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A Note to Parents

Many children today have behavioral problems. They may have mild problems such as talking back or being uncooperative, or they may have more serious problems like throwing tantrums or hitting other children.

You have probably heard or read the standard advice on getting kids to behave. There are basic principles to parenting children with behavioral problems, including:

- Understand the reasons why your child is misbehaving.
- Have consistent rules and age-appropriate expectations for your child.
- Reward good behavior with praise or a point system.
- Be a good role model.
- Provide appropriate discipline for misbehavior (such as time-outs or taking away privileges).

These principles will always apply, but this workbook adds a new approach to helping children with behavioral problems. The activities in this workbook will help you teach your children the emotional, social, and behavioral skills they need to be kinder, more considerate, and more cooperative.

The activities in this workbook are very similar to the ones that a counselor would use to help children overcome behavior problems. They will help your child manage his anger, develop a better understanding of others, see the value of helping and caring, and much more. Each activity teaches your child a new emotional intelligence skill, and once learned, these skills will not only improve his behavior at home, they will also help him make new friends and develop the habits that lead to school and work success.

Children learn emotional intelligence skills just like they learn academic or athletic skills: through practice and encouragement. Your child will likely need your guidance going through this workbook, and he or she will certainly need your encouragement.

As you help your child, you will probably find out that it is difficult for him to talk about certain issues. Never force your child to talk if he doesn't want to. The best way to get children to open up is to be a good role model. Talk about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences as they relate to each activity, stressing the positive ways that *you* cope with problems. Even if your child doesn't say a thing back, your words will have an impact on his behavior.

This workbook was designed to help any child with behavioral problems, but your child may need some additional help as well. There are many reasons why children misbehave, and a thorough evaluation will help you pinpoint just what needs to be done. If you are concerned about your child's behavior, I urge you to get help soon. Misbehavior attracts negative responses from the people around your child, which then leads to more misbehavior. The sooner that you break this cycle of negativity, the easier it will be for your child to learn new, positive behaviors. If your child needs professional help—or if you need some guidance—you will find this workbook to be of added benefit. Show it to your counselor, and she may have some additional ideas on the best way to use it.

There is no wrong way to use this workbook as long as you remain patient and respectful of your child's feelings. Parenting can have its difficult moments, but I hope that the positive approaches to difficult behaviors in this book will help.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Shapiro, Ph.D.

A Note to Kids

Dear Reader,

I bet that you have people telling you how they want you to behave all of the time. I also bet that they might not be telling you to behave in ways that you want to hear.

Do your parents yell at you? Do you get punished for not doing what they want you to? Do your teachers give you a hard time? Do you ever have to stay after school or go to the principal's office? Do your friends get mad at you? Do you sometimes wish that everyone would just leave you alone?

If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, this book can help you.

This is a book about learning to do the things that will make everyone who is giving you a hard time feel better about how you behave. It is a book about learning to behave in ways that will bring you closer to people and make you feel better about yourself.

Now you might think that it's not your fault that other people give you a hard time, that it is really their problem, not yours. The truth is that when people are unhappy with each other, it is everyone's problem. Another truth is that you can't change anyone else's behavior, but you can change yours. And changing your behavior is what this book is about.

I also hope that you will find most of the activities in this book fun. Changing your behavior is not easy to do, but I hope that this book will make it a little easier.

Good luck!

Lawrence Shapiro, Ph.D.

For You to Know

Talking about how you feel is an important part of getting along with others.

We all want other people, particularly our parents, to understand our feelings and to act in the ways we want.

For example, Johnny had a terrible day in school. He got into a fight with Arthur, his teacher yelled at him, and he got a poor grade on his book report. When he came home, his mother was happy to see him, and she gave him a hug and said, "Hi, Honey, would you like some brownies that I just made?"

But Johnny was in such a bad mood that he didn't want to be hugged, and he didn't want a brownie, and his mother's cheerfulness irritated him.

He yelled at her: "Can't you just leave me alone!"

Johnny's mother was very surprised at his reaction, and she was hurt. Then she got mad, too. She said, "Okay, if you want to be that way, then just go to your room."

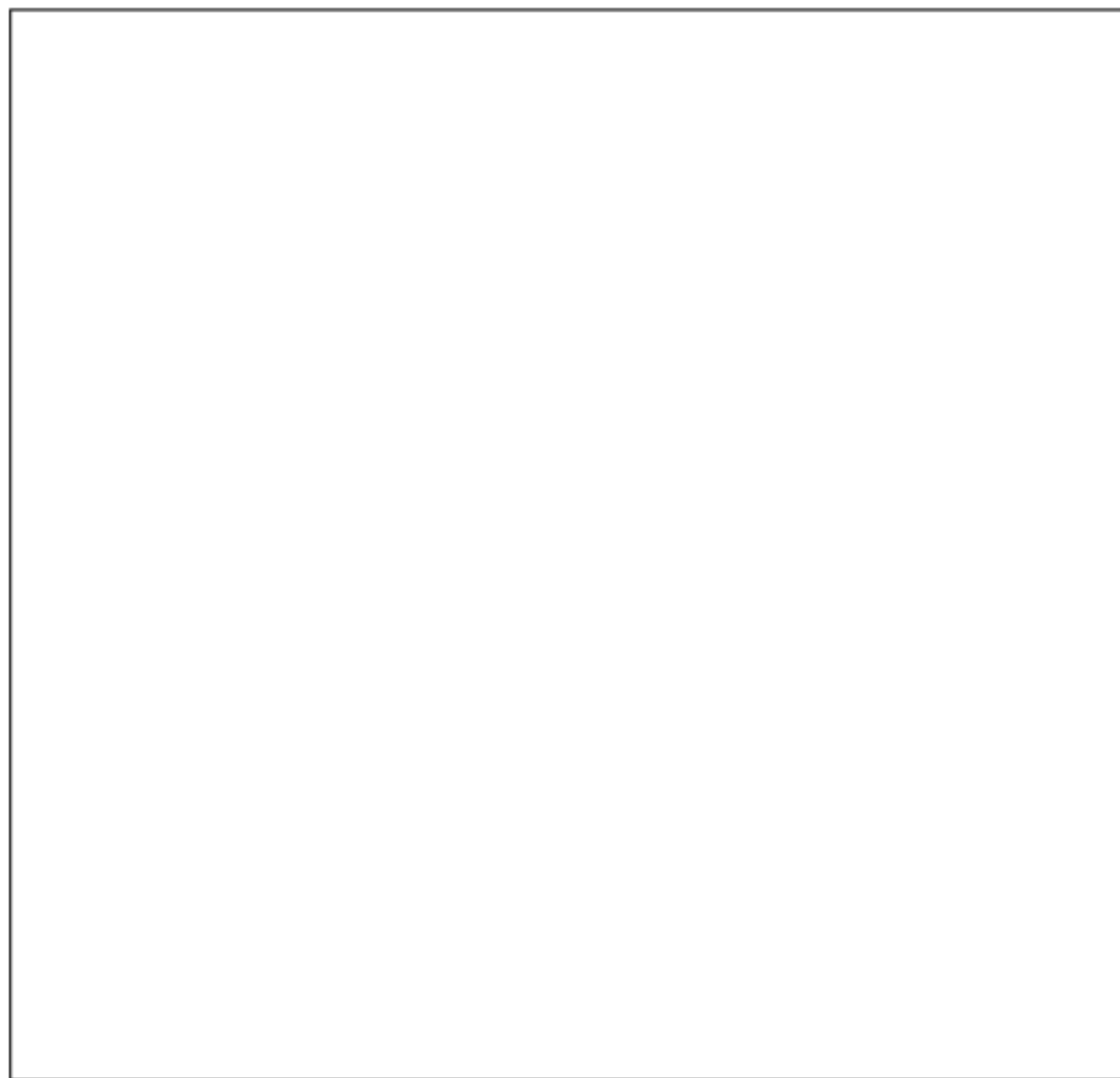
Johnny went to his room, and now he was mad at his mother, too! Both Johnny and his mother stayed mad for the rest of the evening.

Things would have gone much better if Johnny just said, "I'm in a bad mood because I had a bad day." Then his mother would have known why he was acting that way, and she might have even asked him to talk about his bad mood. Johnny would probably have felt much better if he had talked about his bad day.

Your challenge: Start talking about your feelings rather than just expecting people to read your mind.

For You to Do

Many children find it easier to express their feelings by drawing them. Then they can talk about what they drew. In the space below, draw a picture of how you are feeling right now. Then talk about what made you feel this way.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw a picture of their current feelings.

...And More to Do!

What are three things that always make you happy?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are three things that always make you mad?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Who do you think you can talk to about your feelings?

What can you do to create a time and place to talk about your feelings?

For You to Know

Everyone has many different feelings. Some feelings are harder to talk about than others. When you understand your different feelings, you will find it easier to get along with others.

Your feelings are changing all of the time, even though you may not be aware of it. Every day you have many feelings, and some of them, like anger or sadness or guilt, may cause you to behave in ways that just make things worse. Talking about your feelings will usually help you find ways to cope with difficult feelings and difficult situations. But sometimes it is hard to talk about or even think about what you are feeling. For example:

- You might be sad because a pet died.
- You might be afraid of dogs, but you don't want your friends to know it.
- You might have lied, and you feel guilty about it.
- You might be angry because a parent yelled at you for no good reason.

Even though it is hard, it is important to think about and talk about your difficult feelings.

- When you talk about these feelings, you will feel better.
- When you talk about these feelings, people will understand you better and may even behave differently toward you.
- There are many positive and creative ways to deal with difficult feelings. to cope with your difficult feelings is an important part of growing up.

Your challenge: If you are upset or feeling bad, take time to think about why you are feeling this way and what you can do about it.

For You to Do

Look at the pictures of the kids with the different feelings. Write down the most recent time that you had each of these feelings.



Happy



Angry



Sad



Worried
