



# ACTIVITY KIT

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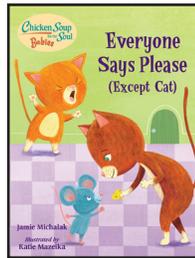
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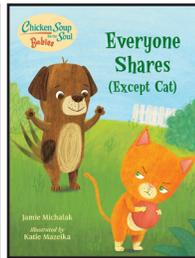
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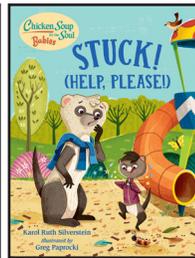
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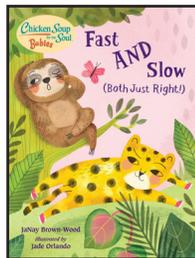
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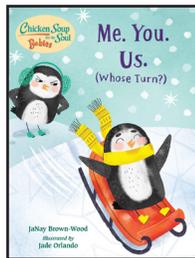
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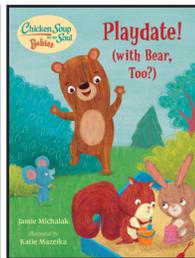
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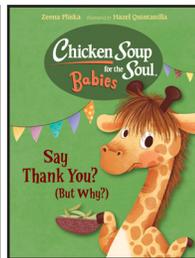
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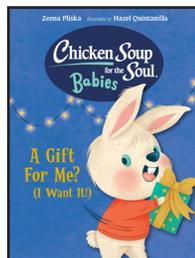
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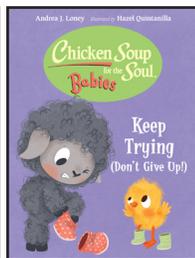
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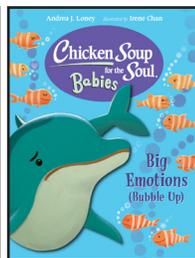
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## About the Series

Sweet and silly, Chicken Soup for the Soul Babies imparts good values through heartwarming and humorous stories to help little ones put their best foot forward.

Clear text and bright illustrations follow these little critters as they learn about manners, sharing, problem-solving, patience, acceptance of differences, turn-taking, and inclusion. Every book includes quick tips for parents and educators to use with their youngsters.



# Everyone Says Please (Except Cat)

## Quick Tips

Teaching your toddler manners means that you're also teaching them how their behavior affects others. A toddler might not grasp that others have feelings until 18 months or older.

Impart healthy habits!

- Model your own manners—say “please” and “thank you” and “excuse me” in front of your child.
- Teach your toddler to notice the color of people’s eyes so that they can practice making eye contact.
- Start very small and simple. Teach your child to say “hello” when someone says “hello” to them.
- Point out when someone gets hurt (feelings count, too!) and how saying “I’m sorry” can make them feel better.

## Simon Says Please

For older children, a fun game of “Simon Says Please” can teach careful listening habits and emphasize the power of polite words.

- At the start of the game, choose one child to be “Simon.”
- Simon uses the formulaic phrase “Simon says, please \_\_\_\_\_” to ask players to perform a task. For example: “Simon says, please hop on one foot.”
- If Simon omits the formula “Simon says, please \_\_\_\_\_” when issuing a task, any player who does perform the task is out. For example: “Simon says, please hop on one foot. Simon says, please meow like a cat. Stop meowing.” Any player who stops meowing is out.
- Continue play until one player is remaining. That player becomes the new Simon.



# Everyone Shares (Except Cat)

## Quick Tips

Did you know that your child may not fully grasp the concept of sharing until age three?

Introducing the concept of empathy—that others have feelings and wants too—can begin earlier.

Impart healthy habits!

- Have plenty of similar toys on hand so that substitutions among kids are easier.
- Encourage activities other than playing with toys—such as a dance party or kicking a ball around. Playground structures like a merry-go-round or seesaw are great for sharing!
- Model sharing behaviors yourself with neighbors or friends.

## Splitting the Dough

Older children can practice sharing and negotiation with a play-dough activity. For the play-dough, you will need:

2 cups flour  
1/2 cup salt  
~1 cup hot water  
2 tbsp cooking oil  
2 tbsp cream of tartar  
food coloring

Whisk together the dry ingredients, then add the cooking oil and water and knead to form a dough. If it looks runny, let it rest a few minutes so the salt can absorb the extra moisture. If too sticky or dry, add flour or water a tablespoon at a time until the dough is smooth.

Next divide the dough evenly and color each portion a different color. If you are working with a group of fewer than ten children, make three colors of dough. For ten to twenty children, start with five colors of dough. For more than twenty children, create six colors.

Give each child a mandarin-orange-sized lump of dough, alternating colors. Then ask them to each gather a sample of all the colors in circulation by asking politely and sharing with each other. Take a few moments before the activity begins to review polite ways of asking for someone to share and kind ways of offering to share with others.

If developmentally appropriate, set a time limit and/or turn on some soothing, upbeat background music while students practice sharing.



# STUCK!

## (HELP, PLEASE!)

## Quick Tips

Toddlers don't always have the ability to cope with big feelings using words.

Teaching your child to stay calm and problem solve when they get "stuck" may lessen disruptive behavior and help build their confidence.

Impart healthy habits!

- Model your own calmness. Tantrums mean your toddler is likely frustrated or overwhelmed, so if you exhibit strong emotions, your toddler may get more upset. Try talking softer every time they talk louder.
- Acknowledge your child's frustration. Encourage toddlers to take a breath and think of solutions on their own first, assuring them that you'll help if needed.
- Teach problem-solving skills with activities like playing with blocks, building forts, matching animals with their sounds, or grouping like items together.

## My Helper

- Using the reproducible sheet on page 5, invite students to draw a picture of someone who helps them. This could be a parent, a sibling, a friend, a teacher, a doctor, or even a pet.
- Invite students to share their drawings in small groups or at circle time and explain who this person is and how they help.
- During discussion, encourage students to reflect on the different ways to help: with words, with actions, with affection, with advice, with a listening ear, etc.



**STUCK!**  
**(HELP, PLEASE!)**

**My Helper**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border occupies the central portion of the page. This box is intended for a child to draw or write about their helper.



# NOW!

## (BARKS DOG)

## Quick Tips

Teaching toddlers patience also means you're teaching them that it's important to communicate needs and wants graciously.

Model healthy behaviors!

- Make the wait a positive experience. By remaining kind and positive when they ask repeatedly for something, you model good behavior for your child and make the wait less tense.
- Waiting might also be fun if you give kids an activity they can do individually or with you—jumping jacks or thumb wars!
- Give them the information they need to contextualize a wait. Reply to “When will we get there?” with time estimates, or daily countdowns with simple frames of reference, such as “We’ll sleep at Grandma’s house after the sun comes up two more times.”
- Be gracious and understanding. It’s harder to have patience when you’re hungry or tired—try to avoid creating a long wait situation too close to nap time or dinner.

## Big Feelings

For older children, identifying big feelings is a key skill in emotional regulation. Materials for this group activity include:

- A large piece of roll or poster paper
  - Markers in several colors
1. In a large or small group of children, lay out the poster paper on the ground and introduce the topic of big emotions. Invite the group to share the names of some big feelings—fear, anger, joy, etc.
  2. Draw a large, stylized outline of a child’s body in black marker on the paper.
  3. Ask the group how anger, fear, sadness, etc. feel in their bodies (for example: sweaty hands, upset stomach, flushed face). Jot down these observations inside the body outline.
  4. Then brainstorm physical strategies for managing feelings together (for example: taking a walk, deep breaths, drinking cold water or a hot cup of tea). Write these suggestions outside the body outline.



# Fast AND Slow

(Both Just Right!)

## Quick Tips

Teaching your toddler to accept differences means that you're also teaching them that there's no one kind of "normal." Often the best way for children of all ages to tolerate differences is to simply interact with others who are different from them.

Impart healthy habits!

- Be honest by recognizing that differences do exist. Remind your child that we live in a very big world, where people look different and make different choices.
- Recognize that similarities exist, too. Remind your child about ways we are all similar. For example, we are all humans with feelings.
- Talk about how everyone deserves kindness and respect no matter our differences or similarities.
- Try to expand your child's understanding of the world. Explore areas away from your own neighborhood; read books about and by people from around the world; or visit cultural establishments, like museums or libraries.

## Two Truths and a Lie

Older children can practice getting to know each other and celebrating their differences and similarities by playing "Two Truths and a Lie."

Players sit in a circle. Each takes a turn to make three statements about themselves to the group (For example: "I speak two languages. I have a treehouse in my backyard. I am afraid of spiders.") Two of these statements are true, and one is false; the other players get to guess which one is the lie!



# Me. You. Us. (Whose Turn?)

## Quick Tips

Teaching your toddler to take turns means that you're also teaching them how to socialize and play with others. A child might not understand the perspectives of others until they're around four years old.

Impart healthy habits!

- Model sharing by passing an object back and forth between you and your child, saying, "my turn, your turn."
- Try using a timer. When it rings, it's your child's turn to give a toy to her friend, and so forth each time it rings.
- Acknowledge when waiting is hard, and also point out to your child when someone else is really enjoying a toy they are waiting for. Reflect the feelings on both sides of the situation.
- When sharing proves difficult, encourage simultaneous play, like a make-believe game.

## The Tallest Tower

Encourage youngsters to practice turn-taking skills by building a tower together. Each person takes a turn to add a block to the tower. When the tower grows too tall and falls over, take a moment to celebrate the collapse and start a new tower.

For older children, this game can be remixed by breaking into teams to compete, each group trying to build the tallest, sturdiest, or most interestingly shaped tower (but with each team member still taking turns to add a block!). Students can also play games like Jenga and Suspend to combine turn-taking skills with fine motor coordination and visual reasoning.



# Playdate!

(with Bear,  
Too?)

## Quick Tips

Making new friends can be challenging for preschoolers who might be nervous around children they don't know. It's good to remember that the first step is being friendly!

- When a new person joins the group, demonstrate welcoming behaviors: a warm smile; a cheerful hello using the newcomer's name; a handshake, elbow tap, or fist bump; and most importantly, an invitation to join the fun.
- If your child is shy or quiet, try pairing them with someone who is outgoing and well-liked. That special buddy will help make the shy child feel included right from the start.
- Talk to your child about what it means to be a friend. Friends are kind. They share, take turns, and cooperate. They don't leave someone out on purpose or make fun of them. If they make a mistake, they say they're sorry.
- Some children don't do well in groups. If that is your child, consider hosting a playdate with one or two friends. If a group setting can't be avoided, try setting up different activity stations where a few children can play together at a time.

## Snowball

For older children, a game of "Snowball" emphasizes that fun grows when you include more people.

- At the beginning, ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the room. Arrange the group to stand in a ring around them.
- Put on a fun, upbeat song and get the whole group clapping along while the first child dances in the middle.
- When you shout "Snowball!" the child in the middle looks for someone in the circle and invites them to come dance in the middle.
- Each time you shout "Snowball!", every child in the middle finds a new person to come dance with them, so that the number of dancers grows exponentially.
- Repeat until every child is dancing. Continue until the song ends.



# Say Thank You? (But Why?)

## Quick Tips

Showing appreciation doesn't always come naturally to young children. Here are some suggestions for helping your preschooler develop an "attitude for gratitude."

- Model the behavior you want to see in your child. Children are much more likely to say thank you when they've heard others say it.
- Help your child recognize when they have been on the receiving end of a gift, a compliment, or another generous action—and encourage them to express their gratitude with words, smiles, or even a handmade thank-you card.
- Invite your child to help with household chores. When they lend a hand, show them that you are grateful for any assistance or acts of kindness they do for you or for others.
- Ask your preschooler what they are grateful for and tell them what you are grateful for. Talk about your shared gratitude as a regular part of your dinnertime or nightly routine.

## Thank-You Cards

Use this activity for older kids to practice writing thank-you cards as a gesture of gratitude and appreciation.

1. Preview the activity for the kids by discussing what a thank-you card is. When are they usually given? What are some phrases that commonly appear in thank-you cards? Jot down the phrases on a whiteboard or piece of poster paper. Review the form of a thank-you card, including salutation, message, closing, and signature.
2. Invite the kids to think of something they are grateful to someone for—this could be a gift, a shared experience, words of encouragement, or an offer of comfort when they were feeling bad.
3. Distribute craft supplies, including colored paper, markers, paints, glitter glue, etc. Give the kids fifteen to twenty minutes to work on their cards. Circulate to offer help to kids who get stuck.
4. Encourage the kids to give the cards to their intended recipients or mail them if the recipient lives far away.



# A Gift For Me? (I Want It!)

## Quick Tips

Mindful giving shows that you care for others. It teaches empathy and kindness, too. And the act of giving itself can bring joy to the giver. But giving can be tough for preschoolers, especially if the gift is something they want for themselves. Make giving a little easier by including your child in the process.

- Explain the reason for giving the gift—for a friend’s birthday, or for a holiday gift exchange, or for a milestone in a loved one’s life.
- Ask your child for gift ideas. It can be helpful to offer a few suggestions—a toy, a book, a handmade item, arts-and-crafts supplies—as guidance.
- Plan a “date” with your child to pick the present. That way, the day is about one-on-one time together, not about the gift.
- If your preschooler gets upset about not getting a gift, gently remind them that it’s the receiver’s turn to get a present, and that they’ll have a turn sometime, too.
- Make wrapping the present a fun activity with your child. Decorate a large sheet of recyclable white or brown paper with drawings, stickers, or glitter. Create a handmade card. Include a yummy treat that you make together.

## Kindness Calendar

This fun activity for older kids is designed to encourage daily habits of generosity and kindness.

You will need:

- A single month calendar page for each kid
  - A sheet of small stickers for each kid (such as stars or smiley faces)
  - Writing and art supplies for each kid
1. Begin with a discussion of what kindness is and how kids are shown kindness in their daily lives. Ask kids to list examples of kind acts.
  2. Invite kids to join your challenge: Do one kind act per day for a month. Ask each kid to write down a list of kindnesses they think they could do for others during this month. They could do these kindnesses for peers, family members, teachers, and even animals.
  3. Invite kids to decorate their list of kindnesses and keep it with them. Distribute a calendar page and a sheet of stickers to each kid so that they can mark their calendar on each day they do a kindness. Missing days is okay! What matters is continuing to try.



# Keep Trying (Don't Give Up!)

## Quick Tips

Toddlers can become frustrated when trying to do something new or challenging. Often, they give up instead of continuing to try. When this happens, consider helping your child persevere by following this advice.

- Perseverance doesn't always lead to success. Celebrate your toddler's efforts, even if they fall short of the final goal. Use phrases like "You tried so hard!" and "That was tough, but you didn't give up."
- Resist the temptation to take over. Toddlers gain confidence by doing the task themselves, even if it takes several tries.
- Set manageable goals that can be reached one step at a time. Then encourage and praise your child every step of the way.
- Allow a frustrated toddler to take a break from a task. Nobody—including parents!—does their best when upset or stressed.
- Remind your child of a time they achieved a goal because they persisted instead of giving up.

## My Comfort Zone

Invite older kids to do an activity exploring what they're confident doing and what they haven't tried yet.

1. Ask each kid to turn a regular sheet of paper sideways and divide it into three columns. Label the columns from left to right as "I can do it!" "I haven't done it but I want to try!" and "I don't want to try it!" Model the page layout on the whiteboard or a piece of poster paper.
2. Read aloud a list of possible activities. Try to hit a variety of skills, abilities, and experiences. For example: tying your shoes, cooking dinner, painting, using a wheelchair, braiding your hair, holding a tarantula, riding a bike, playing guitar, or skydiving. As you read each activity, ask the kids to write it down in whatever column it fits for them.
3. Invite the kids to discuss their comfort zones. They don't have to name where each activity falls for them if they don't want to. Did anything stand out to them about this activity? What activity in their "I want to try" column are they most excited about trying?



## Listen First (Then Go!)

### Quick Tips

Listening is like walking and talking—it’s a skill most toddlers need help learning to do well. Children with good listening habits are better able to engage with the world and people around them. Guide them on this path forward by following these practices.

- Read to your child, then ask a question or two about what you just read. Model good listening by repeating back their answer, then asking a follow-up question to keep the conversation going.
- Keep instructions simple, straightforward, and positive by using phrases such as “you can” and “do this” instead of “you can’t” and “don’t do that.”
- Get down to your child’s level and make eye contact when talking with them. They’ll listen better when you give them your full attention—and you’ll know you have theirs!
- Spend time together listening to read-aloud stories and age-appropriate music or playing listening games that stimulate the imagination.

### Telephone

A classic game of telephone is a great way to emphasize the importance of listening carefully in order to understand what someone is saying.

1. Invite kids to sit in a circle with you.
2. Think of a short sentence and whisper it into the ear of the kid next to you. That kid must then whisper it into the ear of the next person in the circle. The message will continue to pass around the circle, one person at a time. As developmentally appropriate, you can increase the difficulty of this game by requiring that the whisperer cannot repeat the message and/or by playing soft background music.
3. When the message passes all the way around the circle to the kid sitting on your other side, that kid announces to the room what they heard. Then you announce the sentence you started. Invite the kids to reflect: What happened as the message went around the room? Did it change? How could they have kept the message from changing?



## Big Emotions (Bubble Up)

### Quick Tips

Toddlers might be small, but many have outsized emotions. Sometimes their excitement, anger, frustration, and other strong feelings can be overwhelming for them—and for you, their caregiver. To navigate these oceans of emotions, try these techniques:

- Be a reassuring presence while toddlers feel their big emotions. Sit or squat near them, talking in a soothing voice, and show them how to take deep, calming breaths.
- Name their feelings and reactions and connect them to their causes. For instance, try saying something like, “You’re smiling because you’re happy. You’re happy because we got ice-cream cones.” Or “It’s sad you dropped your ice-cream cone. That’s why you’re crying.”
- Be ready to comfort little ones once their big emotions have eased. Feeling strong feelings can take a lot out of them!
- When they’re calmer, talk to them about what they felt. Show that you understand why they felt that way. But be sure to point out negative behaviors such as hitting or throwing things. Let them know that such actions are not okay, even when they’re upset.

### Box Breathing

When big emotions start to spiral, box breathing can help a kid’s body return to a place of calm. This is a skill best learned before emotions get big! At a time when your child is feeling calm, try this activity.

1. Sit down with your child and draw a square on a sheet of paper. Say that you’re going to show your child a cool trick.
2. Stand up and do ten to twenty jumping jacks, until your breathing is elevated. Immediately sit down, put your finger on one corner of the square, and demonstrate box breathing by running your finger slowly and steadily around the perimeter of the square. Inhale on one side, hold it on the next, exhale on the next, and hold it on the next. Repeat until your breathing has returned to normal. Explain to your child that this is a trick called “box breathing” that is useful for calming down and feeling better in a stressful or scary situation.
3. Practice box breathing together with your child using the finger-on-the-square method, while counting to four aloud on each side. Explain that if your child needs to do box breathing and there’s no square to use, they can picture a square in their mind and count to four on each side. There are also apps that can display a visual cue for box breathing. Talk together about situations in your child’s life where box breathing might be a useful tool.



## Brave Little Otter! (It's Okay to Wait)

### Quick Tips

Being brave can look different for every child. Toddlers will say “yes” to some things and “not yet” to others. Here’s how you can support your child as bravery takes shape.

- Meet your child where they are in the moment. Show that they have your support when they choose to stay in their comfort zone and when they push to leave it. Where appropriate, allow your child to use their intuition to help build confidence and trust.
- Make space for mistakes. Encourage your child to engage in various activities. Along the way they might excel at certain things over others. The end goal is personal growth, not perfection.
- Share your own experiences. Your child will feel less alone hearing about times you have worked through feeling nervous or uncertain. These stories can empower them to be brave, too.
- Name acts of bravery. Call out different ways your child exhibits courage to affirm their choices and help them recognize bravery in themselves.

### Amazing Affirmations

Positive self-talk can be a powerful tool to boost courage and self-esteem. Try this daily affirmation activity for older kids.

You will need:

- Popsicle sticks
  - Colorful markers and other art-and-craft supplies
  - An empty jar, cup, or other container
1. Together with your child, write affirmations on popsicle sticks with colorful markers. Decorate a container to keep them in and choose a place in your home for the container to stay. As you work on the popsicle sticks, talk about some of the messages they normally receive in life, good and bad. Explain that positive messages help both kids and grown-ups to be their best selves.
  2. Develop a practice with your child of drawing a stick from the container every morning and reading the affirmation out loud. Anchor the affirmation to a part of your morning routine, such as getting out of bed, brushing teeth, eating breakfast, or putting on shoes.
  3. Encourage your child to think about their affirmation during the day. For a fun bonus, they can make it their mission that day to share the morning affirmation with another person—for example, if they draw “I am kind,” in the morning, they can look for examples of kindness in their life and find a good opportunity to tell a friend, classmate, or neighbor, “You are kind.”