



KIDS WITH COURAGE PROGRAM

PARENT INFORMATION

This booklet is designed to help you the parents understand the journey your children are taking over the next seven weeks.

The outline of each session will give a basis for understanding the comments and reflections that children may make while attending the course.

If you have any questions as the course unfolds, please feel free to discuss them with any of the leaders.

At the conclusion of the seven weeks, the children will bring home the Activity Book they have been completing week by week.

Having followed their journey by means of the session outlines, you will have more of an understanding of what they have learned and hopefully assimilated. You will also be able to encourage them continue to practice new positive behaviours.

Session One: Feelings

This topic is fundamental to the effectiveness of the program and will be explored throughout it.

Learning to identify and express feelings is a necessary tool for all children to develop in order to be able to process their current concerns and handle future challenges.

In their Activity Book the children have lion faces depicting a range of feelings, and these are a useful tool to help them to express themselves.

Lenny the lion and his puppet friend discuss Feelings. They model how courage can be demonstrated in many ways just as feelings can also be expressed in a variety of ways.

In their small groups, using the activity books, children then see the different ways their bodies react to feelings such as anger, sadness, frustration, happiness etc. This helps them to have more insight into what is happening for them and to process any issues that arise.

Session Two: Boundaries

This session is primarily concerned with helping children to be safe.

1. **Skin.** A personal boundary. It is like an invisible fence around each of us that helps to keep us safe.

Good boundaries stop other people from causing us to feel unsafe or “yucky.”

2. **Words.** Children learn to communicate to others through speaking of feelings and needs.
3. **Personal Distance.** An invisible circle around a child that only invited, safe people may enter.
4. **Emotional Protectiveness.** This refers to words and behaviours directed at the child. It helps prevent victimization through the development of positive self-esteem.

The above topics are introduced through strategies for handling bullying or unwanted attention from adults.

Children will learn

It’s OK to say NO when in a dangerous or “yucky” situation.

Children must talk to someone they trust if they are feeling unsafe.

There is a 5 Finger Hand in their Activity Book, as a way of remembering names and phone numbers of people they would be happy to contact when they feel unsafe for any reason.

It is emphasized that they **MUST** tell their story as often as it takes till someone listens and does something about it to help them.

Session Three: Social Skills

Social behaviour plays a powerful role in a child being accepted by peers.

It is closely linked with issues relating to self-esteem.

Effective social skills include communication that is sensitive to peers, how to be friendly, how to be co-operative and how to problem solve.

Teaching social skills as a restorative strategy may positively affect academic performance at school.

One key teaching point demonstrated through drama and puppetry will help the child to learn that ***“to have a good friend you need to BE a good friend.”***

During the session we encourage the children to share their ideas on what it means to be a good friend. We write these on post it notes and stick them on a board. The children will come up with all kinds of ideas including being a good sport, sharing, caring and thinking of others.

This is then followed up in the small groups discussion time. The Activity Book has several suggestions children could use for making a friend. The children will also have an opportunity to act out some scenarios and practice learning the skills.

For older children there is a Problem Solving Sheet, which poses a series of question useful for problem solving.

What is my problem? What can I do about it? Who can help me? What is the best choice for me?

If the chosen plan didn't work? What should I do? Try again!

Session Four: Grief and Loss

Grief is expressed as “ a collection of sad feelings” experienced when you have lost someone or something precious to you.

In this session the children sit in groups and brainstorm on a large sheet of paper what they have lost that is precious to them. These sheets are then put up on the board for the large group participation. Here they see that there are many reasons why we experience grief and loss, e.g. loss of things, pets, and people. All children’s contributions are validated.

The leader tells the story of “Josh”, a boy whose parents have split up. The story explores how he feels about it, how the family copes. The important conclusion acknowledges that although things will not be the same as they were, over time they will get better and the two now separate parts of the family will adjust to the change.

The ***Continuum Line*** is a powerful tool that helps children understand this point. It gives them an opportunity to consider and express how they are coping with their particular grief issue.

A line on the floor is marked out with numbers 1 to 10.

1 is “OK barely affecting me now” and “10 really sad and overwhelming.”

A leader demonstrates by showing how she felt at the time of a loss-10, but how she is feeling now- 4.

Each child is then encouraged to take up their position on the line, according to how they are feeling NOW, about the precious thing they have lost.

In small groups, the activity book statement emphasized is:

I must tell my story as often as I need to; Remember that it is OK to cry; Tell God how I feel and ask Him to comfort me; remember that it will get better.

Session Five: Anger

This lesson acknowledges that everyone feels anger from time to time, but there are good and bad ways to handle and express it.

Children can experience anger when they are sad, or sense injustice; when they are hurt by verbal or physical abuse, frustration and annoyance.

Visual examples are used to illustrate this.

1. A soft drink can is shaken vigorously while the leader is speaking. Then she or he goes to open it, facing the children, who all cringe back from it of course! This is like anger that is not controlled, it just sprays out over anyone nearby. The can is set to one side for 15 minutes, and then opened; no fizz effect. This is how anger under control looks.
2. Toothpaste Dare. \$10 offered to any child who can squeeze all the toothpaste out of the tube-easy. But to earn the \$10 all the toothpaste must be put back in the tube!
Anger expressed cannot be taken back!!!

The use of Lenny the lion and the puppet at this point address the issue that sometimes children express anger because of anxiety over a situation at home or at school .

Children are given some stones to represent an anger they may feel. Having spoken of it, they then put that stone in a bucket, as a symbol of letting it go. When they go home, each child is able to take one or two stones with them to repeat the process at home when necessary.

Activity Books are used in the small groups illustrating choices for handling anger. Children are encouraged to give input here and enhance their problem solving skills.

Session Six: Fear and Worry

This session aims to provide a safe place for children to express their fears and worries.

Fears are a natural part of growing and maturing in childhood.

With Lenny the lion and his puppet friend talking about the different fears they face at school, at home, going to the dentist, worrying about sickness in the family. The children are shown that fear and worry are a common experience across all ages.

In the large group each child is given a post-it note on which to write a fear or worry they may have. These notes are simply initialled for leaders to be aware of later in their small group time. They are all gathered up and displayed on the whiteboard, and discussed in the large group.

A clip from The Lion King is shown to illustrate one cause of fear. In this scenario it is the cubs being in a place where they should not have been, there is fear but there is intervention in the form of the cub's father, Mufasa. This introduces the children to the idea that a loving God is always on hand to help and comfort.

In small groups, the activity books allow the children to explore different types of fears and worries, and how the body reacts to them. Most importantly, ideas are given for ways of solving the problems associated with these feelings.

Finally, each child is given a balloon and a soft felt pen. They are then encouraged to write a worry or fear they have on the balloon.

When they are ready they burst the balloon (or release it if a helium balloon) as a symbolic way of letting go of the feelings that have already been addressed and shared.

Session Seven: Self Esteem

Self-esteem emanates from the value a person places on him or herself.

This session aims to be preventative as well as therapeutic in building resilience to life challenges through healthy self-esteem.

Studies have shown that faith can build resilience.

When children know they don't have to DO anything to be loved by God they often find this to be encouraging and transforming.

Children measure their worth by their parents' attitude to them, school performance, sporting ability, social acceptance by peers, and physical attractiveness.

Activities in the larger group include brainstorming a range of positive comments that build people up with the emphasis being on character traits rather than appearance.

In the small groups the emphasis is on 'Whatever we SAY matters.'

Before going into small groups, the leader reads to everyone a book titled You are Special by author Max Lucado. It is a powerful tool for teaching children not to accept the opinions of others especially negative ones.

They are taught that they are special JUST AS THEY ARE because God has made everyone special and all are equally loved and equally important.

We have emphasized this truth throughout the whole seven weeks, having the children embrace the truth that they have great POTENTIAL, they are SPECIAL, COURAGEOUS and VALUED.