

Jenny Mosley's
**CIRCLE TIME
HANDBOOK**

... for the Golden Rules Stories



Helping children with social and emotional aspects of learning

Jenny Mosley's

Circle Time Handbook

for the Golden Rules stories

Helping children with social and
emotional aspects of learning

Illustrations by Juliet Doyle
from the Golden Rules storybooks
by Donna Luck and Juliet Doyle



With thanks to Juliet Doyle and Donna Luck for their invaluable contribution to this book

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What are the golden rules?

The moral values that we learn as children are part of the wider process of socialisation. Our sense of morality is grounded in our growing understanding that we must build bonds with other people to ensure our mutual well-being in a community. A consensus about the values that should underpin and guide our behaviour towards each other is the code of conduct that ensures that we can live in social harmony by taking care of one another.

Morality is linked to consequences. We decide if an action is right or wrong when we see how it affects the people around us. Does it harm or improve their welfare?

By teaching moral standards that are universal, schools and parents are promoting behaviours that are common to all humanity. They should incorporate the moral codes of all the major religions without undercutting the particular practices that make them all different. The Quality Circle Time model considers these universal values to be vitally important and calls them the Golden Rules:

We are gentle, we don't hurt others.

*We are kind and helpful,
we don't hurt anybody's feelings.*

We are honest, we don't cover up the truth.

We work hard, we don't waste time.

We listen, we don't interrupt.

We look after property, we don't damage things.

People often ask why there are negative statements in the Golden Rules. Young children learn through opposites. Hot and cold, smooth and rough: each concept's opposite enhances its 'definition' or knowledge of itself. We can put our emphasis on the positive part of the Golden Rule by scribing it in gold lettering and keeping the negative part in small, grey writing. But the negative is still there as a reverse image.

Everything depends on the language you use. An ideal approach might be as follows: 'Do you know the rule you are breaking now? By hurting Wayne, you are breaking the Golden Rule of being gentle'. The fact that all the adults share a mutual understanding of the rules is reinforced when the whole learning community, including the parents, use similar applications of the Golden Rules.

Introducing the Golden Rules

For very young children it is advisable to start with two positive statements:

We are gentle.

We are kind.

There is a further Golden Rule that is useful for young children:

We play well, we don't spoil each others' games.

The other Golden Rules can be introduced gradually from the second term of the reception year onwards.

Young children need visual images to support their learning. It is important that displays of the Golden Rules are surrounded by photographs of children showing gentle and kind behaviours. Firstly, you need to engage the children in discussions of what a gentle act and a kind act would look like. Eventually they will be able to describe examples of behaviour that they would like to see shown in photographs. Later, you can draw attention to the Golden Rules by pointing to the photographs.

The benefits of using stories

We cannot be truly moral unless we are able to see things from another person's point of view. It is important that we help children to take the big cognitive leap from self-absorption to a sense of empathy and sharing that is called 'perspective taking'. Many children find this difficult, but practice makes perfect. This essential cognitive shift is accelerated by social interaction and games that draw attention to the skills involved. Another useful strategy is to harness children's imagination by using plays, stories and puppets to stimulate discussion about what is right and what is wrong.

In stories, the predicaments we all face are made concrete and the structure – a beginning, middle and end – means that children can experience the thrill of anticipation safe in the knowledge that all will be sorted out in the end.

Stories usually deal with action and its consequences and so provide excellent starting points for discussions about moral behaviour. The main characters are involved in goal-oriented action and we learn about the strategies they use to overcome hurdles and setbacks before they reach the satisfying place where stories end.

Interesting moral questions can be teased out from almost any children's story. However, the Golden Rules series makes each Golden Rule the subject of a separate story that has been written specifically with the needs of young children in mind. All you need to do is to read them to your group. A range of open-ended questions can then be asked to encourage them to build on the ideas embedded in the story. For example...

'Can you tell me which of the Golden Rules was broken?'

'Why did he/she break the rule?'

'What happened because he/she broke the rule?'

'Why do you think the other characters reacted as they did?'

'How do you think the other characters felt when he/she did that?'

'What do you think should have happened to the character after he/she did that?'

'If you were the character, how do you think you would be feeling at that moment?'

'If you could change the story, how would it end?'

'Was it fair? Was it right?'

These questions gently introduce children to philosophical dialogue and debate.

Using finger puppets

Moral values can be difficult to talk about and there are many advantages to using finger puppets to open up discussion (see pages 4-5). When children are able to speak through a puppet they often find that they can say things that would be impossible to articulate if they were required to use their 'real' voice. In the same way, you will find that puppets are able to close the distance between you, as an adult, and the children with whom you wish to communicate. Once you have a finger puppet you can cross the generation gap and speak 'as a child'.

What is more, you can sit with a finger puppet and a script on your lap and nobody will complain – your audience will be so riveted by the puppet's antics that they won't even notice that you are reading!

Learning to love the Golden Rules

The commitment of staff and children is of paramount importance if the Golden Rules are to be applied with confidence. This commitment requires that they are learned in an atmosphere of respect and that all parties understand why they are so important. To impose the Golden Rules is to show that you expect obedience but to negotiate them is to show that you desire co-operation and that you are ready to discuss all the uncertainties that your children may feel. By discussing the problems that your children encounter, you are also showing that you value their participation in creating an environment that is emotionally safe. This raises the communal sense of responsibility and increases the likelihood that your children will use these rules as life-long codes of conduct. You will be giving them something of inestimable value in helping them to become compassionate adults.





We look after property...

Circle time session 1

Use the five steps of circle time to help children appreciate the importance of caring for things

Circle Time Session 1 Preparation

Read the book to the class so that they are familiar with the story and characters. You could stop reading at the end of page 10 and ask the children if they can guess what Miss Beanie's good idea might be.

What you need

- A copy of the book *We Look After Property, We Don't Damage Things*
- A speaking object
- Animal finger puppets
- Badges, made using the 'I look after things' template on page 34
- A selection of animal toys, puppets or masks
- Some calming music (You will find a range of relaxation compilations in most music stores.)

Meeting up

- Read pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 and show the pictures to the children. Go round the group and tell each child that they will be a different colour of super, glittery play-dough – red, yellow or blue. When you call out 'blue', all the children who are that colour must change places with one another. Repeat this with yellow and red. When you call out 'Tidy-up time, everyone' the whole group must go into a huddle in the middle of the circle until you call 'now', when they must quickly find a new seat.

Warming up

- Talk to the children about all the different activities that happen in Miss Beanie's classroom. Using the speaking object, ask the children to complete the following sentence: 'My favourite time at school is...' (Cutting out, painting, playing with play-dough etc).

Opening up

- Put the children into small groups and help them to make up some little plays based on different scenes from the story. Ask for volunteers to show their plays to the rest of the class.
- Give out the finger puppets so that the animals can watch the plays too. Ask the children to help the puppets by telling them how we all look after things in the classroom. (There are places for everything to go, boxes to keep small things together, different areas for different activities. This helps with tidying up at the end of a session.)
- Talk about what the classroom would be like if we didn't do these things. Ask for suggestions for how we could look after things in the classroom and make it a nicer place to be. Make plans to carry out some of these ideas.

Cheering up

- Make sure your badges are ready (from page 34). Put on a pair of finger puppets and use them to give out badges to the children who always take care of classroom property. Your script might read like this:

We don't damage things

Alfred: *Come here, Elsa, and let's think about who should be given a badge. (Put your hands together so that Alfred and Elsa appear to be having a conversation.)*

Elsa: *Alfred and I have had a chat and we have decided that Shaheen has earned this badge. Let's give her a clap!*

- Continue with the remaining puppets.

Calming down

- Ask the children to lie on the floor in an uncomfortable and untidy way but without touching anyone else. Play some calming music and ask them to stretch out and 'tidy' themselves up until they are rested and comfortable. Allow them to lie in this relaxed position for a few minutes as they listen to the music. Then you can ask them to stand up slowly and quietly and go on to the next activity.

Circle time session 2

Meeting up

- Tell the children that you are in Miss Beanie's classroom. You are going to mime some of the activities that take place there while the children copy your actions. Talk them through the mimes by saying, 'Gino is cutting up the play-dough' and 'Alfred is playing with the car jigsaw puzzle'. When you say, 'Miss Beanie says, "Tidy-up time, children",' everyone must stand up and quickly sit in a different place.

Warming up

- Using the speaking object, ask the children to complete the sentence: 'My most precious thing is my...' (They might say: my new toy car, rabbit, silver necklace etc.)

Opening up

- Show the children your box of precious things and tell them why each thing is important to you. Ask them to tell you about their precious things (or tell each other in pairs).

The story

The animals in Miss Beanie's class are all having a great time with play-dough, puzzles and paper play. But when it comes to tidying away, they're not so careful and things end up in the bin or are all muddled up. At the end of the week, when Miss Beanie says they can go and play, there's nothing left. She has thought of a clever way to help them appreciate an important Golden Rule.

Circle Time Session 2 Preparation

Re-read the book with the class and focus on how Miss Beanie must have been feeling as the story goes along. What was she feeling when she saw the way in which the materials had been treated? Why did she frown?

What you need

A speaking object

A box containing some things that are precious to you: a photo of your family, an ornament, your favourite book, a piece of jewellery etc



- Talk about how we keep our precious things safe and the different ways we look after them. Discuss how we would feel if our precious things got lost or damaged.
- Find some things from your classroom that haven't been looked after properly. Pass them round the circle for the children to look at. Talk about what happened to them, why and how they could have been looked after more carefully. Ask the children to suggest how everyone can stop this from happening to other things in the classroom. Make some plans together and discuss who will check that things are being looked after well. Would some children like to be monitors or classroom helpers? Do they think a rota would be a good idea? Would they like you to make some certificates or badges to show who has looked after property particularly well?

Cheering up

- Thank the children for their suggestions and pass the finger puppets around the group so that everyone has the opportunity to use one to tell the class which part of the circle meeting they most enjoyed.

Calming down

- Stand up and hold hands in the circle. Swing your arms as you chant, 'We are lovely and very, very special'. On the word 'special', everyone must lift their arms as high as they can. Lower your arms and repeat the sentence.

Extension activities

Story-telling

- Ask the children to tell the rest of the group about times when they, or members of their family, have lost something important. What happened because it was lost? Did Dad ever lose his car keys? Did Mum ever lose her glasses? How did they go about sorting out the problem? How long did it take to find the lost items? Were they ever found or did they need to be replaced? Prompt the children by telling a story of your own if necessary. Ask the children to make up a short story about something that was lost and found. This can be a cartoon story, writing with a single illustration or a play acted out in a drama lesson.

Show and tell

- Ask the children to bring in a precious object to show to the rest of the class. Encourage them to talk about how they take care of it and keep it safe. Be sure that these objects are kept in a safe place while they are in your classroom.

Lucky dip

- Put some bits of classroom equipment into a box or tub and cover them up with torn-up newspaper or tissue paper. Allow one child at a time to dig into the tub and pull out an object. They can talk about how we care for it and show the rest of the class where it is kept and how it is stored to keep it as good as new.

Days of the week story

- Make little books that tell a 'days of the week' story about how a toy loses its parts through neglect and accidents. Children could do this as a group and take a day each. An example might be:

On Monday, Freddy the fire engine had smart red paint and four black wheels but Tamsin trod on him and one of his wheels fell off. On Tuesday, Freddy the fire engine had smart red paint and three black wheels.

A picture on each page would show how Freddy becomes more and more unusable until he is saved by Mr Tibbs, the caretaker.



These charming Golden Rules books support parents, carers and teachers who wish to help their children love the Golden Rules

The books in the series...



We Are Gentle ... We Don't Hurt Others

We Are Honest ... We Don't Cover Up The Truth

We Listen ... We Don't Interrupt

We are Kind and Helpful ... We Don't Hurt Anybody's Feelings

We Look After Property ... We Don't Damage Things

We Work Hard ... We Don't Waste Time

For more information about the Golden Rules and helping children to care about them, contact:

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Circle time games and activities to help teachers deliver social and emotional aspects of learning, suitable for children aged four to seven years

Thousands of schools use the Golden Rules to improve behaviour and deliver calmer, happier classrooms. This handbook uses Jenny Mosley's Quality Circle Time to explore each Golden Rule through two circle time session plans and a range of extension activities. It is designed for use with the delightful storybooks from Donna Luck and Juliet Doyle, which feature a cast of lovable animal characters and a familiar classroom setting to bring each Golden Rule alive in a lively, entertaining way.

Quality Circle Time

"Circle time is most likely to be most effective when embedded within a whole-school approach, such as the Whole School Quality Circle Time model developed by Jenny Mosley. This describes a democratic and practical school management system which addresses social, emotional and behavioural issues through a systemic approach. Its features reflect closely the philosophy, guidance and practice embodied in the SEAL curriculum resource."

From the Primary National Strategy, Department for Education and Skills: Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Guidance

For more information,
visit the circle time website www.circle-time.co.uk

