

Understanding Feelings

Family Development Resources, Inc.

Feelings


- Most people have learned that there are two types of feelings: Good and Bad.

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Feelings

- There is no such thing as a bad feeling since all feelings are an expression of an experience.
- When we categorize feelings as good or bad, we also categorize the people who have them as good or bad.


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Feelings


- Instead of referring to feelings as good or bad, we can group them into **feelings of comfort**, and **feelings of discomfort**.
- That way it's the feelings we are labeling, not the people who have the feeling.

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Feelings of Comfort

- **Feelings of comfort** include:
 - Love.
 - Peace.
 - Joy.
 - Contentment.
 - Happiness.
 - Satisfaction.
 - All other feelings that influence the person in a positive way.




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Feelings of Discomfort

- **Feelings of discomfort** are feelings create an unsettled feeling inside. For example:
 - Hate.
 - Envy.
 - Jealousy.
 - Anger.
 - Frustration.
 - Sadness.




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Feelings of Discomfort

- The goal is not to deny feelings of discomfort.
- The goal is to manage the feelings so the feelings do not take over your life.


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How To Manage Feelings

- **Awareness**
 - The way your body responds to a feeling.
 - The name you give the feeling.
 - Awareness of the situation or similar situations that generate specific feelings.


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How To Manage Feelings


- **Acceptance**
 - The second step in managing feelings is a general acceptance that whatever you are feeling is OK, and that you are not a bad person for having such feelings.
 - Instead of accepting a feeling, many people deny, pretend or mask the feeling.

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How To Manage Feelings

- **Communication**
 - When it comes to expressing feelings, such communication can either be verbal or non-verbal.
 - All feelings have energy which gives the feelings life.




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How To Manage Feelings

- Three helpful rules in expressing energy are:
 - **Respect yourself** - don't hurt others.
 - **Respect others** - don't hurt others.
 - **Respect the environment** - don't destroy property, animals, or nature.


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Hiding Your Feelings

- When past experiences in our lives have been very painful, there is a tendency for many of us to avoid dealing with the pain.
- Examples are the death of a loved one, the breakup of a meaningful relationship, a bad investment of money, or some painful experience in childhood.

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Hiding Your Feelings

- We will either try to forget the experience altogether, or we will attempt to get rid of the painful feelings by stuffing them inside.
- Neither works very well in the long run. The painful feelings do not go away; they are just out of sight.

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Hiding Your Feelings

- We learn very early in life not to deal with pain or other feelings of discomfort.




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Letting Go of Past Pain

- An unpleasant experience we have had that we are unwilling or unable to deal with acts as a giant spring.
- We have to squash by applying pressure to it.




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Letting Go of Past Pain

- The moment we let up on the spring, it becomes fully extended.
- This is just like the painful feelings that come leaping into our mind.
- When that happens, we relive the experience again.




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Letting Go of Past Pain

- The first step is to use healthy strategies to express your feelings of discomfort, and not hide them.
- The effort involved in feeling free and being able to nurture yourself and others may not be easy, but it is certainly worth it.

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Helping Children Handle Their Feelings

- How we prepare our children to handle their feelings will affect the quality of their life more than any other element of parenting.
- The worst thing we can do as parents is to not prepare children for the tasks and challenges of life.

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Children and Their Feelings

- Help children handle their feelings, and the world is theirs.
- Let them struggle in their ways to recognize, express and handle their feelings, and difficulty will be theirs.



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Children and Their Feelings

- Children that learn to handle their feelings develop a sense of competence.
- Children who think they are competent are easier children to parent and to be around.



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Emotional Competence

- Emotional competence is the ability for parents and children to be able to recognize and express their feelings in appropriate ways.



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Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Let children know all feelings are OK.
 - Children have to believe that all feelings are good and useful in communicating.
 - It is HOW the feelings are communicated that can either be OK or not OK.

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Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Label the feeling you see or think you see.
 - For example, "You look "happy."
 - This will give the child a feeling of being believed and respected.




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Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Do not dominate the conversation.
 - Let the child do the talking.
 - Encourage sharing by looking interested in what your child is saying.





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Ways to Build Emotional Competence


- Promote rationale behind feelings.
 - Ask the question, “Why?” For example:
 - “Why do you think he is feeling that way?”
 - “Why are you feeling so sad?”






Ways to Build Emotional Competence


- Brainstorm with the child what, if anything, needs to be done.
 - Sometimes comforting a child is all that needs to be done, or simply just listening.





Ways to Build Emotional Competence


- When a child wants something, honor their desire.
 - Children feel you understand and appreciate their desires.
 - Once children realize that their feelings are honored, they are more open to listening to the logic why they cannot have what they want.



Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Teach children how to express their emotional energy.
 - All feelings have energy that need expression.
 - Brainstorm a list of physical things children can do to release their energy.

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Ways to Build Emotional Competence

- Praise, praise, praise.
 - When children are expressing their feelings appropriately, let them know you like what you hear.
 - Remember, the behaviors you pay attention to are the behaviors that are being reinforced.
 - Catch your children behaving well.

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Understanding Feelings

Worksheets



Hiding Feelings

For this activity it is important to have ample space. You may have to temporarily move tables and chairs to make room. If there is no way to have parents participate due to a lack of space, model the activity in front of the class so everyone can see.

- Have parents take one piece of paper and tear it into thirds. Have parents write one feeling on each piece of paper. The feeling can be any feeling they want.
- Instruct each parent to fold each piece of paper into a small square.
- Have parents stand up and walk around the room, taking their pieces of paper with them. As parents are walking around, have them notice their freedom of movement.
- Have each parent drop one of their pieces of paper on the floor and cover it with their shoe. Mention that when we choose to hide our feelings, we are essentially covering them up.
- Have them continue walking, dragging their paper with them under their shoe. Mention that freedom is restricted when we choose to cover how we feel or stuff our feelings inside.
- Next, have them drop the second piece of paper on the floor and cover it with their other shoe. Have them walk shuffling both feet as they are covering the pieces of paper.
- Instruct the parents to drop the third piece of the paper on the ground. Keeping both feet on the ground, have them cover the third slip with their hand, assuming a three-point position. Ask them to move. Listen to the moans and groans.
- Have the parents stop in their position and look around. What do they notice? Instruct parents to pick up their pieces of paper and return to their chair. Note that when we accept what has happened to us, we can move again and get on with life.
- Ask parents to share the feelings they wrote on their paper that they were not allowed to express. Have them notice the range of feelings.
- Mention that each piece of paper represents an emotion that people do not want to deal with or accept. The more we try to cover up our feelings, the less freedom we have. Instead of 3 slips, what if they had 15 slips? The more experiences (pieces of paper) that a person tries to cover up, the more energy it takes and the less movement a person can make. The feeling of depression is when there are so many experiences that the person uses most of their energy to cover up their feelings of discomfort.



Home Practice: Expressing Feelings



We would like to encourage you and your family to spend your energy using healthy strategies to express your feelings of discomfort, and not hide them.

For home practice:

1. Practice expressing feelings. Describe an event that has you feeling discomfort.
2. Come up with a plan to share your big hurts. This may be with someone you trust, like a close friend, or you may want to seek help from a professional.

3. Identify three ways to deal with your feelings in a positive way.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Identify three ways children can express their feeling energy in positive ways.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. Model appropriate ways to express feelings in front of your children. It will help them know how to handle feelings of discomfort.



Understanding Children's Feelings



Sometimes the best solution for helping a child handle feelings is to talk to the child about what and how he or she feels. For this activity you will role play this technique with a partner.

For this activity, one parent will be the "child" and the other parent will be the "parent." The "child" in the group will demonstrate a feeling without telling the "parent" what the feeling is. Use the three steps below to process the "child's" feelings.

- 1. Label the feeling you see.** "You look angry," or "proud," or "happy." This will give the child a feeling of being believed and respected.
- 2. Do not dominate the conversation.** Let the child do the talking. Encourage sharing by looking interested in what they are saying. Children can think better when someone is not advising, or blaming, or criticizing.
- 3. When the child wants something, honor the desire.** If you are in a store and your child wants something, rather than saying "no," tell him or her you wish you could give them anything they want. This has an almost magical effect on a situation because you have joined the child, not forbidden him or her. Children feel you understand and appreciate their desires. Once children realize that their feelings are honored, they are more open to listening to the logic why they cannot have what they want.

After you have finished the activity, switch roles. The "child" will now become the "parent" and the "parent" will now become the "child."

Share your experience with the group.

How did the "child" feel when the "parent" honored the request?

Would this work in your own home? Why or why not?