



Gershon's Monster

Overview

Explore what it means to make mistakes and ask for forgiveness by discussing the book *Gershon's Monster*, by Eric Kimmel.



45 minutes



Elementary (ages 6-11)



Newcomer Friendly

Aims & Objectives

Reading this story and wondering with the children about it will provide an opportunity to introduce the concept of forgiveness.

Reading List

Sparkling Still provides tools for teachers of children ages 3-12. Included are sample lessons, a master lesson plan, ideas for building classroom community, an introduction to wondering questions and more.

Sparkling Still provides useful instructions on:

- Creating the circle and other components of your time together: pages 5-22
- Reading out loud with children: pages 16-17
- Wondering with children and adults: pages vii-xi and 6-7
- Individual Art Responses: page 7
- Art Supplies: pages 20-22

Credits: Anne Collins, Sally Farneth, Susan Hopkins,
and Erika Mittag, Exercise Authors

Materials & Setup

Book: *Gershon's Monster* by Eric Kimmel ([link to purchase: http://tinyurl.com/ht3r528](http://tinyurl.com/ht3r528))

Video: 11 minutes (password = deepen) ([video link: https://vimeo.com/183925454](https://vimeo.com/183925454))

Summary of the Story

Our story is about a man who makes lots of mistakes, but never asks for forgiveness or tries to undo his mistakes until it is almost too late.

Background

This story is part of the Jewish tradition of Rosh Hashanah (The Jewish New Year). On the first day of New Year, people gather by a body of water and recite Bible verses concerning repentance (t'shuvah) and forgiveness. If we fall short of being our best selves we are bothered by our conscience. (in this story the conscience is played by the Monster)

Suggestions for reading for teacher spiritual preparation before exercise/lesson

Matthew 6: 14 "If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you." [Contemporary English Version (CEV)]

Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal

#207 Tender Shepherd

#218 God's Love is a Light

#266 This Little Light of Mine

Materials Needed for Art Responses

For Individual Art Response:

- drawing paper
- crayons, markers, or pastels
- other supplies

For Teacher-directed Activities:

- Thank You card: paper, pens, pencils, crayons
- Thankful Chain: strips of paper, pens, pencils, crayons, stapler or tape

Take Home Notes (one per family)

Note for children to take home after exercise/lesson or to email to parents during week prior to this lesson:

Today we read *Gershon's Monster* by Eric Kimmel. We learned about forgiveness and how we can become our "best selves".

Instructions

Welcome the children to the circle. Be sure to introduce everyone, if visitors are present.

Invite children and adults to go around the circle sharing one or two plusses and minuses from their day or week. It helps to ask for 2 items only, either 2 of one or one of each. Children are comfortable with a limit, unless another person's comment sparks another one for an individual child.

Sing a centering song, such as "God's Love is a Light," hymn #218, *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, and/or one of the songs previously suggested under Materials. In addition, or instead of, use breathing or other exercise to center the group. The simplest way is to breathe deeply three times. Adding lifting arms up and down with the breath or holding tummy during deep breaths can help.

Show the cover of the book, read the title and author's name. Ask the children a question that invites them to wonder about the story.

"Why does Gershon have a monster?" Then, "Let's see what happens."

Read the story, holding the book so all can see. Depending on reader's comfort level with the children, allow comments during the story, especially from younger children.

After reading the story, invite the children to wonder about the story with you.

Wondering Questions

I wonder what part of the story you liked best?

I wonder what part of the story is the most important?

I wonder where you are in the story or what part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we can leave our and still have all the story we need?

After the children have finished wondering and are ready to go to the next activity, introduce the option for Individual Reflective Art Response or a Teacher-directed Activity.

Individual Reflective Art Response

Children choose from a collection of attractive art supplies and work individually for about 15 minutes to create something of importance to the child. It may or may not be a direct reflection on the story they just heard and wondered about

Options for Teacher-directed Activity

Make a Thank You card for someone who has done something nice or for you.

Create a thankful chain using narrow strips of paper, each child writes or dictates his/her thought for the chain. It can also be a "resolution" chain where the child resolves to do something differently. (pick up my toys, feed the dog, etc.)

Closing

Provide a 5-minute warning before the children need to clean up. After clean up, gather the children in a circle and ask them to name one thing for which they are grateful. Sing songs while waiting for their parents to pick them up, or before joining the adults after the rise of Meeting for Worship.

If the children join their loved ones while Meeting for Worship is still in progress, before you lead them back to the meeting room, invite them to remember how they still themselves and some things about the morning that they may want to think about during the final moments of Meeting for Worship.

Hand out the Take Home Notes, if using, as parents pick up the children in the First Day School room, or after the rise of Meeting for Worship, if joining loved ones in worship.