FOR PRESCHOOLS, CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AND LIBRARIES · AGES 4–6

Family Newsletter Kit

Twelve short notes for your parent newsletter, app or group chat — one feelings skill at a time.

How to use it

- Send one note a week or one a month. They follow the 12 weeks of our free circle-time program, but each one stands on its own.
- Copy a note into your newsletter as it is, or print a page and send it home.
- The same twelve notes in Spanish: raisingstoics.com/es/boletin-para-familias

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The twelve notes

1. **When the Park Trip Gets Rained Out** — “That's in my basket.”
2. **Big Anger and the Pause Button** — “Stop. Breathe. Choose.”
3. **Finding Words for Feelings** — “Right now I feel…”
4. **"Why Did You Do That?" Can Wait** — “I thought it — and then I got mad.”
5. **What Being Brave Really Means** — “Brave means scared and doing it anyway.”
6. **Big Problem or Small One?** — “Is this big or is this small?”
7. **Learning to Wait for What They Want** — “I'm the boss of my want.”
8. **Fair Play and Helping a Friend** — “I play fair. I can help.”
9. **The Magic Word "Yet"** — “Not yet.”
10. **When the Plan Falls Apart** — “There's another way.”
11. **How Big Will This Be Tomorrow?** — “What if I look from up high?”
12. **"I Can Handle This"** — “I can handle this.”

NOTE 1 · WHAT'S IN MY CONTROL

When the Park Trip Gets Rained Out

It is raining, the park trip is off, and your child is crushed. Or the tower fell, or a friend picked the other game. For a 4-year-old, the whole world can feel like it should bend to what they want, and it is very common for them to melt down when it does not. This week in class, children are sorting things into two imaginary baskets: things that listen to me, like my hands and how hard I try, and things that do not, like the weather or who wins. The idea is simple. Some things are mine to handle, and some are not. You can use the same words at home, in the moment, without lecturing.

Say: “Is that in your basket? What part is in your basket?”

Try at home: Set out two bowls or laundry baskets. Name four things together, such as the rain, your hands, a sibling's choice, how hard you try. Your child drops a large toy in the bowl where each belongs. Two minutes.

Ask after school: What did we put in the basket today?

From Big Feelings in Circle Time by Raising Stoics — raisingstoics.com/for-schools

NOTE 2 · MEETING ANGER

Big Anger and the Pause Button

Your child's block house gets knocked over, and in one second they are shouting, stomping, or throwing. Anger at this age is big, fast, and physical, and it is a normal part of being 4 or 5. Grown-ups often say "calm down," which names a place without showing the way there. This week in class, children are learning a three-step game called Stop, Breathe, Choose: freeze your hands, let out one slow breath, then say what you will do. They practice it while everyone is calm and happy, because a new skill is hard to find in the middle of a storm. You can practice the same way at home.

Say: “Let's play the pause button. Stop, breathe, choose. I'll go first.”

Try at home: Cut a circle from paper for your child and call it the pause button. Play a freeze game: when you press it, everyone stops, takes one slow breath out like blowing a candle, and then picks something silly to do. Take turns pressing it. Do this only when everyone is calm.

Ask after school: Did you use your pause button today?

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NOTE 3 · NAMING FEELINGS

Finding Words for Feelings

"Why are you crying?" "I don't know!" Many 4- and 5-year-olds feel something big long before they have a word for it, and the feeling comes out as shouting, hiding, or a bad mood with no name. This week in class, children are using a weather map for the inside of us: sunny, calm, cloudy, rain, storm, and fog, where fog means "I don't know what I feel." Every feeling is welcome, and feelings tend to pass, like a wave that rises, peaks, and goes down. Putting a name on a feeling can make it easier to handle. You can borrow the weather at home, and share your own too.

Say: “Right now I feel cloudy. What's your weather?”

Try at home: At dinner, everyone says their inside weather for the day: sunny, cloudy, rain, storm, or fog. Adults go first. Draw the weather on a napkin if your child likes. No fixing and no questions, just listen and say thank you. About three minutes.

Ask after school: What was your weather at school today?

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NOTE 4 · THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

"Why Did You Do That?" Can Wait

A cup spills, a little brother knocks over a tower, and your child is sure it was on purpose. Often it was not, but in the moment the story in their head is what makes them angry. This week in class, children watch two puppets see the same tower fall. One thinks "it was on purpose," and one thinks "it was an accident." Which puppet is angrier? Children this age are just beginning to notice that what we think about an event can change how we feel about it. At home, a curious question works better than "why did you do that?" It gives your child room to look at their own thinking.

Say: “What did you think when that happened?”

Try at home: Use two stuffed animals. Knock over a small stack of cups and let one animal say "it was on purpose!" and the other say "it was an accident." Ask your child how each animal feels, then let them tell the next story. Three minutes.

Ask after school: What did you think when you got upset today?

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NOTE 5 · COURAGE

What Being Brave Really Means

Your child stands at the top of the slide, or won't raise a hand at circle time, or hides behind your leg at a birthday party. Children can come to believe that brave people are never scared, so feeling scared seems like failing. This week in class, children hear a teacher's small, true story about being scared and doing the thing anyway. Then they draw a bravery ladder: the bottom rung is easy, the top is the whole scary thing, and we only ever climb one step at a time. At home, you can show your child that being scared and going anyway is exactly what brave looks like, including for you.

Say: “I'm scared, and I'm going. Want to come with me?”

Try at home: Pick one small scary thing, like ordering at a counter or saying hello to a neighbor. Draw a ladder with three rungs on paper and mark the first step together. Do only that step today and color in the rung afterward.

Ask after school: What was something a little scary you did today?

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NOTE 6 · WISDOM

Big Problem or Small One?

The cookie broke in half, and the day is ruined. To a 4-year-old, a cracked cookie and a lost toy can feel exactly the same size as something truly sad. It is normal at this age; they are still learning how to measure. This week in class, children sort troubles into three circles: big, medium, and small. A broken cookie, the wrong cup, a scraped knee, a friend moving away. Then they talk about what a fair reaction to each size would look like. The idea is not to tell children their feelings are wrong. It is to give them a way to look at a problem and notice how large it really is.

Say: “Let's check. Is this big, medium, or small?”

Try at home: Cut three paper circles in different sizes for your child. Name a few troubles from your day, like a spilled juice, a lost sock, or a rainy morning. Your child puts each one in the circle that fits. Disagree gently and ask why. About three minutes.

Ask after school: What was the biggest trouble today, and was it big or small?

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NOTE 7 · BEING THE BOSS OF MY WANT

Learning to Wait for What They Want

The checkout line, the cookie on the counter, the turn on the swing: waiting is hard for a 4- or 5-year-old, and a wait with nothing to do feels endless. It is very common for a child this age to grab, whine, or fall apart when a want cannot be met right now. This week in class, children are collecting waiting tricks: turn your back on the thing you want, sing a song, count, keep your hands busy. They also start a class jar where each day one child adds one good, ordinary thing from the day. Wanting is fine. The skill is being the boss of the want while it waits.

Say: “You can wait. What trick will you use while we wait?”

Try at home: Use a sand timer or a phone timer on a small want, such as a snack or a turn. Let your child watch the time run out. Ask them to pick a waiting trick: sing, count, or hold a toy. Keep it short, one or two minutes.

Ask after school: What did you wait for today, and what trick did you use?

From Big Feelings in Circle Time by Raising Stoics — raisingstoics.com/for-schools

NOTE 8 · FAIRNESS AND KINDNESS

Fair Play and Helping a Friend

Two children, one swing. Or your child sees someone sitting alone at the edge of the playground and doesn't know what to do. At ages 4 to 6, children care a lot about fairness, loudly, and are only starting to learn what to do when someone is left out. This week in class, the teacher plays a game and cheats on purpose. The children object, then make three rules for a new game themselves. They also practice three moves for a friend who is left out: sit next to them, ask what happened, or get a grown-up. At home, notice one kind or fair thing your child did and name it quietly.

Say: “I saw you share the blocks. That was fair, and it helped.”

Try at home: Play a quick card or board game, but make up a silly unfair rule on purpose. Let your child object, then work out three new rules together and play again with them. About five minutes.

Ask after school: Did you see anyone who needed help today? What did you do?

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NOTE 9 · MISTAKES

The Magic Word "Yet"

Your child tears up the drawing, or says "I can't!" when the shoe won't go on. Many children this age feel that a mistake means they are bad at something for good, which is a lot of weight to carry at 5. This week in class, children hear a story about trying and failing, and compare how it feels to say "I can't do it" and "I can't do it yet." They also stand on two ribbon roads, the easy road and the good road, and choose which one they would take in small, real situations. At home, adding one small word to your child's sentence can change how a hard thing feels.

Say: “You can't do it yet. What could you try next?”

Try at home: Pick one thing your child can't do yet, such as tying a shoe or a hard puzzle. Say "not yet" together, try one step for two minutes, then stop on a good note. If you like, take a photo so you can look back in a week.

Ask after school: What is something you can't do yet?

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NOTE 10 · WHEN PLANS BREAK

When the Plan Falls Apart

The tower keeps falling, the favorite cup is in the dishwasher, the outing is canceled. A plan that breaks can feel like the end of the world to a 4- or 5-year-old, and it often shows up as tears or refusing to try anything else. This week in class, children play a silly game: the teacher announces a small disaster, and the children answer with what it makes possible. They also build a bridge from blocks that are too short and look for three different ways to make it work, silly ones included. Finding another way is a skill children can practice, and the practice can be playful. You can try it at home.

Say: “Oh no! Okay. There's another way. What could we try?”

Try at home: Build a tower or a bridge from blocks, or lay a path of pillows. Take away one piece and say "oh no!" Then find three ways to solve it, silly ideas welcome, and try each one. About four minutes.

Ask after school: What went wrong today, and what did you try next?

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NOTE 11 · SEEING IT DIFFERENTLY

How Big Will This Be Tomorrow?

A fall on the playground or a spoiled game can fill your whole child's world for the moment. Young children live in the middle of what is happening, and it is hard for them to step back. This week in class, children look at a small trouble from the floor, from a chair, from the window, and from the sky, noticing how big it looks from each place. They also imagine a day without spoons or water from the tap, then think about who made those things happen. Stepping back can give a feeling room to get smaller. At home, you can invite a quick look from up high.

Say: “What if you look from up high? How big is it now?”

Try at home: Take a small trouble, like a broken crayon. Look at it from the floor, from a seat on a chair (sitting, not standing), and from a window with a grown-up beside your child, and ask how big it looks each time. Then ask "How big will it be tomorrow?" About three minutes.

Ask after school: What would you see if you looked at today from up high?

From Big Feelings in Circle Time by Raising Stoics — raisingstoics.com/for-schools

NOTE 12 · PUTTING IT TOGETHER

"I Can Handle This"

After a few weeks of working on big feelings, you may notice small changes at home: a pause before a shout, a name for a feeling, a try-again after a spill. Some days will still be hard, and that is normal at this age. This final week in class, children build a fort from cushions or paper, and each child chooses one rule of their own to put inside it. They then walk through everything they made in twelve weeks, from baskets to a pause button, and explain each tool to the class. Teaching someone else can help a child remember. Let your child be the teacher at home.

Say: “I can handle this, and you can too.”

Try at home: Build a small fort from cushions or blankets. Ask your child to pick one rule for inside the fort, like "we take a breath" or "we help each other," and teach you one thing they learned at school. Five minutes.

Ask after school: What would you like to teach me from school?

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How the notes map to early learning standards

NOTE	CASEL	HEAD START ELOF (PRESCHOOL)	PYRAMID MODEL
1. What's in my control	Responsible decision-making	—	No specific practice; the closest skill area is behavior regulation (not a confident match).
2. Meeting anger	Self-management, Self-awareness	P-SE 8 — Child manages emotions with increasing independence. P-ATL 5 — Child demonstrates an increasing ability to control impulses.	Behavior regulation (teaching self-regulation steps; NCPMI's practical strategies page groups these under behavior regulation).
3. Naming feelings	Self-awareness	P-SE 6 — Child expresses a broad range of emotions and recognizes these emotions in self and others. P-SE 8 — Child manages emotions with increasing independence.	Emotional literacy.
4. Thoughts and feelings	Self-awareness, Social awareness	P-SE 6 — Child expresses a broad range of emotions and recognizes these emotions in self and others. P-SE 5 — Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children.	Emotional literacy; problem solving (partial).
5. Courage	Self-management	P-ATL 7 — Child persists in tasks. P-SE 10 — Child expresses confidence in own skills and positive feelings about self.	Behavior regulation (closest; not a confident match).
6. Wisdom	Responsible decision-making	P-SE 8 — Child manages emotions with increasing independence.	Emotional literacy (closest; not a confident match).
7. Being the boss of my want	Self-management	P-ATL 5 — Child demonstrates an increasing ability to control impulses. P-ATL 4 — Child manages actions, words, and behavior with increasing independence.	Behavior regulation.
8. Fairness and kindness	Relationship skills, Social awareness	P-SE 4 — Child engages in cooperative play with other children. P-SE 7 — Child expresses care and concern toward others.	Friendship skills.
9. Mistakes	Responsible decision-making	P-ATL 7 — Child persists in tasks. P-ATL 9 — Child demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior.	No specific practice; closest is behavior regulation (not a confident match).
10. When plans break	Responsible decision-making	P-ATL 9 — Child demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior. P-SE 5 — Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children.	Problem solving.
11. Seeing it differently	Social awareness	P-ATL 9 — Child demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior.	No specific practice (no confident match).
12. Putting it together	All five (review week; not mapped separately in the classroom program)	P-SE 10 — Child expresses confidence in own skills and positive feelings about self.	No single practice; the week reviews the skills taught earlier.

About this mapping

This is our own mapping, built from the public text of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (2015), the NCPMI Pyramid Model pages and the CASEL framework. It is not an evaluation or an endorsement by the Office of Head Start, NCPMI or CASEL. Where a week has no clear match to a goal, we say so instead of stretching one. The program has not been reviewed through the CASEL Program Guide.

Sources

- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (2015), full PDF, preschool goals P-SE 3-10 and P-ATL 4-9 — U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start (via U.S. Government Publishing Office): https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-gpo65456/pdf/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-gpo65456.pdf
- Practical Strategies: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills (behavior regulation, friendship skills, emotional literacy, problem-solving skills) — National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI): https://challengingbehavior.org/implementation/classroom/practical-strategies
- Pyramid Model tiers — National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI): https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/tiers/
- What Is the CASEL Framework? (the five competencies) — CASEL: https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/