When children play about something that’s worrying them, they feel more in charge. When they feel more in charge of it, they can better manage it. And just as Daniel Tiger sings in his strategy song, talking about a new experience can help too.

One new experience for children is going to the doctor. Use the following suggestions to help the children in your classroom prepare for a trip to the doctor.

• Teachers can help children manage their worries by putting out materials and facilitating doctor play. Children can take on the roles of doctor and nurse. They might want to use dolls or stuffed animals as patients to practice giving shots and medicine and applying bandages.

• Teachers can facilitate comforting actions following such pretend medical procedures.

• Remember: Drawing is a form of play. Make materials freely available for children to use as a way of expressing their feelings and worries.

• Children often are most worried about getting a shot. Ask them to think of ideas that might help to make the “pinch” easier to take. Maybe by sitting in mom or dad’s lap, holding on to a “blankey” from home, singing a song really loudly, or having a stuffed animal or baby doll get a pretend shot first!

• Before the visit, talk about doctors and nurses as being kind and caring. They were children once, too. Some of them are even moms and dads with their own children that they care for and love.

• Before the visit, allow children time to play the online game Doctor Daniel - http://pbskids.org/daniel/games/doctor-daniel/

• Be honest and careful with your words when preparing children for new experiences. Through these experiences, children will learn to trust you and their doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals.

• Be sure to observe and listen throughout the year as children express their concerns about going to the doctor or other new experiences.

♫ ♪ When we do something new, let’s talk about what we’ll do. ♫ ♪