

## OVERVIEW

Central to handling our feelings in healthy ways is the ability to express all our feelings openly. That is *not* to say that all ways of expressing our feelings are healthy, nor that all people will express their feelings in the same ways. This session explores the negative consequences of holding feelings inside or expressing them in destructive ways, and offers healthy ways of expressing our feelings.

## NEEDED

- Session Summary for Parents (page 358)
- “Reflections” worksheet
- “Building on God’s Word” worksheet
- A pillow, a box of tissues, a pair of running shoes, stationery and pen, drawing paper and markers, a telephone, and a big red heart
- *Optional:* A “Family Feelings Box”
- Prayer journal

# EXPRESSING OUR FEELINGS

## PARENT SESSION 4 OUTLINE

### *Getting Started (20 Minutes)*

- Check-In
- Group Rules
- Review Session Summary for Parents

### *Teaching Time (20 Minutes)*

“To Each His Own”

### *Making It Personal (35 Minutes)*

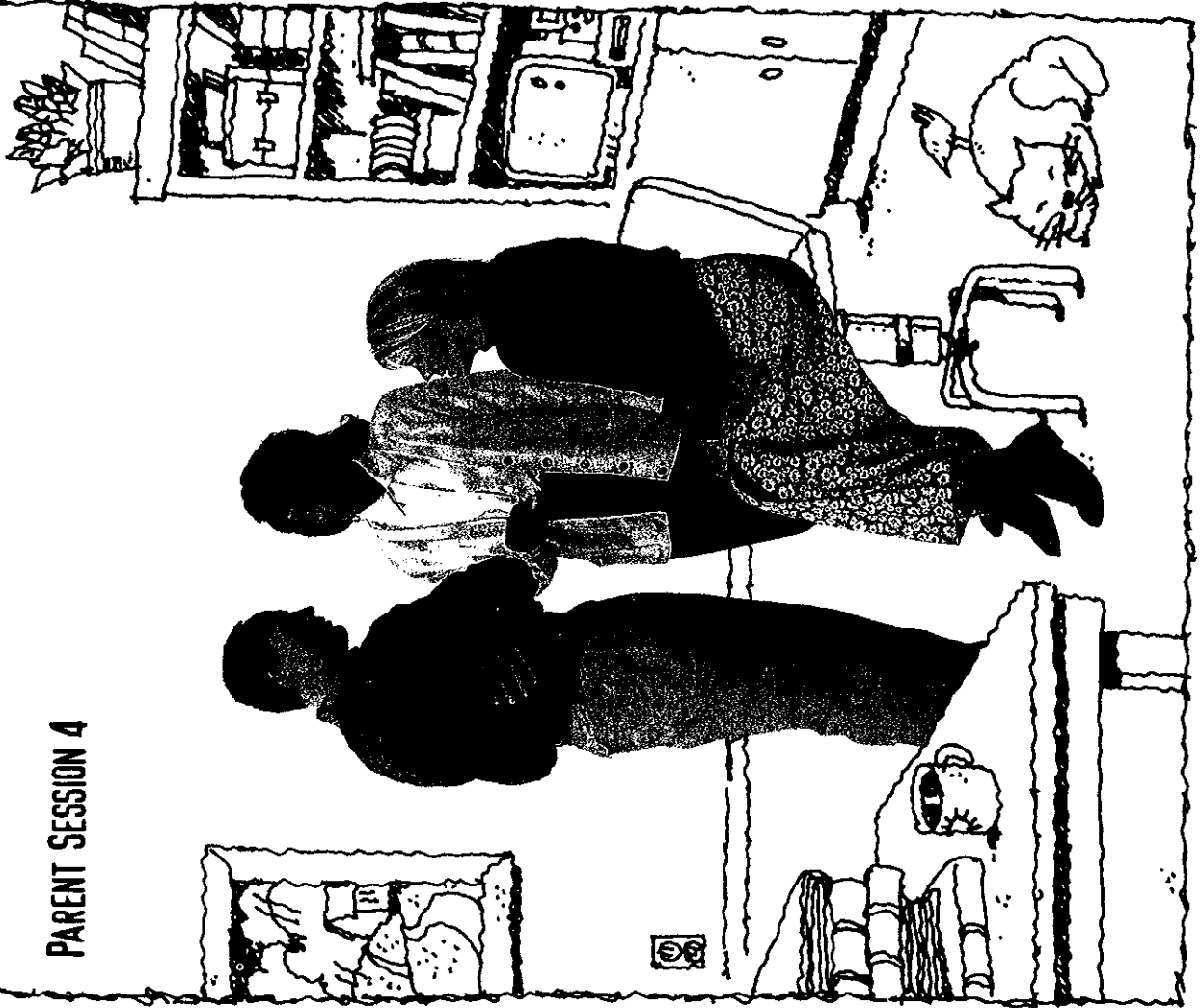
- Reflections: “Our Family Feelings Box”
- Group Sharing

### *Building on God’s Word (15 Minutes)*

- Bible Focus
- Prayer Time

# EXPRESSING OUR FEELINGS

## PARENT SESSION 4



### GETTING STARTED (20 MINUTES)

#### CHECK-IN

Ask if anyone has any feedback or questions from last week's session. Then ask parents to share one time during the past week they noticed that they used or lowered a feelings defense.

#### GROUP RULES

Review the three basic rules of Confident Kids parent sessions:

1. Confidentiality
2. No advice giving
3. The right to pass

#### REVIEW SESSION SUMMARY FOR PARENTS

Read through the "Session Summary for Parents" (page 358). Be sure parents understand that this handout summarizes what their children will learn in their session today.

### TEACHING TIME (20 MINUTES)

#### TO EACH HIS OWN

Today's emphasis is, "I can choose a healthy way to express my feelings."

Have you ever heard (or made) comments like these:

"Poor Josephine! Imagine having your husband walk out on you after twenty-five years of marriage! But she's taking it very well. She told me 'he's not worth crying over,' and 'life goes on.' I wish I

could be more like her. Nothing ever seems to bother her, especially crises.”

“I’m so sorry about your father, Billy. But remember, you have to be strong for your mother. You’re the man of the house now!”

Statements such as these reflect a denial of one of our most basic needs—to feel and openly express our emotional responses to life situations. As much as we may wish it to be true, it is not possible to handle our feelings by ignoring them or pretending they don’t exist. Here are three important points to remember about expressing our feelings:

*Feelings will be expressed eventually.*

A fundamental truth of emotional health is this: Unexpressed feelings do not go away. They simply get stuffed deep inside until they find their own way out, and that way will almost always be destructive.

Today your kids are learning about healthy ways to express their feelings. We need to do this, too. Keeping feelings stuffed inside is exhausting and will result in one or more of the following: stress-related illnesses, (*Headaches and ulcers*) excessive irritability, (*Overreacting to people and circumstances*) depression, (*Anger turned inward*) escapism/withdrawal, (*Hiding from the world*) misplaced anger (*Striking out at everyone around us, especially those we love most*)

*Feelings can be expressed in many different ways.* Although we all experience the same feelings, we express them in unique ways. (*Bring with you a pillow, a box of tissues, a pair of running shoes, stationery and pen, drawing paper*

*and markers, a telephone, and a big red heart. Place all of these items in the center of your group at this time.)* These items represent a wide variety of healthy ways of expressing our feelings. Our task as parents is twofold: Find the ways that work best for us, and help our children find the ways that work best for them.

Ask:

How can each of these items be used to express feelings in a healthy way? (*Most items are self-evident. The heart represents being with someone we love, asking for a hug, etc.*)

What specific ways do you express your feelings? (*Let parents respond*)

What specific ways do each of your children express their feelings? (*Let parents respond*)

*We need to observe realistic limits to expressing our feelings.* Finding our own way to express our feelings does not give us or our children permission to indulge in a feelings “free-for-all.” Today your kids are learning a very important rule about expressing feelings: You can express your feelings any way you choose, *except* you may not be destructive to yourself, others, or property. For example:

It’s OK to go to your room and be alone for awhile; it’s not OK to cut yourself off entirely from the people who care about you (that’s destructive to yourself).

It’s OK to tell a friend she hurt you by telling your secret to someone else; it’s not OK to spread gossip about her to get even (that’s destructive to others).

# I CAN CHOOSE A HEALTHY WAY TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS

It's OK to punch a pillow when you're angry; it's not OK to throw lamps or dishes through your TV screen (that's destructive to property).

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## **MAKING IT PERSONAL (35 MINUTES)**

### **OUR FAMILY FEELINGS BOX**

Distribute copies of the "Reflections" worksheet (page 315) to all participants and give them a few minutes to fill them out.

*Optional:* Prepare a "Family Feelings Box" for your family as a visual illustration of this idea. Bring an empty box that has been decorated as a feelings box. Then following the directions in the "Reflections" worksheet, describe how each member of your family likes to express his feelings and add the appropriate items to your box.

Encourage parents to follow your example and make a "Family Feelings Box."

### **GROUP SHARING**

After all are finished, point out the importance of the relationship between the answers to their "family of

origin" questions, and the way feelings are handled in their own families now. Also, give volunteers time to share what items they would place in their "Family Feelings Boxes" and why. Remind everyone of the "Right to Pass" rule before starting.

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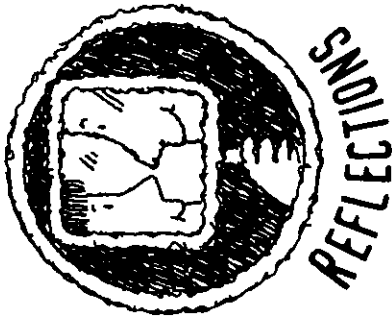
## **BUILDING ON GOD'S WORD (15 MINUTES)**

### **BIBLE FOCUS**

Distribute copies of the "Building on God's Word" worksheet (page 316) and discuss it together. Encourage parents to use this sheet at home during the coming week as a means of spiritual encouragement and connecting to God.

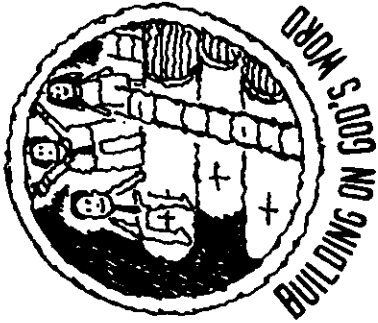
### **PRAYER TIME**

Ask parents to fill in the prayer request line on their "Building on God's Word" worksheet. Give opportunity for parents to share these requests with the rest of the group. End the session with a time of open prayer.



# OUR FAMILY FEELINGS BOX

1. In your family of origin, how did family members express “pleasant” emotions, such as happiness, excitement, pride, and silliness?
  - Everyone joined in; we had a family celebration.
  - The kids could act happy and silly, but my parents did not participate.
  - These feelings were considered self-indulgent and we were not allowed to express them openly.
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What happened when someone was angry, sad, or scared?
  - We were told, “There’s nothing to be angry, sad, or scared about.”
  - We were sent to our rooms until we could calm down and act “appropriately.”
  - We were allowed to express these feelings openly, and we received validation.
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. In your present family, how do your children express their feelings?
  - They share them openly and the family responds appropriately.
  - Their feelings are denied (We tell them, “Don’t feel that way”; no one responds to their joy or sorrow, etc.).
  - I don’t know; I feel uncomfortable with my children’s feelings so I just ignore them.
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. On a separate sheet of paper, identify how the members of your family express their feelings. Then design a “Family Feelings Box” by thinking of all the items you could gather together in a box for family members to use when they need to express their feelings. For example: “Mary likes to write letters to her dad when she is angry with him, so I’ll put letter writing items in our feelings box.” Do the same for each family member.



# SELECTIONS FROM THE PSALMS

The book of Psalms is actually a collection of poems, hymns, and prayers written to God. Within them can be found honest expressions of every feeling that exists. Read the Psalms listed below and identify feelings being poured out to God:

Psalms 22

Psalms 61

Psalms 66

Psalms 121

What are you feeling today? In the space below, write a psalm or prayer to God that honestly pours out your feeling(s) to Him:

Dear God,

Your #1 prayer request for this week: