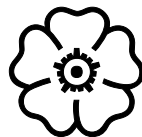


Building Resilience in Preschool Children

Preschool Teachers' Manual

2005



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In Cooperation with

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HERZOG HOSPITAL  בית חולים הרצוג



Table of Contents

Preface	3
Part One: Information Pages and Articles	6
Building Resilience <i>Information Page No. 1</i>	7
Test Your Resilience Level	10
Self Awareness and Self Care <i>Information Page No. 2</i>	13
Guidelines for preschool staff and parents: Coping with stressful events <i>Information Page No. 3</i>	15
Teachers and Parents: How To Talk To Young Children <i>Information Page No. 4</i> ..	17
How to help children cope during times of uncertainty <i>Information Page No. 5</i> ..	19
How do children react to trauma? <i>Information Page No. 6</i>	21
Basic PH A Model for Effective Coping	23
Part Two: Classroom Activities	24
General Guidelines	25
Chapter 1 Mind-Body Connection: Relaxation	27
A Journey through the Body <i>Activity No. 1</i>	28
Guided Imagery - A Walk in the Woods <i>Activity No. 2</i>	30
Guided Imagery - The Story of Bambi <i>Activity No. 3</i>	32
Self Massage <i>Activity No. 4</i>	35
Chapter 2 Expressing Feelings and Coping with Fears	37
Wheel of Feelings <i>Activity No. 1</i>	38
I Feel, I Think, I Do <i>Activity No. 2</i>	40
Line-Color-Shape <i>Activity No. 3</i>	42
Chapter 3 Coping with Fears	44
Sculpting Feelings <i>Activity No. 1</i>	45
The Dream Catcher <i>Activity No. 2</i>	46
The Dream Catcher <i>Parents' Explanation Page</i>	49
Chapter 4 Developing Personal Resources	50
Finding Hidden Treasures <i>Activity No. 1</i>	51
Finding Hidden Treasures <i>Parents' Explanation Page</i>	53
Chapter 5 Meaning Making and Hope for the Future	54
The Silver Lining <i>Activity No. 1</i>	55
Stories from the Past <i>Activity No. 2</i>	56
Stories from the Past <i>Parents' Explanation Page</i>	57
Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself <i>Activity No. 3</i>	58
The Colors of Peace <i>Activity No. 4</i>	59
A Collage of Hope <i>Activity No. 5</i>	61
Teacher's Reflective Diary	63
Epilogue	65



Preface

We are pleased to present you with this manual entitled "Building Resilience in the Preschool Classroom." This manual is the companion to workshops we have developed and implemented in Israel over the past three years, as part of our effort in building personal and professional resilience in preschools. The workshops, which developed against the backdrop of severe and prolonged exposure to terrorist attacks in the civilian population of Israel, beginning in September 2000, form the cornerstone of the National School Resilience Project. We chose to focus on teachers in building resilience in the classroom, because we see them as the foundation of the resilience building process. Teachers are the ones who meet their students day in and day out. Teachers are the ones that are there during times of crisis and calm. Setting our goals on the empowerment of teachers to bring resilience to the classroom has proven an effective route to go.

After working with over 500 preschool teachers and aides in Israel, we are proud to bring the English version of this manual and the workshops to an international audience. Since September 11, 2001, the threat of terror has become an ever-present reality worldwide. Living with the threat of terror attacks and the cloud of war, we try to maintain our lifestyles and go about our business in a normal fashion. This situation raises many questions and dilemmas for educators of young children. How much time and attention shall we give to events that impact us only peripherally? How can we bring difficult events into the preschool classroom without upsetting the equilibrium of our young students and their parents? How much do the students really know about what is going on? How much should they know? Is it possible to build resilience proactively, so that it can serve us in future times of need? The workshops and information pages of the manual provide a place to ask and find answers to many of these questions.

The concept of resilience forms the core of our workshops, which emphasize proactive and healthy ways of coping with and overcoming feelings of fear, helplessness, and burn-out caused by high levels of stress. The word "resilience" has two definitions in the dictionary. The first definition according to the Merriam – Webster dictionary is, "the capability of a



strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress." The second definition, more directly related to mental health is, "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change." This definition intimates the existence of internal strength as well as well developed personal resources. These two meanings form the basis of our work, which is to provide teachers with the knowledge and the tools that can help them in building their personal resilience and their students. While we recognize that most teachers enter the workshops with their own personal stores of resources and resilience - building behaviors accrued from life experiences, our goal is to supplement and strengthen those existing stores, and help them begin to apply this knowledge and these tools directly into their classrooms.

We have come to realize that resilience is built on at least three major building blocks, on which our program focuses on: knowledge, empathy and the enrichment of personal and professional resources.

The program consists of four 3 hour workshops. The first session focuses on developing self awareness on the part of the teachers, the premise being that teachers who are self aware are better able to be empathic towards their students. In addition, a didactic session about the range of reactions to trauma and stress in adults and children is included. The emphasis is on the normal recovery process, emphasizing the natural resilience of the great majority of people. The remaining three sessions focus on skill building and simulation of resilience building classroom activities. We have chosen four components of the many that form the term resilience, as our focus for classroom activities. These include:

the mind – body connection, with an emphasis on relaxation

working with emotions, with an emphasis on fear

expanding personal coping resources

finding meaning in traumatic and difficult events, and hope for the future

While these are not the only components of resilience, they do form the cornerstones from which the structure of resilience can take form and prosper.

During the course of the workshop, teachers are encouraged to choose two activities to implement in their classrooms. They teachers are asked to fill in reflective diaries which they bring to the fourth and final session, which focuses on sharing and peer supervision. Teachers are able to raise questions, dilemmas, or difficulties they may have encountered in implementing these activities in their classrooms.



This manual includes Information Pages, articles, classroom activities, and worksheets for teachers to use in the classroom. Teachers are also encouraged to develop activities that are appropriate for their students, using their creative reservoirs and experiences. This manual is intended to be merely a springboard to help teachers get started, and give them a taste for resilience building activities in the classroom. We welcome hearing from teachers across the world about their experiences and about the resilience building activities they have created for their classrooms.

Please send us both comments and activities to the following e-mail address:

nbaum@herzoghospital.org

Wishing you a successful "Building Resilience" experience!

Naomi L. Baum, Ph.D.

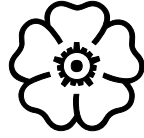
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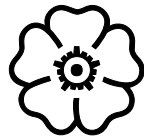
Jerusalem

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We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Professor Mooli Lahad, Dr. Ofra Ayalon, and the staff of the Center for the Development of Coping Resources in Kiryat Shmona who inspired us to adapt many of the activities found within this manual. Their books "Living on the Edge" 2000 and "Great Fear", (Haifa: Nord Publishing, both published in Hebrew, and unavailable to the English reading public) are excellent resources and have served as an inspiration to us.



Part One:
Information Pages
and Articles





🌸 **Building Resilience** 🌸

Information Page No. 1

❖ **What is resilience?**

Resilience is a person's ability to cope with the difficulties and stresses of life, and to emerge from them stronger than before, having learned something from the experience. The term also refers to a person's ability to return to his former situation after having experienced a lengthy period of deprivation, or stress.

Resilience is not an inborn trait. Like the body's immune system, it is affected by our mood and by the amount of help we receive from others. Also similar to our immune system, it also has high and low periods, and sometimes, during long stretches of difficult times, our natural resilience is faced with more challenges than usual.

In this article you will find advice on how to boost your own emotional immune system and increase your resilience.

❖ **What is a long-term emergency?**

A long-term emergency is a conflict in terms. Emergencies are usually short-lived situations in which all resources, both physical and mental are mobilized to help with the immediate task of survival. In a long term emergency situation, like the one Israel finds itself in today, the whole of society is exposed daily to constant and ongoing threats to our personal survival, either through direct personal experience or through the media. This situation of constant threat, affects all areas of life: going to school or to work, going out for the evening or even just walking down the street. Many people fear for their safety and the safety of their children, even during activities that used to be every day ones, such as spending time with friends.

Fortunately, however, the human body and soul are built to cope effectively with long periods of stress. Very quickly, despite apparent danger, it seeks to return to the quiet of a safe routine. This process is not only natural but also desirable. One of the aims of coping with long-term emergency situations is to regain a feeling of safety in our daily lives despite the external dangers. The "winter" out there brings in many "germs" such as: tension, anger, fear, irritability and despair. Our aim is to get through this winter in one piece.



❖ **The Importance of Hope and Meaning**

Hope is one of the more efficient tools we have at our disposal. Many studies have shown that people who continue to believe in a better future and maintain an optimistic outlook, manage to deal more effectively with difficult situations. Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel, showing us which way to continue, and insisting that we owe it to ourselves to do so.

The twin sister of "hope" is, "meaning." Meaning, or significance, is trying to find a reason for our existence, and for our having to face difficulties, such as traumatic events. Finding meaning in these difficult times often gives us reason to continue to struggle through hardships and keep on living. This meaning is not the same for everyone. Each person must find his or her own personal meaning and significance in life. Some people find meaning in a political or ideological stand, some find it in religion; others find it in their desire to give of themselves to others. Meaning and hope – why am I here, and how do I want to be here in future, are two of the most important tools for building and achieving resilience.

❖ **More ways to improve resilience**

Research has proven that there are a several factors that help us cope more effectively with stressful and traumatic situations. These factors help to improve our natural resilience and allow us to feel more secure. Aside from hope and meaning the following have been found to be helpful in building resilience:

- ▶ **Devote time to relationships** - People who have close and meaningful ties with family and friends tend to cope better during times of distress. Spending time with family and friends creates a sense of belonging, mutuality, and of having something to fight for. Researchers have found that married people and others with families tended to suffer less from depression in stressful situations. This may be due in part to the fact they knew they were responsible for their loved ones so they could not afford to sink into the depths of despair.
- ▶ **Acquire knowledge about the situation** - Accurate knowledge about the situation you are in will help you make more informed decisions and help you to feel more in control of the situation. This knowledge can also help diminish fears, which often stem from the unknown.



- ▶ **Talk about your feelings with people close to you** - Every one of us sometimes feels the need to relieve some of the stress that accumulates during rough times. Opportunities to talk about the feelings we experience allow us to “let off steam” and return to normal functioning.
- ▶ **Maintain physical health** - There is a proven link between nutrition, physical activity and stress. Stressful situations present taxing demands on our bodies, and gradually deplete our physical resources. This typically results in fatigue and physical aches and pains. Taking responsibility for our body - healthy nutrition, physical activity and enough sleep - gives the body an opportunity to renew its resources and repair the damage done by stress.
- ▶ **Use your sense of humor** - Laughter allows us to see the brighter side of reality, and helps us emerge from situations of anxiety or stress. A sense of humor also improves our physical health and allows us to find creative solutions to difficulties.



🌸 **Test Your Resilience Level** 🌸

Research has shown that there are a number of characteristics and traits that allow a person to have greater resilience when faced with stressful life conditions, and help a person to recuperate from a negative situation such as stress or trauma. The purpose of this quiz is to see which of these characteristics you possess. The more questions you answer with a "yes", the greater your chances are to deal effectively with stressful situations and get past them.

There are no right or wrong answers in this quiz. Its purpose is to allow you to get to know yourself better and to recognize your strengths and weaknesses in dealing with difficult life situations. The quiz is made up of two parts:

- ▶ **Part one** - deals with situations in your life that improve resilience.
- ▶ **Part two** - deals with personality traits that allow you to deal with stressful and distressing situations.

Good luck!



Part 1: Life Situations that Improve Resilience

Mark the following statements with Yes or No. Then count the number of times you answered Yes:

1. Attention and Support

- a. You have family and friends to whom you are important, and who will be there for you when you need them.
- b. You are part of a group that appreciates you, and that make you feel like you belong (for example: school, work, religious community).

2. Self-Esteem

- a. The people close to you believe in you and make sure you know that.
- b. Most of the time, you believe in yourself and your ability to achieve the goals you have set, despite the difficulties.

3. Personal Expression

- a. You devote time to hobbies and activities you enjoy.
- b. You volunteer somewhere for a cause you believe in.

4. Positive Relationships

- a. You feel close to the people you work or study with.
- b. Your relationships with your family and friends don't exhaust you, but usually give you strength and energy.

5. Clear Boundaries

- a. Your friends and family respect you and your privacy
- b. It is clear to you what the expectations are at the place you work or study.
- c. You know how to stand up for yourself and you don't let others take advantage of you.

6. Life Traits

- a. You know how to listen and be honest with people you are conversing with.
- b. You have the necessary training and talents to succeed in your work or studies.
- c. You know how to set goals for yourself and achieve them.

Count the number of times you answered Yes : _____ out of 18.

A supportive environment, in which you feel you are important and to which you feel you belong, can be the basis of your ability to handle difficult events in your life.



Part 2: Personal Traits that Improve Resilience

Mark the traits that you find especially helpful when dealing with stressful or difficult situations:

- Relationships** - the ability to be close to other people and share your feelings with them.
 - Humor** - the ability to see the funny or humorous side of things.
 - Perceptiveness** - the ability to accurately assess people and situations.
 - Independence** - the ability to choose to stay away from unpleasant people or situations.
 - Control** - the ability to direct your life in the direction you want and change unpleasant situations.
 - Optimism** - the expectation of a better future
 - Flexibility** - the ability to adapt to changes in the situation.
 - Curiosity** - willingness to learn how to overcome difficult situations.
 - Self worth** - self confidence and worthiness.
 - Faith** - religious or ideological.
 - Perseverance** - the ability to persevere and not give in.
 - Creativity** - self-expression through the arts, sports, hobbies or crafts.
- Count the number of times you marked "+": _____

Part 3: How Can You Improve Your Resilience?

Resilience is not an inborn trait. You can acquire resilience through awareness and effort, and by doing so improve your quality of life. Apply these principles in practice in everyday life, and improve your resilience

- ▶ **Awareness** -- Be aware of your strengths and rely on them in times of stress and difficulty.
- ▶ **Self-improvement** -- Try out some of the behaviors and activities listed above that you haven't until now. Expand your repertoire.
- ▶ **Seek out support** -- The more supportive your surroundings are, the more successful you will be in dealing with stressful and difficult situations. Seek out people who can give you support, and treat you with respect.
- ▶ **Patience** -- The path to resilience, especially in stressful situations, may be long and arduous. Remember that change often takes a long time.



🌸 **Self Awareness and Self Care** 🌸

Information Page No. 2

As an adult you may have experienced traumas of various sorts. In your role as teacher you may need to put your personal experiences aside in order to attend to the professional requirements of your job which include the need to maintain routine and order and to continue teaching, all the while serving as a role model for pupils and providing them with a sympathetic ear. One of the most significant factors that influence students' reactions to traumas is the manner in which their teachers and the school staff cope with crisis and handle the aftermath of traumatic events.

In order for teachers to function effectively in their professional roles, self awareness of one's emotions, physical reactions, thoughts, and actions are essential. Becoming more aware of one's own reactions facilitates personal coping as well as becoming a more empathic support to students. If you feel overwhelmed by your own emotions, seek out another adult to share with, before returning to your classroom.

Common Reactions

It is important to pay special note to the following in the wake of crisis or traumatic events:

- ▶ Feelings tend to be intense and sometimes unexpected. The threshold for anger may be lower and one's mood may be less stable than in normal periods. You are liable to feel more anxious or irritable and may even feel despondent or depressed.
- ▶ Thought processes and behavior patterns are likely to be affected by the trauma. You may be disturbed by memories of the incident especially if these were incidents you experienced personally. These intrusive thoughts can lead to physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, or weakness. It is sometimes difficult to concentrate and make decisions and there is an increased tendency for confusion. Some people report difficulties in feeling and a general numbness of the senses. Eating and sleeping patterns are likely to be upset as well.
- ▶ Some people feel the need to review the incident, and talk about it with others, again and again over the course of several weeks and months. Others prefer to maintain silence.



- ▶ Personal relationships often become tension filled. There may be a tendency towards more arguments and conflicts among family members. There may be a tendency to withdraw socially and prefer being alone...
- ▶ Physical symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, and chest pains can accompany situations of extreme stress..

Coping resources

What can be done to restore the sense of stability and control to the way we felt prior to the traumatic event?

- ▶ Give yourselves time to heal. Anticipate the fact that you can expect it to be a difficult time in your life and allow yourselves time to grieve and mourn if you have suffered a loss. Be patient with yourselves.
- ▶ Look for support amongst those close to you.. Keep in mind that your natural support network may also be weakened due to the circumstances.
- ▶ Maintain a healthy lifestyle. Make sure to eat regularly and rest.
- ▶ Find things that help you to relax. Try and connect with pleasant memories and resume enjoyable activities (watch movies or take up hobbies).
- ▶ Avoid making important decisions such as a career or lifestyle change in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events..

When should one seek professional help?

- ▶ When strong emotions, changes in behavior patterns, or recurring memories don't decrease in intensity after a month or two.
- ▶ When emotional reactions or changes in behavior patterns significantly disrupt daily functioning at home, at work, or in interpersonal relationships.
- ▶ When you are obsessed with thoughts of helplessness and hopelessness or inflict injury on yourself.
- ▶ When you suffer physical symptoms that do not disappear after a period of time.



Guidelines for preschool staff and parents:

🌸 Coping with stressful events 🌸

Information Page No. 3

Children can be affected by stressful events even when they have not been directly exposed and are not facing any external threat. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. Children are highly sensitive to the reactions of their caregivers, both parents and preschool staff. A child who senses that the adults looking after him are tense and troubled will feel that his own safety and security are threatened.
2. Children often overhear bits of information in conversations between adults and older children. This information may not be understandable and may cause increased concern about their own personal safety.
3. Children may be exposed to television and radio news programs that are not appropriate for them, and this may increase their confusion and anxiety.

Children's reactions to stress vary depending of course on their age. Typical reactions include:

- ❖ Clinging to parents or teaching staff
- ❖ Clinging to a favorite object such as a teddy bear or blanket
- ❖ Fears, either new or old
- ❖ Low threshold for frustration
- ❖ Crying and angry outbursts
- ❖ Regression to earlier stages of behavior
- ❖ Sleep and eating disturbances or changes

Children who have experienced a previous trauma, who live under difficult family circumstances, who suffer from illness or developmental problems, or who have trouble making friends are more sensitive and may react more to difficult situations or prolonged periods of stress.



What can be done in the classroom to help youngsters cope?

Below are a few suggestions on how to cope with difficult situations and prolonged periods of stress:

❖ Creating a sense of safety

Children look to adults as their source of security and safety. We need to give them the feeling that we are watching over them and protecting them and that we know what to do in difficult and abnormal situations. We need to comfort them in every way we can, both physically and verbally. The presence of a familiar adult gives the child a sense of security. Try to stay with your child, but when it is necessary to leave, explain to the child where you are going and when he can expect to see you again.

❖ Routine

Routine is the most important way to provide a sense of security. Stick to regular eating and sleeping habits, continue to engage in activities the children are used to, maintain discipline and the routine of the home and school environment as much as possible. Finding the middle road between being sensitive to your child's needs and maintaining routine and rules is the goal. Children are sensitive to adults, and the more the adult has a sense of control the more this will provide a sense of stability for the child.

❖ Information and explanations

During times of crisis all people, including young children, need information. The youngsters need our help to make sense out of all the bits of information they hear. It is imperative that the adult in charge gives them as reliable, trustworthy, and reassuring information as possible at a level that is comprehensible to them. Below are a few guidelines on how to give preschoolers this kind of information.

Do:

- ▶ Tell only as much about the situation as the child is interested in.
- ▶ Answer questions that are asked.
- ▶ Answer all questions even if they are difficult or frightening to us.
- ▶ Limit the child's exposure to media coverage.



Teachers and Parents:

🌸 How to Talk to Young Children 🌸

Information Page No. 4

During extended periods of uncertainty and tension young children need reliable information and a way to incorporate this information into an existing information system. We can help them to mediate and assimilate the information they receive from their environment in a credible, controlled way in terms they understand. Children must also be able to feel a sense of security and have a "safe place" where they can express their feelings. Thus, an open discussion is invaluable during this time. Below are some guidelines on to how to talk with your children:

Accurate information

- ❖ Provide as much information as the child is interested in knowing. You do not need to provide all the details, as often the broad outlines are sufficient.
- ❖ Allow plenty of time and space for questions over the ensuing days.
- ❖ Answer all questions, even if they are difficult or frightening.
- ❖ Answer all questions truthfully; but remember, this doesn't mean that you need to overwhelm the child with details.
- ❖ Listen and respond without trying to take over or lead the conversation.
- ❖ Avoid giving dramatic or detailed descriptions of upsetting events.
- ❖ Limit children's exposure to the media.
- ❖ Be willing to provide explanations over and over again. Repetition helps the child understand the complexities of the world and makes him/her feel more secure.

Feelings

- ❖ Convey the message that feelings of fear and anger that your child may be experiencing are perfectly normal and acceptable and there is no need to feel embarrassed or ashamed of these or any other feelings.
- ❖ Say something like, "Many children feel this way," or "It's fine to feel this way."



- ❖ Convey how important it is for the child to express his/her feelings so that the adults around them will understand them better.

Honesty

- ❖ It is permissible and even advisable to say "I don't know."
- ❖ It is fine to share your feelings with the child, but not to overwhelm him/her with very strong feelings.
- ❖ Make it clear that if you are worried it is due to things that are going on around you and not because of the child or due to his/her behavior. Young children tend to blame themselves when they see that their parents are upset.

Remember: A frank discussion with children during difficult times can do a world of good! It can:

- ❖ Clear up a lot of confusion and uncertainty.
- ❖ Show them that you are taking an interest in them and their thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ Prevent unnecessary fears.
- ❖ Encourage and develop a child's natural desire to understand the world around him/her.
- ❖ Provide a sense of control and capability.



How to help children cope **🌸 during times of uncertainty 🌸**

Information Page No. 5

Preface

We live in times of uncertainty where both adults and children are often exposed, directly or indirectly, to many emergency situations. This situation affects all of us greatly as adults and even more so as children. On top of the anxiety and stress in our daily lives, children often sense the uncertainty and accompanying sense of helplessness. Often, children are confused and do not fully understand what is going on. We hope to help you understand children's reactions and what you can do to cope more effectively with them.

Parents and teachers of young children often say or think the following:

- ❖ *He won't understand it, even if we explain it*
- ❖ *He's not old enough to cope emotionally with it*
- ❖ *Childhood is the time to have fun and play, it's a pity to spoil it - He'll have enough time for worries and stress when he grows up*

These are just a few of the phrases heard from grownups as they deliberate whether or not to share their concerns with their children or to expose them to what is going on. On the one hand they are right. Childhood is indeed the time when a child should have no concerns about his survival and should be concentrating on acquiring skills that will serve him later on in life. However, it is unfortunately impossible to completely shelter a child from events around him. Children are much more aware of what goes on around them than we realize. They hear bits of information from their classmates, media broadcasts, and even when we try to screen and shelter our children, they absorb the atmosphere around them both at home and at school. The problem is that young children often pick up unreliable or exaggerated information which can cause even greater fear. Thus, adults must share information with children in a measured, responsible way. If they are dependent solely on their friends for information, this information may be distorted, sensational, anxiety producing as well as down right false.



Recognizing your child's needs

Children's needs during prolonged periods of stress can be divided into two categories:

Cognitive Needs

Cognitively, children need accurate/reliable information provided to them by a person in a position of authority. The child needs to have certain widely used concepts and terms clarified, such as "suicide bomber", "terrorist attack" or "frontline". Often children hear and use words they really don't understand the meaning of. Patiently explaining the meaning of such words at an age appropriate level will help to alleviate fear of the unknown.

Emotional Needs

Emotionally, children need to have a sense of security and to feel that their parents are there to protect them. One way to ensure this is by sticking to a regular, stable routine which provides a measure of permanency and continuity in the child's life. Another great need a child has is to express the strong feelings that trouble him, and to know his parents will be there for him in order to contain those feelings.

Problems arise when there is a gap between the cognitive and emotional needs of the child. That is, when his need for explanation and clarification of the situation are not in line with his need for security. In such cases the adult must use his judgment. We will try to give some guidelines to help deal with these situations.

Children and Fears

Fears are an inevitable part of childhood. This is due to the child's position in life: a newcomer in an adult's world which he does not yet completely understand. Every age has fears associated with it, according to the child's stage of development and the kind of challenges he is required to face.

All fears, even ones that seem ridiculous or groundless may be very serious ones for the child and should be treated as such and taken seriously. In many cases the child may feel ashamed or helpless because of his fear, so it is important to be very sensitive and explain that fears are perfectly natural.



🌸 **How do children react to trauma?** 🌸

Information Page No. 6

Trauma is a sudden and threatening event for children, as it is for adults. Trauma disturbs basic assumptions that children have about the world, namely, that the world is a safe and controllable place. Often, children may feel helpless and do not understand what is going on around them. Trauma also upsets the delicate balance of adult-child relationships; the child's confidence that the adults in his environment will always be able to protect him may be disturbed and the adult's sense of his role as protector may be severely undermined.

Children's reactions to a traumatic event are strongly influenced by the behavior of parents or other significant adults in the child's environment. The adult serves as a role model for the child, showing him how to interpret the situation and how to react to it. Older children begin to use their own judgment, yet their reactions are also influenced by external factors such as friends, teachers, and media.

Children react to trauma in different ways. Some children do not show outward signs of distress. However, it is possible to divide typical reactions to a traumatic event into three developmental age groups:

Toddlers (up to five years old)

Typical reactions in this age group include clinging to parents, crying and a return to regressive behaviors, which are typical of earlier periods of development. These behaviors often include bed wetting, finger sucking and fear of the dark.

Middle childhood (six to eleven year olds)

Typical reactions in this age group are anger, aggressiveness, avoidance of subjects related to the trauma, regressive behavior, withdrawal, restlessness, and difficulties in concentrating and studying.

Adolescence (twelve to eighteen year olds)

This age group shows varied reactions to traumatic events. Some adolescent reactions resemble those of adults and others resemble those of younger children. In addition, adolescents may evidence increased risk taking behavior, isolation, antisocial behavior and increased use of addictive substances such as drugs and alcohol. Adolescents that have experienced trauma may behave impulsively, sometimes clearly provoking danger or



ignoring it. This situation can aggravate existing conflicts between parents and adolescents and may contribute to a vicious cycle, which causes even more extreme reactions.

In many situations the child or adolescent may be experiencing significant distress even if they do not express it outwardly. It is therefore most important for parents to be sensitive to their children's distress signals. In most cases, children and adolescents cope well with trauma, and return to normal functioning with time. As with adults, the healing process is predicted by the degree of exposure to the event, the amount of support available, and the child's general level of functioning before the event. A sensitive and tuned-in environment that encourages the child to return to normal functioning and allows him to deal with the trauma at his own pace, may go a long way in helping the natural healing process.



🌸 Basic PH 🌸

A Model for Effective Coping

By: Professor Mooli Lahad and Dr. Ofra Ayalon

This model appears in the book: Living on the Edge (Hebrew), by M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Haifa: Nord Publishers (Telephone: 04-6909600; Fax: 04-6950740)

According to the BASIC PH model of coping, different people choose different modes of coping. The letters of the BASIC PH stand for six basic modes of coping. They are as follows:

B - Beliefs and Values - A **belief system** that belongs to the spiritual side of the individual. These may be expressed through religious belief or ideology, or more outwardly through open declaration of position or values, in group rituals or through performing good deeds. Spirituality includes the belief that there is reason to live and order in the universe. **Belief** gives **meaning** to distress and to suffering.

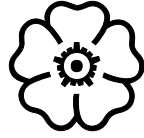
A – Affect - Activities that allow for an **emotional** release on a personal and interpersonal level have been found effective in decreasing one's sense of stress or crisis.

S – Social - The degree of support derived from a **social** group is inestimable in importance when coping with a crisis. The ability to fill a role and become involved in a group helps give a feeling of confidence during uncertain and confusing times. In some manner **doing for others** is a temporary means through which time is bought until a person learns to live life fully for himself. Social supports may include family, friends, colleagues and community groups.

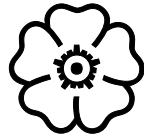
I – Imagination - **The imagination** enables dialogue between the body, mind and emotion. It is an essential part of invention, creative thinking, problem solving, and adds greatly to enriching life. Imagination provides distraction and respite during stressful situations.

C – Cognitive – By using our **cognitive abilities** we are able to organize our thoughts, set priorities, solve problems, and provide ourselves with advice on decreasing stress.

Ph – Physical For every feeling of stress there is a corresponding **physical** element. Learning how to release tension and relax using physical techniques, such as activity and meditative techniques can significantly reduce stress levels.



Part Two:
Classroom Activities





General Guidelines

In the following pages you will find detailed suggestions for classroom activities related to building resilience specifically designed for the preschool classroom. Some activities include parental participation. There are five categories of activity including Mind-Body Techniques, Expanding Personal Resources, Feelings, Fears, Meaning and Hope.

One or two activities from each category will be practiced during the workshop.

Additional activities are included in this manual, which can be used in the classroom. You are encouraged to read through the manual and choose activities that are comfortable to you and suitable to your students.

You may of course create or design activities of your own. We would be pleased if you would share these activities with us.

Following are **general guidelines** on how to use the activities included in this manual:

1. Mutual respect

A lot of interaction between children occurs during these activities. Children have a lot of different opinions, beliefs, thoughts and feelings on every topic they deal with. It is vital to stress the importance of mutual respect for others. Below are a number of specific guidelines:

- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers
- ▶ Everyone needs to listen to and support one another
- ▶ No teasing or making fun of a child over what he said or did
- ▶ All feelings and opinions are acceptable

2. Listening

Many children will want to contribute to the classroom discussion. Here are some suggestions:

- ▶ Help the children learn to wait their turn and to listen to what others have to say. Using a "talking stick" is often helpful. The child who is speaking can hold onto the "talking stick" and pass it along to the next speaker when he has finished. Only the person holding the stick can speak.



- ▶ There are some children who might prefer to listen and not say anything. Respect their wishes. Do not force children to speak or take part in these activities against their will.
- ▶ Should you overhear distorted information about an event, clear up any misinformation without offending the speaker.

3. Mirroring children's thoughts and feelings

Sometimes children have difficulty finding the right words when they try to describe their thoughts and feelings. You can help them out by clarifying or adding a word or two. Children sometimes say negative and very blunt things about those whom they see as the "bad guy." Permit the expression of anger and differentiate between opinions which may be expressed and behaviors which are unacceptable. A discussion of the negative consequences of hatred could be helpful.

4. Encouraging praise and positive reinforcement

It is important to encourage group participation in the sharing of opinions, feelings, and creative expression. It is important to praise children's participation in the group, so that they feel their contribution is valuable. Finally, encouragement and praise given to a child by an influential adult will be invaluable in helping him cope with a difficult situation.

5. Self awareness of your own feelings and responses

You too are dealing with tense and stressful situations during this time, just as the children in your care are.

- ▶ Be aware of your own feelings and opinions as you guide the children along in their work.
- ▶ Ask yourself what feelings come up inside when going over the activities you plan to do in your class.
- ▶ Think of what you want the children to get out of this; your thoughts, feelings, beliefs.
- ▶ Garner support for yourself and your own coping ability under extended periods of stress.
- ▶ Young children need adults who are optimistic and who have things under control especially during trying times of uncertainty and stress. You may however share your difficult feelings, as long as this can be done without burdening the children or seeming like a threat to them.

Good Luck!



Mind-Body Connection: Relaxation

Chapter 1

Relaxation is an excellent way of decreasing tension and creating balance and a feeling of calmness and control for adults and children alike. Relaxation allows the body to rejuvenate itself, through relaxation of muscles, distraction from fears and worries, and by practicing thinking pleasant thoughts.

Below are three suggested activities for pupils:

1. A Journey through the Body - Full Body Relaxation
2. Relaxation through Breathing, Guided Imagery and Art work
3. Guided Imagery - The Story of Bambi

It is important to read the instructions in a quiet, even voice.

In addition to the verbal instructions to enhance the feeling of calm you can go around and gently touch the children with a piece of cloth or a feather or play some soothing background music as you read the instructions.

The activity can take just a few minutes or last longer if desired.

Relaxation is best at the beginning or at the end of the day or as a transition from one activity to the next.

You can also suggest the children try out the relaxation activity at home before going to bed and to tell their parents about it.



Relaxation

🌸 A Journey through the Body 🌸

Activity No. 1

This exercise is suitable for all ages.

If you wish, you can add music in the background that is soothing and relaxing. There are many selections readily available on the market. Most people enjoy having music in the background, although there are some that find it annoying.

Note: These are suggested texts, for getting started. Feel free to depart from them, and use your own words.

Read:

Now we're going to do a relaxation exercise that will help us all calm down and feel better. I'd like everyone to sit quietly and get comfortable in their chair. Listen to my instructions.

Read the instructions in a slow, quiet voice, pausing often between sentences:

Close your eyes and listen to the rhythm of your breathing...

Now, let's release all the muscles in our bodies and let them relax... relax your feet... your legs, the palms of your hands, your shoulders and neck... your face. Breathe very slowly...

If you'd like to you can tense all your muscles, and then let them go. Tense all your muscles, make fists with your hands, scrunch up your face, tighten your shoulders, then your legs. Hold it. Hold it. Now let go, and take a slow, deep breath.

We're about to set off on a journey through our bodies. Let's move very slowly, try and feel each and every muscle and bone in your body.

Start with your hands... Visualize your right hand from the tip of your pinky through all your fingers, all the way up to your elbow... from there to your right shoulder.

Everywhere you go - continue to breathe deeply, and visualize your body parts letting go... relaxing... becoming softer... warmer... heavier...

Move around to your left shoulder and down to your left arm. From there to your wrist, your hand... and fingers. Move back up to your shoulders, and slowly go up your neck...

Continue relaxing into each part of your body... move up to your head. Move around



your head to your scalp... to your forehead... your eyebrows and eyes... ears... lips and mouth... to your chin and back again to your neck and shoulders. Go back through the cavity of your chest... notice your heartbeat... Move to your solar plexus, to your stomach... notice what you feel there.

Notice how your whole body is relaxing... feeling warm... good...

Now move down your right leg... to the knee... ankle... and heel, ball of your foot, toes. Now move to your left leg. Down to the knee, ankle, heel, ball of your foot, to the end of your toes...

Now your whole body is feeling relaxed and calm.

Stay with that feeling for a moment or two and enjoy it. Remember that you can come back here whenever you wish... Now, move out slowly and quietly... begin to let your eyes flutter... move your fingers and toes and slowly, very slowly, come back here, to the classroom, to your chair.

Allow a few moments for students to get their bearings before continuing.

Optional

At the end of the activity ask if there is anyone who would like to share his experience with the others.

Ask questions like:

- How does your body feel now after the relaxation exercise?
- What did you think or feel while you were doing the relaxation exercise?
- When is the best time to do relaxation exercises (when you are worried/afraid, before an exciting event, before going to sleep)?

This is not compulsory, you may move on to the next activity.



Relaxation

🌸 Guided Imagery - A Walk in the Woods 🌸

Activity No. 2

This relaxation exercise is especially suitable for young children.

Equipment

A sheet of paper for each child, some crayons or colored pencils.

Instruct:

I'd like everyone to sit quietly on a chair in the most comfortable position they can and pay careful attention to my instructions.

Close your eyes and put your hands on your tummies.

The first thing we're going to do is a special breathing exercise. We'll take a deep breath as if we're blowing up a balloon. Now we'll stop breathing in and everybody will try and hold their breath for as long as they can. That's it. Now let the air out slowly, slowly, as slowly as you can. Slowly, slowly does it... as you let the air out say very softly: aaaahh...

Take a deep breath and hold it in your tummy. Good. Blow slowly, slowly.

(Note: Inhaling and exhaling are the key to feeling relaxed.) *Let's do it once again.*

Now we are beginning to feel calm and peaceful. Breathe again, slowly, slowly, fill your lungs and let them release, slowly, slowly... See how it's getting easier each time, more relaxing, as if all the tension is just flowing right out of our bodies.

*Once again let your tummy fill up with air like a balloon... Now blow the air out... let your tummy go flat like an empty balloon. Now sit comfortably and close your eyes... If you wish, you may cover your eyes with your hands. **(Note:** if you notice children who are having trouble closing their eyes, you might say *those who prefer, can keep their eyes open.*)*

Now I'm going to tell you a story. As I tell the story, follow along with me in your minds.

Tell the story slowly, in a soft voice, with many pauses:

It's a nice sunny day today... a wonderful day... not too hot and not too cold. We're going on a walk... We're walking over a big green lawn. The grass is lovely and green and is surrounded by wild flowers... a pleasant fragrance fills the air.



We're walking along enjoying ourselves... In the distance we see a forest. We all want to reach the forest and the deep green shade... Here we are now, resting in the shade... enjoying the deep green of the trees. Take a deep breathe and smell the wonderful smells of the forest...

Now... take off your knapsacks. Think of the nice surprises waiting for you inside... in your mind open your knapsack... unzip it slowly... notice what is inside. When you have seen, or heard, or felt, the surprise that is in your knapsack, you may slowly, very slowly open your eyes...

Now I'm going to ask each of you to very quietly draw what you found in your knapsack. When you're finished, those who would like can share what they found in their knapsack with the rest of the group.



Relaxation

🌸 Guided Imagery - The Story of Bambi 🌸

Activity No. 3

Preparations

Arrange the space accordingly so that every child will be able to lie down on a blanket/mat or pillow.

Instruct the children:

I'd like you all to lie down comfortably on the floor. Make sure you each have room to stretch out without touching each other.

Make sure every child has enough room.

I'm going to read you the story of Bambi, the little deer. Listen carefully and do with your body just what Bambi does.

Read quietly and slowly:

Imagine you are a little deer called Bambi who lives in the forest. You've been out for a walk in the forest and now you are tired. You decide to take a rest in a shady corner beside the stream.

You are lying down resting on the soft grass.

(Breathing activity)

You may close your eyes or keep them open. Bambi stretches his whole body, then rests. Let all your muscles relax. fill your lungs with air, and slowly, very slowly, let the air go out... and again... breathe in and out... it feels good, it feels so nice here on the grass, breathes in... out... you feel refreshed and you are ready to continue along your way.

(Forehead muscles)

Keep lying down and imagine that you are Bambi carrying on along the way through the forest, breathing comfortably, looking up, looking at the birds whose chirping you hear; the sun is very strong and Bambi squints his eyes and wrinkles his forehead... he looks down again, away from the sun, and then his forehead unwrinkles...he breathes slowly he thinks he saw some fruit he likes hanging high up on the tree. He looks up again. He squints and wrinkles his forehead... and then he looks down and can straighten his eyes



and forehead. Let's do just like Bambi - wrinkle our foreheads, squint our eyes, and then let go. Up ahead he sees a fruit bush he really likes... he keeps going and feels better now that his eyes and forehead feel relaxed. He breathes calmly and continues on his way.

Bambi reaches the fruit bush, the fruit is big and Bambi opens his mouth as wide as he can, big and strong, and feels his mouth and jaw muscles are really tense... and then he grabs the fruit... and shuts his mouth... enjoys feeling his mouth muscles are relaxed... and swallows the delicious fruit and breathes comfortably...let's do that with Bambi. but he is still hungry so opens his mouth big and wide - the muscles are tight... he shuts his mouth on the great fruit... swallows... and feels the muscles are relaxed... then breathes slowly, very slowly... lets the lower jaw and mouth open slightly... breathe... it feels good...

(Shoulder and neck muscles)

Bambi is walking in the forest. He really likes being here in the midst of all these trees. But in order to go on he needs to get through a patch of bushes and he has to bend his shoulders and neck so he can make it through the narrow passage... He tenses his shoulders drawing them closer together, flexes his neck and goes through... then he's out in the open and relaxes his shoulders and stretches his neck, and breathes...

Oh, but here he goes again, Bambi has to go under a branch... he scrunches his neck and shoulders... and makes it through... and again he can relax his neck and shoulders... he breathes happily, feels his forehead, mouth, cheeks, neck and shoulders, they all feel good, heavy and not tight... he breathes air into his lungs... and lets it out, slowly, slowly and comfortably

(Arm muscles)

Bambi has eaten a lot of fruit and now he is thirsty. He goes over to a stream of water but it is covered with heavy rocks. Bambi has to move those rocks with his paws. He clenches his paws, flexes his muscles- now tense your arms just like Bambi and then relax them, and again while Bambi flexes his paws and pushes the rocks away... and now his muscles are relaxed and at ease...

And again, flexes his paws... really tightly, and pushes the rocks away and the muscles are once again relaxed, but there is still one rock... he flexes again and pushes it away... He breathes slowly, very slowly and drinks to his heart's content. His paws are relaxed and lie heavily at his side...



(Stomach muscles)

But Bambi is still hungry. He tightens his stomach really hard and it feels as hard as a rock. He feels how those delicious fruits are stuffed into his stomach, and now he has room to eat some more tasty fruit and leaves, so he relaxes his stomach, and feels comfortable around his stomach. He breathes deeply, looks around at the nice trees and breathes, slowly, slowly... he feels hungry again and tightens his stomach again to make room for the fruit he is going to pick soon, his stomach is tight and strong now, even a hard blow to it couldn't hurt a stomach as hard as that, and then Bambi relaxes and feels how pleasant his body feels and how relaxed and heavy his limbs feel.

(Leg Muscles)

Bambi is getting tired and decides to go back to his little corner in the shade next to the stream... he flexes his legs from top to bottom till his toes, and starts running... his muscles tighten up...he stops for a moment, releases his muscles and breathes slowly, slowly... and flexes his legs again and keeps going towards the river. When he gets there he stops and rests, relaxing his legs and letting his legs feel loose and heavy on the grass.

(Total body relaxation)

Now Bambi is lying on the grass, breathing slowly, slowly, releasing the muscles that worked so hard up till now - legs, arms, shoulders, mouth, and forehead. It is really pleasant to lie there like this, to breathe slowly, to let the muscles relax, the body feels heavy and relaxed.

Bambi is tired. He's breathing slowly, slowly...air goes in... and out... he's nodding off... and thinks what fun it is for little Bambi to live here in the forest...

After a few moments ask the children to gradually open their eyes and sit up.

Optional

At the end of the activity you can ask the children if there is anyone who'd like to share their experiences with the others. Ask questions like:

- How does your body feel after the activity?
- What thoughts or feelings did you have while you were doing the activity?



Relaxation

🌸 Self Massage 🌸

Activity No. 4

Equipment

- Body lotion
- Pleasant music

Remarks

It is preferable to do this activity when children are wearing lightweight clothing such as short sleeves and shorts.

Instruct the children:

Today we are going to give ourselves a massage - something very pleasant and relaxing. Sit down on your chairs and I'll give each of you some hand cream.

Give each child a dab of cream on his hands (during the activity some of the children will need to add more lotion).

Read the instructions in a soft, calm voice:

During this activity you need to sit quietly and listen very carefully to my instructions, to your bodies, and to the pleasant music. Anyone who needs more cream will put out his hand quietly and I'll come around with some more.

Breathe slowly, very slowly... take in air... let it out...

Rub the cream into the palms of your hands.... over all your fingers. Start with your right hand first from finger to finger, one by one, starting from where it joins your hand till the tip.... Start with your thumb... index finger... middle finger... ring finger... pinky... then move over to your left hand. Spread the cream over each finger... slowly, gently... the fingers are relaxed now, soft, and feel nice...

Now we'll continue using our fingers to relax the rest of our body...

Let's move on to our hands...spread the lotion all the way down our arms...from top to bottom... slowly does it... up and down... soften them... leave them relaxed and comfortable... go over to the other hand, spread the lotion from top to bottom...



(If the children are wearing shorts) Now let's move on to our legs... spread some cream on your right leg, from the knee down... slowly, does it... spread it on... the muscles feel relaxed... softened... and the leg feels comfortable... move over to the left leg... spread the lotion from the knee down, slowly... and let your legs relax and feel comfortable...

Now let's move to our face... spread some cream on your face slowly... rub circles on your chin... on your cheeks... on your nose... over your forehead... close your eyes and spread the lotion all over your face, slowly does it... breathe slowly, slowly... take your hands away from your face... place them gently by your side... and breathe in slowly...



Expressing Feelings and Coping with Fears

Chapter 2

Being able to express a variety of emotions greatly facilitates our ability to cope with stress and distress. In order to fully and appropriately give expression to emotional situations we must increase our emotional vocabulary. Learning how to identify the flow of our emotions and the way we express them through different forms of behavior and in varied social situations, is the aim of this chapter. Allowing expression of emotions as something acceptable and normative in the classroom is our goal. Understanding and being in touch with our own emotions, leads the way to being open to listen to children. The research literature on resilience points to an empathic environment as conducive to resilience building. The exercises in this chapter, focusing on expression of emotions, often difficult ones, will hopefully pave the way to further development of empathic classroom environments.

Fear is one of the most common emotions experienced by school age children and merits special attention. In stressful situations particularly those of threat from terror, war or other violence, and exposure to traumatic events, new fears may crop up or existing ones may intensify. Being able to talk about fears is one way to defuse their potency. Additionally, being able to look at these fears in the open often leads the way to coping and finding solutions. Teachers often worry that talking about fears will exacerbate them. It is important to note that expressing fear, either verbally or through a creative outlet neither increases the fear nor does it eliminate it. What it does is to enrich our efforts in dealing with it. Also, allowing talk about fear into the classroom helps a child feel that he is not alone, and that there are caring adults.

We have divided these exercises into two categories. First are three activities which deal with emotions in general. In the next chapter are several activities that focus on fear.

Following are three activities which deal with emotions in general.

1. Wheel of Feelings
2. I Feel, I Think, I Do
3. Line, Shape, Color



Expressing Feelings

🌸 Wheel of Feelings* 🌸

Activity No. 1

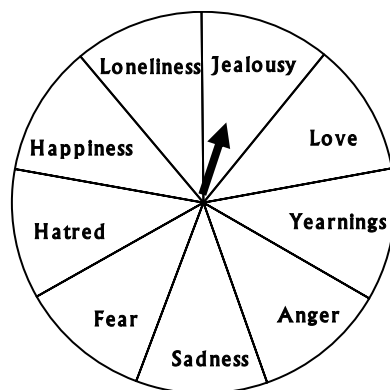
Goals

To enrich the vocabulary used to express emotions.

To encourage expression and discussion of difficult subjects.

Equipment

- Wheel of Feeling (see diagram). Prepare wheel with eight sections – choosing eight feelings, for example: happy, sad, angry, excited, afraid, peaceful, love, hate (you may of course choose others)



Show the children the Wheel of Feelings and say:

Every person has a wide range of feelings and emotions which affect their mood, the way they think, and their behavior. This wheel depicts only some of our emotions; you will certainly be able to add more. In our activity today we will learn about our different emotions.

Hand out the enclosed worksheet.

Ask one of the pupils to take the Wheel of Feelings and spin the dial. When it stops ask him to describe a situation or incident related to the chosen feeling. The other students are then asked to write their thoughts about what that feeling evokes in them on their worksheet.

*Adapted from an activity in the book **Living on the Edge 2000**, M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Nord Publishing, 2001.



In the ensuing discussion raise the fact that there are many words synonymous with various emotions, words with different connotations for the same emotion such as anger/rage; there are also words that express opposite emotions. In addition, every emotion arouses a different feeling in each child and different children may feel different emotions while in the same situation.

Optional

1. At the end of the discussion you may want to create a Dictionary of Feelings which you can later hang on a wall in the classroom.
2. Later that day /week have the children draw pictures about the stories and feelings that were heard during the session. You may let them continue spinning the Wheel of Feelings during free play time.



Expressing Feelings

🌸 I Feel, I Think, I Do* 🌸

Activity No. 2

Goals

To teach the children to verbalize their various feelings as well as to make the connection between their thoughts and behaviors.

To encourage expression and discussion of emotionally related subjects.

Equipment

- Open space which can be used as a stage.
- A list of scripts for the teacher. Examples:

How do I look when...

- *I wake up in the middle of the night*
- *I am at my birthday party*
- *I fall and hurt myself*
- *I see a huge dog*
- *I watch a scary show*
- *I eat sweets that I really like*
- *I play with a friend*
- *a bigger kid threatens/bullies me in the school yard*
- *my older sister calls me names, etc. ...*

Explain to the children:

In today's activity we will learn how certain situations influence how we feel and think and how our thoughts and feelings influence our behavior.

Choose a few children to act out the various scenes.

Quietly describe to each one in turn a situation or feeling he will need to present before the others. The child will then act out the feeling you described.

* Adapted from an activity in the book **Living on the Edge 2000**, M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Nord Publishing, 2001.



After each presentation the rest of the children will guess:

- What was the situation the child presented?
- What did the child feel/ think?
- Why did he behave as he did?
- Are there any more ways he could have behaved? Positive ones? Negative ones?
- How would you feel in that situation?

Discussion:

Some of the following may come up in the classroom discussion:

- Even difficult incidents can sometimes arouse positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which display positive coping in face of a difficult situation. For example *When I run into a huge dog I get scared and think of turning back but I decide to continue on my way and not let the dog bother me. I feel brave.*
- In similar situations different children will feel differently.
- Whenever we feel or think something there are usually several different ways we may choose to act. Give examples of this, for example: when I see a dog and am scared, I can run away, I can hold my sister's hand and go and pet the dog, I can take a deep breath and walk slowly away.



Expressing Feelings

🌸 **Line-Color-Shape** * 🌸

Activity No. 3

Goal

To become acquainted with a range of emotions and find creative expression for them.

Equipment

Drawing paper and colored pencils or crayons

Instructions

Part I: Discussion

Read the following pairs of words:

Weak	Strong
Happy	Sad
Angry	Content
Irritated	Calm

- Explain these concepts using examples that are familiar to the children from their own experiences..
- Explain that these concepts pertain to feelings, and that each pair represents opposite emotions.
- Suggest that sometimes feelings remind us of colors and shapes and ask for some examples.

Part II: Arts & Crafts Corner

Ask each child to think of how he can express emotions through colors and shapes. Think of which color or shape fits each emotion.

Remind them of the pairs of feelings discussed earlier.

*Adapted from an activity in the book **Living on the Edge 2000**, M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Nord Publishing, 2001.



Ask each child to choose a pair of feelings and draw them in any way he chooses. Compare with the children the various shapes, colors and lines used to express the same feelings, while they are working, and perhaps in the group discussion at the end of the day.



🌸 Coping with Fears 🌸

Chapter 3

Fears are a normal phenomenon in children of various ages. In situations of stress and security threats additional fears are likely to appear in children or existing fears may intensify. It is important to encourage expression of these fears for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we may be able to help identify their cause and suggest ways to cope with them. Expressing fears also helps kids feel like they are not alone. ***It is important to note that discussing fears verbally or through a creative outlet does not increase the fears.*** Following are two activities that deal with coping with fears.

- a. Sculpting Feelings
- b. The Dream Catcher



Coping with Fears

🌸 Sculpting Feelings 🌸

Activity No. 1

Goals

To learn how to express feelings including fear.

To learn how to cope with fear by befriending fear.

Equipment

Play dough or modeling clay, water, plastic sheeting to protect desks and table tops.

Instructions

Open with the following: *Today we're going to sculpt our feelings.*

Give each child a block of modeling clay and some water. Ask them to divide their block into five pieces. Allow them time to play with the clay, and "become friendly with it". Some children have some hesitation about working with clay, and may fear getting dirty. Gently encourage them to participate.

Ask the children to create a sculpture that expresses the following emotions (feel free to choose emotions that you want): Happiness, sadness, fear, hope.

Allow them to choose whatever emotion they wish for the last piece of clay.

Split the children into pairs or small groups, and ask them to share their creations.

Bring them back for a classroom discussion about what they have experienced. Ask them the following questions:

- How did it feel be with your feelings? Did they change as you sculpted them?
- How did it feel to talk about your feelings?
- What about your fear?
- What did you learn about yourself from this activity

When discussing fears with the children it is important to:

- Mention that there are several ways of coping/ overcoming fears.
- Make it clear that each child can have his own way to deal with things and there is no right or wrong way.
- Distinguish between what we have control over and what we don't and can't change.

Optional

Leave the children's projects on display for a few days.



Coping with Fears

The Dream Catcher*

Activity No. 2

Goal

Children's fears and worries are frequently expressed in dreams, directly, indirectly, or symbolically. It is useful to ask children to share their dreams as yet another vehicle of emotional expression. We need to explain to them that bad dreams are a common manifestation of our daytime fears and concerns.

Equipment

- Story about the Dream Catcher (see below)
- Plastic or cardboard 12-15 cms. in diameter
- Colored lengths of yarn
- Beads for stringing on the yarn
- Colored feathers
- Scissors

Planning the activity

You can start by reading the story together to all the children. During the week plan for a crafts activity of making a dream catcher. Make sure the children do their projects in small groups so they have more of a chance to really express themselves and get more individual attention from the supervising adult.

Group Discussion

Many children and adults have bad dreams. Sometimes these bad dreams have to do with the fears we feel while we are awake. We're going to learn how to catch the bad dreams and give the good dreams more time. Who has heard of the bad dream catcher?

Show the children the one that you made.

I want to tell you now the story of the Dream Catcher...

*Adapted from an activity in the book **Living on the Edge 2000**, M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Nord Publishing, 2001.



- First Version

This story of the Dream Catcher comes from an ancient Native American Indian legend. Many years ago all the members of the Anishinabe tribe were plagued by bad dreams at night. The people tried all sorts of different ways to get rid of the dreams, but nothing helped. One night one of the elders of the tribe dreamt of the " Spider woman". She spun a beautiful spider web which had beads and feathers. The bad parts of the dream got caught in it and the good dreams passed through it. When dawn broke all the bad dreams that had been caught inside either disappeared, melted, or were destroyed.

When the old man woke up he told the rest of the members of his tribe about his dream. Every family prepared its own spider web, from beads, feathers, just like the one that appeared in the elder's dream. They hung their dream catchers above their beds. These dream catchers caught all the bad dreams and allowed the good ones to pass through into the sleeping person.

As dawn broke, all the bad dreams disappeared or were destroyed.. This method worked and the tribe members all slept well after that and dreamt pleasant dreams. The dream catchers are still used today by members of many Native American tribes.

- Second version

The story of the dream catcher is an ancient legend.

Many years ago, in a little village all the children were visited night after night by bad dreams. People tried to do all sorts of things to get rid of them, but nothing helped at all. One night a little boy dreamt about a spider that spun a beautiful web. It had beads and feathers in it. The beads and feathers caught bad dreams and good dreams passed right through. When dawn broke the bad dreams that had been trapped in the web were gone. They had evaporated and disappeared.

When the boy woke up he told his friends about his dream. All the rest of the children in the village made a web just like the one that appeared in the little boy's dream, and they hung them up above their beds. The dream catchers caught all the bad dreams and let the good dreams pass through to the sleeping child.

At first light all the bad dreams disappeared. If something bad still managed to survive till morning the children thought he should tell his loved ones and together they would work things out. This worked and all the village children slept fine after that and had good dreams. To this day many children still make dream catchers like these.



After reading the story start a discussion surrounding the following questions:

- What do I do when I have a bad dream?
- How can I order pleasant dreams?
- How can we get rid of bad dreams?
- Who do I tell my bad dreams to?

Note: When discussing fears with the children it is important to:

- Mention that there are different ways of coping with fears.
- Make it clear that each child can have his own way to deal with things and there is no right or wrong way.
- Distinguish between what we have control over and what we don't have control over, and can't change.

When the discussion ends suggest that any child who is interested in making a dream catcher can do so in the arts & crafts corner during the rest of the day or week..

B. Arts & Crafts Corner

Tell the children:

Today we're going to make our own Dream Catchers.

Help the children to string the lengths of yarn through the rings/hoops and decorate them with beads and feathers for hanging.

When they have finished tell them to ask their parents to hang their dream catchers above their beds, as you explain:

The dream catcher will trap the bad dreams and let the good ones through. When dawn breaks the bad dreams will melt and disappear from the dream catcher. If a bad dream didn't melt away but was left behind that's a sign that you need to tell someone –like a parent, big brother, the teacher, or her helper.

In a discussion with the children you can raise the following questions:

- Which good/bad dream do you have?
- Who can you tell a bad dream to?
- Do you have any other ideas about what to do when you have a bad dream?

On the day the children take their projects home attach an explanation letter to the parents (see sample below).



Coping with Fears

🌸 The Dream Catcher 🌸

Parents' Explanation Page

Dear Parents,

Over the past few days we have been discussing how to get over bad dreams. Bad dreams and sleep disturbances are a common occurrence in young children and they are particularly prevalent during prolonged periods of stress or exposure to trauma or crisis.

In class this week, we told the story of the "Dream Catcher" (see attached) and the children made a "Dream Catcher" which we suggested they hang above their beds to use whenever they want to get rid of their bad dreams and order pleasant ones instead.

We suggested that if the Bad Dream catcher misses from time to time that's a sign that the child should tell someone he's close to. By talking over the bad dream with your child you can reassure your child, and help him feel safe and secure.

We welcome your questions and feedback.

To the preschool teacher:

Attach the story you read in class.

We also recommend attaching the Information Page Number 5 about coping with children's fears.



Developing Personal Resources

Chapter 4

Developing coping resources is one of the most effective life skills that we can give our children. During extended periods of stress and tension it is important to reinforce children's awareness of the good forces in their lives. These positive forces may be people in their lives such as parents, other family members, friends, or teachers. There may be possessions that help them feel better such as a blanket, pacifier, bottle, stuffed animals, toys or pets that help them. In these exercises we wish to help students focus on resources they currently have and use, and help them expand their repertoire.

The following activity "Finding Hidden Treasures" focus on developing and expanding existing coping resources.



Developing Resources

🌸 Finding Hidden Treasures 🌸

Activity No. 1

Goal

To help the children identify, gather and hold on to the positive resources they have

Equipment

Provide each child with a covered box (shoe box)

Materials to decorate the box (papers, ribbons, sequins, feathers, glue)

10 yellow 4-5 cm. circles cut from construction paper.

Instructions

Open with a class discussion:

Every one of us has difficult or sad moments, worries and unpleasant situations. But we also are surrounded by many good things like games, toys, pets, activities we enjoy, and people like our parents, relatives, teachers, and friends who make us happy and look after us when we are feeling unhappy or sad. We can think of all of these as our own special treasures!

Ask the children to talk about unpleasant situations and what things they find helpful when they are in them. Emphasize the various ways there are of coping - the "treasures" that each child has - and note the differences between them.

Today we're going to make "coins" which we will save in our treasure chests. I'm going to give each of you some coins and I want you to draw or color something nice on each one - a game, an activity you enjoy, a person, a thing - whatever feels like a treasure for you. Think about the kinds of things that help you when you are feeling sad or lonely or worried. If you want more "coins" you may have as many as you wish.

Give the children plenty of time to color their coins and to talk about what they did with the teacher or other pupils.

Tell the children:

Now we are going to make treasure chests out of the boxes you brought so you can keep all the coins that make you happy inside it. Decorate the boxes in any way you like using



the materials you see here. Bring me the lids of your boxes so I can make a slot for the coins.

When everyone has finished, the children can put their coins into their treasure chests. Remind the children that they can add more coins at any time and they can also ask members of their families to put some in, too. This activity can be done over a number of days.

When most of the children have finished, start a discussion and ask the children to share the feelings and experiences they had while doing this activity.

Optional

Exhibit all the treasure chests.

Suggest each child make a coin for a friend.

When the children take their treasure chests home suggest they ask their parents to put in some more coins.

Send a note to the parents (see sample below) explaining the purpose of the activity.



Developing Resources

🌸 Finding Hidden Treasures 🌸

Parents' Explanation Page

Dear Parents,

Over the past few days we have been working with the children on an exercise to help us cope with unpleasant situations and feelings. We have called the things that help us cope, "treasures". We spoke of people, family, favorite possessions, activities, beliefs and feelings all of which help us during rough times.

All the children drew coins which symbolize the positive, happy elements in their lives, and made a "treasure chest" to save them in. That way they can take them out whenever they feel the need. Look at the treasure chest together with your child and see if there are more treasures you can make together to add to the treasure chest.

Please choose a special place to keep the treasure chest. Over time you can add coins to it and use it whenever your child feels tense, afraid, or sad and think of the happy things which help your child cope.

We are enclosing an Information Page which will help you as parents, to cope with difficult situations.

Note to teacher: We recommend adding *Information Page 4* "How to talk with children", which can be found at the beginning of this manual.



🌸 **Meaning Making and Hope for the Future** 🌸

Chapter 5

During difficult times one of the central themes that recurs is "why are these difficult things happening to us?" Allowing discussion of this difficult question, even when we don't have **the** answer, creates a feeling of community and support, which is a most important component of resilience. We can be encouraged by finding meaning in our actions and in our experiences, everyone in his own individual way, within his family and community.

Hope - focusing on the light at the end of the tunnel - is most important in dealing with difficult situations. By focusing on a better future, optimism and a feeling of personal efficacy increase, and resilience is built.

The following exercises focus on these two aspects of building resilience:

1. The Silver Lining
2. Stories from the Past
3. Love Thy neighbor as Thyself
4. The Colors of Peace
5. A Collage of Hope



Meaning Making and Hope

🌸 The Silver Lining 🌸

Activity No. 1

This exercise can be adapted to children of all ages.

Goal

To help children find a positive outlook in difficult times.

Equipment

Student's Worksheet (see below).

Instructions

In every situation, even if it is difficult there are some moments which give us strength and hope and we feel we are learning something important about ourselves, about the people around us. We can call these moments: "The Silver Lining of the Cloud".

Examples of such moments:

- ▶ When I was sick and had to stay at home a classmate would call me everyday and tell me about all the funny things that went on in class that day.
- ▶ When my friend's dog was run over by a car I helped my friend pick up the dog and bring it home. Afterwards my friend thanked me.

Now you try and think of an unpleasant incident or situation you went through, in which you felt some part of it was positive or good.

In the classroom discussion ask for volunteers who wish to share their Silver Lining. Discuss:

- What happened?
- What was special about this situation?
- How did you feel during the event?
- What did you learn from this experience or special moment?
- If you were to meet a child from another country or another part of Israel who is going through a tough time, would you like to tell him what you have learned about coping with difficult situations?

Now have the children who wish to, draw those "silver lining moments"



Meaning Making and Hope

🌸 Stories from the Past 🌸

Activity No. 2

Goal

To help children learn that meaning can be found even in difficult times.

Instructions

This exercise takes place in two stages. In the first session the children will receive explanation of what they need to do. The teacher will ask them to interview a parent, grandparent or family member, neighbor or adult friend. The children will take home the attached letter to explain to parents the activity. In the second session the children share their stories with their classmates.

Session 1

Say to the students: *In every situation, time period, or difficult event there are certain moments that give us strength and hope, or teach us something important about ourselves. We can call these moments "meaningful moments."*

Here you can add a personal story to illustrate this point.

By the time we next meet I'd like you to interview someone in your family, a neighbor or a grownup friend who went through a difficult experience (e.g. war, illness, other adversity). Tell them that you want to hear about those special moments that kept them going, or that taught them something about themselves or others during the difficult times they went through. Ask your mother or father to help you to write down the main points and bring it back to school.

Session 2

In a classroom discussion have children share the stories they have collected. Children who wish to can draw pictures that illustrate these stories..



Meaning Making and Hope

🌸 Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself 🌸

Activity No. 3

Goal

To encourage doing things for others both individually and as a group.

To reinforce the feeling of self-efficacy and self control.

To build social cohesion.

Instructions

Say to the students: *Even while we're going through a tough time our abilities and talents remain intact. We can pool all our strengths together to help others who are having a hard time. We can help them feel better and see just how much we are capable of doing!*

- Ask each child to think of an activity which he could do by himself to help someone out. Share with the group.
- Ask now for an activity the class can do as a group, for others.

Discuss which of these suggestions can be used as individual and group activities.

Work on a plan for a group activity. Delegate responsibilities to small groups of students.

Parents can also be involved in this activity.

Examples of volunteer activities (individual):

- Visiting someone who is sick.
- Helping a mom or dad with a younger brother or sister.

Examples of class activities:

- Sending drawings and letters to the wounded and their families.
- Putting on a performance for the elderly or disabled.
- Sprucing up the grounds of a public institution or park in your community.



Meaning Making and Hope

🌸 The Colors of Peace * 🌸

Activity No. 4

Goal

To talk about peace and enable expression of the concept.

Equipment

Arts & crafts materials, drawing paper, the words to the poem.

Instructions

I'd like to read you a poem that a young girl wrote many years ago about peace. When I finish reading we can talk about it.

From: www.sholem.org

A poem by Tali Sorek, written at age 11, Beersheba, Israel

I had a box of colors.

Shining, bright and bold.

I had a box of colors,

Some warm, some very cold.

I had no red for the blood of wounds.

I had no black for the orphans' grief.

I had no white for dead faces and hands.

I had no yellow for burning sands.

But I had orange for the joy of life,

And I had green for buds and nests.

I had blue for bright, clear sides.

I had pink for dreams and rest.

I sat down and painted peace.

Explain any words the children did not understand.

*Adapted from an activity in the book **Living on the Edge 2000**, M. Lahad and O. Ayalon, Nord Publishing, 2001.



Hold a discussion about the following topics:

- What is peace?
- The connection between colors and feelings and certain memories
- Pleasant/unpleasant memories.

Have the children draw their colors of peace.

Put the children's projects on display.



Meaning Making and Hope

🌸 A Collage of Hope* 🌸

Activity No. 5

Goal

To become aware of what gives me meaning, and hope.

Directions

Work around 2-3 tables with the following items on each:

- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons
- Sheets of white paper
- Markers
- Magnets (see note at bottom of the page).

Explain

Sometimes we are so busy with our day to day lives we forget about the things we enjoy and what gives us strength. Today we will make something that will help remind us of these things that give us strength and hope: some of those things are fun things we like to do, that make us feel good. Others remind us of what is important to us. We have assembled all sorts of materials to use in making a collage. Think of things that are meaningful to your lives- and what gives you hope. You can use a symbol or reminder if you don't find exactly what you want. When you finish gathering all the pictures you have chosen, cut and paste them into a collage on the white sheet of paper. You can also draw, write, or add captions.

Conclusion

When all have completed their collages, they can go be brought to the group discussion at the end of the day. Each child in turn can show the collage he made and explain it.

*By: Nava Zohar-Sykes



It is important to make some brief comment or ask a question after each child's turn. Please do not interpret what the child has done-merely mirror his words, or ask a clarifying question. Also do not give "marks" to the works, for example, do not say "oh how beautiful." This may make one child feel good at the expense of others.

At the end of this round the teacher sums up all the different kinds of meaning and hope that were presented, for example:

We heard that there are many different things that give us meaning and hope: spending time with family, watching a movie, reading a book, praying, going on a hike, helping a friend, playing with someone we like, etc. We know that these things really can help someone who is having a hard time and it reminds them what gives them strength and what is really important.

I wish you all the best of luck in applying these things in your day to day lives. I hope you will be able to feel those feelings you mentioned, today - and every day.

Note:

- You can also glue magnets to the page then take it home and hang it up on the fridge so you can be reminded of all these nice things all the time....
- This exercise can be used in the "Expanding Resources " Section. In that case, the instruction would be to pick pictures, and make a collage that reminds us of all the things we can do to help ourselves during difficult times.



Teacher's Reflective Diary

Teacher's instructions:

Kindly fill in this page after trying out one of the exercises in your classroom.

Please bring this sheet to the workshop session.

Date: _____ Grade: _____

Exercise: _____

If you selected a different exercise that does not appear in the manual or if you made any changes please describe them:

Number of children who participated: _____ Boys _____ Girls

To what extent did the exercise succeed in your class?

1. Complete failure
2. Did not work
3. Partially successful
4. Very successful
5. Successful above and beyond all expectations

What goals were achieved through this exercise (you may check off more than one answer)?

1. Emotional release
2. Built coping resources
3. Improved atmosphere in the class
4. Built empathy for others
5. Learned about personal reactions
6. Learned about others' feelings

Do you think you will use these exercises in the classroom for similar topics?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know



At what intervals in your opinion should these exercises be conducted in the class?

1. Once a week
2. Twice a week
3. Once a month
4. Once every 4 months
5. Once a year

Were the instructions clear?

1. Very clear
2. Clear enough
3. Not clear enough
4. Not clear at all

Did the pupils seem interested and get involved in the exercise?

1. Not interested or involved at all
2. Showed little interest
3. Showed some interest
4. Were very interested and involved

Comments on how the exercise worked: _____

What do you think the children got out of this exercise? _____

What did you gain professionally and personally from doing this exercise with your students? _____

Additional comments and thoughts: _____

Teacher's Identifying code (birth date): _____



🌸 Epilogue 🌸

"Hope" is the thing with feathers

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—*

*And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm—*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me.*

Emily Dickinson