

Let's Help

**A Guide for Grown-Ups
Helping Children Through
the Toughest Times**



- ♥ ACTIVITIES you can do with children
- ♥ WAYS to offer comfort & reassurance
- ♥ TIPS for working with children
- ♥ IDEAS for taking care of yourself

For more resources, visit
[SesameStreet In Communities.org](https://www.SesameStreetInCommunities.org)

It's Okay to Play!

As a grown-up working with children in crisis, your caring presence is so important. Along with everything else you do, you have the power to meet some of their most important needs. You can provide:

- » **moments** in which children can enjoy “everyday life”
- » **extra help** feeling safe and secure enough to relax just a little—and have fun
- » **opportunities** to play so they can keep their brains and bodies growing
- » **a soothing presence** to reassure them they’ll be cared for

Some of these activities go along with the pages in *Let’s Play: A Children’s Activity Book*, others you can do on their own in any way that works for you in your setting. Most can be done without any materials at all.

You’ll also find suggestions and links to more materials (including lots of videos) from [SesameStreetInCommunities.org](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org) so that you can use the free, bilingual resources in your important work helping kids continue to grow, learn, and feel safer.



Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit organization behind *Sesame Street*, the television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Sesame Workshop has a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We’re active in over 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through media, formal education, and philanthropically-funded programs, each grounded in research and tailored to local needs and cultures. For more information, please visit [sesameworkshop.org](https://www.sesameworkshop.org).

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Tips for Working With Children

It’s so important for children to have a caring grown-up around. Here are some tips for using these pages to make the most of your time together.

Take a few minutes to prepare.

- » Look over the activities.
- » Gather the materials you need (most require none at all).

Help children feel safe and welcome.

- » Kneel down and smile as you say hello to each child (by name, if possible).
- » Start off with a short ice-breaker activity, such as singing a song.

Help children enjoy themselves.

- » Praise children’s efforts by saying things like “I love the way you’re moving your body to the music!”
- » As you do the activities together, have fun yourself! Being positive and showing your own joy and interest in them can really help children join in.



Offering Comfort

During traumatic situations, it's challenging to help children feel secure. Here are some simple ways to create a calm and soothing environment for children.

Provide Safety

Assure children that they are safe and let them know that they will be taken care of. Hold hands. Comfort items like blankets or toys may also help.

Keep Routines

Help children feel they can depend on some things not changing, and that there is at least one small thing each day to look forward to. You might read a story (such as "Imagining a Safe Place With Big Bird" at the end of the Children's Activity Book, maybe before bed each night).

Watch and Listen

Children will show signs of stress when big changes happen. You can expect to notice:

- » **Unusual clinging or fear of being alone.** Use gentle words and reassure him that he is safe, and offer a comfort item like a toy or blanket.
- » **Angry behavior or tantrums.** Try to help her describe her feelings with words (*angry, sad, scared, worried*).
- » **Trouble sleeping.** Try to keep a consistent routine. Read a favorite story or sing a favorite song each night. Taking deep, long breaths together may also help.
- » **The child has stopped talking or interacting with others.** Speak softly and try to offer other ways for him to express himself, such as drawing.

Model Healthy Ways of Coping

Children look to the grown-ups around them to see how they should feel. As much as you can, try to keep yourself calm (see page 15 for self-care ideas).

Spend Time Together

Laughing, moving, and playing together can go a long way. Try drawing a picture or singing a song.



My Full Name Is...

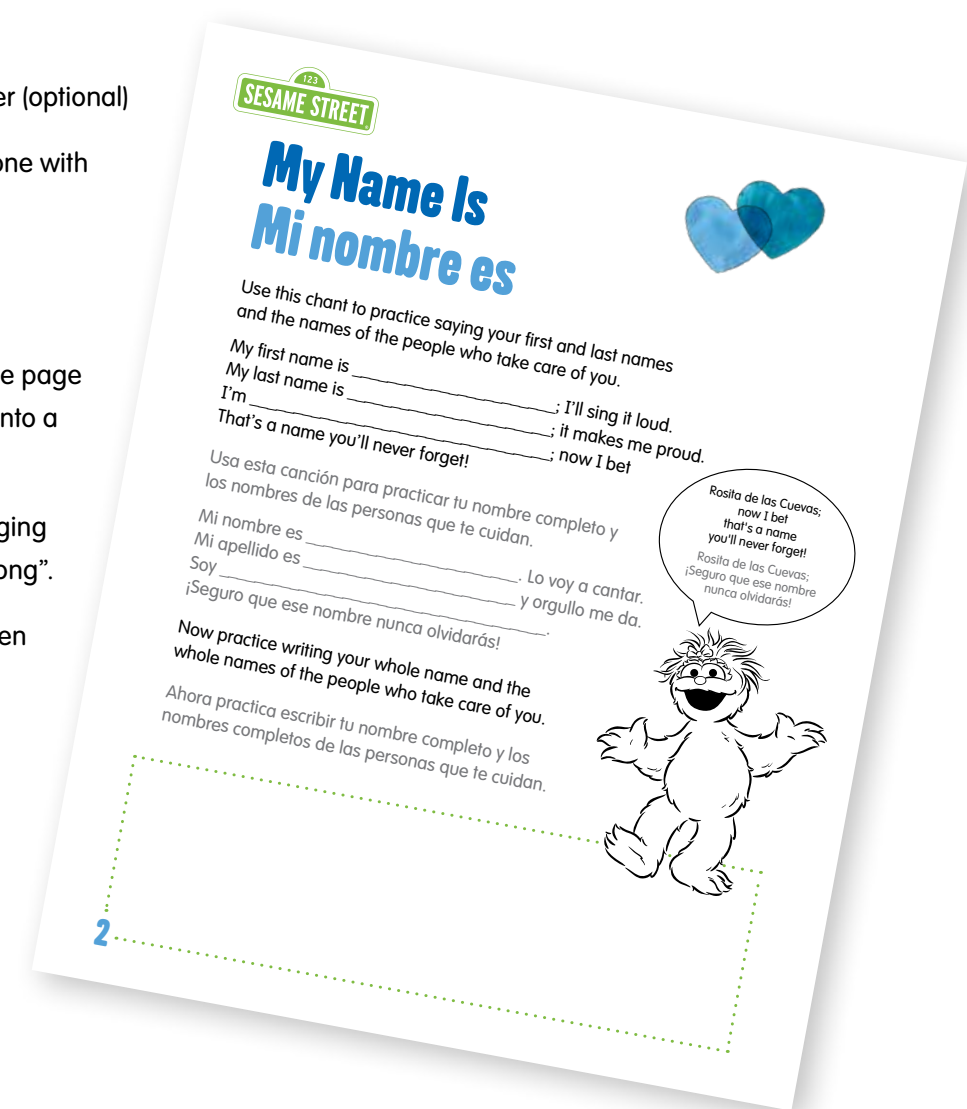
Teach children to remember their whole names (and those of the grown-ups who care for them).

Materials

- » The "My Name Is" printable (page 2 in children's Activity Book)
- » Pen, pencil, or markers
- » Large sheet of blank paper (optional)
- » A computer, tablet, or phone with internet access (optional)

How to Play

- » Help children complete the page (you can also copy it out onto a large sheet of paper).
- » Help children practice singing or chanting "The Name Song".
- » Every so often, help children practice by asking them for their own or someone else's full name.



Visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/comfort](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/comfort) to find more activities around offering comfort.



Visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emergency-preparedness](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emergency-preparedness) to watch the "Knowing First and Last Names" video together.

ABC Move With Me!

Movement is an important type of play. Here, children can stretch and bend as they build confidence in learning something new.

Materials

- » The Alphabet Page (page 7)

How to Play

- » Warm up together by saying, “Let’s march in place by raising our knees high up in the air.” Sing the ABC song as you march (you can do this with jumping jacks, stretching, and so on).
- » Then let children know that it’s time for making letters with their bodies. Explain that stretching is good for their whole bodies and can also be fun.
- » Using the alphabet on page 7, close your eyes, count to three and put your finger somewhere on the paper. Open your eyes and read the letter you landed on in a loud, clear voice to the group.
- » Model how to make that letter with your own body (you may need a child to form part of the letter with you). Tell children to bend, stretch, twist, and reach to form the letter. Let children know that they do not need to look exactly like the letter, just to move their bodies!

Keep Playing!

- » As children hold a position, challenge older children to think of different words that begin with that letter.
- » Ask a child to lead the activity.



Visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise) for more ideas to help kids get moving, and [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/language/](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/language/) for more ideas on building language skills.

Alphabet Page



Close your eyes, count to three, and place your finger on the paper. Open your eyes to see which letter you are pointing to. Read the letter in a loud, clear voice to the group.



Number Fun

Children can play with shapes and numbers in fun, easy ways.

Shape Hunt

Materials

- » None

How to Play

- » Explain to children that shapes are all around and that we can find them by looking closely.
- » Look (or move) around the room or outdoor space around you. Ask children to look for and name the shapes they see (looking for a certain shape or any shape at all).
- » Help children notice! “Look, this door is a rectangle, and the knob is a circle.”
 “The rock is like a round ball.”
 “The book is a rectangle.”

More Math Moments

- » When you talk about what you’ll be doing throughout the day, use words like *first*, *next*, and *last* to describe order.
- » Have children line up by height or age, or in patterns like “boy, girl, boy, girl.”

Math Moves

Materials

- » None

How to Play

To build counting skills, challenge children to do a certain number of moves and count aloud as you go. For instance:

- » Seven hops on one foot
- » Four jumping jacks
- » Clap six times



Visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/math](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/math) for a “Math and Movement” video and more math games.



Jumping Frogs

Jumping around and playing pretend helps children exercise both their bodies and their imaginations.

Materials

- » Chalk, masking tape, or string. (If you don’t have that, it’s okay! Find a line somewhere on the floor that you can use—on a floorboard or in the ground outside. Or, line up a row of sheets of paper, blocks, or pebbles.)

How to Play

- » Make or find lines on the ground using any of the supplies listed above. Tell children that they are now frogs and that they need to hop over the “rocks”!
- » Show children how to jump forward, and let them practice:
 1. Extend your arms behind your back and bend your knees.
 2. Swing your arms forward and take off with both feet.
 3. Land on both feet at the same time.
- » Ask children to stand on one side of the line and try to jump over the “rocks”!
- » Challenge them to jump 10 times back and forth, counting each jump aloud. Older children can count to a higher number. Jump along with them!

Keep Playing!

Depending on children’s ages, you can vary the jumps:

- » Jump off with one foot and land on two.
- » Jump off with two feet and land on one.
- » Jump with your arms at your sides or high in the air.



Visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise/](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise/) for a “Move Along With Elmo” video and more movement ideas.

Musical Statues

Help children express themselves through dance—and build their focus.

Materials

- » A device you can play music on, with upbeat music that you can stop and restart easily

How to Play

- » Tell children that you will be playing some music and that they can dance or move when it plays. But when it stops and you call out “statue” (or “freeze”), they freeze! Encourage them to move as fast as they can—jumping, bouncing, marching, or wiggling.
- » Repeat as many times as you like!

Keep Playing!

- » Share these and ask children to freeze in one of Grover’s poses.



For a “Workout With Grover” video and more fun ideas help kids move their bodies, visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise/](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise/)

Be Your Own Rhythm Band



Help children feel like part of a group as they play around with rhythm and sound.

Materials

- » None

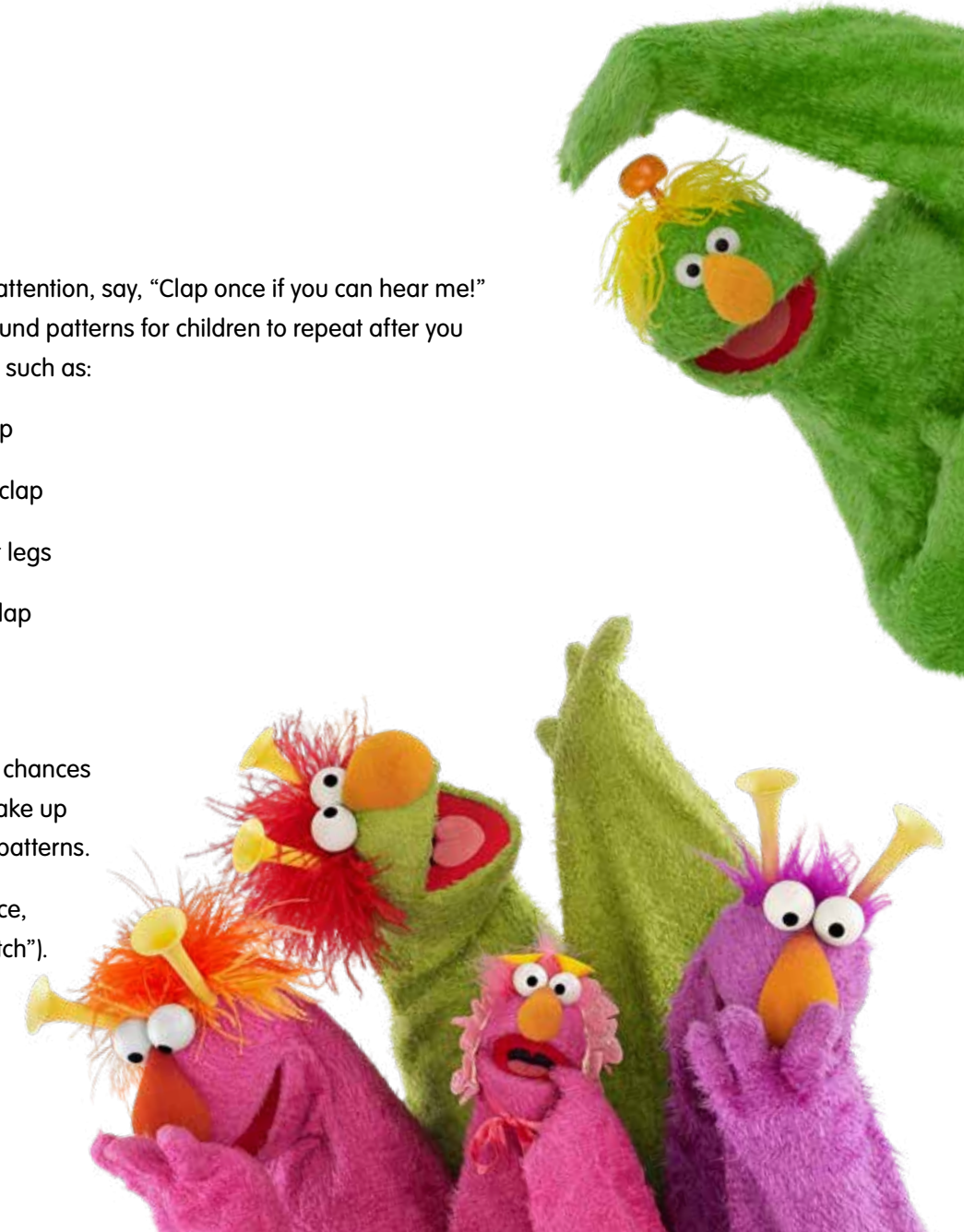
How to Play

To help gather children’s attention, say, “Clap once if you can hear me!” Then begin making up sound patterns for children to repeat after you with their hands and feet, such as:

- » Clap, stomp, clap, stomp
- » Clap, tap feet, tap feet, clap
- » Clap, pat legs, clap, pat legs
- » Stomp, stomp, stomp, clap

Keep Playing!

- » Give individual children chances to be the leader and make up their own rhythms and patterns.
- » Add motions (for instance, “clap, stretch, clap, stretch”).



For more ideas on learning through play, visit [sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/learning-through-play/](https://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/learning-through-play/)



Grover's Yoga Poses

Movement such as yoga is a great way to begin to create feelings of confidence, strength, safety, and calm.

Materials

» None

How to Play

Lead children through the movements below as you demonstrate them yourself (a quiet space is ideal, but not necessary).



Tree Pose

Developing new skills can help build a child's sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities.

STEP ONE

Say, "Stand straight and steady on two feet. Press your palms together near your heart. Then keep one foot on the ground while lifting your opposite heel." (For older children: "Turn out your knee with your head lifted, and bring your heel to your inner ankle. Move your hands up over your head.")

STEP TWO

Say "You are standing tall and straight, steady and strong. Just like a tree, feel your roots growing from your foot, deep into the ground. How long can you stay in this pose?"

Turtle Pose



When children are overwhelmed, this pose can help them quiet their minds and feel safer.

STEP ONE

Say, "Sit back on your heels, resting your forehead on the ground. Walk your fingers away from your body to stretch your hips, thighs, and ankles. Try moving your arms back and holding on to your feet. Take long breaths as you move."

STEP TWO

Then say, "Pretend you are a turtle, safe inside your shell. Or you can pretend you're a tiny snail in a strong shell. Or you can pretend you're a little seed, safe and warm in the soil. Let's stay here for a few minutes."

Feeling Faces



When you help children name, express, and understand their emotions, you're helping them overcome challenges, understand themselves and others, and communicate.

Materials

» A computer, tablet, or phone with internet access (optional)

How to Play

- » Say a feeling word (*sad, happy, frustrated, excited, mad, calm, scared, worried*) and invite children to make a face showing that feeling (model it yourself as you say the word).
- » Tell children they can use their whole bodies. They can make sounds to go with the feeling, too.
- » Explain that feelings come and go, and that children are allowed to feel all of them, even very big ones. Tell them that it's okay to feel many feelings all at once, too.

Keep Playing!

- » Let a child lead the activity.
- » Do some movements that show each feeling (for instance, for "scared," you may hunch over and cross your arms across your chest).



Read "Breathe, Balance, and Bend: The 3 Bs of Calm Bodies" and find more ideas at sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/exercise



Watch an "Exploring Big Feelings" video and find more ideas to help kids handle overwhelming emotions at sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emotions/

Imagining a Safe Place With Big Bird

At the end of the children's Activity Book, there is a story about Big Bird imagining his safe place. You can help children imagine their own safe place by reading these steps aloud:



1. Get Ready

- » Sit down and get comfy.
- » Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.

2. Imagine

- » Imagine a place in which you would feel safe and comfortable. It's all yours.
- » What do you see? What do you want to be there? What colors are those things? What do they feel like?
- » Is there a person or an animal with you?
- » Try to stay there even if you start thinking about other things.
- » Keep coming back to your place. Take three deep breaths in your place.
- » What do you smell? What do you hear?

3. Notice

- » How do you feel, now that you're there?
- » How does your breathing feel? Fast or slow? Short or long? Deep or shallow?
- » Stay here for as long as you like.

4. Come Back Slowly

- » When you're ready, cover your eyes with your hands. Then open your eyes. Spread your fingers out so a little light comes in.
- » Now take your hands away. Here you are.
- » You can return to your safe place whenever you need to.

Taking Care of Yourself



During stressful times in which you're taking care of others, it's easy to forget about your own physical and emotional needs. You're more helpful to children when you take care of yourself, so try to do something that helps you feel a little better each day. Here are some ideas:

Breathe

Close your eyes and take a deep breath through your nose. Pretend you are filling up a balloon in your belly. Exhale slowly and repeat.

Stay Active

Even two minutes of stretching can help your body feel more relaxed and cared for. Or, turn on some music and dance!

Connect

Reach out to someone you trust and can talk to—a relative, friend, faith leader, or counselor. You are not alone.

Sing or Listen

Sing a favorite tune or listen to a song that helps your mood.

Relax

To relieve muscle tension, roll your neck and shoulders or make big arm circles.

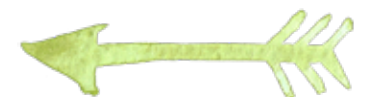
Imagine

Close your eyes, take deep breaths, and picture a situation or place that feels peaceful.



Read Big Bird's full story and find more resources for helping children cope with traumatic experiences at sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/

For more ways to care for yourself so that you can care for others, visit sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/you-matter-most/



Notes

Use this page to write children’s names,
jot down ideas, or list your questions.