What Do I Say Now?

In the next lesson, you will learn about responding to challenging behavior. In this activity, you will begin thinking about challenging behavior in terms of social and emotional competence. Challenging behaviors are often signs that a child could use support around social and emotional competence. As you read these scenarios, think about how you could encourage the child to use social skills instead.

Carlos has a crush on Sandi. While they were eating snack, a few kids started teasing him about it—right in front of Sandi. He got very angry and started pushing the children who were teasing him.

- Why is Carlos angry?
  Children are teasing him in front of the girl he likes. He is probably very embarrassed.

- What social skills might help Carlos in this situation?
  Carlos might benefit from working on strategies to deal with anger or express anger in an appropriate way. An adult could help him learn to diffuse situations like this by ignoring, walking away, or using humor.

- What emotions is he likely feeling?
  Carlos is probably feeling embarrassed or threatened.

- How could you help Carlos express his emotions in a healthy way?
  You could help Carlos learn to assert himself with words (“Stop guys. That’s not cool.”). You could also help him use strategies to deal with anger. He could recognize that he is angry, stop and think, and come up with a solution to his problem. You could help him brainstorm solutions to use in the future: walk away, ignore, get help, say “Please stop”, etc. You could also work on promoting a respectful environment. Talk to the other children about respectful language and teasing.

Talia forgot her math textbook at school. She had important homework to do, and she is very upset. She plopped down on the couch and has not moved. She just sits there and says, “I’m going to flunk. Leave me alone.”

- What social skills might help Talia in this situation?
  Talia might benefit from problem-solving. You could help her brainstorm solutions and reframe her negative self-talk.

- What emotions is she likely feeling?
  Talia is probably frustrated with herself. She might be scared about what will happen if she doesn’t do her homework. She might feel overwhelmed or hopeless.

- How could you help Talia express herself and build social and emotional competence?
You could begin by labeling what you have noticed about Talia’s emotions. You might say, “Talia, I can tell you’re upset about forgetting your book.” Then you can help Talia think of solutions. “It’s not hopeless. There is always something we can try. Help me think of options, and maybe we can ask a friend to help if we get stuck.” Help Talia brainstorm whether she can call the school, ask to borrow a friend’s book, or go in before school to get the book.