

## **All About Feelings**

### Syllabus

Facilitator: Kathy Brown

### **Course Summary**

This is an interactive communications course designed to help children better understand, process and express both their positive and negative feelings. Through group play, such as songs, games, activities and crafts, children will learn to recognize our common humanity: We all have feelings. Each class is designed to allow for the free expression of feelings in an effort to shift our cultural perspective to accept that safely expressing emotions - such as anger, fear and sadness - is healthy and a natural stress-releasing mechanism. Not only have researchers discovered that expressing one's feelings in a safe and loving environment has life-long health benefits, but educators have discovered that children become more enthusiastic and successful learners when the need for emotional release is recognized and accepted. (1)

This course will introduce Nonviolent Communication (NVC) skills to:

- \* Help children understand and express their feelings and needs safely and productively
- \* Encourage children to actively listen to another person's feelings and needs
- \* Demonstrate how to connect compassionately with others so needs can be met and conflicts resolved.

The predominant message throughout the course is that "feelings are okay; everybody has them. What is key is being aware of one's feelings and expressing and releasing them safely."

**Note:** Each class, which will run approximately 1.5 hours, will include handouts for parents so they can help their child(ren) implement the skills between classes.

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Lesson 1: Introduction to Feelings**

In a typical classroom, two emotions are generally the only ones ever demonstrated or allowed. Anger is permitted, but usually only by the teacher; if a student displays anger, a consequence generally occurs, and happiness. The other hundreds of emotions do occur — but are simply never recognized or addressed. In an NVC classroom, teachers and students simply give each other the gift of allowing each other the freedom to both feel and express a wide variety of emotions experienced throughout the day. This helps create a positive learning environment where learning can only accelerate. (2)

Through group interaction, children will explore what feelings are, how they're connected to the body, how they come and go, and various ways to release strong feelings safely.

#### **Lesson 2: Building a Nonviolent Vocabulary**

Our repertoire of words for calling people names is often larger than our vocabulary of words that allow us to clearly describe our emotional states. By developing a vocabulary of feelings and needs we can connect with ourselves and others more easily. We're also more apt to inspire compassion. (3)

Through art and activities, children will begin to learn to name what they're feeling and needing in an effort to increase their power to express a wide range of emotional experiences.

### **Lesson 3: The Difference Between Observation and Evaluation**

The Indian philosopher J. Krishnamurti once remarked that observing without evaluating is the highest form of human intelligence. (4) While there is no mandate that we remain completely objective and refrain from evaluating, the goal here is to simply learn the difference between an observation and an evaluation. In order to be in touch with one's feelings, it helps to understand the difference between these two processes.

Through games and activities, children will learn how to determine an observation separate from an evaluation, as well as, an observation with evaluation mixed in.

### **Lesson 4: Acknowledging the Needs Behind Our Feelings**

Judgments, criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations of others are all alienated expressions of our needs. If someone says, "You never understand me," they are really telling us their need to be understood is not being fulfilled. Most of us are accustomed to thinking about what's wrong with other people when our needs aren't being fulfilled. But if we're wishing for a compassionate response from others, the more directly we can connect our feelings to our own needs, the easier it is for others to respond compassionately to our needs. (5)

Through games, activities and role plays, children will begin to learn how to recognize the basic human need/s at the root of their feelings to enhance their relationship within themselves and with others.

### **Lesson 5: Requests vs Demands**

Making requests in clear, positive, concrete action language reveals what we really want. Because the message we send is not always the message that's received, we need to learn how to find out if our message has been accurately heard. Requests are received as demands when listeners believe they will be blamed or punished if they do not comply. We can help others trust we are requesting, not demanding, by indicating our desire for them to comply only if they can do so willingly.

The objective here is not to change people and their behavior, but rather to express our feelings in order to establish a relationship based on honesty and empathy, which will eventually fulfill everyone's needs. (6)

Through games, activities and role plays, children will learn how to distinguish between expressing requests and making demands. They also will learn how to make sure the message they send is the message that's received by asking the listener to reflect it back.

### **Lesson 6: Validation and Active Listening**

Researchers have discovered that feeling heard, which is the definition of validation, has amazing connecting properties, inspiring one to solve his or her own problems. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding and promotes validation. (7)

Through group play, children will explore ways to validate one's self and others, as well as, how validation helps process strong emotions, such as anger, fear, and sadness.

**End of class party** - At the beginning of each class, students will draw on their Feelings Board. The class will culminate with the completion of their Feelings Book by drawing on a Native American tradition called the "give away."

**My Background:** I hold a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of South Florida. I spent 10 years as a reporter and copy editor at *The Tampa Tribune*. I also did a stint as a copy editor at the *St. Petersburg Times*. For two years, I wrote a monthly parenting column for *Tampa Bay Woman* magazine, formerly known as *Intuition For Women*. I'm also a certified Aware Parenting Consultant. Aware Parenting promotes attachment-style parenting, non-punitive discipline and the acceptance of emotional release.

**Footnotes:**

- 1) Weissglass, J. (1997). *Ripples of Hope: Building Relationships for Educational Change*. Center for Educational Change in Mathematics and Science. University of California, Santa Barbara, California, 93115.
- 2) Green, Nancy Sokol. (1991, revised 2001). *The Giraffe Classroom: Where Teaching is a Pleasure and Learning is a Joy*. p. 39.
- 3) Rosenberg, Marshall. (1999) *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. p. 32.
- 4) Ibid. p. 24.
- 5) Ibid. p. 51.
- 6) Ibid. p. 73.
- 7) Gordon, Thomas. (1962) *P.E.T. Parent Effectiveness Training: The Tested New Way To Raise Responsible Children*.

I have drawn material for this course from four books.

- \* *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*, by Marshall Rosenberg.
- \* *The Giraffe Classroom: Where Teaching is a Pleasure and Learning is a Joy*, by Nancy Sokol Green.
- \* *Tears & Tantrums: What to do when babies and children cry*, by Aletha Solter.
- \* *P.E.T. Parent Effectiveness Training: The Tested New Way To Raise Responsible Children*, by Thomas Gordon.

**Fees:**

The fee for each class is \$5 per child. For those with more than one child, the discount is \$4 for the second child. However, no child will be turned away for lack of funds. You can pay by the class, by the month, or in full, whichever works for each of you. There is no charge for parents if they choose to attend the class at any time.