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Activities That Teach, Heal, and Enrich

Activities are great for teaching lessons because they are fun! Here are some activities that have proven helpful in my clinical experience for explaining change and helping children to express themselves. These suggestions are wonderful for writing enrichment too!

TAKE A NATURE WALK. If you don't live near a park, walking in your neighborhood will do fine. First of all, the exercise of walking has fantastic physical benefits! Secondly, pointing out the changes in nature gives children a great visual image of change. For example, the fall is rich in examples of leaves changing colors and falling off trees, and grass turning brown. These are natural changes. Spring is a good time to point out new growth like flowers in bloom and other beginnings.

Lessons: Leaves, grass, and weather naturally change. There is beauty in change. Walking relieves stress.

Writing activity: Write some of the changes you observed on the nature walk. Collect leaves and write about the different shapes and colors.

LISTEN TO OR CREATE MUSIC. It is a well known fact that music heals the savage beast! It also helps heal people too! Allow children to select their favorite songs and listen to the music with the children. Ask them how the music makes them feel. Think of your favorite songs that you enjoyed when you were young. Teach your song to your child/children. Learn a song from your child/children. If you play an instrument, create a song expressing a feeling or dedicated to someone. If all else fails, put on an upbeat song and everybody dance like crazy!

Lessons: Helpful messages can be found in songs. Dancing relieves stress and is tons of fun!

Writing activity: Make up fun lyrics to a song. Go through old magazines, cut out pictures of people enjoying music. Write an essay describing what they are doing.

PLAY GAMES. Many lessons are contained in game playing. The main one that children relate to is that there are winners and losers. Everyone wants to win. Some children who lose cry and learn to dislike that particular game because they feel inept. Teach children that learning the game and enjoying the camaraderie is more important than winning or losing. When something sad happens in the child's life, you can liken it to losing a game. Regardless of the outcome, there was fun in the process.

Lessons: Winning and losing are part of life. You get better at things with practice. Playing with friends and family is enjoyable.

Writing activity: Describe how you felt when you lost a particular game. Describe how you felt when you were the winner. What do you like most about playing your favorite game? Who do you like to play with? Describe why?

READ. Reading is a great way to learn new things! I especially love children's books because the illustrations make serious subjects understandable. Four outstanding children's books that I recommend for helping children identify and express emotions are:

My Many Colored Days - by Dr. Seuss

Sometimes I'm Bombaloo - by Rachel Vail

Today I Feel Silly and Other Moods That Make My Day - by Jamie Lee Curtis & Laura Cornell

The Way I Feel - by Janan Cain

These books may be found in the library or take a peek online to see if you want to purchase them... new or used!

Lessons: Identify and express feelings. Reading enrichment.

Writing activity: Select an emotion and write a paragraph about when you felt that way.

COLOR A PICTURE. I keep lots of coloring books at hand to use with children and adults! I've learned that adults enjoy coloring just as much as children. So as you help a child/children work on feelings pick up a crayon and join in! This is a no-rules activity. Do not encourage them to color within the lines or use certain colors. If they want to color a pig green, allow it. Then use their unique creations to open up dialogue. For example: "That's a pretty green pig. How did you become so creative?"

I've attached a coloring page from *Why the Snowman Melts*. Please download it and start coloring immediately!

If you want to share ideas or send me questions, email me at diane@dianeharveyworks.com

