



CREATING CALM, CONFIDENT, CARING KIDS



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Creating Calm, Confident, Caring Kids: The Mutt-i-grees® Curriculum

Children and animals have a natural affinity for one another.

Evidence shows that both derive many benefits from their interactions. The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum draws on this resiliency research, social and emotional learning and human-animal interaction to guide our program, which has two goals: enhancing children's resilience and social and emotional competence and promoting awareness of the desirability of shelter pets, referred to as Mutt-i-grees®. Our program reaches children beginning at a young age and provides opportunities for them to learn to care about themselves, other people, and animals.

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum is a collaboration of North Shore Animal League America and Yale University's School of the 21st Century. The two organizations, one concerned with the welfare of companion animals and the other with the education and social and emotional development of children, have written a unique curriculum that supports the growth of calm, confident, and caring kids while creating a more humane future for all. The program is offered in schools, libraries, and other settings where children and families come together.



Awareness.

What Motivates Us

The Mutt-i-grees Curriculum addresses two sad realities:

- The large numbers of children who attend school each day, weighed down by negative experiences at school or at home.
- The plight of homeless pets awaiting adoption, millions of them euthanized each year in shelters that lack sufficient space.

Our Program Model

Every aspect of the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum reinforces the dual focus of our program. Children learn about shelter pets while also acquiring skills that support their ability to cope with stress, attain self-confidence and empathy, and learn to collaborate and make informed decisions. Each session includes an educational/developmental objective, with hands-on activities, books, and games focusing on shelter pets.



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How Mutt-i-grees Works

We offer the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum for Grades Pre-K through Grade 12. The lessons are organized into five themes that correspond to children's social and emotional skills:

- **Achieving Awareness**
- **Finding Feelings**
- **Encouraging Empathy**
- **Cultivating Cooperation**
- **Dealing with Decisions**

This sample packet contains a complete lesson that you can share with your students with step by step instructions. Each lesson plan follows a similar structure in which there is a clear objective and rationale for each session and includes materials, worksheets and hands-on activities. Plus, the digital version of the curriculum includes interactive materials such as videos, presentations and online activities.

Feelings. Empathy. Cooperation.



Effective for Special-Needs Kids

The Curriculum has proven extremely effective for special-needs students and those on the autism spectrum, providing a means for a more direct and meaningful connection to their environments. In several schools, educators provided alternative education students (with behavior and academic problems) with opportunities to work hands-on with shelter animals, feeding them, grooming them, and promoting their adoption. They report that the experience transforms students within several months; they return to regular classrooms and continue their education with classmates.

Praise from Teachers and Administrators

"I've always considered the Mutt-i-grees Curriculum an asset because it meets the social and emotional needs of the students. But when I saw the impact of actually incorporating dogs and puppies into the classroom, a light bulb went off."

Principal Terri Ahearn - Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Children already have a natural love and curiosity about animals and the curriculum draws upon that love to help transfer those feelings to other children."

Camy Bankemper, Program Coordinator - Cold Spring, KY

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DEALING WITH DECISIONS

GRADES 1-2-3



curriculum

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Lesson Overview

LESSON TITLE	LESSON OBJECTIVE
5.1 It's your choice	Children will learn about choices and decisions
5.2 Connecting choices and consequences	Children will learn that decisions may have positive or negative outcomes, with consequences for both oneself and others
5.3 The Four Paws of Problem Solving	Children will learn strategies to aid in decision-making, including a sequence to stop and consider their options before making a decision
5.4 What is a good decision?	Children will learn that there may not be a right or wrong choice; a good decision is one where they have considered all their options, as well as consequences for themselves and others.
5.5 I can't wait	Children will learn how to deal with frustration and manage feelings when they have to wait.

Extension lessons available at www.education.muttigrees.org

LESSON TITLE	LESSON OBJECTIVE
5.6 But I don't want to	Children will learn how to deal with disappointment and manage feelings when they don't get what they want
5.7 You win some, you lose some, and some you tie	Children will review decision-making strategies and discuss how they may not always be successful in their attempts to solve problems
5.8 I can make a difference	Children will learn how their decisions can impact other people, animals, and the environment



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LESSON	5.2 Connecting choices and consequences
Objective	Children will learn that decisions may have positive or negative outcomes, with consequences for both oneself and others.
Rationale	Recognizing the consequences of decisions will help children begin to take responsibility for their actions and consider how their choices affect others. Such perspective taking will enhance empathy and foster children's ability to make informed decisions that benefit other people, animals, and the environment.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutt-i-gree® Puppet • Connecting Choices and Consequences worksheet (see sample)
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequence • Impact • Effect • Positive • Negative
Introduction	Last time we talked about the many choices we make. Today we are going to talk about how every decision/choice we make has a consequence. This means that every decision/choice has an effect on someone or something.
Discussion	<p>Some decisions affect mostly ourselves (choosing to have toast or cereal for breakfast doesn't really impact anyone but ourselves—unless it's the last piece of toast and someone else in our family wants some too!), while other decisions can affect other people, animals, or the environment (choosing to adopt a dog from a shelter). And those effects can be positive (as in the case of adopting a dog) or negative (choosing to throw garbage on the ground).</p> <p>Today we are going to think about how our choices affect our pets and other animals. As you've learned, Mutt-i-grees® are special dogs that are often found in shelters awaiting a home. Choosing to adopt a dog has a lot of consequences. What are some consequences for the dog (will have a new/permanent home, may be scared to leave shelter or siblings if a puppy)? The shelter (gains a spot to take care of another dog, may get some financial contribution, employees may be happy a dog was adopted, but also sad to say goodbye to the dog)? The person adopting the dog (excitement about getting a dog, scared about taking a new dog home)? The family of the person adopting the dog (excitement about getting a dog, nervous/scared about what the new dog will be like, concerned about how other pets may react to the dog)? Are all of these consequences positive? Can you think of any negative consequences?</p>



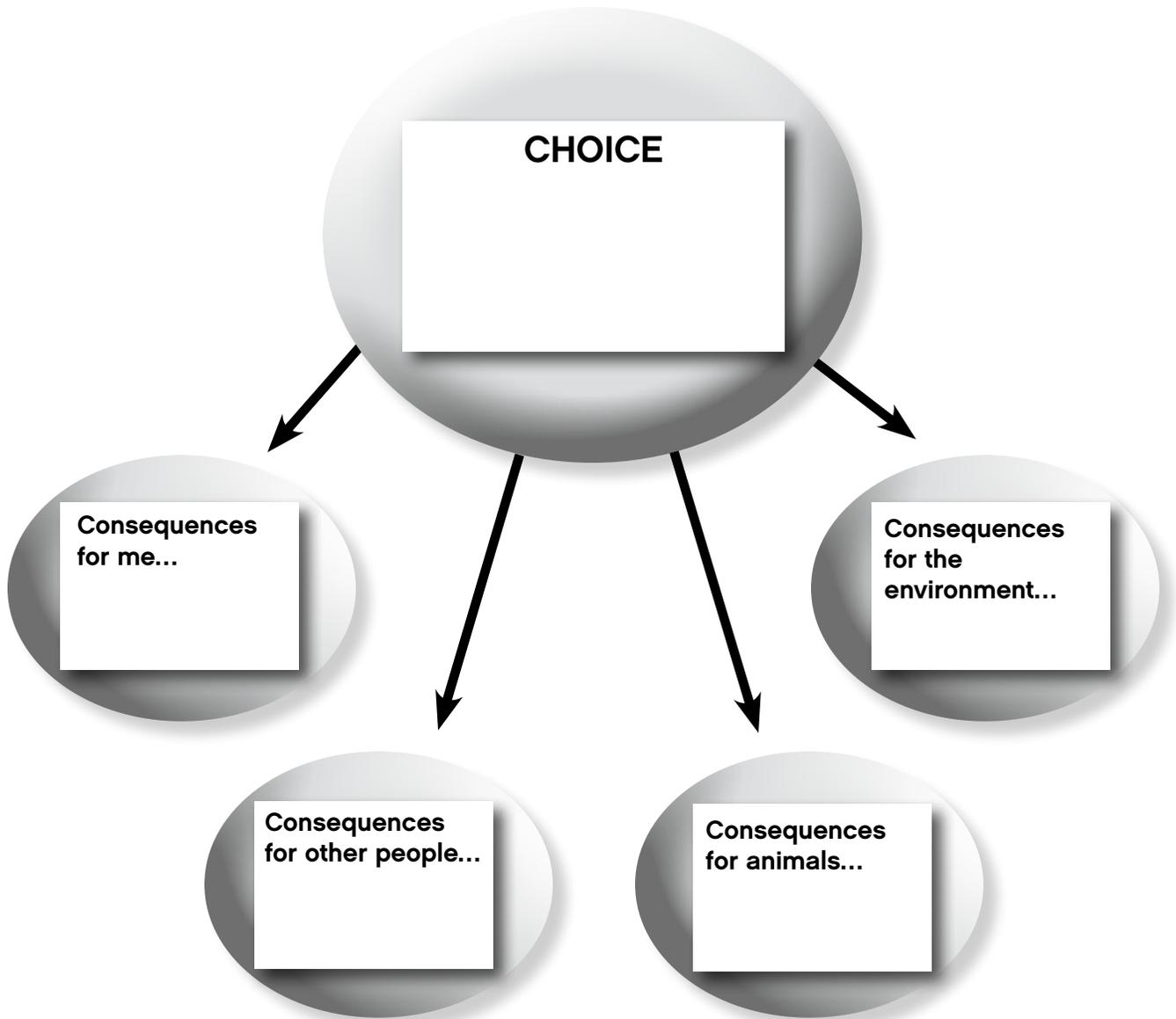
Learning by Doing	The following activity can be conducted with the whole class or in small groups. Have students complete the worksheet independently or ask small groups of students to complete the worksheet and then reconvene the class as a whole to share and discuss responses. Have students complete the worksheet (see sample) and note (in respective columns) what the consequences of each choice would be for oneself, others, animals, and the environment. Prompt children to consider both positive and negative consequences. Children can also denote positive consequences with a + or color them green and mark negative consequences with a – or color them red.
Closure	Today we talked about consequences of the choices and decisions we make. Every decision we make has an effect on someone or something. Some of our choices have consequences for other people, animals, and the environment, and these can be positive or negative.



Readings and Resources	<i>Madeline's Rescue</i> by Ludwig Bemelmans <i>"Let's Get a Pup!" Said Kate</i> by Bob Graham
Family and Community Involvement Activities	Ask a family member about a choice they made today that impacted someone else. Ask the family member how and why they made their choice and whether it had a positive or negative impact on someone else.
Advanced Activities	<u>Canine consequences.</u> Choosing to adopt a dog is a big decision. What do you think a person/family would need to think about before making that choice (how big is their house, do they have a yard, are they allergic)? What do you think shelters might ask families when they come to adopt a dog (do you have a yard, how many kids do you have)? What would you want to know about a family coming in to adopt a dog (do they have other pets, where will the dog sleep)? Why do you think shelters ask some of these questions or ask for references (to make sure families have enough room, to make sure they have thought about their choice, to ensure the dog's safety and health)? Help children research or contact a local shelter to inquire about the adoption process.



Lesson 5.2: Sample Worksheet





DOG DIALOG

HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND... TO A DOG

Being a good friend to a dog means being a calm leader and also a responsible pet owner. As we talked about earlier, it is up to us (people) to make sure that dogs have exercise, discipline and affection, and also food, water, and medical care. We talked about how we need to exercise often. So do dogs. Dogs are used to walking and working for food and we need to give them enough exercise and play time every day to keep their bodies and minds active. There are other ways that we can be a good friend to a dog.

- How does making sure your dog has an identification tag or collar help our pets?

Making sure your dog has an identification tag or collar with its name and your phone number will help in case your dog gets lost; anyone finding

him/her will be able to contact your family and make sure your pet gets home to you safely.

We can also be good friends to our dogs by being a pack leader - dogs look up to a fair leader, and it's up to their owners to fulfill that role. Dogs respect rules; they help them know when and how to act.

Remaining calm and consistent in how we talk to and treat our dogs will help to teach them the rules and make sure they are followed. Finally, it's important to show our dogs that we appreciate and care for them. Just like our friends, the better we treat and care for our dogs, the better they are likely to treat and care for us!

- What do you do to show your dog that you care and appreciate him/her?

Objective:

Children will learn how to care for their dog and be a responsible pet owner.

Vocabulary Words to Highlight:

Responsible, Fulfill, Consistent

