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Tide Pool Treasures



Dive into Feelings

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Welcome to Tide Pool Treasures

This week invites children to explore emotions through calming sensory play inspired by the ocean. Just as tide pools hold many different treasures waiting to be discovered, children can learn to recognize, express, and understand the many feelings they experience each day.

Through water play, sensory exploration, movement, and imaginative ocean-themed activities, children build emotional awareness, co-regulation skills, communication, and confidence while learning healthy ways to navigate big feelings.

As you explore together, you can support your child by:

- Talking about feelings during play and daily routines
- Modeling calm strategies and emotional vocabulary
- Encouraging children to notice and express emotions
- Celebrating self-awareness, empathy, and resilience

with gentle hearts,
the gro academy
team

Home Extension: Ocean Calm Bottle

Creating a calming sensory tool for emotional regulation

Objective:

Children create and use a simple ocean-themed calm bottle to support self-regulation, emotional awareness, and calming strategies during everyday experiences.

Materials:

- Clear plastic bottle with lid
- Water
- Blue food coloring (optional)
- Glitter or sequins
- Small shells, beads, or ocean-themed items
- Funnel (optional)
- Strong tape or glue for sealing

Instructions:

1. Fill the bottle with water and a few ocean-themed treasures.
2. Add glitter, color, or other calming sensory materials.
3. Secure the lid tightly before use.
4. Shake the bottle and watch the treasures slowly settle.
5. Encourage children to use the bottle while practicing calm breathing.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger sensory bottles filled with water, glitter, and high-contrast ocean-themed objects for children to observe safely. Model calming language, breathing strategies, and emotional vocabulary while encouraging children to watch, shake, and explore the movement of the materials together.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Attention • Emotional regulation • Persistence
- **Health & Physical:** Sensory regulation • Visual tracking
- **Literacy & Language:** Emotional vocabulary • Listening skills
- **Social & Emotional:** Emotional awareness • Calming strategies

Tide Pool Treasures

This week's activities invite children to discover feelings just like treasures hidden in a tide pool. Through calming sensory experiences, water-inspired play, movement, and imagination, children learn to recognize emotions, practice self-regulation, build empathy, and develop healthy ways to express their feelings.

Floating Feelings

Exploring emotions through ocean-themed sensory play

Objective:

Children identify, name, and discuss emotions while exploring floating ocean objects and feeling prompts through hands-on sensory play.

Materials:

- Large bin or tub of water
- Floating ocean toys or objects
- Emotion cards or feeling faces
- Small nets, scoops, or cups
- Towels for cleanup

Instructions:

1. Place floating ocean objects and feeling cards in the water.
2. Invite children to scoop, collect, and explore the materials.
3. Encourage children to identify and name different feelings.
4. Talk about times children may have experienced those emotions.
5. Practice simple calming strategies while exploring together.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger floating toys, scoops, and simple feeling faces for children to explore safely together. Model emotion words, facial expressions, and calming language while encouraging children to notice, name, and respond to feelings through sensory play.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Attention • Engagement • Curiosity
- **Health & Physical:** Hand-eye coordination • Tool use
- **Literacy & Language:** Emotional vocabulary • Expressive language
- **Social & Emotional:** Emotion identification • Self-awareness

Tide Pool Sensory Bin

Building emotional vocabulary through calming sensory exploration

Objective:

Children explore ocean-themed sensory materials while developing emotional vocabulary, communication skills, and self-awareness through guided conversations about feelings.

Materials:

- Sensory bin or shallow tray
- Water beads, sand, or sensory filler
- Small sea creature figures
- Seashells and ocean-themed loose parts
- Emotion cards or feeling prompts
- Scoops, cups, or tongs

Instructions:

1. Fill the sensory bin with ocean-themed materials.
2. Hide feeling cards and ocean treasures throughout the bin.
3. Invite children to search, sort, and explore the materials.
4. Encourage children to name and discuss the feelings they find.
5. Talk about ways to manage and express different emotions.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger ocean-themed sensory materials, scoops, and simple feeling faces for children to explore safely together. Model emotion words, descriptive language, and simple conversations while encouraging children to touch, scoop, sort, and discuss feelings through sensory play.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Exploration • Problem-solving • Persistence
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor control • Sensory processing
- **Literacy & Language:** Descriptive language • Conversation skills
- **Social & Emotional:** Emotional expression • Emotional awareness

Waves of Breathing

Practicing calming strategies through ocean-inspired movement and mindfulness

Objective:

Children develop self-regulation skills by practicing deep breathing, mindfulness, and calming body awareness through ocean-themed movement experiences.

Materials:

- Blue scarves, ribbons, or fabric pieces
- Ocean sounds or calming music (optional)
- Seashells or ocean-themed props
- Open floor space

Instructions:

1. Invite children to pretend they are gentle ocean waves.
2. Slowly raise and lower scarves while taking deep breaths.
3. Practice breathing in as waves rise and out as waves fall.
4. Encourage children to notice how their bodies feel while breathing.
5. Repeat together using calm movements and slow breaths.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer scarves, ribbons, or lightweight fabric for children to move safely together. Model slow breathing, simple calming movements, and emotion words while encouraging children to watch, sway, stretch, and practice relaxation through playful ocean-inspired movement.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Focus • Self-control • Engagement
- **Health & Physical:** Body awareness • Motor planning
- **Literacy & Language:** Listening comprehension • Following directions
- **Social & Emotional:** Self-regulation • Emotional coping skills

Seashell Feelings Sort

Exploring emotions through sorting, discussion, and self-reflection

Objective:

Children build emotional awareness and communication skills by sorting ocean treasures into different feeling categories and discussing personal emotional experiences.

Materials:

- Seashells, sea glass, or smooth stones
- Small containers or sorting trays
- Emotion cards or feeling faces
- Optional labels for feeling categories
- Ocean-themed basket or tray

Instructions:

1. Place ocean treasures and feeling cards on the table.
2. Invite children to sort items into different feeling groups.
3. Encourage children to identify and name each emotion.
4. Discuss situations that might cause those feelings.
5. Explore healthy ways to respond to different emotions.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger shells, stones, and simple feeling faces for children to explore safely together. Model emotion words, facial expressions, and simple conversations while encouraging children to sort, match, compare, and talk about feelings through hands-on play.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Classification • Reasoning • Decision-making
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor coordination • Visual discrimination
- **Literacy & Language:** Vocabulary development • Verbal expression
- **Social & Emotional:** Emotional recognition • Perspective-taking

Ocean Friends Small World Play

Exploring empathy, friendship, and emotions through imaginative play

Objective:

Children develop empathy, emotional understanding, and social problem-solving skills through ocean-themed storytelling and small world play experiences.

Materials:

- Ocean animal figures or toys
- Blue fabric or sensory materials for water
- Small containers or trays
- Seashells, stones, or ocean loose parts
- Emotion cards or feeling prompts (optional)

Instructions:

1. Create an ocean small world play area using the materials.
2. Invite children to explore and create stories with the ocean animals.
3. Encourage children to discuss how the characters may be feeling.
4. Explore friendship, kindness, and problem-solving through storytelling.
5. Support children in creating positive solutions for challenges that arise during play.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer larger ocean figures, fabric, and sensory materials for children to explore safely together. Model simple storytelling, emotion words, and social language while encouraging children to move characters, act out feelings, and explore relationships through imaginative play.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Imagination • Flexible thinking • Story development
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor coordination • Manipulation skills
- **Literacy & Language:** Narrative language • Conversational turn-taking
- **Social & Emotional:** Empathy • Friendship skills • Perspective-taking

Facilitator Focus: Tide Pool Treasures

✨ **Theme** *Children explore emotions, self-regulation, empathy, and emotional expression through calming ocean-inspired sensory play. Using water, movement, storytelling, and sensory exploration, children develop healthy strategies for recognizing, communicating, and navigating their feelings.*



🌸 **Overview**

This week's activities invite children to discover feelings just like treasures hidden in a tide pool. Through sensory exploration, mindfulness, imaginative play, and meaningful conversations, children build emotional awareness, communication skills, self-regulation strategies, and empathy while learning that all feelings are important and manageable.



🌿 **Facilitator Tips**

- Model emotion vocabulary throughout daily interactions and play.
- Validate children's feelings while helping them identify healthy coping strategies.
- Encourage children to describe emotions, experiences, and solutions during conversations.
- Use calming sensory materials and movement experiences to support regulation.
- Allow children to revisit activities and practice emotional skills through repeated experiences



🌻 **Vocabulary to Emphasize**

emotion • calm • frustrated • excited • worried • proud • disappointed • peaceful • breathe • regulate • empathy • kindness

Short Sentence Prompts (for modeling language):

- "How do you think that character is feeling?"
- "What helps your body feel calm?"
- "What could we do when we feel that way?"



Developmental Connections (WMELS Alignment)



Approaches to Learning:

- Children strengthen attention, persistence, flexibility, curiosity, and self-regulation while exploring sensory materials, practicing calming strategies, and engaging in reflective conversations about emotions.



Cognition & General Knowledge:

- Children build classification, symbolic thinking, cause-and-effect awareness, problem-solving, and early reasoning skills as they sort ocean treasures, match feeling prompts, observe sensory changes, and connect emotions to real-life experiences through play.



Health & Physical Development:

- Children develop body awareness, sensory processing skills, visual tracking, fine motor coordination, motor planning, and self-regulation through movement, sensory exploration, and hands-on play experiences.



Language & Literacy Development:

- Children expand emotional vocabulary, descriptive language, conversation skills, listening comprehension, storytelling abilities, and expressive communication while discussing feelings, experiences, and problem-solving strategies.



Social & Emotional Development:

- Children build emotional awareness, self-expression, empathy, friendship skills, perspective-taking, emotional regulation, resilience, and confidence through meaningful social-emotional learning experiences.



Reflection for Educators

- How did children demonstrate creativity, problem-solving, or flexible thinking during the activities?
- Which materials or invitations encouraged the most meaningful exploration and communication?
- How did the environment support children's confidence, independence, and artistic decision-making?