

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From ***What's the Buzz?*** A social skills enrichment programme for primary students



Lesson 7: feelings, the warning signs

In this lesson your child learnt that their bodies often transmit physical signals when they experience emotion. For example, many of us talk about feeling “a lump in the throat,” “a tight chest” or “a racing heart” when facing fearful or difficult circumstances. This is in fact the physical component of emotion and alerts us to the problem at hand. It is our brain and body’s way of telling us to think carefully about what we do next. Here are a few practical ideas for parents to improve their children’s capacity to understand and read their emotions.



Be patient

The children who participate in *What's the Buzz?* are far more reliant on parents who treat them with respect, who speak quietly when reprimanding, who give them time to respond, and can cleverly sidestep until the heat of the moment subsides. These children, more than most, do their best learning when they are composed. It may not be what you wished for, but their journey to gain self-awareness and self-regulation is at a different pace. It is not a matter of unearthing a miraculous “cure” through a new therapist or a new programme. What is far more powerful is the thoughtful, consistent approach from parents at home.

In the spirit of gentle, persistent encouragement we offer the following ...

The North Wind and the Sun

A dispute arose between the North Wind and the Sun, each claiming that he was stronger than the other. At last they agreed to try their powers on a traveller to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all the force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it around himself. Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveller, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders: then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had got many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad.

(Aesop)

Assist your child to identify their early warning signs

Everything that happens to us is experienced both emotionally and physically whether we are aware of it or not. The physical component, what we refer to as the early warning indicators, is often felt first. These are activated as our brain tells our bodies that the experience is likely to be pleasing or otherwise. To illustrate this, as we face a fearful encounter our body releases adrenalin. Abruptly, the heart starts to race and there is a tightening of the muscles preparing the body for a classic fight or flight reaction. Increased tension in the muscles, elevated heart rate and a state of fear at the emotional centre of the brain tends to reduce emotional strength. Suddenly we think less clearly!

Alert your child to the simple facts. They need to know what is happening to their body and emotions when stressed and conversations often provide a wonderful way to explore this. Simple things as saying, “I understand you’re angry Stef. I can see how hot and red your face is. I bet your heart is beating fast as well!” By being empathetic and helping youngsters identify their feelings the heat can be taken out of many an

emotionally charged situation. This practical day to day approach offers the best chance to consolidate a child's understanding about their feelings.

The smart advantage

Those who learn to stay calm when things go wrong give themselves the advantage of thinking more clearly and making better choices. It's the smart advantage! When someone says something that's annoying, hurtful or threatening a brain that remains calm and can think of new ways to address the problem - a smile, a shrug, walk away, tell a joke, ignore, run, eye roll, duck for cover, be quiet, agree, say sorry or become invisible and blend into the background – gives the best advantage. A smart idea is to teach children to press the 'delete key' in their mind and shrink those they are having trouble with into little babies with smelly nappies. Also teach that just because someone looks as though they are being mean or thoughtless, it isn't a cue to get even, get back at them or have the last say. All children need to know that when they stay calm they give their brain the best chance to send powerful help messages to deal with the problem. When they do this they exude confidence, poise and graciousness and this will have a positive influence on how others see them.

Where do your Warning Signs live?

Ask your child to share their completed 'Where do your Warning Signs live?' worksheet. It should be in their folder. Also in the folder is a blank worksheet for you to complete. Fill it out with your child. In this way they can learn more about you and how you interpret your warning signs! Comparing similarities and differences provides useful discussion and new learning.



"Every person is a new door to a different world."

from the movie, 'Six Degrees of Separation'