

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build this trait in yourself, your family or your class.



- As a family or class, complete an escape room challenge, scavenger hunt, or one-team charades game where family/class members have to work together to be successful. Talk about how cooperation was or wasn't used and how it related to the success of the game.
- Cooperation, Collaboration and Competition. With 4 or more people, play a collaborative drawing game, [see instructions here](#). When reviewing the final drawing, discuss collaboration and cooperation. How are they similar? Different? How could this activity build more



Cooperation

To look into the character trait of cooperation we can begin by breaking the word into two parts: **co** **operate**

Co refers to "together" or "with others" and **operate** can be how we work or accomplish things. In cooperation we are looking to work together for the good of the group and to accomplish a group goal.

Research shows us that humans are social creatures. This holds true for animals as well who often work together to accomplish a task such as eating or creating shelter. In human development, some of the initial developmental phases are to play with others. We can look more deeply into the later stages for understanding how children develop towards cooperation.

Here are the stages of play in early childhood:

- **Unoccupied play:** birth - 3 months
- **Solitary Play:** birth - 2 years old
- **Spectator/Onlooker Behavior:** 2 years old. Children watch others but do not play with them.
- **Parallel Play:** 2+ years old. Children play alongside others without interacting with them.
- **Associate Play:** 3 - 4 years old. Children begin to interact with others in play in very basic ways, such as playing the same theme nearby.
- **Cooperative Play:** 4+ years old. Children play together and interact together in their play with interest in the other children and the play activity.

While children develop at different rates, most are able to play cooperatively by the end of preschool. One area of cooperation that can be frustrating is when children and adolescents do not cooperate with parent, teacher or other authority figure requests. While the adolescent

cooperation? Talk about how this game has no winner or loser. How does keeping score increase competition? Talk about how that impacts cooperation.

- Divide a 25-100 piece puzzle among class/family members. Discuss how to cooperate to complete the puzzle, and then do so. When finished, talk about how members cooperated and kept the same goal in mind (completing the puzzle). Talk about other areas of life where it is more challenging to have a single goal, and how to boost cooperation in those areas. Note what gets in the way of cooperation (personal goals, disinterest in the outcome/activity, personality conflicts, mood, different viewpoints, etc.) and some ways to boost cooperation.

- Watch a sports event, theater show or musical performance. Talk about how these group members need to cooperate to achieve their end result. Talk about personal experiences of cooperation in a group.

- Images courtesy of [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)



developmental period is meant to test some of these dynamics while kids form their own values and identities, this does not mean that parents, teachers and other authority figures are without strategies. Drs. Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson’s book *No-Drama Discipline* addresses just how to connect with kids in ways that promote their cooperation.

The authors of this book put a focus on connecting to children first and then redirecting them, such as towards cooperation with a requested task. To tie it back to cooperation, kids need to see themselves as connected to the group (family, classmates, sports team, etc.) in order to work together toward a common goal. In the “[No Drama Discipline refrigerator sheet](#)” for the book, they lay out specific connection principles and strategies to use. Review that sheet and consider which strategy stands out to you the most. Has anyone worked with you to first connect before asking you to do something? Which connection strategy works best for you? Which could you put into practice to support your child or student? Which redirection strategy would you like to work on this month to boost cooperation in your home or classroom?

Look for additional ways to boost this trait in the activities listed in the rest of this newsletter.

References:

Parten MB. (1932) Social Participation among Preschool Children. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. **27** (3): 243–269. [Information here](#)

Siegel DJ & Bryson, TP. (2016) *No-Drama Discipline: the whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child’s developing mind*. New York: Bantam Books.

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