

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED PARENTS
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CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED PARENTS OUTLINE

SESSION ONE

1. Evaluation of child's perceptions of present situation and stresses.
2. Presentation of factual data on geography, culture, and other aspects of Saudi Arabia.
3. Discussion of feelings and concerns regarding deployed parent, his/her comfort, safety, and involvement in possible conflict.

SESSION TWO

1. Evaluation of child's perceptions of his/her family, and his/her role in the family. Evaluation of his/her perceptions of how this role has changed since the deployment of his/her parent.
2. Examination of remaining parent, his/her likely concerns, worries, and behaviors when under stress. Child's concerns over possible loss of remaining parent, lack of availability of parent due to stress, and increasing irritability and conflict.
3. Summary of specific behaviors that could be tried and discussed at home with siblings and remaining parent.

SESSION THREE

1. Examination of "my own feelings" by each child. Start with skills in generally recognizing one's own feelings, moving on more specifically to recognizing feelings when becoming agitated and when feeling stresses associated with deployment of parent.
2. Discussion on verbalizing above feelings rather than acting them out.
3. Discussion on using remaining parent as a source of sharing and talking. Other ways of sharing feelings with remaining parent rather than acting out. Learning to share feelings with parent, and thinking of the worst thing that could happen if certain sensitive feelings were shared with the remaining parent.
4. Discussion on how to use friends and trusted adults in an appropriate way to deal with feelings; how to pick up social cues from friends when sharing feelings and attempting to elicit support.

OUTLINE CONTINUED

SESSION FOUR

1. Teach students to understand teacher's concerns, role and responsibility towards each student; examine ways in which students' acting out behaviors interfere with teacher's ability to teach, and take away teacher's availability to provide support.
2. Discussion of the classroom behaviors that students exhibit when they feel anxious, upset, sad, angry, or feel that they do not like or understand the subject material.
3. Discussion of termination, how we say good-bye many times in our life. Examine feelings and assist in verbalizing feelings having to do with separation. Relate these feelings to feelings of separation from deployed parent.

INTRODUCTION

This four-session curriculum is designed to provide children of deployed parents a facilitative environment to deal with deployment issues in a school setting. This curriculum is designed to interfere as little as possible with the routine classroom schedule and to consume as little time as possible overall.

The curriculum achieves the following objectives:

1. The child replaces distorted fantasies and accompanying anxieties with factual information.
2. The child is able to recognize previously unrecognized feelings both within him/herself, and within other significant people.
3. The child develops and enhanced vocabulary and repertoire of behaviors to deal with his/her feelings, and to decrease his/her reliance on acting out behaviors in order to deal with sadness, anger, frustration, anxiety, and fear.
4. The child better understands the fears, concerns, and extra duties which are faced by his/her remaining parent.
5. The child is able to determine behaviors which will decrease the tension and stress at home and in the classroom.
6. The child knows how to communicate more effectively with his/her remaining parent.
7. The child is able to elicit support from friends and teachers in a more appropriate way.
8. The child learns to deal with intrusive thoughts, preoccupations, and apathy in the classroom which have interfered with his/her functioning in the classroom as a result of separation from the deployed parent.
9. The course will be standardized enough and require minimal enough counseling experience, so that after a brief observation period, a school counselor, facilitator, social worker, mental health nurse, psychologist, or psychiatrist can teach the class in an effective way so as to assure achievement by the child of the above objectives.

This course is based on the expectation that parents, teachers, and especially the children have the inner resources to handle even severe trauma and emotional stress, if they are educated in the issues involved, are kept close to support resources, kept in a group setting, and given the expectation that they can deal with the stress involved. Past experience with severe emotional

stress and trauma has demonstrated without question, that when an individual is immediately delivered to a clinic or hospital, rather than supported “at the front lines,” the affected individual becomes regressed and dependent upon a treatment program. This has the negative effect upon the individual’s subsequent ability to adapt to any further stress, because the individual has been deprived of the critical healing element: his/her own confidence and opportunity to grow and develop from the traumatic experience. Studies repeatedly reveal that when soldiers, civilians, and children were treated quickly after war shock, air or auto accidents, or other devastating traumatic life experiences, and quickly returned to routine activities and support structures, they recovered with minimal residual pathology. Those who were removed from their work setting, or who did not immediately process the traumatic event, suffered from a severe crippling psychiatric syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder.

In a sense, these children of parents deployed to a war theater, are in a “combat zone” themselves. They are expected to perform socially, control their behavior, attend class, complete tasks, learn academic objectives, while being expected to interact appropriately in a stressed home. These expectations of a child besieged by certain fear, sadness, anxieties, and frightening and distorted fantasies, create a “war zone” for the child, which he/she must negotiate with uncertain success.

This curriculum was designed to be used with children of deployed parents who are either considered to be “behaving well” or who are considered to have developed emotional and behavioral problems. Its intent is to keep the child in his school environment, to be completed in a short time, preferably two weeks, and to have as minimal an impact as possible on his/her routine class schedule. The homework assignments are minimal with regard to task content, but designed to encourage participation of the non-deployed parent. The class size is 8-10 children.

We have found that a critical element in this process is a general feedback to the non-deployed parents of comments and feelings expressed within the group, while preserving the child’s confidentiality with respect to specific comments made by any particular child. If significantly pathological thinking or behavior is suspected, consultation with the parent is advised on an individual basis to encourage a more intensive individual plan in the school for the child, or, in certain circumstances, evaluation at a child mental health facility.

An objective evaluation tool being used at this time to evaluate the effectiveness of this curriculum is the completion by the teacher and non-deployed parent of an Achenbach Childhood Behavioral Checklist on the child recommended for the class, as well as completion by the child of the Kovacs Childhood Depression Inventory. These are completed both before and after the two week course.

An important component in teaching this course is the understanding that it is a class and not Group therapy. It is also designed for children in first through fifth grade. Thus, it is critical that it be highly structured with regard to time allotments, systematic participation by all students in the group, and generous amount of clarifying comments by the instructor.

Certain flexibility is encouraged in pursuing a thought expressed by one student, either by further clarification, or by eliciting comments from other students relating to that thought. This is the “therapeutic” element which can be especially helpful. A reticent child should be systematically encouraged throughout the curriculum to share thoughts with the group, but should never be made to feel at any one time that he/she must say something.

The class is most easily taught with desks in a circle and participation being elicited by going around the circle. However, interactive comments from other children in the circle are encouraged. Time boundaries should be firm if it appears a child is going beyond his/her share of time, but when this occurs frequently, it is usually an indication that the child needs additional attention outside the class in the form of support.

Finally, the instructor should be one who has had some form of counseling training, but even more importantly, enjoys and feels comfortable around children at this developmental level. The intent of the class is not to rescue these children from difficult stresses, nor to expect that they will resolve the issues which will become so clear in this setting. The overall objective is to give them the tools and processing ability to deal with the stresses over time, and to make better use of their peers, teachers, and most importantly, their non-deployed parent.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

It is important to note that although this curriculum is designed for children who may or may not be exhibiting symptomatic behavior related to stress from a deploying parent, it will not be helpful for the child who has been a discipline problem all along for many other reason. Not only will it not be helpful for that child, but these children tend to be so disruptive in the class that it defeats the purpose for the other children and the class benefits no one else. Thus, it is important to make sure that either ongoing conditions such as attention deficit disorder, or other disorder are under control, or that the children included in the class have had recent behavioral or emotional changes attributable to deployment issues.

TIME RESTRAINTS

Time allotted for these four sessions is purposely short as to be minimally intrusive in the academic setting for these children. Each of the sixty minutes allotted for each session is critical, and care should be taken to start and end the sessions on time to the minute, and to insure that the students do not miss any of the sessions or any of the time of any individual session. The progression from one principle to another goes so quickly that the course loses its effectiveness exponentially as a student misses any of the time allotted.

FEEDBACK TO PARENTS

If parents desire to have individual feedback on their child, the child should be assured that what he said and did in the course will be confidential and not share with parents. However, it is

appropriate and encouraged to share the instructor's assessment as to how the child is dealing with the deployment issues, whether or not he seems to be having difficulties with home issues, and how he seemed to benefit (or not) from the course.

It is strongly encouraged for the instructor to make a general list of comments and concerns made by the class as a whole to send in printed form to the parent. This will hopefully encourage the parent to interact more actively with the child around deployment and family issues, and perhaps give permission to discuss certain issues previously considered taboo at home.

HOMEWORK AND SPECIAL ITEMS

The homework assignments are meant to give the child the opportunity to try out some of these newly learned principles at home. They are also designed to involve the parent with the child on a limited basis so as not to be threatening to the parent. Thus, the assignment usually centers around a concrete task which hopefully will generate more talking between the child and parent about what have previously been difficult issues to discuss. If the child comes home and states he/she was involved in discussing these issues in a group, this may encourage the parent to ask questions and talk more freely about the parent's and child's feelings. The homework assignments should not be required in the same manner as in their regular academic curriculum. The child or parent may not at this time be ready to engage.

Allot a few minutes at the beginning of each session to review and to acknowledge any child's returned homework and to ask the child's reactions to the interaction the night before with his/her parent.

Encourage the children to bring letters from the deployed parent, and to share them with the group. Have them select a particular passage and tell why this is meaningful to them. If they share the entire letter, there will not be enough time.

ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This curriculum does differ from the conventional academic classroom setting in that it deals specifically with sensitive issues and expression of individual feelings. It cannot function if the children feel that their feelings will be shared outside the group without their consent.

A sample permission and consent letter is included which explain the nature and goals of the curriculum to the non-deployed parent. The child should not participate in this curriculum without this explicit consent by the parent.

In addition, the children in the class, along with the instructor, agree in an explicit way at the beginning of the class that they will neither make discouraging comments directed at any other student, nor will they take comments and thoughts made by other class members outside the class. They are, however, invited to share the content of the class activities, the issues discussed, and general feelings expressed with peers and outside adults. Class members should be reminded of this agreement at the beginning of each class session.

PERMISSION FORM
FOR SPECIAL CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED PARENTS

We are offering a class for children of deployed parents, for which your child is eligible and encouraged to participate in. The class is designed to have little if any disruption of your child's daily class routine at school. It consists of four one-hour sessions to be given over a one or two week period.

The purpose of the class is to give specific techniques to your child to deal with both the stresses at home and in the classroom. It consists of both instructional written material, teacher instruction, and group support from other members of the class. The goals are that your child will learn more factual information about the deployed parent's geographical and cultural situation, learn to turn acting out behavior into more constructive coping skills, learn to recognize feelings, and to deal better with those feelings both at home and in class. Finally, the child will be taught how to make better use of peers, teachers, and family support.

The class will be taught by one of various types of child training professionals: a social worker, nurse, child psychiatrist or psychologist.

To insure the quality and effectiveness of the class, it is asked that the teacher and parent fill out a brief behavioral checklist before and after the set of classes. If so desired, the results regarding your child will be shared with you.

A new class will start every two weeks or so, but each class is small with limited seating. If you desire that your child be included in one of the four-session classes, please sign below and return with a completed child behavior checklist, to be reviewed by the class instructor. You will be notified which dates your child will be in the class, so that you can follow-up with your child on those days and discuss lessons he/she has learned.

If you have further questions, please feel free to call the school office.

School Principal

I desire that my child _____ be included in the above class. I understand the class at present is scheduled from _____ on the four days to be determined. Attached is my completed behavioral checklist.

Signature (Parent/guardian) Date: _____

SESSION ONE

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

1. Individual sets of crayons, markers, pencils
2. Supply of 8" X 11" blank white paper
3. Let's Visit Iraq, coloring book
4. Large classroom size world map, and, if available, individual sheets with simplified drawing of world.
5. Individual packets of "fold-a-letter" sheets, such as provided in this material.

SESSION ONE

1. Evaluation of child's perceptions of present situation and stresses of deployed parent.

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

Drawings by students:

SAME MATERIAL AND ACTIVITY

- a. Map of world showing location of deployed parent and of the student. emphasize that this is very freehand, may well not be accurate at all, but just represents their thoughts as to where their deployed parent is. (Time limit 3-5 minutes)
- b. Picture of an activity which deployed parent is engaged in. Accompanied by likely surrounding features, terrain, living accommodations, animals, other people. Again, this is not an art contest. (This may be replaced by a written activity where activities and surrounding features are described in list form.) Time limit 3-5 minutes)
- c. Pictures of family – with indication as to who lives at home usually, or the usual location of parents or siblings in divorce situation or blended family. (Time limit 3 minutes)

After each of the above activities, each child in circle is asked to present his/her picture, with the facilitator being attuned to underlying feelings as pictures are presented. It is important that the discussion move from child to child without dwelling too long on any one child. If others wish to address child and ask questions or make comments, this is encouraged, again with direction by facilitator to keep discussion moving. **NOTE:** This is not group therapy. While opportunity should be given each child to participate, time should be firmly apportioned. If it is evident that a child has further issues or problems to be addressed, Individual time should be arranged for time outside class.

The facilitator uses judgment to allow a follow-up comment or feeling to be made in response to discussion by another child, and should clarify the feeling or remark so that the group can benefit from it. Interactive comments from student to student is preferable over student to facilitator. Facilitator is ready to intervene quickly if discussion veers off topic, or if anxiety becomes high and destructive comments are made would inhibit participation by any student in the group.

SESSION ONE CONTINUED

2. Presentation of geography and Middle East facts.

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

a. Allow individuals in the circle to read paragraphs from A Visit to Saudi Arabia, with brief explanations by facilitator about strange words and cultural and social economic references. Children are especially interested in what families eat, what the children there do and wear, and what their deployed parent might experience there. Finish the book. Children could color while listening or talking.

b. Use world map to show where the class and children are located and where the deployed parents are located. Translate this into concrete distance, how many days travel if one drove, how many days on a ship. Trace possible routes a ship might take to get there. Children might trace these routes on their own individual maps.

c. Use map of middle east area in A Visit to Saudi Arabia to ask and share knowledge concerning which countries are involved in conflict, which are allies, which are unfriendly to the U.S. Ask them to note relationships geographically between countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, etc.

d. Emphasize similarities between children and families in Saudi Arabia and our own families. Elicit feelings about differences such as dress, foods, and customs.

a. This presentation should be shorter than in grades 3-5, with longer time given to section 3. Have children come up and hold a finger on locations indicated by facilitator showing where class and deployed parents are. Ask children to come up and trace routes from their location on the map to where their deployed parents are. Point out Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq, and in simple terms explain the story of their significance.

SESSION ONE CONTINUED

3. Discussion of feelings and concerns regarding deployed parents, his/her comfort, safety, and possible involvement in conflict.

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

a. Discussion: What is your parent experiencing in Arabia right now? What have you learned in letters from him/her? What would you do for fun in this situation, and do you think your mom/dad is able to find ways to make things more positive? What kind of training do you think they receive there to defend themselves and to prevent harm?

DO emphasize training and preventive measures that are being practiced daily so that the children understand that their parent is not totally helpless and is in control of much of what happens.

DO emphasize facilities and people prepared to help soldiers who are ill or who get hurt.

DO NOT attempt to reassure the child that the parent will not get hurt or die.

Use fold-a-letter forms to write short paragraph to the deployed parent, and to read out loud.

HOMEWORK: Share A Visit to Saudi Arabia book with remaining parent and color some or all of the pictures and the map.

a. Allow 15 to 20 minutes to read Someone in My Family Went to The Middle East out loud to the group. Insert various children's names into the blanks to personalize story. There will not be sufficient time to allow children to attempt to read it out loud themselves. Punctuate with questions about children's reactions to the text and to make clarifying remarks.

b. Use "thought bubbles" on fold-a-letter forms to color a thought about what the deployed parent is experiencing in Arabia, and have each share picture and description with class.

c. Discussion: If there was one question you were afraid to ask before about your mom/dad, would you like to ask it here? If this brings forth a very difficult question, ("What happens if my parent is hurt or dies?"), allow other children to indicate that these questions are on their minds, too, and that the child who asked did the group a service to put this concern into words. If tearful or giggly behavior is precipitated, acknowledge that other likely have the same feelings and that crying or being silly is another way to share a feeling and receive support.

HOMEWORK: Have remaining parent read above book again using only the individual child's name this time to fill in the blanks.

SESSION TWO

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

1. Individual sets of crayons, markers pencils
2. Supply of 8" X 11" blank white paper

SESSION TWO

1. Evaluation of child's perceptions of his/her family, and his/her role in the family. Evaluation of his/her perceptions of how this role has changed since the deployment of his/her parent.

GRADES 3-5

- a. Have the class mark their blank paper as illustrated:

<u>MYSELF</u>	<u>MOM (or DAD)</u>
1.	1.

For the purpose of discussion, each child writes different ways in which his/her life has been changed since the deployment of the parent. This would be listing of responsibilities, chores, worries that the child has had to take on since the deployment – usually chores and worries which the deployed parent used to perform. Give a time limit of 3-5 minutes, and if each child thinks of only one or two items, this is enough to provide significant discussion. Important issues pertain to pervasive issues which pertain to all the children, in that all are more likely to have to do chores previously performed by the deployed parent. In addition, each child may have something unique that he/she has to worry about that the other children in the group do not have to deal with and this uniqueness should be addressed as well as it occurs.

Each child then lists one or two items which he/she has noticed that the mother has had to do which is new – such as taking over financial responsibilities, car maintenance, taking care of children by herself, being alone, and perhaps needing to spend time supporting other wives in support groups or unit groups.

How does the mother respond to this? (She may be less available, appear more worried, troubled, sad, crying, impatient, angry.) What measures can the child take to decrease the tension in the home, and perhaps to make mother more available for more enjoyable activities? (Allow mother to be sad or angry without taking it personally that it might be the child's fault, give her some time to herself without interruption, perform chores and requested tasks as asked without resistance, express love.) Children frequently complain that the mother does not share information with them which is disturbing, and this is more unsettling to the child than knowing the information that is disturbing the mother.

SESSION TWO

EMPHASIZE that although more cooperative behavior at home is helpful to the mother, that the child does not have to take responsibility for making the mother feel better. She may well not respond to their efforts, and they may wish to discuss this with a teacher or counselor. The important take-home issue from this discussion is just to have an understanding that much of the mother's behavior is predictable based on an understanding of what her new worries and concerns are and that her change in behavior is not a sign that the family or home is crumbling. Also, with increased understanding of what the mother is going through, the child does not have to feel that he/she is the cause of mother's distraught feelings. This increased understanding may also give the child more feeling of being able to control the situation.

Children have been remarkably perceptive at problem-solving and at making lists of ideas and behaviors they could try to improve the situation at home. They enjoy having their ideas documented on the blackboard.

Similar ideas may be addressed with respect to assisting siblings in the home, and indirectly reducing the stress on the mother.

ISSUES AND COMPLAINTS PREVIOUSLY NOTED BY CHILDREN

"Mom is too busy helping everybody else in the community" (Remember, this may be just perception, not reality. But significant nonetheless.)

"She pays more attention to dad. All these presents, cookies, candy, going to dad. Seems like none of that is for me."

"she won't talk about dad, (or deployment, or news events, or other news). She won't let me talk about."

"Mom holds back information I know is important."

"It seems like she's always mad/sad/impatient. It seems I'm always in trouble."

"I respond by having a tantrum or by going to my room and staying away from her."

"I know she's worried, but she's afraid to tell me because she thinks she can hid it."

"It seems like if she is crying, everything's falling apart."

HOMEWORK: Child take home paper from class and has mother help to add more items to each column. Children are encouraged to tell mother about issues discussed in class.

ADDENDUM: If children receive letters from deployed parents, they should be invited to share a special passage or paragraph in the last few minutes of class with the group.

SESSION TWO CONTINUED

GRADES 1 & 2

A more developmentally appropriate version of the above discussion is engaged in. The stimulus for discussion should be carried out as follows:

- a. Have the children draw a picture of the deployed parent performing a responsibility or chore before the deployment. Each member of the group describes the action in the picture. Facilitator can ask questions about the picture of the parent, making observations about how strong the parent must be, about whether the child was involved with the parent in the activity, the expression on the parent's face, the nature of the activity. This may bring about responses from other children about comparisons and contrasts.
- b. Draw a picture of a new chore or responsibility that the child has to do now that the deployed parent is gone. The same comments can be made or elicited from other children regarding the nature of the chore (its difficulty, tediousness, enjoyment). It may be a common activity to the entire group or very unique. The child is asked what feelings the child in the picture is feeling while performing the chore. Are there other figures in the picture? What are they thinking or feeling? Encourage the children to draw in the expressions on the faces of the figures in the picture.
- c. Draw a picture of mother (remaining parent) engaged in a new activity made necessary by the departure of the deployed parent. Use this as an opportunity for the children to draw in what the home looks like, and details around the figure in the picture. Encourage as much detail in the figure, to include clothes, color hair, and expression on face. The facilitator may ask what the mother is saying, thinking.

The ensuing discussion requires more direction on the part of the instructor than with the older age group. This discussion centers around mother's feelings, her behaviors. Does mother get impatient more easily, does she cry, does she talk more or less? How does this make the child feel? Are there behaviors that the children engage in which seems to make her emotions get more irritable?

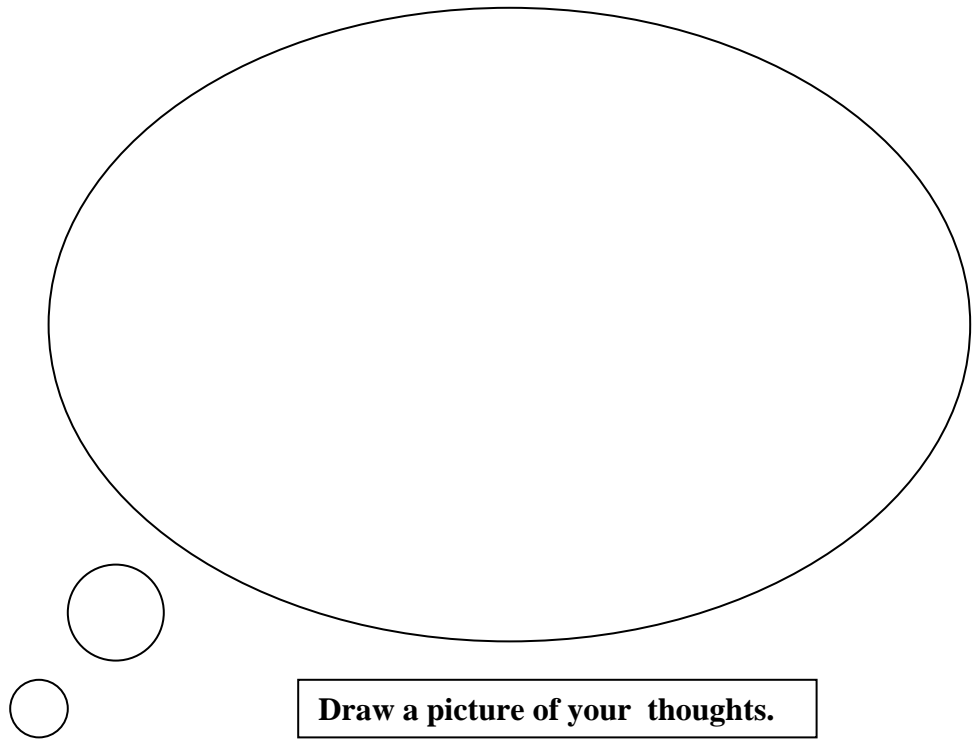
- d. Draw a picture of the child and the mother. The child should be doing something to make the home situation easier for the mother. Have the children think up their own ideas first and share them with the class. Make a list on the board of helpful ideas as each child shares the picture.

HOMEWORK: Encourage the children, if the mothers are willing, to have their mothers draw a picture with them of an additional activity which each of them have to perform because of the deployment of the other parent. Have them bring the picture to class to share with the class at the next session.

SESSION THREE

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

1. Columbus Sentence Completion for Children – with specific sentences circled as indicated to be completed
2. How Do You Feel Today? - sheet with multiple facial expressions
3. Individual 8” X 11” white sheets of paper with drawing materials
4. My Big Color Ring Book: A book about feelings by Chaplain (CPT) Eric Erkinnen, Chaplains Office, Fort Hood, Texas, 1990.



Draw a picture of your thoughts.



DEAR _____,

LOVE _____

**STICKER
HERE**

-----**FOLD HERE**-----

FROM _____ _____ _____	PASTE STAMP HERE
TO _____ _____ _____	

-----**FOLD HERE**-----

COLUMBUS SENTENCE COMPLETION FOR CHILDREN

Name _____

- (1.) I would like to _____
- (2.) At home _____
- (3.) My mother _____
- (4.) I wish that I _____
- (5.) My brother _____
- 6. My secret is _____
- 7. When school is out _____
- (8.) I can't _____
- (9.) My biggest worry _____
- 10. Girls _____
- 11. If I only _____
- (12.) Daddy gets angry when _____
- 13. I have fun _____
- (14.) I am ashamed _____
- (15.) I hope _____
- 16. My daddy _____
- (17.) My mother should learn that _____
- 18. Sometimes I _____
- 19. My teacher _____
- (20.) I hate _____
- 21. I failed _____
- 22. Reading is _____
- (23.) Mother gets angry when _____
- (24.) I like _____
- 25. In school I _____

COLUMBUS SENTENCE COMPLETION FOR CHILDREN CONTINUED

Name _____

26. My home is _____

27. Boys _____

(28.) What bothers me is _____

29. Other kids _____

(30.) I'm sorry _____

(31.) I am afraid of _____

(32.) Father should learn that _____

33. People think that I _____

(34.) I feel happy when _____

(35.) I need _____

36. My sister _____

(37.) I get mad when _____

38. When I go to bed _____

39. Games _____

40. Babies _____

41. At supper _____

(42.) I get nervous when _____

43. When I grow up _____

(44.) I feel sad when _____

45. When I was younger _____

(46.) I do my best when _____

47. My trouble is _____

(48.) I am very _____

49. In the morning _____

(50.) I _____

SESSION THREE CONTINUED

1. Examination of “my own feelings” (as contrasted to feelings of deployed parent or remaining parent). Start with skills in generally recognizing one’s own feelings. The discussion then becomes more specific with regard to recognizing feelings under stress, such as anger, boredom, sadness, anxiousness, fear, and relief. The extension of this, more for the older age group, is to be able to sense and predict the onset of feelings in time to deal with that feeling in an appropriate way.

GRADES 3-5

a. Distribute How Do You Feel Today? sheets, and ask each student around the circle to point to one face, sharing the feeling with the group, without necessarily having to give an explanation justifying that feeling.

b. Allow each student to identify a face (feeling) that might be expected in a given situation:

e.g., making a 100 on a test, not getting selected for a team, seeing a newborn puppy, finding a roach in the sink, discovering someone has stolen your bike, etc.

c. Discussion emphasize that one does not have to have a “good reason” to have a feeling. One cannot help having a given feeling. However, one can control the subsequent behavior if one is conscious of the feeling.

d. Allow 5 minutes to write in sentences on Columbus Sentence Completion for Children. They will not likely have time to finish more than a few sentences. Allow each student to share their response in sequence. Then, as time permits, have each student complete a sentence without having previously written it.

GRADES 1 & 2

a. Use book My Big Color Ring Book as a guide to explain hooking up a given feeling with a color. Each color is associated with a vignette which describes a situation in which a child is happy (yellow), angry (red), jealous (green), etc. Draw corresponding facial expressions for the colors on the blackboard. (If your artistry is questionable, you can use some of the faces from the How Do You Feel Today sheet.) Review the colors, to make sure that they can associate the colors with the feelings and faces. Attach an appropriately colored pipe cleaner or sheet of paper on the blackboard next to each face.

b. Give each student a chance to select a face on the board to demonstrate a feeling generated from a vignette which you compose. (See paragraph b, across page.) The vignette will be simpler, more concrete and more developmentally appropriate for Grades 1 & 2.

c. Ask for volunteers to pantomime a given feeling for the others in the middle of the circle. Whisper a phrase depicting a situation and corresponding feeling. See if the other students can guess the feeling. Initial reticence will transform into vehement requests to be next.

SESSION THREE CONTINUED

e. Continue discussion with the question, “How do kids show others their feelings when they are scared, angry, or sad?” (usually act out by screaming, tantrum, withdrawing, acting giggly and silly.) How does this behavior affect someone who might be a help to them, such as a teacher, parent, or friend? (It makes them get in a conflict with them, rather than be supportive or otherwise helpful. It might cause friends to shy away from them.) What is the worst thing that could happen if we recognize how we are feeling, and share that feeling of sadness, or anger, or nervousness with someone in words? I might get yelled at, or someone might make fun of my feelings). Is this response likely to happen with a good friend, teacher, or parent? Ask other ways that the children might deal with a strong feeling that would improve their problem, rather than worsen it.

f. Sometimes we may get clues from teachers or friends that we should only share some of our feelings but not all. Discuss the fact that learning how to utilize friends may mean only sharing some of our feelings and saving the rest for our parents or another special adult whom we trust. This is called responding to social cues.

HOMEWORK: Experiment with parent at home by sharing one feeling with that parent in words. Record the parent’s response and report experience to class next session.

Allow all takers to get a chance, even if a given feeling is repeated.

d. Use any story such as the following one to take the children through a sequence of feelings and subsequent actions:

Describe a boy who had taken very good care of a puppy and had grown to love the puppy. One day the puppy was gone and appeared to have run away. (How would you feel?) Sad, lonely, angry.) When mother came and said good morning and told the boy to come eat breakfast, the boy screamed at her and refused to eat. He did not tell her what had happened. (Why did the boy scream and disobey his mother? He felt upset inside and did not want anyone to know how sad and angry he was.) The mother told him to eat his breakfast and to sit down. He kicked the chair and refused to sit down. The mother became angry and sent him to his room. (Why was the mother angry? She thought the boy was choosing to be disobedient. Did the boy’s behavior help his situation? No. Why not? Instead of receiving help and support, he was yelled at and received no help. Do you think the mother would have acted differently if the boy had told her he felt sad and angry because his puppy had run away? Yes. What might she have done differently? She probably would have comforted him and tried to think of a way to find the puppy. She would probably have understood why he didn’t feel like eating.)

SESSION THREE CONTINUED

e. Sometimes we have similar situations in our own home with parents and friends. We get more help when we know what we are feeling and tell others.

HOMEWORK: No specific assignment.

SESSION FOUR

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- 1. White paper 8" X 11" with drawing materials**

SESSION FOUR

COMMENT: This session is the most critical, and, based on previous experience, the most difficult. It is also the most important. It touches on the reason that the child was identified in the first place, i.e., emotional or behavioral problems noted in the classroom to be interfering with classroom function. This topic raises anxiety more than the other sessions because the issue being discussed is not theoretical or off at home, but actually right there in the classroom and in the school. In fact, they are living it in this class because the facilitator is functioning as another one of their teachers.

Another sensitive issue is that his group now faces “termination,” psychotherapeutic jargon for the last session of a relationship, therapeutic or otherwise. Though it may seem that four sessions is hardly enough time for children to attach to a facilitator or to each other, it has turned out to be the case that this is a strong reality. They have shared an intimate part of themselves with an adult and other children who will listen, and they are now anticipating having to endure a similar pain that they’ve been addressing – the pain of being separated from their deployed parent. The implication in their own minds is, “I’ve been sharing difficult stuff here and now you are trivializing it by arbitrarily cutting me off.” It is the same feeling experienced by patient and psychotherapist at the end of a 50 minutes session, or at the last of a series of sessions.

The children’s reactions will likely be played out the way it was started theoretically in session three – they will act out, be giggly, distract each other, and likely evoke some anger from the facilitator. There may be the frustrating feeling that this session is going badly, nothing is being learned, and that one has failed as a facilitator – until the children seek a hug before leaving the class at the end.

In order to make this last session more effective, it is important not only to be aware of the above issues, but also to structure adequate time for each of the issues to be addressed. A desired implicit message for the child to receive by the end is, “Yes, we are separating just like you had to separate from your parent, only this time we are discussing it openly, using the group to support you, and giving you the tools for you to handle it on your own. Your group members will still be available to you as friends at school.”

This session will have three sections: the first dealing with problems the teacher faces in teaching a class and challenges making his/her job difficult, the second dealing with thoughts, distractions, and feelings making it difficult for the child to function in the class, and the third dealing with each child’s feelings concerning the termination of the experience.

SESSION FOUR CONTINUED

1. Understand teacher's concerns, role and responsibility towards each student. Examine ways in which students' acting out behaviors interfere with teacher's teaching, and correlate teacher's reactions with student's behaviors.

GRADES 3 –5

- a. Begin this a session by making statement that this is the last session and that it is important to help you with the discussions in the first half of the session so that there is enough time to talk about any issue they wish to in the second half.
- b. Use the blackboard to collect ideas regarding impediments to a teacher being able to teach in the classroom. (Non-student related interruptions such as visitors, announcements, equipment failure, etc.) (Student-related behaviors such as inattention, taking, moving about, laughing, non-participation, outright conflict.)
- c. What is the teacher's reaction to this? (Becomes louder, raises voice, remove student, becomes annoyed or angry, becomes discouraged, has little energy left for interesting class activities.) Do any students feel that the teacher does not like them? Why? (Teacher has disciplined them in some way. Student has personalized this.) Other students usually pick up in this discussion that a disciplinary action does not equal the teacher not liking the student.
- d. If the student does not understand or like the subject material, is the teacher more helpful when the student acts out the above behaviors? (No, It just makes things worse.) If there is a problem with sad feelings or other difficulty, what ways could the student use to elicit the teacher's support and help?

GRADES 1 & 2

- a. Begin this session by stating that this will be the last meeting together and that you will miss each of them. You will have more time to talk about this after you talk about what teachers do.

- b. Relate the following story:

There was once a man who enjoyed teaching children. He liked to teach them how to use numbers, how to read and spell, about other places and people, and how to do things that the children had never done before. Many children listened and learned many new things about numbers, reading, and about other people and places. When he gave them work to do, they practiced what they had learned and felt happy about learning to do things they couldn't do before.

There were some children who did not listen, who did not understand what he was teaching or did not feel happy inside and did not wish to listen. They did not know about their feelings the way you learned about in your last meeting.

They could not tell that they were feeling sad, angry, or scared inside. Instead of telling their teacher what was the matter, they giggled, and laughed, make jokes, and jumped out of their seats. They thought this would make their class more fun. It did not. (Why were these children not listening?) (What did they do instead of listening?) (What do you think the teacher had to do instead of teach? He had to spend most

SESSION FOUR CONTINUED

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

(He could use the principles in session three and use words to explain his feelings or difficulties to the teacher. He could try to participate to the best of his ability during the time that the teacher is explaining a lesson.

of his time telling children to be quiet, to listen, and finally raise his voice, or get angry, or send the children out of the room.) (Did the children know how to tell the teacher about their feelings? Did they tell the teacher they did not understand? No.) (How much time did the teacher have to help the students with their feelings after they laughed, joked, and jumped around for the whole time? There was no time left to help the children.) What could the children have done to make things better for themselves and the teacher?

SESSION FOR CONTUNUED

2. Examine the classroom behaviors that students exhibit when they feel anxious, upset, sad, angry, or feel that they do not like or understand the subject material.

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

a. Ask how many in the group daydream in class. (Usually most have problems with preoccupations in class.) Ask each to share what they are thinking about. (Issues at home, deployed parent, themselves, other children.) Ask how many get bored in class at some time and laugh, giggle, make jokes, and move about? (This is sensitive and you may not get as many takers.) Ask for suggestions from what the children have learned so far, as to what issues and feelings contributed to these behaviors. Perhaps there is some of this behavior going on right in this class at this moment. Could it have to do with the subject matter of this session, or that we will be saying good-bye today? (Some children will say they are “bored” with the material, when mean “nervous and uncomfortable.” What do you think my feelings are as a teacher when you act out that way in this session?

b. When one has “daydreams” or worries or preoccupations, it means we are experiencing those feelings described above. What are some ways to deal with this in the classroom so that we can still do well in school? (We can first recognize that we are daydreaming, we can recognize what feelings we are having, as discussed in session three, and we can put the thoughts “on hold” until the class is over. At that time we can worry again. Or better yet, we can share the worry with a friend or teacher, even if we have just a few minutes.)

a. Our teacher can be our friend. If we are feeling scared or sad or angry, it is better to tell the teacher instead of acting like the children in the story who did not listen. If we want the teacher to listen to us, when is a good time to talk to the teacher? (In the middle of a lesson? While the teacher is talking to another child? No.) (What are better times? Before and after class, when the child is feeling especially bad, during a free activity time.)

b. “There may be some acting out behavior in this class. Maybe this is because it is hard to talk about these feelings and it is tempting to jump around, giggle, laugh, or make jokes. Right now I feel like I am getting upset and nervous inside. Can I help you easily if I feel this way, or if you are acting this way?” (No.) Let’s talk about some of the things we have done in our last three sessions that you liked the most, and that you didn’t like.

This is the transition point into discussing termination. If they are asked point blank about their feelings about saying good-bye at this age, they will not respond. Thus, we generate a discussion about memorable parts of these sessions. As they describe the actions, they will gradually exhibit their feelings. It will probably be up to the instructor to help put the feelings into words for the children.

SESSION FOUR CONTINUED

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

c. It is important that the students understand this it is OK and expected to have these feelings and difficulties. The important thing is to understand that “acting out” those feelings in the classroom will not make them feel better. Usually the one person who could help them, the teacher, ends up being annoyed with them, and the student loses that relationship that could have been helpful. They may have temporary enjoyment in being a class clown, but the sad and angry feelings don’t get better, but just sad inside.

SESSION FOUR CONTINUES

3. Discussion of termination, how we say good-bye many times in our life. Examination of feelings and assistance in verbalizing feelings having to do with separation.

GRADES 3-5

GRADES 1 & 2

- a. The remaining discussion should center around the idea that we all have different feelings about saying good-bye. Sometimes we feel sad, sometime we feel angry that we are being left, sometimes we feel happy that it is over. When we do not know how to tell people these feelings, we act silly, or get quiet, or argue, or maybe even cry. It is OK to have any of these feelings. As your teacher, I have gotten to know you and like you and I will miss you. I feel two ways at the same time. Part of me is happy that you have learned some important tools to help yourself.
- b. Ask if there are feelings that students in the class have about stopping. Maybe these feelings may be mixed up, maybe having several different feelings at the same time. Point out that any acting out behavior at this time, or silence, may speak to how difficult it is. If it is this difficult after four sessions, it is easy to see how difficult it is when a parent leaves us for a long time. Probably our feelings are mixed up about that just like in this class.
- c. Ask for any other questions, comments, last items to share with the group (letters, other important items).

a. Continue the transition into the discussion about saying good-bye. The discussion will likely be very concrete about liking or disliking certain activities in the four sessions. Read paragraphs a & b across the page and relate your feelings about coming to the end of your experience together. Emphasize that you will miss them and that you have both sad and happy feelings. Relate these feelings to certain similarities in feelings about saying good-bye at other times – especially having said good-bye to their deployed parent for a long time. It is OK to have these feelings and to let trusted people know about them. We all share these feelings.