



GENTLE HANDS

and Other Sing-Along Songs
for Social-Emotional Learning

Amadee Ricketts

Illustrated by Ashley Barron

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Gentle Hands

to the tune of "Frère Jacques"

Kind and gentle,
Kind and gentle,
Are my hands,
Are my hands.

Hands are made for holding,
Hands are made for clapping,
Gentle hands,
Gentle hands.

Kind and gentle,
Kind and gentle,
Are my feet,
Are my feet.

Feet are made for walking,
Feet are made for dancing,
Gentle feet,
Gentle feet.


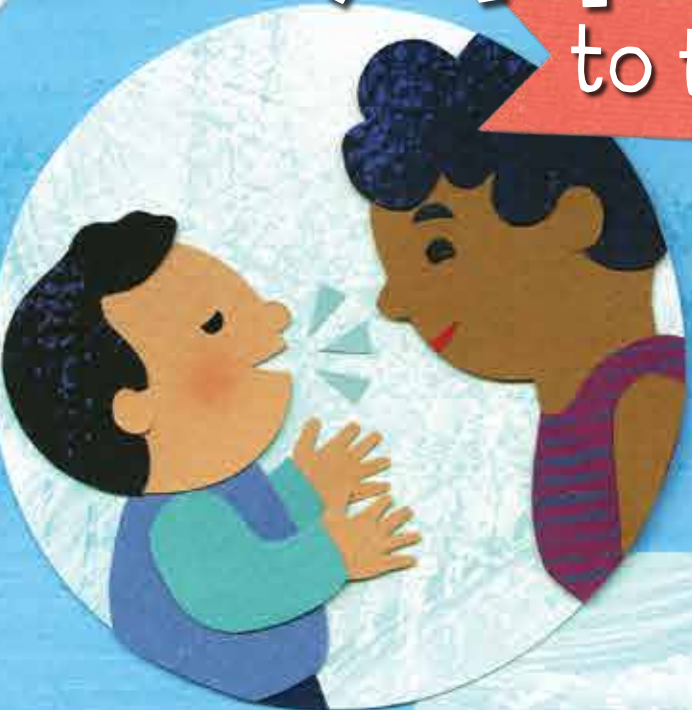
Kind and gentle,
Kind and gentle,
Is my mouth,
Is my mouth.

Mouths are made for talking,
Mouths are made for singing,
Gentle mouth,
Gentle mouth.



A-N-G-E-R

to the tune of "B-I-N-G-O"




When I feel mad, I take a break,
That's how I deal with anger.
A-N-G-E-R,
A-N-G-E-R,
Yes, I take a break,
That's how I deal with anger.

When I feel mad, I count to ten,
That's how I deal with anger.
A-N-G-E-R,
A-N-G-E-R,
Yes, I count to ten,
That's how I deal with anger.

When I feel mad, I take deep breaths,
That's how I deal with anger.
A-N-G-E-R,
A-N-G-E-R,
Yes, I take deep breaths,
That's how I deal with anger.

When I feel mad, I use my words,
That's how I deal with anger.
A-N-G-E-R,
A-N-G-E-R,
Yes, I use my words,
That's how I deal with anger.



TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Gentle Hands is meant to be shared anywhere, any time, one on one, or with a group. The individual songs are short and simple enough to fit right into your routine. Whether it is bedtime, storytime, classroom time, circle time, or stuck-in-traffic time, these songs are a fun way to share social-emotional skills with young children.

Talk About It

The social-emotional concepts in this book come up throughout the day at home and at school. Each of these moments is a chance to talk about feelings, kindness, inclusion, or being a good friend. Seeing the way these general ideas fit in to their own experiences helps young children make connections between ideas and actions.

Just as specific praise (“It was really kind when Marcus offered Serena a turn playing with the train”) is more meaningful than general praise (“Marcus is kind”), specific moments provide an opportunity for meaningful discussion (“Thank you for telling me that you are feeling afraid. Talking about it can help! Can you think of any other things that might help when you are feeling scared?”).

Singing and Learning

Songs are a great way to teach new words and concepts, in part because they are so easy to remember. One great example is the alphabet song. (Because I mentioned it, you are probably thinking of the tune right now!) Advertising jingles are less educational, but a good jingle “sticks” in your head. This demonstrates the powerful connection between music and memory.

Familiar tunes like the ones in this book, which come from nursery rhymes and folk songs, are easy for anyone to sing and remember. Whether you think of yourself as a singer or not, the children you care for love to hear your voice simply because it is yours. Singing together is a wonderful way to bond.

Along with teaching new concepts and providing special time together, singing is valuable for young children because it helps them hear and differentiate between the smaller sounds that make up words. This skill is an important building block when children begin learning to read.

One of the most effective ways to share the early learning benefits of singing is also the simplest: sing the

same songs again and again. Just as small children enjoy revisiting a familiar story or a favorite toy, the confidence that comes with repetition is clear when singing a special song together with a child who knows the words and the tune. Once your child or group really knows a song, you can add interest by changing it up a little. Try varying the pace (“Can we sing it slowly? How about reeeeeeeally slooowly?”), or the volume, as in “Should We Be Quiet or Loud Now?” Hearing a song in a different way can help kids focus on the words and the way the words and the tune work together.

Another way to get the most out of singing together is to play with rhyming lyrics. Rhymes help children hear the smaller sounds in words, just as songs do. So, songs that rhyme are especially effective early learning tools. With older children (four and five years old), it is fun to talk about rhymes and work together to find rhyming words. For instance, in “I Have Feelings,” there are two pairs of rhyming words: you and too, and care and share. You may be surprised at how many more “oo” words and “air” words children can identify when they start thinking about it.

Once you have some additional rhyming words, try them out in the song:

When I’m kind,
And help, and share,
All my friends
Will know *I’m a chair.*
... *I’m hair.*
... *I’m a bear.*
... *I’m fair.*



Do the new words make sense? Are they silly? This game works best if there are no “wrong” answers, just funny ones.

With younger children (two and three years old), rhyming lyrics can help them take an active role in a song. Using a very familiar song that rhymes, experiment with “forgetting” an important word:

When I’m kind,
And help, and share,
All my friends
Will know I _____



(Make a puzzled face, giving kids a chance to fill in the missing word.)

Interactive Storytime Fun

Although they have a wide application in several different settings, the songs in this book were written with storytime in mind. A successful storytime is interactive, inclusive, and fun. The way that looks varies from group to group and day to day, but it rarely features young children sitting still and being passive listeners for more than a minute or two at a time. And it shouldn’t! Small children have lots of energy and short attention spans. It’s best to plan activities to work with those characteristics, not in spite of them.

Learning to pay attention and be part of a group are important. But flexibility and an awareness of each child’s unique developmental needs are just as important. If a behavior does not harm anyone or actively interfere with other children’s learning, err on the side of being adaptable. Some children learn best while sitting still and listening. Others may need to keep moving, whether that means holding a fidget, standing up, or even dancing around.

