Young children are naturally egocentric. They largely see the world from their own perspective. For example, when you bring a full bag into a room, the young child asks, “What's in the bag for me?” Typically, when solving a problem, young children tend to focus on one aspect of the situation to the exclusion of all others. So, when you ask them to share, they think mostly about themselves and what they want.

This way of thinking shows up in other ways as well. That’s how we know children aren’t just being selfish. For example, let’s say you have two balls of play dough that are exactly the same size and shape. You show both pieces of the play dough to the children, and then, as the children watch, you roll out one piece into a snake shape. Once you have the two different shapes, you ask the children to tell you which one is bigger; some will say “the ball” and others will say “the snake.” That's because they see the problem from one perspective…theirs.

Use the following suggestions to help the children in your classroom learn to share:

• When facilitating sharing, have each child express his/her needs, desires, and emotions. By doing this, each child will be exposed to how the other feels. Neither is faced with having to figure out the other child’s perspective. By using this on a regular basis, you’ll be teaching children how to read each other’s cues, so they will be better able to solve interpersonal conflict as they mature.

• Have multiples of the children’s favorite toys so that children don’t have to share as much. (Examples: tricycles, school buses, dump trucks, baby dolls)

• Let children have certain things that they don’t have to share and that others can’t touch or take without first asking them for permission. (Example: a blanket or favorite stuffed toy)

• Set a timer for taking turns. This helps children trust that when they give up a toy, they will get it back after a certain time.

• Teach by example. Talk with children about things that you share, like the iPad, markers, and ideas.

• Plan some one-on-one time each day with each child. How children feel about sharing things may be related to how they feel about sharing adult attention.

• Teach children to use the words that Daniel Tiger and his friends use:

   🎵🎵 You can take a turn, and then I'll get it back. 🎵🎵