



The Feelings Tree

During these uncertain times our children may have difficulty expressing how they are feeling, simply because they do not have the words or are somewhat unsure of the difference between feeling sad and feeling worried.

The Feelings Tree is a simple activity that parents can do with their young children to discuss the many different emotions they may be feeling and why. Ask your child to draw, or cut out pictures of the feelings they see in old magazines or weekly sales flyers. Look for pictures such as a crying baby, a smiling happy cat enjoying a treat, or an angry looking vegetable – be creative! Once your child has cut out a wide variety of pictures, simply sit together to put them into categories; happy, sad, mad, worried, excited, scared, etc. As you and your child look at the images, talk about what you see. Ask questions such as “What makes you feel happy?” or “What are some things that would make you feel scared?” Be ready to share your answers with your child as well. You can explain to your child how you feel in different situations in your life. Remind them that it is normal and okay to feel many different ways.

Everyone has feelings; however, what is important is what we choose to do with our feelings. We can choose to yell, break things, hit others, or have a temper tantrum or we can choose to practice ways to calm down such as deep belly breathing, have a sip of water, hug mom or dad, or cuddle our favorite stuffed toy.

When talking to your child about the negative ways we sometimes express our emotions, refer to them as helpful things (show them a thumbs up), or unhelpful things (show them a thumbs down). This will also help in the discussion of the feeling pictures that you are looking at together.

Once all the feelings pictures have been sorted, put them in an envelope and attach them to the fridge. Post a picture of a tree with many branches beside the envelope on the fridge for everyone

to see. Each day, ask your child how they are feeling today, or if you notice your child is a little extra happy or seems somewhat sad or quiet, ask them to choose a picture from the feelings envelope and place it on the branch of the tree. You can talk a little at this time about why they chose that feeling and/or then again at the end of the week, showing them the many different feelings they had during the week.

Encouraging your child to express their feelings will not stop the temper tantrums or occasional battles that we all have with our kids, but it will give you the opportunity to talk with your child and develop strategies for managing their many emotions in a helpful positive way together.

If you would like more simple tips, or parenting resources, please contact the GMFRC Child and Youth Services Coordinator, Kim Dixon, at GMFRCchildyouth@gmail.com.