



Sooper Puppy: This, That, or the Other

Theme

Making good decisions

Background

Making choices can be more complicated than recognizing the difference between right and wrong. In this videotape, Baxter (also known as Sooper Puppy) faces a series of decisions concerning friends, family, and responsibility. With practice and some wise advice from Grandpaw, Baxter learns that decision-making is frequently just a matter of how you choose to look at something.

Outcomes

Viewers will

- understand that life is full of decisions
- learn that decision-making can involve more than just a right or wrong answer
- discover that a chore is only a chore if you choose to look at it that way
- realize that friends don't always agree on everything
- gain respect for the opinions of others

Before Viewing

Ask children to discuss how they make decisions. You may need to point out that they do this every day. Use some simple examples, such as choosing what to wear and whether to finish their soup. Questions such as the following might help you get started:

1. What are some examples of decisions you make every day? Are some harder to make than others? Why?
2. What happens when you have a disagreement with a friend and neither of you is clearly right or wrong?
3. Have you ever been afraid to make a decision? Why? What happened?
4. Do you have chores or jobs you're responsible for at home? What are they? Do you think of doing them as "fun" or as "work"? Why?
5. How do decisions you make affect other people? Give some examples.

After Viewing

Encourage discussion of the videotape, perhaps by using questions like these:

1. Why didn't Baxter and Pickles agree about the shapes of the clouds?
2. Since you don't have Grandpaw, who can you go to for advice? Why does it help to talk things over with someone?
3. If you were Baxter, would you have chosen to scrub the floor or to paint the doghouse? Why?
4. Baxter's owner gave him a new toy, but Baxter decided to finish his painting before he played with it. Would you have done that, too? Why or why not?
5. In Grandpaw's story, what did Rosie learn about making choices?
6. Do you think Grizzle and Stoops will litter again? Did they learn anything from Baxter? Why do you think so?
7. Make a list of some choices people make in their lives. Which ones do you think are easy to make? Which ones are hard?

School Activities

- Suggest that children role-play the process they go through when they must make a difficult decision, especially when other people try to influence them. Invite students to make up their own situations. Get them started by suggesting a situation in which "a friend wants you to play alone but you want to play with the group."
- On a day when clouds form shapes in the sky, take children outside. Encourage discussion of what the clouds look like. Let them discover that, like Pickles and Baxter, they "see" different things. Encourage later discussion about other ways people see things differently.

Home Activities

Give each child a copy of Home Activities 15 and 16 to take home. Encourage families to carry out the activities with their children. It is not necessary to have children return the worksheets; they should not feel pressured if their families choose not to participate.

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Home Activity

15

To the Family from Your Child's Teacher:

We have seen a videotape called "Sooper Puppy: This, That, or the Other." It has helped us realize that making choices isn't always easy, but that sometimes making decisions is just a matter of how you choose to look at something. Below is part of the story that your child will probably remember. In it, Sooper Puppy (whose real name is Baxter) can't seem to make up his mind about things. Grandpaw helps him figure out some ways to do this. Read the story aloud with your child. Encourage your child to tell you more details about the videotape as you go along. Then go on to the activity on the following page.

Baxter and his friend Pickles argued over who was right about the shape of the clouds. Grandpaw finally said to Baxter, "You're both right. If you choose to see a jet and Pickles chooses to see a bunny rabbit, no one is wrong. That's just your opinion. Now, on the other hand, there are choices that have to do with safety that make a big difference—like choosing to agree on what a red light means. We all agree to choose that a red light means to stop, and it helps to keep us safe."

Later, Baxter had trouble making up his mind about whether to go for a ride with his owner or to the beach with Pickles. He waited so long to decide that he missed going to either place. He was mad at himself.

When Baxter had to choose between two chores, Grandpaw said, "Well, now you have to decide between two things you don't like, but I'll cut you in on a little secret. After you decide on one or the other, you can choose how you want to feel about it."

Baxter thought. "That means," he said, "I can choose to look at it as a bummer and be unhappy or I can look at it as a way of helping my Grandpaw and making him happy, and that makes me feel happy. I think I might even choose to have fun doing it, too. It made a big difference to realize that I have so much power when I choose. I can't always get my way. Nobody ever does—not even grownups. But I learned that we can choose how we think about things, and that makes a big difference in how we feel. I think knowing how to choose is super."

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Talk with your child about the story. Help your child think of other examples, like the red light, that all of us choose together. Then you may want to remind your child of a personal choice she or he has made recently. Help your child carry out the activity below.

Can you find your way through this maze? Every time you see a little picture, you will have to make a decision about which way to go. Use a pencil so you can erase if you need to. When you figure it out, follow the right path with a crayon.

