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# HOW CAN OUTDOOR PLAY INCREASE CHILDREN'S ANTI-BIAS SKILLS?

From the ADL's Miller Early Childhood Initiative Question Corner

Children's outdoor play offers many opportunities to teach and reinforce anti-bias behavior. To get you started, incorporate some of the below tips excerpted from *Bias-Free Foundations: Early Childhood Activities for Educators* (2005, 28):

- Take advantage of these opportunities by helping children to learn skills such as taking turns, sharing toys, and inviting new children to play. For example, when two children are on a see-saw you could say, "Melissa, Randy, it looks like Shelly wants to play on the see-saw, too. Why don't you ask her to play with you? Then you can decide together how to play on the see-saw in a fair way."
- Encourage children to stand up for someone who's getting teased or chased. You might model saying, "Stop that! You're hurting Juan's feelings!"
- As children play, take advantage of opportunities to point out and praise the ways children work together successfully, and to gently offer them suggestions when they need help getting along.
- Discuss with children situations that occur during their outdoor play.
- Ask children if there are rules or agreements that might be needed to make sure everyone gets along when playing outside, for example, "Everyone gets a turn to play on the slide if they want to." Help them to write down their ideas and post them.



- While engaged in outdoor play, help children avoid stereotypical gender roles. For example, if you see only boys playing t-ball, you might encourage some girls to join the game and/or if you see only girls playing with the jump rope, ask them to invite some boys to have a turn.
- During outdoor play, questions and comments about differences children notice will probably crop up from time to time. For tips on addressing this, see Question Corner installment, “[How should I respond when children notice differences in others?](#)”
- Help children develop the skills to get along with a variety of people by changing the size and members of groups of children; groups should have a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, gender, personality styles, abilities, and interests.
- Read some of the suggested books below to children.

### References

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#### **SOME SUGGESTED CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

##### [Arnie and the New Kid](#)

Written by [Nancy Carlson](#)

Philip uses a wheelchair and has the challenge of being new to town. Arnie targets Phillip with acts of bullying and name-calling, until Arnie falls, breaks his leg, and finds himself temporarily disabled. As Arnie begins to understand and experience a physical disability, the two become friends.

[Grade Level: Pre-K–3]

##### [Chester's Way](#)

Written by [Kevin Henkes](#)

Best friends Chester and Wilson have the same ways of doing things until a girl moves into town who shows them that different ways can be just as good.

[Grade Level: Pre-K–2]

### **Crow Boy**

Written by [Taro Yashima](#)

Chibi's classmates dislike him because he is different, but a kind teacher appreciates Chibi's unique talents and helps him gain friendship and acceptance.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **Hands are Not for Hitting**

Written by [Martine Agassi](#) (Author), [Marieka Heinlen](#) (Illustrator)

A book that shows the many positive ways that children and adults can use their hands.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **Harry and Willy and Carrothead**

Written by [Judith Caseley](#)

Three boys overcome their prejudices and become friends.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **Paul and Sebastian**

Written by [Rene Escudie](#) (Author), [Ulises Wensell](#) (Illustrator), [Roderick Townley](#) (Adapter)

Paul and Sebastian are told not to play with each other because their lives are too different. One day they get lost together during a rainstorm and become good friends.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon**

Written by [Patty Lovell](#)

When Molly Lou Melon starts at a new school, the class bully, Ronald, teases her for being short, having buckteeth and a voice that sounds like “a bullfrog being squeezed by a boa constrictor.” Molly remembers what her grandmother told her to always feel good about herself, which helps her overcome the bully's taunts.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **The Berenstain Bears No Girls Allowed**

Written by [Jan Berenstain](#) (Author), [Stan Berenstain](#) (Author)

Brother bear is angry because sister bear can do “boy” things better than him. He decides to make a club with other male cubs to exclude her.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **[The Paper Bag Princess](#)**

Written by [Robert Munsch](#) (Author), [Michael Martchenko](#) (Illustrator)

A princess rescues the prince she is supposed to marry by outsmarting a dragon, but when the prince is not at all grateful and is more concerned with her appearance, she decides not to marry him.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]

### **[The Recess Queen](#)**

Written by [Alexia O'Neill](#)

Mean Jean is the playground bully. All of the children are fearful of her. When a new student, Katie Sue, comes to school, she unknowingly does all of the things that Mean Jean forbids. When Mean Jean attempts to set the record straight, Katie Sue pulls out a jump rope and asks Mean Jean to play with her. She does, and the social environment of the playground is improved for everyone.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-2]

### **[We Can Get Along: A Child's Book of Choices](#)**

Written by [L.M. Payne](#) (Author), [Claudia Rohling](#) (Illustrator)

This book shows how getting along and sharing make children happy, while fighting and bullying make children sad and afraid.

[Grade Level: Pre-K-3]