

# ACTIVITY



MIDDLE WAY  
SCHOOL

## Morning Movement with the Harmonious Friends

Ages: Early Education (ages 0-4), Primary/Elementary School (ages 5-12)

Time: 10 minutes

### Introduction

This is a fun way to get students moving their bodies in the morning, based on one part of the classic *Four Harmonious Friends* story found in the Jataka tales and also often found in Bhutanese and Tibetan art. There are some wonderful lessons on respecting elders embedded in the larger story. This particular movement familiarizes students with the characters and opens the door for further exploration of the deeper levels of the story. The activity helps warm up the body and also the eye muscles.

### Activity

To start, gather the students in a circle. Then tell the following story while guiding them through the movements described below in bold and italics. Once they are familiar with the story, you can have them fill in gaps or tell the story themselves. Make it fun and playful. You don't need to follow the script word for word.

### The Story

There was once a beautiful bird who couldn't fly. What kinds of birds can't fly?

*Invite kids answer, e.g., peacocks roosters, penguins...*

This bird loved the fruit in one special tree and it would stretch up to eat the fruits

*Stretch high up, reaching as far as you can*

But the tree grew too high and the bird couldn't reach the fruit anymore. So the bird looked left and right and left and right

*8 times eye stretch looking as far left and right as you can*

And what did it see? A rabbit!

*Start bouncing around the circle like a rabbit (10-15 seconds)*

And the kind rabbit said, I'll help you! You can step on my back and then you can reach.

And so the bird stepped onto the rabbit and stretched high up and reached a fruit and gave the first fruit to its friend the rabbit

*Reach up high and stretch down*

Then got one for itself.

*Reach up high*

But the tree grew too high and the bird couldn't reach the fruit anymore. So the bird looked up and down and up and down

*Up down eye exercises*

And what did it see? A monkey!

*Side stretches like a monkey swinging*

The kind monkey said to the rabbit, step on my back and then you can reach. And so the rabbit stepped on the...

*Let them fill in the hole in the story: "monkey"*

...and stretched high up and got a fruit and gave the first fruit to its friend the rabbit and another for the monkey

*Reach up high and stretch down 2 x*

But the tree grew too high and the bird couldn't reach the fruit anymore. So the bird looked around and around and around in both directions

*Circular eye exercises*

And what did it see? An elephant!

*Forward bend with hands clasped to make a trunk*

And the kind elephant said, I'll help you! You can step on my back and then you can reach.

And so the monkey stepped onto the elephant and the bird stretched high up and got a fruit and he gave the first fruit to its friend the rabbit then the monkey then the elephant.

*Reach up high and stretch down 2 x*

These are the four harmonious friends!

## Resources

For more on the Four Friends. There are some great connections to be made about respecting elders.

<https://fpmt.org/mandala/archives/mandala-for-2014/january/the-four-harmonious-friends/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four\\_harmonious\\_animals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_harmonious_animals)