



Helpful & Unhelpful Thoughts

Parenting during uncertain times like those we are all now experiencing can make feeling positive on a daily basis a little more challenging than usual. Often children hear parents or older siblings talk about situations in a negative way with words such as “I can’t do it”, “It’s hopeless”, or “I’ll never”. With many of us at home on a daily basis with our children the need to create a more positive space is more important than ever. Talking to your children about using positive language and teaching them how they can take those negative thoughts and words and turn them into more positive, helpful ways to express themselves can be an excellent opportunity for everyone in the family to take a moment to discuss how not being at school, activities, or even work is affecting each other right now.

When having this conversation with younger children, using the example of a stoplight, and how it works, gives them a simple but very effective visual that they can easily relate to. Just like the red colour on the stop light, unhelpful thoughts (red thoughts), can stop us from moving forward by making us feel scared, worried, or even angry. Helpful thoughts, (green thoughts), are like the action that takes place when the traffic light turns green enabling us to go, move forward. Green thoughts make us feel happy, good, brave, and excited. Just like the traffic light we see on the street that has the yellow light in the middle, we also have a yellow zone in between our feelings of helpful and unhelpful thoughts. In order to get to either green or red, we need to pass through yellow, which is where we remind ourselves, and our children, that it’s time to take that deep breath, practice those relaxation exercises such as deep belly breathing, and slow down. Making a traffic light to put on your fridge, or in an area where everyone can see it, will help both you and your child remember to talk about those “red” and “green” thoughts when they begin. It doesn’t take long until everyone in the family is reminding each other that they are using unhelpful thoughts and how to pass back through the yellow zone into the green where they will once again feel more positive and happy.

Learning how to identify and express our thoughts and feelings will not only create a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in your home, but it will also help build resiliency skills in your children as they learn to cope with the stressors, worry, and feelings associated with both their unique military lifestyle and during times like these where social distancing has become commonplace.

If you would like more information, or resources, on parenting please contact our Coordinator of Child and Youth Services at gmfrchildyouth@gmail.com.