



Activities for Parents

Helping your child to cope with difficult situations





In the first four weeks of Zippy's Friends, children talk about feelings - feeling happy, sad, angry, annoyed, jealous or nervous. They practise saying how they feel in different situations and explore ways to feel better. The aim is to improve their ability to recognise positive and negative emotions and learn how to make themselves feel better when they experience difficult emotions.

Here are six activities that you can do with your child, to reinforce these lessons.



Module 1 *Feelings*

Tips - Feelings

Children need to know that they can talk about their feelings. Set an example by telling them how you feel and why. Daddy is feeling sad today because... Mummy is cross because...

When your child experiences difficult emotions, such as anger or nervousness, encourage them to name their feelings and talk about them.

Keep drawing materials and Playdough handy. It is sometimes easier for children to 'draw' or 'make' their feelings, rather than talking about them.

Bedtime is a good time to talk about what has happened during the day and to discuss any issues that are troubling your child.



Activity 1 - Show your feelings

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to identify and describe feelings
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Crayons and paper
What do I do?	Ask your child to draw pictures that show how people feel - draw a happy boy, a scared girl, an angry man, a sad woman. Alternatively, the child can look at magazines and find pictures of people showing different feelings. Ask about the pictures. "Why do you think the boy is happy? Why is the woman sad? Have you been angry? How did it feel?"
You can also play this game if your child is upset. Drawing pictures helps children to express their feelings and encourages them to talk.	

Activity 2 - Do you see what I see?

Aim	To help your child to recognise and identify other people's feelings
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	Ask your child to identify people's feelings. They can be characters on TV, family members or people in a public place. Your child should tell you how the person is feeling - and why they think that. This is a good activity to try when you are waiting for a bus, eating in a busy restaurant or walking in the park. You can play too, taking turns with your child.

Activity 3 - Our feelings diary

Aim	To help your child to identify his or her own feelings and the feelings of others
How long will it take?	Five minutes a day for a week
What do I need?	Crayons, paper and old magazines
What do I do?	Each evening for a week, you and your child need to show one feeling you had during the day. You can draw a picture, write down simple words or find pictures in magazines of people who feel the same as you. Display the seven days' feelings together. This helps children to understand that our feelings change - sometimes we are happy, sometimes sad.
It can also be fun to act out these feelings and see if the other person can guess what they are!	

Activity 4 - Today I felt...

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to identify feelings and to learn ways to cope with those feelings
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	Sit down with your child. Each of you should think of one good thing that happened to you today and one bad thing. Take turns to explain how you felt and why you had those feelings. For the bad thing, tell your child clearly what you did to make yourself feel better. You can prompt your child by asking 'What else could you have done to feel better?'
This is a good activity to do at bedtime. It is important for you to talk about your own feelings, as well as listening to your child.	

Activity 5 - Managing anger

Aim	To improve your child's ability to identify ways of coping with anger
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	This activity needs to be done soon after your child has been angry - at bedtime that evening or the following day. Talk about the incident and ask why they were so angry. Ask how they coped with it and prompt them to think of other things they could have done - for example, talk to someone, take deep breaths, think about something nice. Remember: solutions must make your child feel better but not have negative consequences for other people.
You can also use this activity to explore ways of coping with other difficult emotions, such as nervousness or jealousy.	

Activity 6 - Coping with nervousness

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to identify ways to cope with nervousness
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Pen and paper
What do I do?	Help your child to identify and describe a situation that makes them nervous. Ask them to describe the feeling, and then discuss ways of dealing with it. For example - taking deep breaths, talking to someone who can help, thinking carefully about what to say. Write the suggestions on a piece of paper and let your child illustrate each one. Then hang the paper on the wall, where you and your child will see it often.
This activity can be particularly helpful if your child is feeling nervous about something imminent. Talking about it beforehand will help them to cope.	



Over the four weeks of Module 2, children learn how to communicate effectively. They learn how to tell people what they are feeling, how to ask for help and how to say what they want to say, even when they are feeling angry or nervous. Quiet children often open up in these sessions and learn to express themselves more freely. The programme also teaches children to listen to others and not to interrupt when other people are speaking.

Here are some activities and tips for you to reinforce these lessons at home.



Module 2

Communication

Tips-Communication

Read more about children and communication at www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/resources/communication.html Encourage your child to ask for help when they are unable to do something or feel upset. Explain that many people can provide help - parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends, teachers.

Comment positively whenever your child helps or comforts somebody.

Be prepared for your child to start talking more... and be prepared to listen!



Activity 1 My special people

Aim	To help your child identify people who can help in difficult situations
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	Crayons and paper
What do I do?	Ask your child to draw the people to whom they would turn if they were worried or scared or needed help. Display this gallery of parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, teachers and friends. Ask your child to explain why each of them is a 'special person' and why they would be able to help. You can also talk about real or imaginary situations and ask your child which of their 'special people' they would turn to in each one.

Activity 2 Family albums

Aim	To help your child express feelings and emotions
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	Family photograph albums
What do I do?	Children enjoy looking at photographs, particularly if they or their friends and family appear. Look through an album with your child and ask them to tell you how the people in the pictures are feeling. Encourage them to think of as many words as possible to describe the feelings. Ask your child why they think the person shown felt like that.
Family photos usually show people looking happy. If you have your child's class or school photo, ask them to name the children and say how they feel about each of them, and why. It is fine for them to express negative emotions, but not to be disrespectful - 'I don't like Mary because she doesn't play with me' is fine, but 'Mary is stupid because she won't play with me' is not.	

Activity 3 Chinese Whispers

Aim	To help your child to listen to other people
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	A group of family or friends
What do I do?	Everyone sits in a circle. The first person whispers a simple sentence to the next person, who then whispers it to the next person - and so on. Finally, the last person says aloud what they have just heard - which is often very different to the original sentence! The more people in the circle and the more complex the original sentence, the greater the chance of the message becoming confused. This simple game shows children how easily misunderstandings occur (even among grown-ups) and how important it is to listen carefully.

Activity 4 No Yes and No No!

Aim	To improve your child's communication skills
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	This is a simple game that can be played anywhere and at any time. It produces a lot of laughter and children love it. You ask your child questions and they have to answer without saying 'Yes' or 'No'. You can take it in turns and see who wins. At its most basic level, the game improves children's communication skills, requiring them to think more carefully about how to express themselves, and you can also use it to explore issues or feelings in a fun way.



Module 3

Friendship



In this Module, children learn how to make and keep friends, and how to deal with loneliness and rejection. They practice how to say sorry and to make up with a friend after a quarrel.

Here are some suggestions of how you can reinforce these lessons at home.

Tips - Friendship

Encourage and congratulate your child when they make a positive move toward others - sharing, helping, saying kind words, issuing an invitation to play, giving a gift.

When conflicts arise, involve your child in resolving them. Ask them what they suggest, and make sure that they understand the resolution.

If you are organising an activity for some of your child's friends - a party, an outing or a game of football - suggest that your child invites a new friend too. It might be a child who has just moved to the area or joined your child's class.

If your child is worried about joining a new class or group, help them by practising how to talk to people and make friends. This will give them more words and ideas and make them more confident.

If your child loses a friend, try one of our activities to help them make new friends.

Activity 1 - Welcome!

Aim	To strengthen your child's abilities to make new friends
How long will it take?	20-30 minutes
What do I need?	Materials for making a card, cookies or other gift
What do I do?	When a new child arrives in the neighbourhood or school class, your child can make and send them a gift of welcome. They can also suggest doing something together - playing at school or at your home. This is a simple exercise in how to make friends.
You can use the same approach if your child wants to make friends with any child.	

Activity 2 - My magic helper

Aim	To increase your child's abilities to cope with loneliness and rejection
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	Young children often break friendships and begin new ones, and all of them know how it feels when a friend does not want to play with them any more. Talk to your child about times when they have felt lonely or rejected, and ask them what they did to feel better. Encourage them to think of more ideas - singing a favourite song, cuddling a teddy bear, playing with a favourite toy, thinking of something nice. See if together you can think of one thing that your child can keep with them, to comfort them when they feel lonely or rejected - a picture, a small toy or even a magic word.
This activity is particularly helpful if your child is feeling lonely or rejected.	

Activity 3 - Friendship cards

Aim	To increase your child's abilities to keep friends
How long will it take?	30 minutes
What do I need?	Materials for making cards
What do I do?	Ask your child to name their best friends and say why they like them so much. Then help them to produce cards for these friends. Each card should reflect the friendship. If your son likes to play football with his friend, he might draw a football match or cut out a picture of his favourite player from a magazine. If your daughter and her friend both like animals, she can decorate her card with pictures of animals. Your child should sign the cards and perhaps add a message of friendship, before delivering or posting them.



This Module looks at how to resolve conflicts, and many teachers have said that it makes children much better at settling their differences. They practise the four steps of conflict resolution:

1. Understand the problem
2. Think of possible solutions
3. Choose the best solution
4. Try it out.

Children learn that any solution must make them feel better and not harm anyone else.

This module also deals with the problem of bullying, and children learn what they can do if they or others are bullied.

Here are some activities and tips for you to reinforce the lessons at home.



Module 4

Conflict resolution

Tips - Conflict resolution

When your child gets angry, give them time and space to calm down before trying to resolve the situation. Explain later that it is difficult to think of good solutions when we are angry.

Use the four steps of conflict resolution in your family life.

Encourage your child to help other children to resolve conflicts or problems by listening to them, respecting them, finding solutions together and helping them to ask for help.

Read more about bullying at www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/resources/bullying.html



Activity 1 - Beating bullying

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to deal with situations involving bullying
How long will it take?	15-30 minutes
What do I need?	Crayons and paper
What do I do?	Explain that bullying means threatening or hurting someone else or saying nasty things about them. Has your child experienced a situation like that? How did they feel? Explain that when we are bullied, we can ask for help from someone we trust. Ask your child to name and draw the people they would turn to if they were bullied. Make sure that they think of people who can help in different environments - teachers at school, a parent at home. Display the drawings.

Activity 2 - Do you see what I see?

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to resolve conflicts and deal with anger
How long will it take?	30 minutes
What do I need?	Pen and paper
What do I do?	Tell your child what you do to calm down or make yourself feel better. Ask your child if they have felt angry or very upset. What did they do to calm down or make themselves feel better? Encourage them to think of other ideas. Make some of them fun and encourage your child to experiment - let them hit a pillow, run around a garden or park, shout, squeeze some Playdo. Talk to your child after each activity and ask whether it would help them to calm down or feel better. Finally, ask them to draw the three activities they think are most helpful and then display them in your child's bedroom.

Activity 3 - Managing anger

(This activity is also included in Module 1)

Aim	To improve your child's ability to identify ways of coping with anger
How long will it take?	10 minutes
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	This activity needs to be done soon after your child has been angry - at bedtime that evening or the following day. Talk about the incident and ask why they were so angry. Ask how they coped with it and prompt them to think of other things they could have done - for example, talk to someone, take deep breaths, think about something nice.
Remember: solutions must make your child feel better but not have negative consequences for other people.	



This Module looks at coping with changes, both big and small. The biggest change of all is when someone dies. Although adults often find death a difficult subject to talk about, young children rarely do, and they welcome this chance to explore a topic that is taboo for many adults.

Here are some tips and activities that will help you to reinforce the lessons in this Module.



Module 5

Dealing with change and loss

Tips - Dealing with change and loss

When your child or you experience a change (good or bad) talk about it together and how it makes you feel. Explain that change is everywhere around us, that it is part of life and sometimes we cannot do anything about it.

Read about helping children to cope with bereavement at www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/resources/bereavement.html

When the topic of death comes up in conversation, talk about it openly and answer your child's questions as honestly as possible.



Activity 1 - Green fingers

Aim	To help your child understand that change is an everyday experience
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	A small pot of soil and fast germinating seeds (sunflower, runner bean, cress)
What do I do?	Your child plants the seeds and waters them daily. Green shoots will appear within a few days and your child will be able to see the plants growing taller day by day.

Activity 2 - My family

Aim	To help your child understand that change is an everyday experience
How long will it take?	Variable
What do I need?	Family photograph album
What do I do?	Look at the album with your child. Talk about how the people in the pictures have changed over the years. If there are pictures of people whom your child does not know, talk about them and what they were like.

Activity 3 - My life in pictures

Aim	To help your child understand that we all change all the time
How long will it take?	30-45 minutes
What do I need?	A large sheet of cardboard, some old magazines and photographs, and crayons
What do I do?	Work with your child to create a collage of their life so far. Talk to them about their early memories, people they remember, things they used to enjoy. Suggest that they cut out photos from magazines or draw pictures to show these memories. This is a very personal exercise, not an historical record - what matters is that the collage helps your child to remember.
You can also use this game if someone dies. You and your child can make a collage of the person's life, as a way of remembering them.	

Activity 3 - My old friend

Aim	To help your child understand that we all change all the time
How long will it take?	Variable
What do I need?	A friendly and patient older person
What do I do?	Arrange for your child to spend time talking to a much older person - a grandparent, perhaps, or an elderly neighbour. Your child can ask questions about things that are relevant to their own experience - what was your favourite food when you were a boy, where did you go on holiday when you were a girl, did you play sport, can I see a picture of you when you were as old as I am?
Old people can really enjoy this exercise too, and it can build or strengthen a valuable friendship. Ideally, the old person should ask your child about their experiences now, to reinforce the awareness of change.	

Activity 5 - Good and bad

Aim	To help your child understand that change can be positive and negative
How long will it take?	20 minutes
What do I need?	A large sheet of paper or card and pencils
What do I do?	This is an activity to use when your child is about to face a major change - having a new brother or sister, moving home, going to a new school. Ask your child to draw a picture at the top of the sheet, showing what is about to change. Underneath, create two columns - Good and Bad. Then take it in turns to suggest what will happen, and decide whether they will be good changes or bad changes. List them on the sheet. Talk to your child about what they can do about the bad changes.

Activity 6 - Remembering

Aim	To help your child to cope with situations involving grieving and loss
How long will it take?	20 minutes
What do I need?	Pen and paper
What do I do?	This is an activity for when someone dies. You and your child write a letter to the person who has died, recalling times you spent together and telling them how you feel. Your child can also draw them a picture. When you have finished, take the letter to the cemetery.
You can adapt this activity when your child has to cope with other significant losses - a friend moving away, a pet dying.	

Activity 7 - Count on me

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to help others who have experienced loss
How long will it take?	30 minutes
What do I need?	Variable
What do I do?	When a friend, relative or neighbour experiences a loss, ask your child how they think that person is feeling, and why. Ask your child what they could do to help the person - invite them to join an activity, send them a card, give them a gift. Encourage them to think of as many ideas as possible. Then ask your child to choose the best one and do it.



The final Module reinforces and affirms all that the children have learned about finding ways to cope, helping others, and adapting to new situations. The final session is a celebration, with each child receiving a crown and a certificate.

Here are some tips and activities that will help you to reinforce the lessons in this Module.



Module 6

We cope!

Tips - We cope!

It is time to consolidate what your child has learnt. Go back to previous activities and repeat any that your child particularly enjoyed.

Encourage your child to help others cope with different situations.

Even when your child copes well in a situation, ask them to think about what else they could have done. It is important to expand the range of their coping skills.

Offer to help with your child's class celebration at the end of Zippy's Friends.



Activity 1 - Changing or not changing?

Aim	To improve your child's ability to distinguish between situations that we can change and situations we can't
How long will it take?	15 minutes
What do I need?	Illustrated books and magazines
What do I do?	Look at the books and magazines and ask your child to describe what is happening in one of the pictures. Is it a situation that can be changed or not? Is it a good change or a bad change? If it is a bad change, what can the people in the picture do to make themselves feel better?

Activity 2 - The winner

Aim	To help your child apply their coping skills to new situations
How long will it take?	30 minutes
What do I need?	Card, scissors, gold paper and ribbons
What do I do?	Help your child to make ten gold medals. Then explain that they can win a medal each time they cope successfully with a difficult situation. Ask your child to think of a recent situation and explain how they coped with it. You can then award the first medal! This game makes it more likely that your child will tell you when they have to face difficult situations.
You can also award a medal when your child helps a friend to cope with a difficult situation.	

Activity 3 - Into the unknown

Aim	To improve your child's abilities to adapt to new situations
How long will it take?	Variable
What do I need?	Nothing
What do I do?	Plan a visit to a place where your child has never been. Before you go, ask your child what they think it will be like and what they think they will like best. Afterwards, ask your child to draw a picture and tell you how they felt about the visit. How did it compare to their expectations?
You can also play variations of this game. For instance, you can prepare a meal together, using a new recipe (perhaps from another country) with ingredients that your child does not recognise. Ask them how they think the meal will taste - and when you are eating it, see if those expectations were right.	

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