: stack blocks, connect linking cubes, make a paperclip chain, catch a ball, etc.

4.) Ask groups to repeat the above activities with socks on BOTH hands.

Review and Discuss

Start by having a “reporter” from each group talk about what the group noticed.

Follow with class discussion:

- *What did you notice when you drew, folded paper, or played with objects using the sock-hand?

- *What was different when you had socks on both hands?

- *How do you think you would feel if you always had to wear a sock over one hand and you could never take it off?

- *How do you think it would feel to be different from other children because you have a disability?

- *What feelings might you have about going to a birthday party if you had a hand disability?

- *How do you think you could show kindness to a child with a disability?

Note: This is a teachable moment to discuss “disability etiquette.” (e.g.) Always ask a child with a disability if they would like help? Honor the child’s response. Help if they want help; let them do it themselves if they say, “No thank you.”

Extension activities:

- *Ask children to try dressing tasks while wearing the sock on one/both hands, such as zipping a jacket, pulling on shoes, or tying shoelaces.

- *Ask children to try snacking while wearing the sock on one/both hands: picking up small cereal, unwrapping a candy, or using a spoon to eat a pudding cup.

- *Read aloud and discuss children’s books about disabilities or kindness.