

Lesson Plan 1

Facing Personal Feelings

Key Terms and Concepts

uncomfortable feelings memories remember letting go
uncomfortable thoughts normal

Purpose

To help students—

- Understand their personal feelings following a tragic event.
- See that a wide range of feelings is normal.

Objectives

Students will—

- Identify a range of personal feelings.
- Demonstrate healthy ways to redirect uncomfortable thoughts.
- Identify activities that can be fun.

Activities

- “Coloring Your Feelings”
- “What Do Your Feelings Weigh?”

Home Connection

- Redirecting Thoughts

Linking Across the Curriculum

- Music
- Art
- Community Outreach

**Facing
Personal
Feelings**

Following a tragic event, a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place is temporarily lost. Children become afraid that the event will happen again and that they or their family will be injured or killed. The damage, injuries and deaths that can result from an unexpected or uncontrollable event are difficult for most children to understand.

Positive reactions from parents and other adults following any traumatic event can help children recover more quickly and more completely. Adults need to remember that children express their feelings and reactions in different ways. Some children will become withdrawn and unable to talk about the event, while others will feel intensely sad and angry at times and at other times will act as if the disaster never happened. Children are often confused about what has happened and about their feelings. However, don't be surprised if some children don't seem to be affected by what they have seen and heard. Not everyone has immediate reactions; some have delayed reactions that show up days, weeks or even months later, and some may never have reactions.



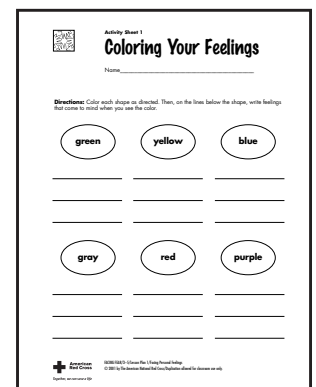
Materials

- Chart paper
- Green, yellow, blue, gray, red and purple sheets of construction paper cut into rectangles 4.5 inches wide by 10 inches long
- **Activity Sheet 1: *Coloring Your Feelings*** (1 page)
- Crayons or markers

“Coloring Your Feelings” Activity

(set up: 5 minutes; conduct: 45 minutes)

1. Arrange students in a circle, or have them sit in a comfortable area of the classroom such as the reading corner. Ask them what they know about the event that has occurred. Listen to and accept children's remarks. Clear up misconceptions about what has occurred by giving honest, simple, brief answers to their remarks and questions. Make sure they understand your answers. Be careful to use words or phrases that won't confuse them or make the world seem more frightening. Let them know you will be talking about feelings. Ask them to help you brainstorm words that suggest feelings. Make a chart of the words and ask students to consider which words express the way they were feeling following this event. Have them turn to a partner and pair/share the words they have chosen.



TEACHING NOTE: Here are some words that describe feelings:

happy	sad	angry	loved	afraid	shy
guilty	tired	jealous	eager	hopeful	bored
proud	sorry	surprised	fidgety	joyful	“down”
gloomy	miserable	tearful	terrified	anxious	worried
restless	startled	shocked	puzzled	bashful	helpless
lonely	unsure	confused	satisfied	mixed up	safe
distracted	calm	content	trusting	relaxed	fearful
ashamed	secure	confident	self-conscious	scared	mad
upset	furious	excited	embarrassed	irritated	
			“top of the world”		

2. A wide range of emotions may exist in your classroom. Tell students that it is okay and in fact normal to have more than one feeling in a very short period of time. Children may have a new pet at home or may be looking forward to a fun trip. These children may feel guilty about having happy feelings interspersed with their reaction to the event. Those who know someone who has been directly affected can have feelings of jealousy toward those who do not.

Tell students that it has long been believed that colors affect one's mood. In fact, artists use color to evoke a particular feeling. Write "green," "yellow," "blue," "gray," "red" and "purple" on the chart listing emotions. Ask students to choose a word from the chart and assign it to a color (for example, "angry" feels red). Tell students that while a color may signify a certain feeling for one person, another person might associate that color with a different emotion.

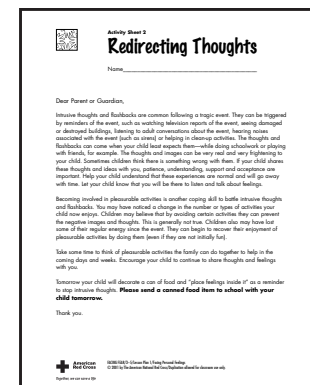
3. Have students work in groups to complete Activity Sheet 1. Tell students that there is no right or wrong answer. Encourage students to add words that show other emotions, such as happy or joyful. Share responses as a class.
4. Now, have students choose the color of construction paper (precut) that best fits an uncomfortable feeling they have had since the event, and draw a picture on it. The picture may be of the event, or it may be an abstract picture depicting feelings.



Home Connection

Redirecting Thoughts

Send Activity Sheet 2, home with each student. Ask students to bring a canned food item to school tomorrow.



Materials

- **Activity Sheet 2:**
Redirecting Thoughts
(1 page)



Materials

- The picture each student drew in the "Coloring Your Feelings" activity
- Canned food (bring in extra cans from home for students who may not be able to provide a can of food)
- Glue sticks
- One large shopping bag

"What Do Your Feelings Weigh?" Activity

(set up: minimal; conduct: 45 minutes)

1. Once children have identified their feelings, it is important for them to have skills to manage those feelings. If they do not have a way to deal with their feelings, the emotions can become overwhelming and interfere with the healing process.

Points to discuss:

- Sometimes after a tragic event like (name the event), students may have thoughts about it or pictures in their heads about it.
- These thoughts and pictures can come even if students are not thinking about the event—even when they are trying very hard not to think about it.
- Because of the thoughts and pictures, students may feel very uncomfortable and may even think there is something wrong with them.

- These thoughts and pictures can interfere with schoolwork, homework, chores and other things that used to be fun.
- Students sometimes will stay away from fun things, hoping the thoughts and pictures will go away.

Tell students, Believe it or not, as much as we don't like what is happening, it is normal to have these thoughts and pictures in our minds after a bad event like (name the event). Today, we are going to learn some ways to handle the thoughts and pictures that we don't want in our minds.

2. Additional points to discuss:
 - What kinds of thoughts and pictures might come to mind after this event?
 - When might these thoughts and pictures come to mind? Include in the discussion reminder triggers like images on television or in the paper, adult conversations about the event, loud noises and activities related to the traumatic event. Also include situations that are completely unrelated to the event, such as completing schoolwork, playing with friends or listening to the radio.
3. Have the students take the picture they drew yesterday and wrap it around their unopened can of food. Use a glue stick to attach the picture to the can. Tell students that they are going to use this can as a way to stop uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. First, tell students to "put their feelings" into the can. Tell them that the can will hold all the uncomfortable feelings. Second, have the students pick up their can. Tell students that uncomfortable feelings can "weigh us down."
4. Tell students to place their can of feelings on their desk where they can see it. When uncomfortable feelings come into their mind, they should look at the can, silently tell themselves, "CAN IT!" and then put those feelings inside. They may even want to hold the can as a reminder that the uncomfortable feelings can be very "heavy" but that the can will hold them all. Tell students that when they are away from the classroom (on the playground, at home, etc.) they can think of their can and send their feelings to it. The can is big enough to hold all their feelings.

Extension: When a few days have passed and you feel students are ready to let go of their canned feelings, bring in a large shopping bag and have students pass the bag around the class. As they pass the bag, they should place their canned food inside, saying "Can it." They will see how much their collective feelings weigh! Tell students that you are going to remove the cans holding their uncomfortable feelings from the classroom. Ask what they think should be done with the canned food. It may be possible to donate the food to a local food bank. Remove the drawings from the cans before donating them.



Linking Across the Curriculum

MUSIC

Teach students the song “I Can Sing a Rainbow” (lyrics below). Have students draw a rainbow and write words describing feelings on each color of the rainbow.

Find someone who can teach students the sign language for “I Can Sing a Rainbow.” Movement is good for releasing tension.

I Can Sing a Rainbow

By Arthur Hamilton

Red and yellow and pink and green,
Purple and orange and blue,
I can sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow too!

Listen to your heart,
Listen to your heart,
And sing everything you feel,
I can sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow too!

(Alternate lyrics)
Listen with your eyes,
Listen with your ears,
And sing everything you see,
I can sing a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow,
Sing along with me

ART

Have students research to find artwork that uses color to depict feelings. Learn about the artist and why he or she drew in that style.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Ask students to write letters to a food bank and tell why they are donating cans of food. Have them ask for other ways they might contribute to the food bank throughout the year, such as collecting food at certain times of year when supplies run low, or contributing blankets or items of clothing. Being involved in helping others is a way for students to feel more in control of their lives.