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Fun, innovative approaches to teaching Social Skills and Social Thinking® (based on the works of experts Michelle G. Winner and Stephanie Madrigal.)

# Smiling's My Favorite! How to Stay in the Green Zone this Holiday Season

In my Social Thinking group this week, we continued to work on the Zones of Regulation keeping in the holiday spirit with the Green Zone.

- **Feather Breathing** The first activity was a breathing practice with a feather. Of course, we used green feathers! The children lay on their back and held the feather over their mouth. Then they took a deep breath in and simultaneously let the feather go and blew out hard. We tried to see how far up their feather went into the air and tried to catch it!



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- **Mindful Balance: "Trim the Tree"** Each child was given a colored felt square to stand on. They were reminded to be "space protectors" and stay on their square. The children picked up their right foot and crossed over to their left. Using their toes, they picked up one colored pom pom "ornament" and carefully carried it back across and placed it on the green tree on their right. When they finished placing all 10 pom poms on the tree, they switched feet and took the ornaments off their tree still using their toes and placed the pom poms in the green cup that was on their left.



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- **Reflection:** Gathering in a circle, we passed around a green glitter ball and shared things that really makes us smile.



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- *"The Impossible Present."* We watched a funny short film about a young boy who uses

desperate measures to open a Christmas present. We talked about what Zone he must be in and how he tried to solve the problem.



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- **What's in the Box?** Holding a wrapped present, I asked the children what they thought might be inside the box. We talked about how it makes them feel not knowing what is in the box.
- **Buddy the Elf** We reviewed the Zones of Regulation and watched some video clips of Buddy the Elf in different Zones. We talked about how Buddy enjoyed smiling and spreading Christmas cheer.
- **Elf in the Zone** For this activity, we used our body language to express the different Zones (red, yellow, green, blue). I called out, "Santa sees a Green Zone Elf", etc. The students had to use their listening skills and be able to switch quickly between the different zones without getting stuck or distracted.



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- **Size of the Problem** On the floor, we had a giant line marked 0-10. I read out several different scenarios. The students moved their bodies on the line to indicate how big of a problem would it be to them. 0 was "not a problem at all" and 10 was a "huge problem". We talked about how we all have different feelings and we may react differently to the same situation.

- **Minute to Win It Game: Christmas Ball** *courtesy NBC* To play, you must use a gift-wrapped box as a fan to move around Christmas ornament across the floor and into a marked square. The box must not touch the ornament while the game is in play. Before we started the game, we talked about fighting Glass Man and D.O.F. from the Superflex Curriculum.



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- **Mindful Balance: Christmas Tree Pose with a Partner** Facing their partner, the children stood, feet together. Then they joined hands with their partner with palms touching. Then they lifted their right foot, turned their knee out; and placed their right foot above or below their knee. Now they can pause, breathe, and imagine they are a Christmas tree!
- **Closing: Smile Cards** At the beginning of our lesson, we talked about how Buddy the Elf really liked to smile and spread Christmas cheer. For our closing activity, we passed out Smile Cards to encourage the children to reach out and do something nice for someone this holiday season. These cards were free from [www.helpothers.com](http://www.helpothers.com) (<http://www.helpothers.com>).



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*\*Glass Man and D.O.F. are Unthinkable characters from the Superflex® Curriculum by Stephanie Madrigal and Michelle Garcia Winner*

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Posted by [mhkeiger](#) on [December 7, 2012](#) in [Self-Regulation](#), [Superflex Curriculum](#).

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## About mhkeiger

I am the Social Skills Director at Forsyth Country Day School in Lewisville, NC. I received my bachelor's degree in English from Salem College and my master's degree in Cross-Categorical Education from University of North Carolina - Greensboro. I am a long-term member of the Autism Society of North Carolina. I was awarded Professional of the Year by the Autism Society of North Carolina in 2003. I have over 20 years of extensive training and experience in the area of social skills.

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