

# Sunshine STEPS



1. Stop and calm yourself down



2. Tell how you feel  
(take turns)



3. Think of ways to solve  
the problem, resolve the  
conflict, or make a  
decision. Then evaluate the  
choices.



4. Pick the best solution

## **The Sunshine STEPS**

The **Sunshine STEPS** can be used with the stories as a tool for teaching the children how to handle situations, make decisions, solve problems, and resolve conflicts. The **STEPS** are presented in a consistent manner and are designed to be easily understood by children.

After each story, you can review the situation and reinforce the solution with the **Sunshine STEPS**. Once the children have a clear understanding of the **STEPS**, they can be used in all classroom situations. It is suggested to turn the **STEPS** into a large poster that can be hung on the wall in the location that you choose to use to resolve problems between children.

## **The Calm-Down or Work-Out Center**

The “Calm-Down or Work- Out Center” is a location that is designated a safe place to resolve conflicts and solve problems between children. The center should be a place away from most of the regular school activities. Introduce children to the center and the concept. When there is a problem or conflict the children will learn that they must go to the center to work it out. A moderator should always be present with the children. The moderator should be the teacher or aide. It is important that this person have a full understanding of the **Sunshine STEPS**, is empathetic and compassionate, and a good listener. The moderator is not supposed to solve the problem for the children, they are to facilitate so the children can learn to solve their own problems.

The Center can be given any creative name. Some names I have heard besides Calm Down Center, are Work Out Area, Peace Mats, Peace Rugs, Peace Center, Time Out Room, Thinking Chair.

Make this a cozy place free from clutter and confusion. It is suggested to put two chairs in the area for the children to sit on. You can also hang up the rules and the **Sunshine STEPS** in the

room on poster-size paper. Other posters that represent peace, respect, understanding, etc can be hung.

### **Calm Breathing or Pizza Breathing**

Children do not always know how to breathe properly to calm themselves down. It is important that children learn this skill early. The simplest way I have learned to teach children deep breathing is calling it “Pizza Breathing.” Have children stretch out their arms and cup their hands, pretending they are holding a piece of pizza. Now first they must smell the delicious pizza. Have them bring their hands up to their nose and take a deep breath, in through their nose, to smell the pizza.

Now it is time to cool the pizza down because it is HOT. Instruct children to let out their air by blowing out of their mouth onto the pizza to cool it down. Have the children repeat this a few times.

You can make this fun and exciting for the children by being enthusiastic, creative, and dramatic.

It is important that the children understand that all problems, conflicts, situations WILL BE addressed – that they WILL be heard. Try not to minimize their feelings. What they think is a “problem”, you may think is nothing. But remember, it IS important to them, and to them it IS something. It is important to not be judgmental. Sometimes teachers/educators are so busy with teaching their curricula that they may push situations aside. They may just separate kids or move problem children to alternative locations. This does NOT solve the problem. This addresses the problem temporarily, but does not show kids the skills on how to resolve their problems. The more time you put into this area in the beginning, the less time you will have to solve their problems in the future – they will be doing it on their own.



### **Sunshine STEP one: STOP**

Conflicts cannot be resolved and good decisions cannot be made while emotions are running high. When emotions are running high your heart beats faster, making the blood run through your body faster. Children need to be taught to calm down before making any decisions. The first STEP is to tell them to STOP and take a minute to calm down and relax. Breathing, meditating, exercising, and relaxing are ways to calm your body down and regain your focus (Instructions for teaching calm breathing is in the manual.)



### **Sunshine STEP two: TELL**

After each child has calmed themselves down, it is now time for each child to have the opportunity to tell their side of the situation, from their view. This is an opportunity for them to share their feelings and to be heard. Let each child have a turn. Encourage them to share their feelings. Make sure to set rules prior to talking. For instance: no interrupting, no putdowns, keep safe and fair, and share your own view on the situation only. It is important that the moderator (teacher) allow each child the opportunity to share, keep the children focused, and make sure that the children follow the rules.



### **Sunshine STEP three: THINK (Evaluate)**

After each child has had the opportunity to share their side or view on the situation, it is now time for each child to brainstorm/think of different solutions to the problem. Encourage different solutions, whether positive or negative. Remind the children during this step that they are just brainstorming/thinking of different ways to solve the problem; it is not actually solving the problem. Write down the solutions that the children pick. If they need help brainstorming/thinking of ideas, you can ask them if they want help from the other students or from you.

After they have finished brainstorming/thinking of solutions and you have written them down, it is now time to evaluate each solution. With each solution, ask the children if the solution is safe and fair. If the solution is not safe or could hurt someone emotionally or physically, make sure the children are aware that this would not be a good solution or decision. Go on to another solution and review that one. Keep evaluating solutions until the children agree on one that is both fair and safe.



### **Sunshine STEP 4: Pick**

After the children have evaluated the solution and have agreed on a solution that is both fair and safe, help the children implement that solution. Point out and praise the children for a job well done and for making a good decision.

