

Lesson Plan: Jedidiah's Cozy Fort Story Adventure

Focus: A calm, creative, and comforting indoor activity perfect for a day of rest.

Materials Needed:

- Blankets, sheets, and pillows
- Two or three sturdy chairs, a sofa, or a table to drape blankets over
- A flashlight (a phone flashlight works perfectly)
- 2-4 of Jedidiah's favorite small stuffed animals or toy figures
- A comfy spot to lie down inside the fort
- Optional: A warm, comforting drink like caffeine-free tea or warm milk

Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, Jedidiah will have an opportunity to:

- **Develop Imagination and Storytelling Skills:** Actively participate in creating a simple narrative (beginning, middle, end) using characters and actions.
- **Engage in Sensory Exploration:** Experience the contrast of light and shadow in a calming, low-stimulation environment.
- **Practice Language and Communication:** Use words to describe characters, express ideas for the story, and answer simple "what happens next?" questions.
- **Experience a Comforting and Regulating Activity:** Engage in a low-energy, soothing activity that promotes rest and connection.

Lesson Procedure

Part 1: The Cozy Fort Construction (5-10 minutes)

The goal here is comfort, not perfection. Since Jedidiah isn't feeling well, you will do most of the work while he directs or helps in small ways.

1. **Set the Scene:** Announce with a gentle, excited voice, "Jedidiah, let's build a special, cozy cave just for you to rest in. It will be our story cave!"
2. **Build the Fort:** Drape blankets or sheets over chairs or a table to create a small, dark space. Fill the inside with his favorite pillows and blankets to make it extra soft and comfortable.
3. **Invite Him In:** Help him get settled comfortably inside the fort. Let him choose where he wants to lie down and which blankets he wants.

Part 2: The Shadow Story (10-15 minutes)

This is the heart of the lesson. The focus is on co-creation and gentle play, not on telling a "correct" story.

1. **Create the Magic:** Turn off the room lights and turn on your flashlight inside the fort. Shine it

against a flat "wall" of the fort. Say, "Look! We have a magic story wall."

2. **Introduce the Characters:** Hold up one of his stuffed animals between the light and the wall to create a shadow puppet. Say, "Look, it's [Teddy Bear's Name]! He's the hero of our story today." Let Jedidiah hold a toy if he feels up to it.
3. **Begin the Story Together:** Start with a simple prompt. "Once upon a time, in a very sleepy, cozy cave, lived a brave bear named [Teddy Bear's Name]. One day, he decided to..." and then pause.
4. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Prompt Jedidiah to contribute to the story. Your role is to be the narrator who incorporates his ideas.
 - "What should the bear do? Should he look for a snack or take a nap?"
 - "Oh look, here comes another friend!" (Introduce a second shadow puppet). "Is this a friendly dinosaur or a silly dinosaur?"
 - "What noise does the silly dinosaur make?" (Encourage him to make sounds).
 - "What happens next, Jedidiah?"
5. **Keep it Simple and Short:** Let the story be whatever it becomes. If he says the bear flies to the moon for a cookie, great! Make the bear "fly" up the wall. A 3-year-old's story may only have two or three steps, and that's perfect. The goal is participation, not a complex plot.

Part 3: The Wind-Down (5 minutes)

This phase gently concludes the activity and transitions back to quiet rest.

1. **A Happy Ending:** Guide the story to a calm conclusion. "And after their fun adventure, the bear and the dinosaur snuggled up together in the cozy cave and fell fast asleep. The end."
2. **Quiet Reflection:** Turn off the flashlight. Lie down with him in the dark or dimly lit fort for a minute. Talk softly about the story. "That was a fun story we made. My favorite part was when the dinosaur sneezed."
3. **Transition to Rest:** You can stay in the fort and snuggle, listen to quiet music, or read a familiar book if he has the energy.

Differentiation and Support

- **For Low Energy:** If Jedidiah is very tired, he doesn't need to contribute verbally. You can tell a gentle story with the shadow puppets while he simply watches from his cozy spot. You can ask him to just point to the character he likes best.
- **For More Engagement:** If he perks up, let him hold the flashlight or make his own shadow puppets with his hands. Encourage him to tell more of the story himself.
- **For Sensory Needs:** The dark, enclosed space is very calming. Keep your voice soft and movements slow. Avoid loud noises or sudden bright lights.

Assessment (Informal Observation)

- **Engagement:** Did he watch the shadows? Did his eyes follow the story?
- **Language:** Did he offer any words or ideas for the story? Did he respond to your questions?
- **Creativity:** Did he seem interested in the imaginative play scenario? (Even just watching with focus is a sign of engagement).