

Gabriel's Angels



Pets Helping Kids®

THE WRIGHT FAMILY

AUDIENCE: AGES 8-17

CORE COMPETENCIES TARGETED: Problem Solving, Empathy, Trust, Awareness

OBJECTIVE:

This exercise is designed to encourage teamwork and to build trust. It also is designed to see how kids work together to solve problems when unexpected distractions and detours force them to reassess their game plan. When completed, it clearly illustrates, on many levels, the power of teamwork and leadership.

MATERIALS:

- Small dog token/toy – 1 for each child; (2-3 for Extension Activity)
- Story of The Wright Family

ACTIVITY:

Preliminary Discussion

For the activity to proceed perfectly, the children must depend on the ability of each person participating in the activity (including themselves) to listen, follow directions and depend on those on either side of them to do the same. **Important tip:** The activity NEVER goes perfectly, and that is by design.

Advise the children that you're going to do a really fun activity but that its success will depend on their ability to listen carefully and follow directions exactly.

Procedure

- Ask kids to form a circle and give each child one small dog token. Make sure that the game begins with one token per child.
- Advise the group that you are going to read them a story about the WRIGHT family. They are to listen carefully to the story and every time they hear the word WRIGHT (RIGHT) they are to pass the dog to the person on their right. And because the person on their left should be passing to them, they should be expecting to receive one from the left.
- Advise the kids that their job is not only to listen and follow directions but also that, like a good pet owner, it is their responsibility to take good care of the dog in their hands. Tell them that no matter what, they have to make sure that the dogs in their care don't get hurt or lost and that they are always handled respectfully!
- As the narrator, begin to read the story and pick up speed as you go along. You may assign a narrator if you wish, or extend this activity (see Extension Activity section at the end of this activity sheet.)
- Emphasize the word WRIGHT/RIGHT when you begin to read the first sentence but as you continue, treat it as any other word.
- Before long, kids will start dropping dogs and, based on their aptitude as listeners and their teamwork, some will end up with none; others with a few or several.
- When the story is over, ask everyone to look around and see who has what.

Post-Discussion

We will outline key points for your post-discussion to make them easier to reference:

- Ask the children how many have no dogs...how many have one or two...or more!

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- Ask children if they think they did a good job protecting their dogs.
- Ask the kids what the story was about. Ask specific questions like how many people were in the Wright family and their names. Ask them how many pets they had, etc. **Few of the children will have those facts.** Ask them why they don't. Suggest to them that they listened, but they only listened for the word WRIGHT instead of absorbing the whole story.
- Ask them what each person would have if the activity had gone perfectly. (ANSWER: Exactly what they started with; one dog)
- Suggest to them that this is what happens in the real world when people don't take care of their pets. They end up in the wrong hands with some getting hurt and some getting lost.
- Ask them what could have been done differently to make the exercise work better? Prompt discussion about better listening, better teamwork, etc.
- What strategies worked/didn't work (Some people are more passive and keep hands flat while they let others give/take actively. Some anticipated getting a dog from their left, others didn't. Some held on to their dogs and didn't pass them, etc.)
- Ask children to define the most important thing they learned today. Accept and acknowledge all responses. Ask if they ever realized there was a problem like this with too many dogs?
- Ask them if they know who they can talk to about pet overpopulation or too many pets in their neighborhoods. Discuss the fact that sometimes we need to ask for help in solving problems and why it is important for people to work together and help each other because animals really cannot help themselves.

If your Therapy Team animal has a special history, share it with the kids, particularly if he or she was a rescue. This will help the kids to realize that adoption is an option!

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Conclude with the statement that both animals and people have feelings and may find themselves in situations where they need help. Helping animals and helping each other shows responsibility and teamwork for all creatures!

Extension Activity

- Ask for volunteers to pass out additional dog toys as the narrator reads the story. This adds to the distraction and ensures the chaos that teens love so much!
- Advise your one or two volunteers that once the story begins, at your signal, they are to walk around the outside of the circle and reach between and place additional dogs in the hands of the kids in the circle.
- You can do the activity normally the first time and then ask the kids if they are up for a challenge to see if they can do better and be more responsible pet owners this time. If they say yes, do it again, adding additional dogs as noted in the second bullet.

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THE STORY OF THE WRIGHT FAMILY

The Wright family lived right on the corner at 922 Rightridge Drive. There were Mr. and Mrs. Wright, their two right-handed sons Robbie and Randy Wright and their daughter Rebecca Wright. They have two dogs named Dudley DoRight and Rex and one white kitty named Righthouse and they all lived together in a big white house.

The Wright house was easy to find. If you come right down the freeway, you stay in the right lane until you see the Rightridge Drive exit. Take a right at the stop sign and then you'll see the big white house right at the end of Rightridge drive. And you're right there!

But there was something very wrong at Rightridge. There were stray animals everywhere! Right before my eyes, they were walking out in the street, climbing over backyard fences and stopping traffic right in the middle of the street! "This just isn't right," I said to Mr. Wright as we pulled into the Wright's driveway on Rightridge Drive. "Something is not right in this neighborhood. There are animals right in the streets! Why are there so many of them? Who are their rightful owners and why aren't they doing the right thing for them? This is wrong, Mr. Wright!"

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"You're right Billy, said Mr. Wright...absolutely right. It's a sad story, but people just don't take the right kind of care of their animals on Rightridge Drive. I've tried and tried to talk them into doing the right thing, but they just look right past me. Until the people here start doing the right thing by spaying and neutering their pets, animals in this area will not be treated the right way and there will continue to be many of them who won't live very long."

Except for the Wright family pets on Rightridge Drive. Their guardians always make the right decisions for animals! Right on, Wright family!

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