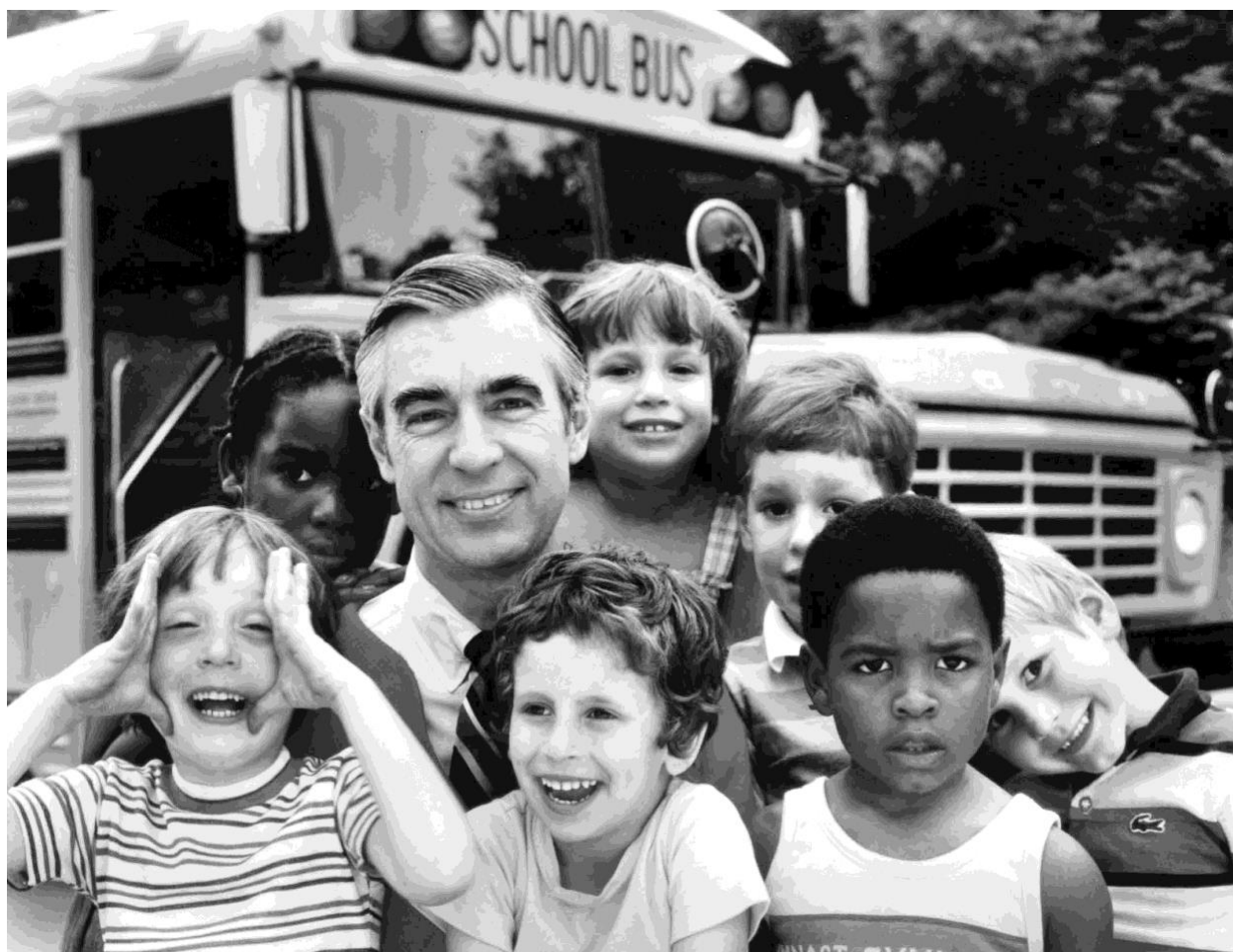


August 2021

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What We Can Continue to Learn from Fred Rogers



Getting to Know You



It's the beginning of a new school year, and I remember a teacher telling me that while she's excited to work with a new group of children, this has always been a challenging time for her. Now and then she sometimes starts to feel sad or a little impatient.

It took her a while to realize where those difficult feelings are coming from -- she's missing last year's children. She knew them so well by the end of the year. "But," she said, "you just have to let go of them." That's what's helping her free up her energy for this year's group. If you're dealing

with some of those feelings, too, I hope you know those feelings are natural and that you're not alone.

It takes a while to build relationships with the children and their families, and I wanted to give you a video that you may want to keep in mind - as you work on getting to know the children and families and as they're getting to know you.

Here's the treasured Neighborhood visit with Ella Jenkins and Neighbor Chuck Aber.



All of us in the studio were sure Fred was going to redo that scene, but he intentionally left it in the program because he felt it conveyed some really important messages. And think about how helpful those messages can be, particularly at this time of year:

It's hard to learn new things. You could see how much trouble Fred had trying to learn the hand motions to Ella Jenkins's song. It's even harder to learn about a child -- his or her strengths, weaknesses, temperament, interests, concerns, ways of dealing with feelings. And you have a whole group of children to learn about. It may be even harder to learn about dealing with each of their families!

We all make mistakes when we're learning new things. Did you see how many mistakes Fred made with those hand motions? What a great reminder that even adults make mistakes, especially when they're working on something new or unfamiliar.

You, too, are just learning about the children and their families, so there may be times when you might misjudge a situation, or say something that you wish you had said differently. But remember that children and parents can be forgiving if you take the time to talk about the situation with them – and listen to them -- and continue to work on your relationship with them.

Keep trying. Fred never gave up. He kept on trying through the whole song. In fact, he even worked on the motions after Ella left! Fred was the executive producer, so he could have stopped the tape and asked to start over. Or he could have asked Ella for an easier song. But he wasn't afraid to show himself trying and failing...and working at it...again and again.

Persistence will help you, too, when you're learning about the children. Keep in mind that it takes longer to get to know some children (and some families). You may have to try the same strategies a while...or try new ones. Relationships grow little by little. Trust builds over time. I've come to learn that progress usually depends much more on persistence and caring than anything else.

It's a real gift to laugh at yourself. I think part of the fun of this scene is that Fred was able to laugh at himself. What a great lesson for all of us. A sense of humor will carry you far – all year long!

Through this video and all through the Neighborhood series, Fred reminded us that we're only human -- and that being human is good enough.

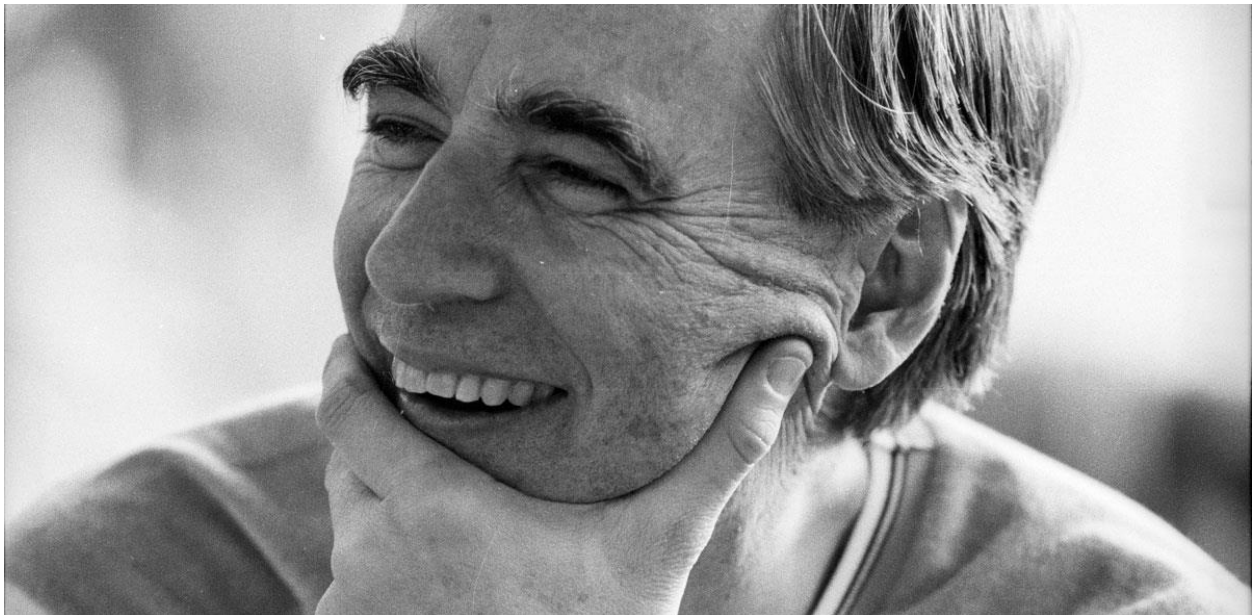
Best wishes for the year ahead,



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P.S. I wonder if you heard that Ella Jenkins celebrated her 97th birthday last week! She's been a favorite Neighbor and visited the program a number of times over the years. Thanks, Ella, for sharing your love of music with children, families and early childhood professionals all over the world. Happy birthday from all of us here in the Neighborhood!

Timeless Wisdom from Fred Rogers



"We need to remember that children are trying, too – trying to understand their feelings and their world, trying to please the people they love, trying to grow. When grownups and children are trying together, just about anything can be possible."

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