



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

IF YOU'RE HAPPY, THEN WHAT?

The song "If you're happy and you know it" is a favorite with many kids. They love to clap, stomp, spin and shout. They do it because they have learned the actions to the song, but have you ever thought do they know what the emotions mean or better still what it is to "feel" that emotion?

Children will recite 'yes I am happy' or 'no I am sad' throughout the day. They respond to a question as they have been taught. Knowing if they are truly happy and understanding that feeling requires us as the caregivers to teach them, not only about these emotions, but about the reactions that accompany their emotions. Letting them put a name to an emotion is great, but it's only the first step. They need more knowledge to really ensure that they are truly feeling happy, not just saying they are.

So, how do you teach them more about their feelings? Showing the faces of the emotions and having them make their sad, scared, worried face in a mirror is a good option. Discussing the way their body reacts, e.g. feeling hot and/or how their muscles get tight in the shoulders and neck, teaches them to recognize inner emotion connection. When you are upset or sad your stomach feels funny and you sometimes tingle. These physical reactions can help all be them understand better. Then you can discuss with them how some people feel emotion more. Some others bodies give them more feelings and signs that is okay.

We also need to help children understand that just because something, like getting to go outside, makes some of us very excited, for others not so much. Helping them understand that your feelings are your own. You can own them and they can be different than others.

This self-awareness of others emotion learning empathy and acceptance. Understanding that someone can be sad but you are not is important. Helping them label and acknowledge this understanding builds on the ability to tolerate others and understand differences in and around them.

Some great activities to help with these skills are:

Emotion or feeling of the week. Pick out an emotion like frustrated and explain it; then find times throughout the week to talk about being frustrated, how to deal with being this and what others might help you.

Cheryl's Corner of Caring

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss and have found a way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen." (Elisabeth Kubler-Ross)

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Emotion Charades: Have everyone get to pick an emotion and act it out. Using no words just your bodies.

Matching emotions: Find pictures and cut them out of different emotions and have the children match them together. (They do not have to be the same picture only same emotion)

Skittle or M&M emotions: Get a bag of either candy and have a color represent an emotion and

with each candy the child has to either say what makes them that emotion, when they have felt that emotion or what can they do to help someone feeling that emotion. Then let them eat the candy after you have talked about that color candy.

Sesame Street Communities have lots of fun and interactive activities to help children learn and deal with emotion.

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emotions/?activity=feelings-have-names>

MEET CENTENNIAL'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION TEAM



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Lincoln & Yuma

For additional support during
the COVID-19 Pandemic you
can call Centennial's
**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT LINE**

You can do this by calling your
nearest Centennial office:

Akron - 970.345.2254
Burlington - 719.346.8183
Cheyenne Wells - 719.346.8183
Elizabeth - 303.646.4519
Fort Morgan - 970.867.4924
Holyoke - 970.854.2114
Julesburg - 970.474.3769
Limon - 719.775.2313
Sterling - 970.522.4392
Wray - 970.332.3133
Yuma - 970.848.5412

Contact your local Centennial Mental Health Center for assistance with any Early Childhood need.

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