

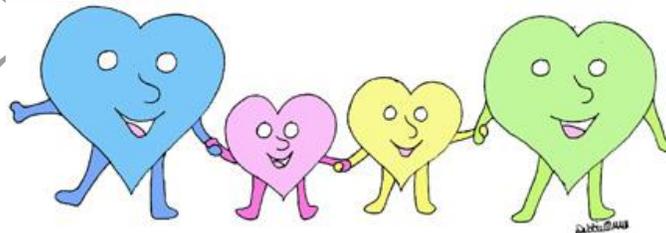


CHILDREN'S WELLNESS CURRICULUM

ASK 4 HELP!® ELEMENTARY PROGRAM TOOLKIT

Edition 2009

Preview



"It is always, no matter what, OK to ask for help, if I am sad or mad or in between. This is what the yellow ribbon means."

Dustin, First Grader, Coloma, MI Elementary School, 2000

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Introduction



Why is the Ask 4 Help® Children’s Wellness Curriculum Important?

The *Ask 4 Help® Children’s Wellness Curriculum*¹ is a primary prevention approach to teaching children the vital skill, of asking for help through the message, that It’s OK to Ask 4 Help!®. There are many suicide prevention efforts that are specific to intervening when someone is suicidal. This program, however, fills a gap with a unique curriculum that teaches children help seeking skills to protect them before the risk of suicide becomes an issue. The intention of this training is that by the time young children reach adolescence, help seeking behavior is ingrained.

This training and curriculum includes hands-on strategies that build protective factors recognized in research literature to protect children from risks associated with suicide. The curriculum seeks to reinforce the building of assets, also known as resiliency factors, which we refer to as *life skills*. Lesson plans have been classroom tested and are age-appropriate.

Goals for the Adults:

- Learn Warning Signs, and Risk and Protective factors for suicidal behavior.
- Learn appropriate protocols for getting help for students in a safe and timely manner.
- Learn how to strengthen protective factors and model connectedness as a strategy for the prevention of suicidal behavior.

By the end of the curriculum, students will:

- Understand what feelings are (definitions).
- Understand / recognize and express their own feelings and feelings of others.
- Recognize what they need, (the difference between needs and wants).
- Differentiate between tattling and telling.
- Know how to ask for help for themselves and for others².
- Know how to identify helpers (trusted adults).

Many teachers and school faculty have asked a critical question; “How do I talk to my own kids about suicide or getting help when you are in emotional pain?” As an elementary-level educator, you may find yourself needing to have that knowledge for your own family as well as for your students. Some elementary teachers who have learned of a suicidal death of a former student have asked “what could I have done, what should I have known, what could I have seen with this child in my class to have helped prevent this tragedy?” This curriculum is part of the answer to these questions, as it develops the skills

¹ In the Children’s Curriculum (lesson plans and worksheets), Ask for Help is spelled out to support early spelling learners.

² Centre for Suicide Prevention, SIEC Alert #39, Strategies for Preventing Child Suicide

necessary to protect children if they become suicidal at some point in their life. This curriculum teaches important life skills.

What are Protective Factors?

Why is it critical to develop and nurture protective factors in elementary school? Protective factors “are the positive conditions, personal and social resources that promote resiliency and reduce the potential for youth suicide as well as other related high-risk behaviors”.³

According to the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, “Measures that enhance protective factors play an essential role in preventing suicide...[and] programs that support and maintain protection against suicide should be ongoing”.⁴

Yellow Ribbon’s elementary *Ask for Help*[®] curriculum specializes in the ongoing development and reinforcement of the following protective factors in children and youth. Many of these protective factors will look very familiar, as they are synonymous with or identical to student outcomes and support systems listed in 21st Century Skills.⁵

- Problem-solving skills (anger management, conflict management, social skills, etc.)
- Cultural identity and support
- Strong sense of self-esteem and self-worth
- Connectedness with family members, teachers and other trusted adults, and peers/friends
- Opportunities to participate in and contribute to school and community projects/activities
- Responsibilities/duties to others
- Healthy fear of risky behavior/pain
- *Knowing when and how to ask for help*

| Lessons Title | Protective Factor |
|-----------------|---|
| • Feelings | Understanding emotions as they apply to self-worth. Healthy expression of emotions and coping skills. Problem solving, leading to help-seeking behavior and to recognizing needs in someone else. Cultural and community support. |
| • Needs | Self-worth, sense of stability, and the difference between tattling versus telling. Help-seeking behavior for getting help for one’s self and for others in need. <i>Knowing when and how to ask for help.</i> |
| • Connectedness | Connectedness with helpful family members or other adults, cultural support, which can increase and strengthen help-seeking behavior. |

Program Fidelity

³ Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program: Risk and Protective Factors.
⁴ National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action 2001, page 35
⁵ www.21stcenturyskills.org

To achieve the full impact and effectiveness of the Ask 4 Help!® Children's Wellness Program, it is important to implement the full scope and sequence of the curriculum, and to implement it with fidelity.

Technical assistance is available from Yellow Ribbon as well as the Yellow Ribbon Listserve in the form of mentoring and networking with other program sites and Yellow Ribbon chapters. It is the medium to receive updates of program development, network news and addenda to toolbooks, handbooks and training materials. Implementers of the curriculum are encouraged to join the listserv and can request to join at ask4help@yellowribbon.org.

To support this fidelity, follow the training* sequence.

- 1: Training for Educators and School staff. 3 hour workshop. *(Parents can be invited)*
Section 1: Be A Link!® Gatekeeper Training. *Appropriate for all school staff.*
Section 2: How to use the curriculum.
- 2: Parent and Community seminars. *(Optional)*
- 3: Student Training(s) Held throughout the school year (Follow-up session or homework as desired). *It is at the discretion of the school to allow parents to attend student sessions.*
- 4: Evaluations. *(Optional, but recommended) (Use YR Event Evaluation Report)*

* Prior to training event, building liaison will confirm with presenter that all presentation equipment and needs are in place.

Ask for Help® Children's Wellness Curriculum Background and information.

This ground-breaking curriculum was developed in response to overwhelming requests by communities and educators who believed that elementary age children should receive direct instruction on help-seeking behaviors before a suicidal crisis arises. If young children are taught how and when to, Ask for Help at an early age, positive changes will occur as reflected in the reduction of suicidal behaviors. The elementary wellness curriculum is the third tier of a comprehensive suicide prevention program that includes:

- Ask for help training and curriculum for teens and young adults
- Gatekeeper training for community members (generalized), and specific gatekeeper trainings for various disciplines
- The elementary curriculum development and implementation are aligned with the recommendations of National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and Best Practices Guidelines.
- The student sessions average 30-50 minutes in length.
- Students are taught by licensed certified and classified staff members that have completed the Ask for Help Children's Wellness Curriculum training.
- School staff, parents and community members are taught by a person trained by Yellow Ribbon Program or one of its recognized trainers.

Training adults and children at the elementary-age level is groundbreaking and may be new to the community in which the program is being implemented. Feedback about the progress of local implementation efforts will greatly assist in the ongoing study and evolution of the social/emotional education of this age group. Please inform the Yellow Ribbon Program regarding the efficacy of the curriculum, the usefulness of each lesson and related training materials, and lessons learned during implementation.

BE A LINK![®]
GATEKEEPER TRAINING GUIDE
(FOR STAFF)

Table of Contents

Introduction

Be A Link![®] Suicide Prevention Training for Staff

- Introduction (Slide 1)
- Why is the Children's Wellness Curriculum Important (Slides 2-5)
- Children and Suicide (Slide 6)
- Objectives of this Training (Slide 7)
- Warning Signs / Behaviors (Slides 8-9)
- Risk Factors / Stressors (Slides 10-12)
- Protective Factors (Slides 13-15)
- Assisting a Child in Crisis (Slides 16-18)
- Introducing the Ask 4 Help![®] Card (Slide 19)
- Training Sequence (Slide 20)

Appendix

- Glossary
- Coloma, MI Newspaper Article
- References
- Resources

Outline of Slides used to present Gatekeeper Training for staff

Citations are listed in the “reference” section in the back of the toolbox

- **Why is the Children’s Wellness Curriculum Important?**
 - Children spend a substantial part of their day in school under the supervision of school personnel
 - It is crucial for all school staff to be trained in suicide prevention to be prepared
 - Education for students and school personnel which teach children how to ask for help for themselves or a friend and which give gatekeepers skills in identifying sources of help are shown to be good strategies for preventing child suicide.
 - It is a primary prevention approach to teaching children a vital life skill; that it is Okay to Ask for Help!
 - This unique program fills a gap and “moves upstream” by helping children develop skills so that by the time they reach adolescence, help seeking behavior is ingrained.
- **Children and Suicide**
 - Though suicide is very rare under age 14, studies show high rates of nonfatal suicidal behaviors and ideation. Statistics also verify that children do act upon suicidal thoughts.
 - Research has found that children by ages 8-9, do have an understanding of suicide, and that younger children understand the concept of “killing oneself”.
 - An undetermined number of traumatic injuries and “accidental” self-poisonings are believed to be suicidal in their intent. (Centre for Suicide Prevention (SIEC) Alert #39)
- **Objectives of this Training**
 - **To learn Warning Signs (observable behaviors)**
 - **Risk Factors / Stressors (Internal Contributors)**
 - **Risk Factors / Stressors (External Contributors)**
 - **Protective Factors - Internal-Personal**
 - **Protective Factors - External-Environmental**
 - **Assisting a Child in Crisis**
 - **Introducing the Ask 4 Help!® Card**
 - **Training Sequence**
 - Be A Link!® Suicide Prevention Training for Staff *(Includes Curriculum implementation)*
 - Be A Link!® Suicide Prevention Training for parents and community. *(Includes Curriculum review and is an optional training)*
 - Ask 4 Help!® Student’s Training - Children’s Wellness Curriculum

TEACHER'S TRAINING MANUAL



Table of Contents

Introduction

- Curriculum
- Expressing Feelings Overview
- The Heart Family

Lesson Plans

- Expressing Feelings 1.0...*Rainbow of Feelings* -- **Sample Lesson Plan**
- Expressing Feelings 1.1...*Color Poetry*
- Expressing Feelings 2.0...*Things That Really Bug Me*
- Things That Bug Me -- **See Student Workbook**
- Expressing Feelings 2.1...*What Emotions Look Like* -- **Sample Lesson Plan**
- Expressing Feelings 3.0...*What Music Feels Like*
- Expressing Feelings 3.1...*Emotion Masks*
- Emotion Mask Template -- **See Student Workbook**
- Needs Overview
- Needs 1.0...*What Do I Need?* -- **Sample Lesson Plan**
- Needs and Wants...**See Student Workbook**
- Needs 1.1...*How can I Ask for Help?*
- Tattling versus Telling Overview
- Helpful Hint: Tattle Mirrors and Tattle Books
- Tattling versus Telling: Getting Help for Others...(Tattle Tales)
- Connectedness Overview
- The Power of Connectedness
- Connectedness 1.0...*Helpful People Quilt?* -- **Sample Lesson Plan**
- Connectedness 1.1...*Classroom Connections*
- Interview Questions for Classmate History Report -- **See Student Workbook**
- Connectedness 1.2...*Family Story*
- Interview Questions for Family History Report -- **See Student Workbook**

Appendix

- What Research Tells Us
- Word Cards (for Expressing Feelings 1.1...*Color Poetry*) -- **See Student Workbook**
- Recommended Children's Books
- Resources

Note: Hard Copy Toolkit has all lesson plans and has page numbers listed on table of contents.

Expressing Feelings Overview

Poetry enables me to express my fears, my joys and whatever other potent emotions I am feeling. Writing poetry is my way of exorcising these emotions and it has become a technique that I use whenever I need to relax. ~Edward Wilson, October, 1999.

Yellow Ribbon strongly encourages the reinforcement of the healthy expression of emotion. Emotions can take a positive or negative tone, depending on the stimulus and response factors, but healthy expression is a beginning step toward help-seeking behavior.

The lesson plans in this section integrate the arts because the plans are synonymous with creative expression. The lesson plans on feelings are organized into three sections, which should be taught in the following order: 1) Understanding what feelings are (definitions), 2) Understanding and recognizing one's own feelings, and 3) Understanding and recognizing the feelings of others.

Section 1: Understanding what feelings are:

In *A Rainbow of Feelings*, children discover connections between color and emotion, thus learning to understand what feelings are by definition. Read the book *My Many Colored Days*, written by Dr. Seuss, and after investigating the way the illustrator has connected the colors with emotions, students select an emotion and illustrate it using the color they feel best describes the emotion.

In *Color Poetry*, children take their color expressions further by creating a class or individual poem. Poems can be about the feelings themselves, or about asking for help. The intention of this lesson is to assist children in beginning to recognize and understand their own feelings. Several opportunities to verbalize the poems are suggested in the lesson plan.

Section 2: Understanding and recognizing their own feelings

In *Things That Really Bug Me*, children write one issue or circumstance in each "bug" that irritates, annoys, angers, or frightens them. They then brainstorm ideas for changing the circumstance to return to a more positive feeling.

In *What Emotions Look Like*, children begin to think beyond how their own emotions affect them, and towards how they might recognize the emotions behind the facial expressions of others. This idea is made concrete with the use of magazine images used to make a collage.

Section 3: Understanding and recognizing the feelings of others

In *What Music Feels Like*, children are asked to kinesthetically express various emotions by responding to certain types of music, which serves to help students understand their own body postures and movements when they feel certain emotions, as well as to recognize the meaning of body postures in others.

In *Emotion Masks*, children utilize what they have learned in the previous four lessons and create a mask that shows an emotion. Activities with the masks can include a parade or a "guess my emotion" game which serves to develop recognition of emotions in others.

Heart Family -- We use the Heart Family to introduce children to ways of expressing their feelings. This is an overview. In the student workbook, the hearts are on separate worksheets (see Tab 3, Student Workbook I). The worksheets can be used multiple times throughout the school year.

There are 12 Lesson Plans for children

Expressing Feelings 1.0

Lesson Title: A Rainbow of Feelings **Grade:** Lower Elementary **Time:** Approx. 30-45 min

Objectives: Students will identify and verbalize emotions and feelings, and visualize a connected color. Students will create a work of art using this emotion concept with the connected color.

Protective factor: understanding emotions as they apply to self-worth and self-esteem; sense of personal control over emotions.

Content Integration: Literacy, Visual Art

Essential Questions: Can Students:

- Connect an emotional response with a certain color?
- Use color to express emotion?

Motivational Resources:
 Book: *My Many Colored Days*
 Examples of paintings by famous artists that depict emotion with color*

Materials needed:
 12x18 white paper (tagboard), 1 per child
 Crayons sets per table or child
 Tempera or watercolor paint, as requested by each child

Procedure:

- Read book, *My Many Colored Days*. Discuss the way colors have been used by the illustrator to depict different emotions. Ask students to relate their own connections between color and emotion.
- Show and discuss examples of paintings by famous artists and how they used color to evoke emotion.
- Brainstorm a list of emotions...discuss what each means.
- Each student chooses an emotion from the list and creates a work of art using a color/colors that depict that emotion OR teacher assigns emotions to students so that there is variety and students don't all choose the same.
- Encourage students that any color they assign to any emotion is acceptable.

Assessment(s)/Student Products:

Proficient work will consist of an expressive painting that accurately depicts an emotion with the student's selection of color.

Vocabulary:

Emotion (feelings)
 Response
 (Names of various colors and emotions)

Notes:

Reproductions of Munch's *The Scream* and Picasso's *Blue* and *Rose* Periods are good examples. Contact art teacher for access to prints; collaborate with art teacher for art project.

Needs Overview

If we don't know what we need, how can we ask for it? In order to be able to ask for help, we must recognize needs, differentiate between needs and wants, and discern between tattling and telling. See the references section for more information on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which breaks down the different criteria of need and suggests that one's relative poverty level can significantly change the level of basic needs.

David Gordon's research, for example, defines absolute poverty as the absence of any two of the following basic needs¹:

- Food: Body Mass Index must be above 16
- Safe drinking water: water must not come solely from rivers and ponds, and must be available nearby (less than 15 min. walk each time).
- Sanitation facilities: Toilets or latrines must be accessible in or near the home
- Health: treatment must be received for serious illness and pregnancy
- Shelter: homes must have fewer than 4 people living in each room. Floors must not be made of dirt, mud or clay.
- Education: everyone must attend school or otherwise learn to read.
- Information: everyone must have access to newspapers, radios, televisions, computers, or telephones at home.
- Access to services: (undefined by Gordon but believed to indicate education, health, social, legal, financial, etc. services)

This chapter of the elementary program focuses on three separate sections which address needs: 1) Recognizing what we need and distinguishing between needs and wants, 2) asking for help for self and others, and 3) discerning the difference between tattling and telling.

Section 1: Recognizing what we need

In *What Do I Need*, children learn how to recognize what a need is by brainstorming a list of needs in everyday life, drawing a picture of how their needs are being met, and writing a sentence or two that explains how the needs are being met.

In *Needs and Wants*, children decide which of the words on the right-hand side of the worksheet belong in the *needs* box and which belong in the *wants* box. They may add other needs and wants as they think of them.

Section 2: Asking for help for self and others

In *How Can I Ask for Help*, a tool to help learn how to ask for help by cutting out and coloring Yellow Ribbon ask for help bookmarks.

Section 3: Tattling vs Telling

In *Tattle Tales*, students listen to a story about a child who tattles, follow the lessons in the back of the book, and play a game designed to help them to distinguish between tattling and telling, an important step in learning how to be able to ask for help (especially for others in need).

¹ Gordon, D. Indicators of Poverty and Hunger. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiDavidGordon_poverty.pdf. Retrieved 6/10/09

Needs 1.0

Lesson Title: What Do I Need? **Grade:** Lower Elementary **Time:** Approx. 30-45 minutes

Lesson Objectives: Students will identify class/school needs.
Protective Factor: Self-Worth, sense of stability
Content Integration: Literacy, art

Essential Questions: Can Students:

- Identify and express needs in different circumstances?
- Show an understanding of how needs are met with a story and illustration?

Motivational Resources:
Chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers

Materials needed:
Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

Procedure:

- Teacher prepares to write on the board, but upon “discovering” there is no writing instrument, asks, “What do I need?”
- Once the lost item is found, teacher writes on board as students brainstorm a list of objects or items needed for success in school (paper, pencils, rulers, etc.)
- Brainstorm a second list of basic needs—“What do we need in our every day lives?” Answers should include food, shelter, water, warm clothes, etc.
- Students draw a picture of how their needs are being met (happy family in home or asleep in a warm bed, etc.).
- Students will write a sentence or two that explains how their needs are being met in the picture.

Assessment(s)/Student Products:
Proficient work will include a clearly thought out and executed work of art and sentences that accurately describe what is happening in the picture.

Vocabulary
Needs
Survival
Brainstormed words

Note: in next lesson, Needs 1.1, the Yellow Ribbon LINK Bear, a classroom mascot who goes home with a different child each night to discuss feelings with parents (caretakers) and to learn how to ask for help, is introduced

Tattling vs. Telling Overview



Yellow Ribbon trainers are often asked how to differentiate between tattling and telling. The short answer is that tattling occurs when someone is trying to get someone else in trouble, whereas people who are telling or reporting an incident are trying to get help to someone*.

The importance of teaching children to tell, to report, lays a foundation that can help overcome the resistance in the adolescence years of *asking for help* from a trusted adult when a friend is exhibiting suicide warning signs, ideation or pain.

Our field research indicates that children who tattle don't have a discernable reason, or they are attempting to get a classmate into trouble. Experts suggest that when a student tells the teacher about a particular incident, the teacher should question the student's motives. Ask, "Why are you telling me this?" or "What are you afraid will happen because of this incident?" The idea is to help the student begin to think critically about his or her reports to the teacher. Will the issue cause harm to myself or another student if I don't let the teacher know? Do I just want that person to stop annoying me? Am I trying to get that person into trouble?

First graders may not have the cognitive ability yet to reason the above, but their sense of danger should not be overlooked. If they can state that the classmate may get hurt or hurt someone else, this is not necessarily tattling and deserves further investigation. However, if the student doesn't verbalize a clear reason for telling the teacher, the teacher may be able to then discern that the issue is a tattle. Asking for help is not the same as tattling. The goal of this program is to promote help-seeking behavior while helping children to avoid unnecessary tattling.

Recommended children's books for this section include *The Tattle Tail Tale*, *A Weekend With Wendell*, and *The Gigantic Turnip*. Each has its own unique take on tattling and/or help-seeking behavior, and they are referenced in the lesson plans. The Yellow Ribbon Ask for Help bookmark is introduced in the lesson plan in which *The Gigantic Turnip* is read, as it fits perfectly with the storyline of a person asking for help pulling his gigantic turnip out of the Earth.

Also recommended for this section, for background purposes, is Chapter 3 of Eckhart Tolle's book, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. While this is a spiritual self-help book, this chapter is a very grounded monolog on the ego, why we behave in certain ways; gossip, attention-seeking, name-calling, complaints, etc. and offers insight into how to change this behavior in self and others in the adult world.

*Dickinson, A. *To Tattle vs To Tell*. TIME Magazine Online, March 19, 2001.
[Http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,999485.00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,999485.00.html)

Tattling vs. Telling: Getting Help for Others

Lesson Title: Tattle Tales **Grade:** Lower Elementary **Time:** Approx. 30-45 minutes

Lesson Objectives:
 Students will learn to identify the difference between tattling and telling, and will be able to make positive choices when seeking help.

Protective Factors: Problem-solving; personal control

Content Integration: Literacy

Essential Questions: Can Students:

- Discern a tattle (trying to get others in trouble) from a report (trying to get others out of trouble)?
- Identify authentic need for help?

Motivational Resources:
 Book: *The Tattle Tail* Tale by Tandy Braid

Materials needed:
 List of TATTLE scenarios, list of TELL scenarios (see examples and/or create your own)

Procedure:

- Read the book *The Tattle Tale Tail* and brainstorm with students what tattling means and what it does to others.
- Ask the questions posed in the back of the book and allow students to think and answer.
- Play the Tattle Tale Game:
 - Set up two chairs in front of the room. Place a sign on one chair that says “TATTLE” and a sign on the other one that says “TELL.”
 - Divide the students into two teams and read scenario to them, or have them read and decide if the scenario is a tattle or report. Students take turns sitting in the chair that they think has the correct sign for their scenario.
 - Tally correct answers for each team; the team with the most right answers wins.
 - Prizes are at discretion of teacher.

Sample Scenarios (to be used and/or adapted and added to school culture/environment!)

| | |
|--|--|
| Johnny broke a crayon (Tattle) Kim fell down on the playground (Tell) Joe has a knife (Tell) | Kelsey won't play with me (Tattle) Danny tripped me (Tell) Madison stuck her tongue out at me (Tattle) |
|--|--|

Assessment(s)/Student Products:

A high incidence of correct guesses will indicate understanding of the concept.

Vocabulary:

Tattle, tattle tail, report

Connectedness Overview

Connectedness; that is, strong relationships with family, close friends, teachers, clergy, or any other close relationship, is a particularly strong protective factor that can lead to help-seeking behavior. Knowing who one can turn to in times of need can dispose of feelings of isolation and encourage reaching out to trusted individuals for assistance in times of need.

In *Helpful People Quilts*, children identify up to three people they know they can turn to for help and draw them on a paper “quilt square” that will be physically connected with similar drawings created by their classmates. The quilt serves as a visual reminder to all children that there are people of whom they can turn in times of need, and to each child specifically, who those people are.



We suggest reading the book(s) by Faith Ringgold after the project is completed. This way, students are not influenced by the imagery or story of family Ringgold shares in her book; rather it can be used as a form of closure to the activity. The book can be read by the teacher, or better yet, by a family member as an excellent way to drive home the idea of feeling connected to family.

In *Classroom Connections*, children will interview and learn more about each other. No matter how diverse any class is, children have shared experiences. Peers are more likely to know about risky behaviors as they get older. This lesson will also serve as a rehearsal for interviewing a family member in the next lesson.

In *Family Story*, children are asked not to create just a “family tree,” but to research their family’s story, and to identify at least one person with whom they feel connected—whether it is because they share the same eye color, similar interests, same cultural background, or anything the child identifies with.

The reproducible set of questions has been extracted from various websites which offer such lists. The websites are listed in the Sources section.

Sources:

www.uctc.wmich.edu/Prevention/protectivefactors.html. Retrieved 2/11/09

Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide, SPRC

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001. P. 35

Websites for family history research:

www.GreatLifeStories.com.

www.stagebridge.org

www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/caboverde/jlopes.html

www.scrapbooking.com/mag/family_history2.htm

Connectedness 1.0

Lesson Title: Helpful People Quilt **Grade:** Lower Elementary **Time:** 30-45 minutes

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to identify up to three people whom they can go to for help when sad or mad, and depict that person/those people on a “quilt square.”
Protective Factors: Connectedness with helpful family members or other adults, cultural support
Content Integration: art, literacy, cultural diversity

Essential Questions: Can Students:

- Identify a person or persons he/she can go to for help when mad or sad?
- Depict that person/those people in an illustration for a class paper quilt?

Motivational Resources:
 Posters of Faith Ringgold’s quilts
 Books: *Tar Beach* and *Cassie’s World Quilt*

Materials needed:
 Various colors of construction paper, 9x9 and scraps, 6x6 white paper and newsprint, pencils, crayons, scissors, glue

Procedure:

- Help children brainstorm lists of people to whom they can go to for help. Some may only have one person; others may have many on their lists. Have the children select at least one, but up to three people on their list for the activity.
- Pass out newsprint or scrap paper and have students draw that person/persons fully detailed, writing their name on the picture. Once students are satisfied with their rough draft, they may start the final copy.
- Students will re-draw and color their helpful person(s) on 6x6 white paper.
- Students select a 9x9 piece of construction paper and with teacher’s help, center and glue their drawing to the construction paper. Scraps may be cut and glued to the construction paper to create a border design.
- Teacher will “stitch” all squares together by stapling, or punching holes in corners and tying to other squares. (do not glue—the squares should be easily separable so the children can have their work back at the end of the display time)
- Quilt should be displayed in a prominent place for a given time period.
- At the end of the lesson, teacher may read *Tar Beach* or *Cassie’s World Quilt*; or send home a note asking parents check out or purchase the book and read it at home with their children.

Assessment(s)/Student Products:
 Proficient work consists of accurately depicted and labeled “helpful person(s)” on a quilt square.

Vocabulary
 Help
 Quilt

Students will use the Classmate History Report Worksheet - see student workbook

What the research tells us



Inspiration and guidance was obtained from the writings of English philosopher John Locke. Even though he was writing for the schools of the late seventeenth century, his theories and practices are timeless and fit very well with Yellow Ribbon's children's wellness lesson plans. John Locke noted that children's play was not just play, but serious work by which they learn¹. It is hoped that taking his lead, each lesson is both play and learning for the student and adults involved.

The outcome of acquired knowledge by humor and playing, with imagination freed to run, is knowledge that will last a lifetime according to the theories of John Locke. He also addresses the role of learning by example, and this has been placed into many lessons. He felt that children understand what they see better than what they hear, and that repeating the same action eventually becomes habitual. The lessons in this curriculum were designed to be hands on and to engage the imagination of children.

Brain research plays an important role in the understanding of children's thinking, reactions, emotions, and social skills. In the premotor cortex of our brains, we have what are called mirror neurons². Since their discovery by Giacomo Rizzolatti in 1995, researchers have been calling these neurons the empathy neurons. These neurons fire when a person acts in a given situation or if a person witnesses an act on the part of another. For example, if one saw another person being comforted, one would in turn feel comforted because of these empathy neurons. Another example would be if one saw someone fall down and hurt their arm, one would feel a degree of pain as a result of these neurons. Humans can be empathic because of this brain function³.

Additional information comes from a team of researchers at the University of Southern California who studied the reaction time of the brain to physical and emotional pain⁴. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, the team leader of the study drew the conclusion that one's brain reacts quickly to another person's physical pain. It only takes seconds for a reaction to occur. Humans are born with the ability to react to physical pain or fear in another.

The reaction to emotional pain, however, is another story. The USC team found more time is needed for the brain to respond to emotional pain. It seems humans may not be born with compassion and thus must learn it.

The team questioned what would happen to a child if he/she did not have parents or guardians around to teach them how to see emotional pain in another person. Without help, some children would not learn compassion for other people. They also might not feel admiration for people who help others.

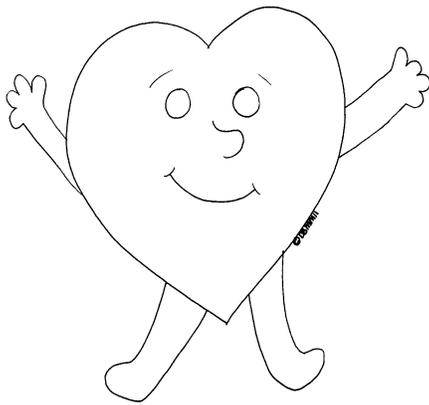
This study highlighted the importance of students learning to recognize emotions in themselves and others at a young age.

- (1) Locke, J. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Dover Philosophical Classics, Reprint, 2007. From original 17th century manuscript.
- (2) Ramachandran, V. *Mirror Neurons and the Brain*, 2006. [Edge: The Third Culture. www.edge.org/3rd_culture/ramachandran06/ramachandran06_index.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/ramachandran06/ramachandran06_index.html) retrieved April 13, 2009.
- (3) Lakoff, D. G. *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know your values and Frame the Debate*. Chelsea Grn. Publishing, 2004.
- (4) Hamilton, J. *Compassion: Easier for a Broken Leg Than Heart*. www.NPR.org/templates/story.php?storyID=103043173. Retrieved April 13, 2009.

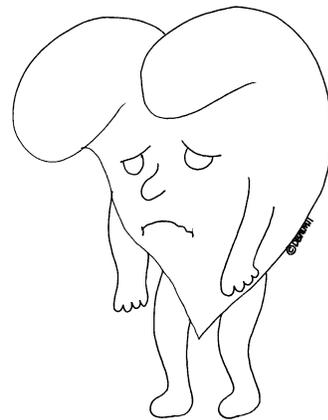
Student Workbook I

Heart Family

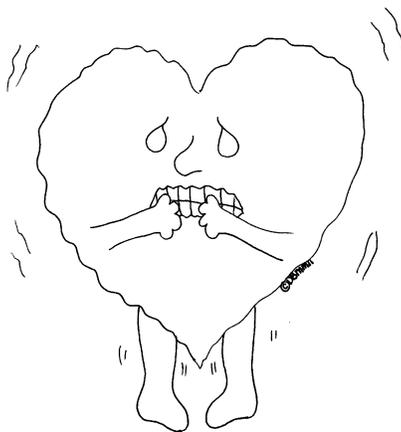
We use the Heart Family to introduce children to ways of expressing their feelings. This is an overview. In the student workbook, the hearts are on separate worksheets, and these worksheets can be used multiple times throughout the school year.



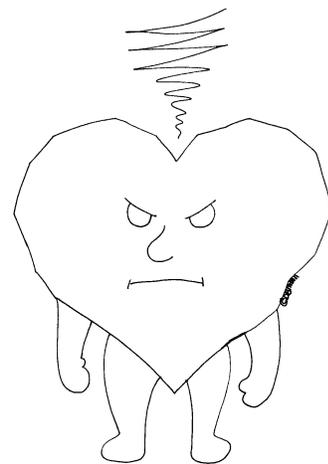
How does it feel to be **HAPPY**?



How does it feel to be **SAD**?



Who can I go to when I feel **SCARED**?



What should I do when I feel **ANGRY**?

Needs and Wants

Name _____

Look at each word on the right. Decide if you **need** it or **want** it. (hint: Needs are things you **CAN'T** live without; Wants are things you **CAN** live without.)

| |
|----------------------|
| Things I NEED |
| Things I WANT |

- Food
- Shelter
- Wii
- School supplies
- My own cell phone
- DVD player
- iPod
- Clothes
- Water
- Videogames
- Oxygen

There are 10 CARDS with Words for Expressing Feelings:
Happy, Sad, Angry, Scared, Anxious, Confused, Peaceful, Annoyed, Shy, Cheerful,

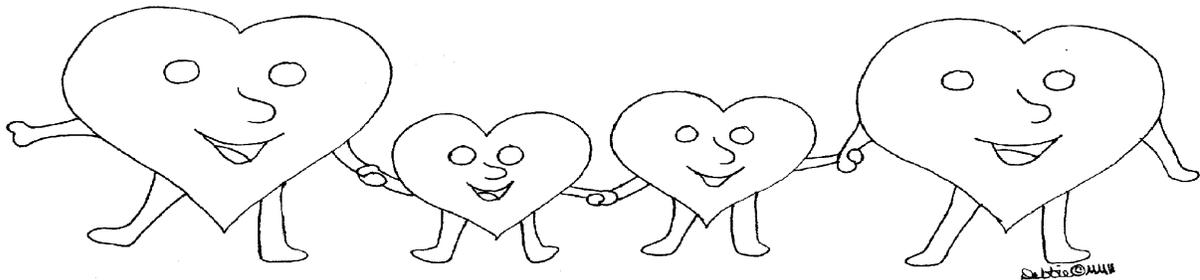
There are BOOKMARKS

BOOKMARK FRONT

Bookmark pages are printed double-sided for children to color and cut



If you are sad or your heart is hurting, take this bookmark to a trusted adult and say, "I NEED HELP"

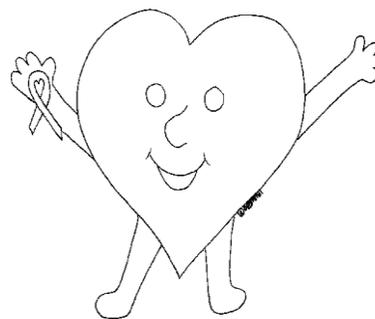


BOOKMARK BACK

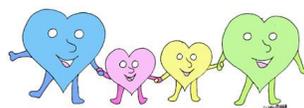
If you are given this bookmark, a child may need help.

- STAY and give your time!
- LISTEN with an open heart!
- GET or call a trusted adult now!

Call _____



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