

Volunteer Leaders TraininG Guide

See the World Through Your Grandkid's Eyes

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Objective

To help grandparents do the perspective taking necessary to see the world through the eyes of their preschool-age grandchildren.

Target Audience

- EHC leaders and members
- Family and friends of EHC members
- Anyone who has an interest in better understanding preschool-age children

Advanced Preparation

Obtain a copy of the *See the World Through My Eyes* curriculum for each person in attendance. Have extra copies of the curriculum available for participants to give to others who may be interested.

Opening

Seeing the world from another person's point of view can be difficult, especially when significant age differences exist. *See the World Through Your Grandkid's Eyes* will help you do the perspective taking necessary to see the world through the eyes of your preschool-age grandchild(ren).

The Adult View

Many adults are stuck in an adult way of seeing things. We sometimes expect preschool-age children to see things the same way we do. But that's simply not realistic. Preschool-age children are not little adults. They see and experience the world differently than we do.

In the adult view, we observe a child's behavior and we often form an adult interpretation of that behavior. For example, we may see a child who is fussy and crying in the grocery store and think: "Why is he carrying on like that? If that were my child, I would teach him a thing or two about respect."

Other times, in the adult view, we may expect, and even push, children to do things they are not yet developmentally ready to do. (See the *Kate and the Bike* story below.)

Kate and the Bike

When young Kate was learning to ride her bike, her father ran along behind her holding the back of her seat until she felt confident enough to have him let go. Initially, she pedaled only a short distance before stopping and wanting to try it again. Dad helped her get started several more times, and each time she was able to ride further before stopping. This went on for several days, and Kate was becoming a confident bike rider. The only problem was that Kate was unable to get started on her own. Every time she wanted to ride her bike she wanted Dad to hold her bike upright while she got on. Then Dad would give her a push and she was on her way.

Dad wanted Kate to learn to get started on her own, not only so he wouldn't have to be there every time she wanted to ride her bike but also so she could have the freedom to ride when she wanted. Dad did his best to teach Kate how to get started on her own, but nothing seemed to work.

One evening, after several unsuccessful attempts to get Kate riding on her own, Dad's frustrations got the best of him. He said in a rather loud voice: "That's it, Kate. Put your bike in the garage and go upstairs for a bath." Kate was hurt and Dad was grumpy. As Kate tearfully climbed the stairs to the bathroom, she flopped down about halfway up and began crying in earnest.

(**Note:** Dad was trying to force Kate to do something she did not feel ready to do. He thought it was silly that she either could not or would not start riding her bike on her own. And he was mostly annoyed that he had to keep being bothered to help get her started. Notice all these adult views.)

Seeing his daughter's tears, Dad had a change of heart. He sat down beside her and apologized for his hurtful behavior. He explained that he wanted his daughter to be able to ride her bike when she wanted. He also said that he knew she would do it when she was ready. Surprisingly, the very next day when dad got home from work, Kate was excited to show him how she could start riding on her own. She had decided she was ready.

A Child's View

When adults try to see things from a child's view, they make the effort to understand the child's purpose and intent for doing something. They also try to understand and be aware of the child's circumstances. They then consider ways they can be helpful to the child, rather than being punitive or judgmental.

In the child's view, when we see a child who is fussy and crying in the grocery store we may think, "That little guy is probably hungry, thirsty, sleepy or bored." We may think, "I get cranky when I experience those things too." We may also think, "What can I do to be helpful?"

In the case of *Kate and the Bike*, if Dad were willing to see from the child's view sooner, he may have thought: "Maybe Kate just likes me being with her while she rides her bike." Or "Maybe there's a better way for me to teach her." Or "Maybe I can be more patient with Kate because I know she will do it when she is ready."

Help for Seeing as Children Do

[Provide each person with a copy of *See the World Through My Eyes*.]

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture has created a curriculum called *See the World Through My Eyes*. This curriculum addresses 21 common developmental challenges that preschool children face. Each of these challenges is discussed from the child's point of view and in the child's voice. In each of these units, the child lets us know what that issue is like for them and what they want us to know about it. Each unit also invites us to consider how we as adults can help children work through those issues.

Activity and Discussion

Take time to identify two to four of the developmental issues from the *See the World Through My Eyes* curriculum that you would like to discuss with your group. As you discuss each one, think about what the adult view of that issue is compared to the child's view of that issue.

Conclusion

We have learned several things we can do today that will help us better understand preschool children. Many of you are already excellent in most of the areas. Celebrate the times in your life when you do well at perspective taking. If there is an area where you would like to do better, make a plan.

You may want to take the *See the World Through My Eyes* curriculum home and share it with family members. You can get more copies of the curriculum from your county FCS agent.

We wish you – and the children you love – happiness as you strive to see the world through their eyes. It will make all the difference in the world to them.