

Goals

- Emphasize our need to express our feelings
- Practice healthy ways of expressing feelings and help kids identify their personal preferences
- Begin assembling a Feelings Box
- Write a Psalm with the help of Freddy and David

Needed

- Group rules poster
- Props for opening skit
- A pillow, a telephone, a notebook and pen, a pair of running shoes or a tennis racket, drawing paper and markers or paints, a box of tissues, stationery with envelopes, and a large red heart (one set per facilitator)
- "Feelings Prayer Journal" (one per child)
- "My Feelings" feelings box inventory (one copy per child)
- *Optional:* Medium-size boxes and as many of the items (or pictures of the items) listed on the "My Feelings" inventory as you would like to provide
- Prayer journals
- Items for regathering, if any
- Props for Bible Story skit
- "Confident Kids Psalm 1" (one copy per every two kids)
- "Confident Kids Psalm 1" reproduced on a poster or overhead transparency
- Philippians 4:6 poster

Express Those Feelings!

Preteen Session 4 Outline

Opening (25 Minutes)

- Knots
- Group Rules
- "The Feelings Stuffer"

Small Groups (40 Minutes)

- Discussion of Session Theme
- Feelings Prayer Journals and Feelings Boxes
- Prayer Time

Bible Focus (20 Minutes)

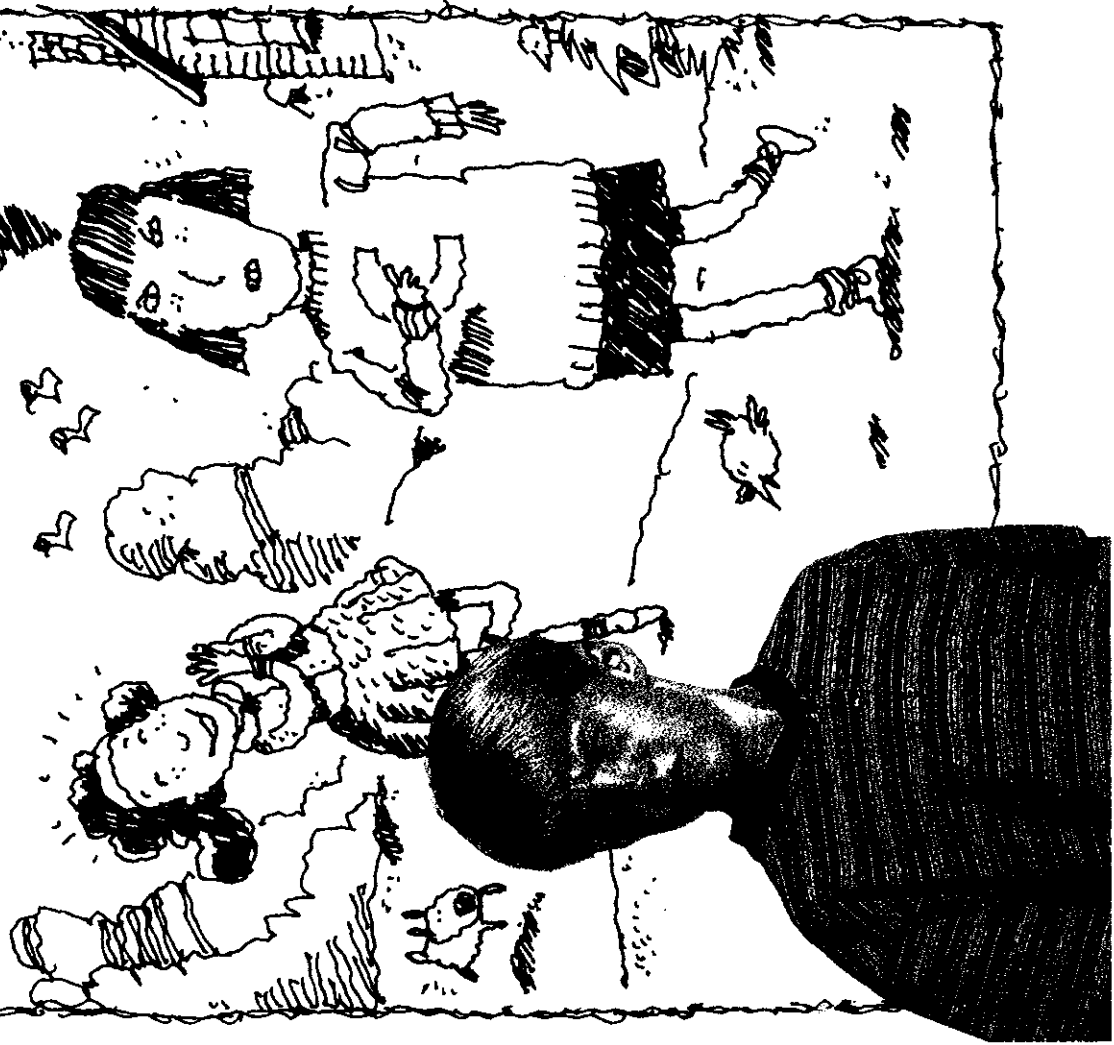
- Regathering
- "Fabulous Freddy, the Famous Feelings Finder Flatfoot, Learns How to Write a Psalm to the Lord"
- Memory Verse
- Closing Prayer Huddle

Snack (5 Minutes)

- The snack can be served during the Bible Focus regathering.

Express Those Feelings!

Preteen Session 4



Opening (25 Minutes)

Knots

As soon as five or more children arrive, begin this activity. Ask kids to bunch up, standing as close together as possible. Have them put their arms straight up over their heads, reach across the "bunch," and take hands. The idea is to take hands randomly, so as to form a human knot. When all hands have connected, tell the group that their task is to untangle themselves. The only rule is that they may not let go of the hands they are holding. Allow the group to accomplish the task without your help. When the kids are done, or after the rest of the kids arrive, start again with everyone participating.

Group Rules

Review the group rules again, if necessary.

"The Feelings Stuffer"

Present the skit without introduction (script is on pages 234 and 235).

Small Groups (40 Minutes)

Discussion of Session Theme

Use the following questions to discuss the session theme, "I can express my feelings in healthy ways."

What do you think it means to "stuff your feelings?" (*Keeping your feelings to yourself*)

What happened to the Stuffer in the skit to make her stuff her feelings? (*Her dad was drunk when she brought her friends home*)

What happened to her when she stuffed her feelings? (*She got sick*)

What was the result? (*Her feelings finally erupted*)

Have you ever felt like you were going to explode if you didn't tell someone when you were happy or upset? (*Share examples*)

What things cause you to want to stuff your feelings? (*Let kids respond*)

Everyone has the same feelings. When something good happens, we feel _____. (*Let the kids supply the answer: happy, excited*) When we are with someone who takes care of us or is kind to us, we feel _____. (*Love, grateful*) When we do something wrong, we feel _____. (*Guilt, sorry*) When we lose something or someone we love, we feel _____. (*Grief*) But even though we may all have the same feelings, we don't all express them in the same ways. For instance, when I feel happy, I _____. (*Finish this by telling the group what you do when you feel happy. Then ask kids to share different ways they express happiness. Repeat, using different feelings, like sad, angry, etc.*)

I can express my feelings in healthy ways

Some feelings are easy to express, and some are very hard. Some feelings we don't like to feel, so we try to hide them or pretend we aren't feeling them. *But all our feelings need to be expressed, even the difficult ones. Ignoring our feelings does not make them go away.* Instead, it just stuffs them down inside of us where they will struggle to get out. The harder we try to ignore them, the harder they will struggle. Eventually they will come out, but probably in very unhealthy

ways. For example, holding our feelings inside can give us headaches and stomachaches. Or, they can work like a volcano. When we finally can't hold them in any more, they explode and we end up doing or saying things we don't really mean. But we can avoid all that by remembering that all our feelings need to be expressed, and by learning healthy ways to express them.

Ask kids to think of some unhealthy ways of expressing feelings. In the discussion, guide the kids to the following two rules about expressing feelings:

It is unhealthy to express our feelings by hurting another person or property.

Throwing or breaking things, and hitting or saying hurtful things to someone else are never OK!

It is unhealthy to express our feelings by hurting ourselves. Using alcohol or drugs, getting physically sick, and thinking about suicide are never good ways to handle feelings!

Let's talk about *healthy ways* to express our feelings!

Pass out the following items to the kids. Distribute them equally around the circle: a pillow, a box of tissues, a telephone, a pair of running shoes (or a tennis racket), a notebook and pen, drawing supplies, stationary with envelopes, and a large red heart.

Ask the kids to look at their object(s) and decide how each one can help them express their feelings in positive ways.

Pillow—Hit it when you are angry; cry into it when you are sad.

Telephone—Call someone you trust and talk about your feelings.

Notebook and pen—Journal your feelings; write a poem.

Stationery with envelopes—Write a letter about your feelings and give it to someone you trust.

Drawing supplies—Drawing or scribbling helps get your feelings out.

Box of tissues—Sometimes you just need to cry!

Running shoes—Doing something physical helps get your feelings out.

Large red heart—Talk to someone you love about your feelings. Ask for a hug.

Read the following scenario:

Your parents have just told you they are getting a divorce.

Then go around the circle and ask each child to answer the following questions:

How would you feel in this situation?

How would you use the object you are holding to handle your feelings in a healthy way?

Now have the kids pass one of their items to the person on their right. Then read the following scenario and repeat the process:

Someone makes fun of you in front of the other kids at school

For the remainder of the scenarios, place all objects in the middle of the group. Have kids choose an object that they would personally use to express their feelings in that situation. Use these scenarios:

Your dad promises to take you on a camping trip (or something you really wanted to do) and then cancels.

You bring home a bad report card and your parents yell at you.

Your dog gets run over by a car.

Your best friend wants to go to the school fair with someone else from your class instead of you.

Add situations *your* kids struggle with.

Feelings Prayer Journals and Boxes

Before the session, prepare a “Feelings Prayer Journal” (pages 239 and 240) for each child. Photocopy one cover and three inside pages for each journal. Distribute the pages to the kids so they can assemble the pages into a booklet. Let kids personalize the covers as you explain how they can use the journals to express their feelings to God. Point out Philippians 4:6, 7, verses that teach us that expressing our feelings to God in prayer can bring us God’s peace. *Note:* If you have used prayer journaling in the past, share with the kids what it meant to you.

Next, distribute copies of the “My Feelings” box inventory (page 241). *Optional:* Provide a box for the kids to take home and use as a feelings box. Place one or more of the items (or pictures of items) from the “Inventory Sheet” in the box.

It is important to have options when you need to express your feelings. If you keep this box (or paper) in your room, you can pull it out and use the items in it when you are having trouble expressing your feelings. This box (or paper) can remind you of all the healthy ways open to you.
Remember:

Never express your feelings by hurting another person or property, or by hurting yourself!

Prayer Time

Use your group's prayer journal to review past prayer requests. How many have been answered? Use the prayer journals kids just made as the focus of today's prayer session.

Bible Focus (20 Minutes)

Regathering

As in weeks past, have one facilitator provide a game, song, or activity.

"Fabulous Freddy, the Famous Feelings Finder Flatfoot, Learns How to Write a Psalm to the Lord"

Present the skit (script is on pages 236 and 237).

Optional: When the kids have completed their Psalms, collect them to copy and make into booklets. Distribute these to the kids next week.

Memory Verse

Review Philippians 4:6, 7 (it's also in the kids' "Feelings Prayer Journal") by displaying a poster of it and having the kids read it together:

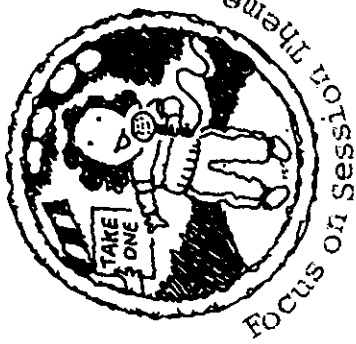
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, present your requests to God. And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:6, 7 (NIV, condensed)

Closing Prayer Huddle

Close the meetings as in weeks past.

Snack (5 Minutes)

Distribute the snack the child brought. Before the kids leave, choose another child to take the snack tin home for next week.



Characters

- Stuffer, Joy, and Anger

The Feelings Stuffer

Stuffer enters with Anger and Joy on each side.

- Stuffer** Hi! I want you to meet my friends. This is Anger (*Puts arm around Anger*) and this is Joy. (*Puts arm around Joy*) Say “hello” to the kids!
- Anger** (*Growsl*) Hi.
- Joy** (*Brightly*) Hello! I’m so happy to be here! I’ve been looking forward to this all week! I feel so happy when I get to do stuff like this—
- Stuffer** OK, OK! (*To kids*) Joy would bubble on forever, if I let her! Anger, on the other hand, doesn’t say much at first. But when he lets go, he really blows up!
- Anger** (*Looks at Stuffer*) What are you talking about? I don’t blow up! (*Increasingly agitated*) Are you trying to make me look bad in front of all these kids? I could get really upset if you were trying to make me look bad—
- Stuffer** See what I mean? Well, as you can see, my two friends are very different. But they are both important to me! They help me express my feelings to others. For instance, when something good happens, Joy comes out and helps me share my good feelings with my friends.
- Joy** (*Bubbly*) Yeah, like the time that really cute boy (*Or girl*) sat next to you at lunch and you got all fluttery inside and you weren’t going to tell anyone. But I came out and made you tell your mom and your brother and call Sally. (*To kids*) Sally is her (*Or his*) best friend. We had fun!
- Stuffer** (*Glaring at Joy*) I am thoroughly embarrassed! You don’t have to tell my personal stuff in public! Honestly! But you are right. It’s more fun to be happy with the people I love most than to keep it all to myself. But then there are other times when things happen that make me mad and Anger comes out to help me get those feelings out.

Anger

(To kids) If it weren't for me, she *(Or he)* would never get mad about anything! Everyone needs to get good and angry once in a while!

Stuffer

That's true! But sometimes things happen and I don't want anyone else to know how I'm feeling. In fact, sometimes I don't want to feel my own feelings! *(Pushes Anger and Joy behind her [or him], and keeps pushing them down to the floor)* So, I stuff them way down inside of me so I won't have to feel them! *(Takes a few steps toward the kids to get further away from Joy and Anger)* Once they are out of sight, I figure I'll stop feeling anything at all!

Anger and Joy begin yelling from where they are: "Hey, quit squishing me!" "Why are you afraid to let me out?" "You can't do this to me!" "Are you crazy?" "Let me out!" etc. Start out softly and as Stuffer continues talking, build in intensity.

Stuffer

(Ignores the voices; speaks loudly enough to be heard over them) Like the time my dad came home drunk when I had some friends over. I felt so scared and embarrassed. I wanted to die! But I pretended nothing was wrong and talked to my friends as if I wasn't feeling anything! *(Looks over shoulder and yells)* Be quiet! I don't want to feel anything right now so go to sleep! *(Voices quiet for a moment, and then continue with increased intensity. Stuffer is now beginning to look irritated and upset and begins to hold her [or his] head and stomach. Anger and Joy start rising and very slowly move forward. The more active they become, the more sick the Stuffer becomes.)*

Stuffer

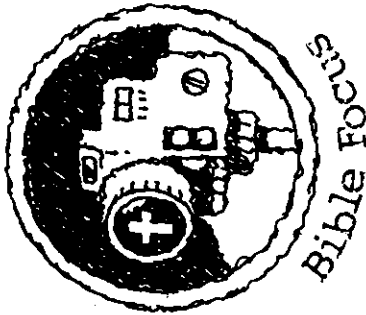
Unfortunately, stuffing my feelings out of sight doesn't get rid of them! It just makes me feel sick because my feelings are trying so hard to get out! The day my friends were over, I felt so sick one of them asked me if everything was OK. I said, "Sure," even though it was a lie! *(At that, Anger growls loudly)* Well, I finally learned that stuffing my feelings doesn't get rid of them! After a while—

Anger and Joy burst forth, and begin chastising the Stuffer: "Why do you do that?" "You know you get sick when you keep us locked up!" "We're going to get out anyway, so knock it off, OK?"

Stuffer

None of you ever do anything like stuffing your feelings, do you?

They exit.



Characters

- Freddy and King David

Needed

- Detective outfit and a Bible for Freddy
- A royal biblical costume for King David
- One copy for every two kids of "Confident Kids Psalm 1" (page 238) plus one copied onto an overhead transparency or enlarged onto poster board

Suggested

- Theme music

Fabulous Freddy, the Famous Feelings Finder Flatfoot, Learns How to Write a Psalm to the Lord

The stage is empty; the music recording starts to play. Freddy is out of sight and does not enter on cue. David enters, carrying the poster (or transparency and overhead projector) and a "Feelings Prayer Journal." He looks around for Freddy.

David

(Searching for Freddy) Now where is that young fellow? Have you seen him?
(Kids respond) I do hope he turns up; I have something very exciting to show him.

Freddy

(Runs in, out of breath, with his coat, hat, and sunglasses all askew, as if he has been roughed up by someone) Oh, my! Am I glad to see all of you! *(Pants; sits down to catch his breath)* Spying on bad guys can get pretty dangerous! Those guys back there were going to tear me apart, piece by— *(Notices David is carrying something; stands to look at it)* Hey, what have you got there?

David

Oh, I'm so excited to show you this! Ah, but are you sure you're all right? You look sort of, well, messed up!

Freddy

Occupational hazard. *(Takes poster from David)* What is this?

David

(Flips through the prayer journal) When I saw this "Feelings Prayer Journal," I got an idea! I thought maybe you would like to write a psalm, like the ones I wrote in my book.

Freddy

Wow! That would be great! How do I do it?

David

(Hangs the poster board or projects the transparency) It's easy. All we have to do is follow the directions and fill in the blanks.

David helps Freddy write a psalm, using the poster/transparency.

David Look at what you have, Freddy. This is an expression of your feelings to the Lord. You can pray this psalm to the Lord, or you can make up a little tune and sing it to Him. Why don't you have the kids say your psalm with you?

Freddy leads the kids in reading the psalm together.

Freddy I'm enjoying this so much, I wish all the kids could do it, too.

David I'm glad you brought that up, because I just happen to be prepared for that. Here, give me some help.

Freddy and David divide the kids into pairs and give each pair a copy of the Psalm 1 sheet. Give the teams a few minutes to write a psalm, then ask for volunteers to come forward and read their psalms.

Freddy We just learned how to write a real psalm! (*Gets an idea*) I know what I'll do! I'll make a book of our Confident Kids psalms for all of us! Let me collect all our sheets and I'll bring back the finished books next week. (*He collects the sheets as David makes his final statements*)

David You know, Fred, I've enjoyed being with you these weeks, but it is time for me to move on. There are so many more people in the Bible who could help you with your mission. I wouldn't want you to think my book is the only place in the Bible where you can find feelings.

Freddy (*Looks disappointed*) But, how will I find them without you? I—

David Just be here next week as usual. I'll send someone new to help you. There are many who would love to talk with you! But for me, my time is done. I must move on. And remember to use your "Feelings Prayer Journal" to help you express your feelings to God, and you'll be fine! (*Show journal*) Good-bye, my friends! (*Exits*)

Freddy (*Sadly*) I'll miss him. (*Gets excited; theme music comes back on; he pulls his collar up, hat down, and dons his sunglasses*) But I wonder who he'll send to us next week? I'll meet you back here next week, same time, and we'll find out! I'm outta here! (*Exits*)

Confident Kids

Psalm 1



1: Address God and tell Him how you feel about Him.

Oh God, You are my

and I

2: Tell God how you are feeling today and why (what happened to make you feel that way).

Today I feel

because

3: Tell God what you wish about what you wrote in #2.

I wish

4: Ask God for what you want Him to do about it (what you wrote in #2).

Oh Lord, please

5: Tell God you trust Him to take care of you.

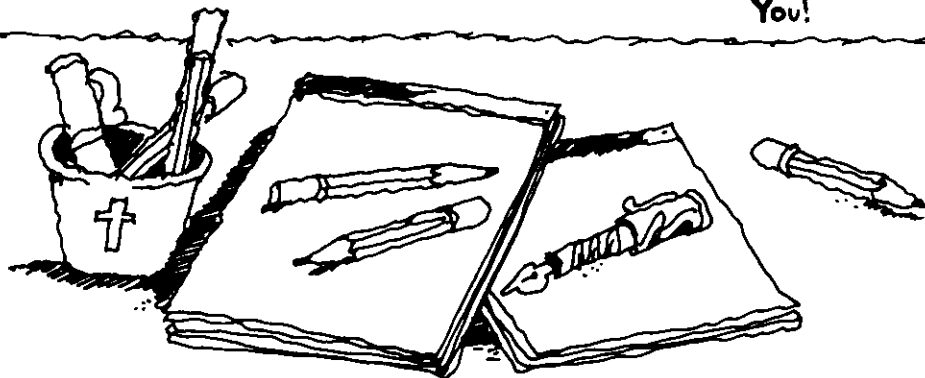
Thank you that no matter what happens, You will never stop taking care of me. I know You will never hurt me or let anything completely destroy me.

6: Repeat exactly what you wrote in #1.

Oh God, You are my

and I

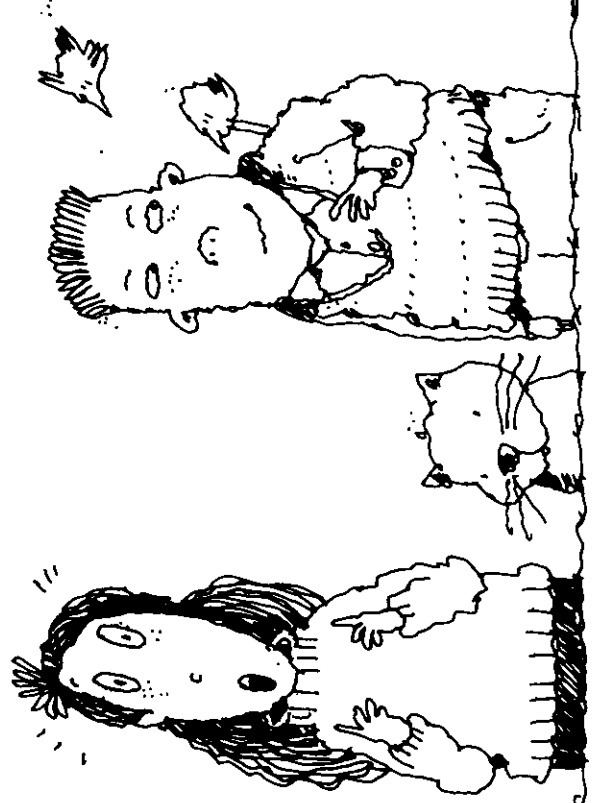
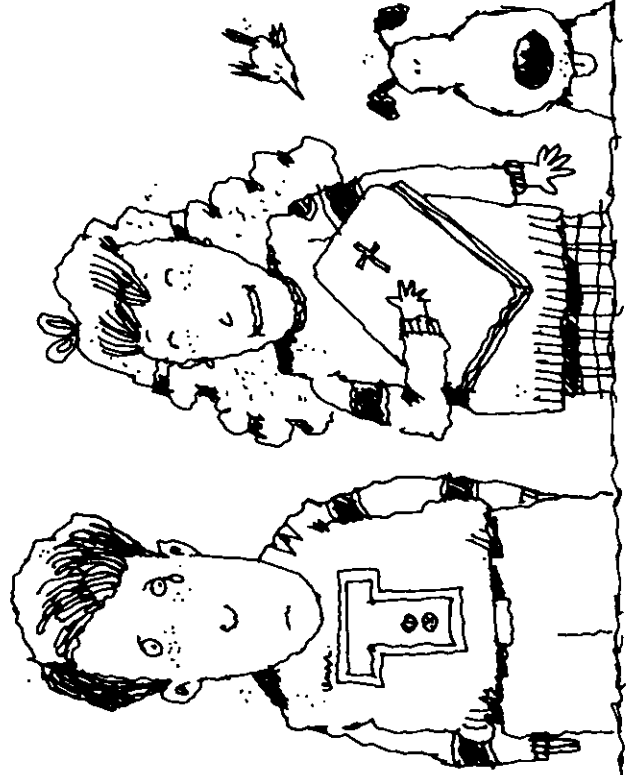
You!



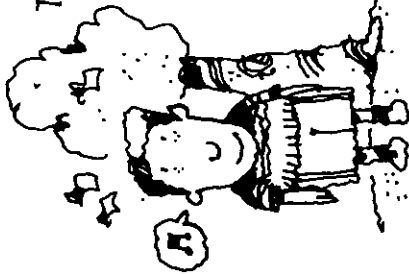
Do not be anxious about
anything, but in everything,
present your requests to God.
And the peace of God
will guard your hearts and
minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6, 7 (NIV, condensed)

Feelings Prayer Journal

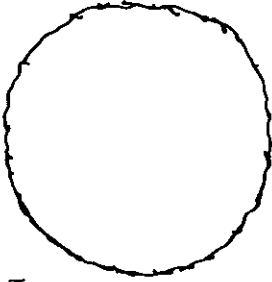


Date: _____



Today I feel:

- Mad
- Scared
- Excited
- GUILTY
- Afraid
- Proud
- Lonely
- Loved
- Surprised
- Stupid



Draw how you feel

I feel this way because: _____

I expressed my feeling by: _____

Dear God,

Right now I feel _____

I wish that _____

Please help me to _____

Thank You for _____

What else do you want to say to God? _____

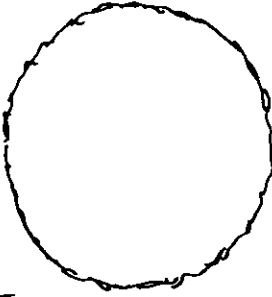
Amen!

Date: _____



Today I feel:

- Mad
- Scared
- Excited
- GUILTY
- Afraid
- Proud
- Lonely
- Loved
- Surprised
- Stupid



Draw how you feel

I feel this way because: _____

I expressed my feeling by: _____

Dear God,

Right now I feel _____

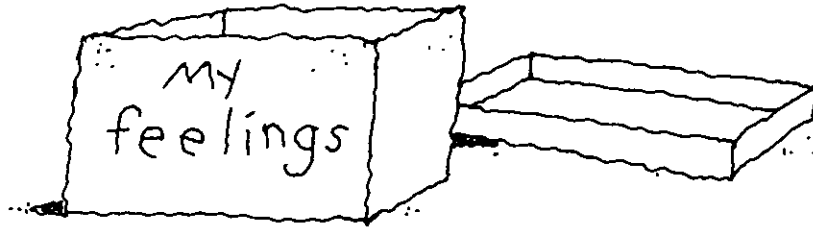
I wish that _____

Please help me to _____

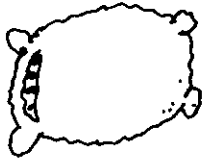
Thank You for _____

What else do you want to say to God? _____

Amen!



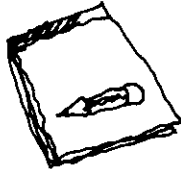
Collect as many of the following items as possible and put them into a box. Keep the box in a convenient place so you can use it whenever you are having trouble expressing your feelings. Choose an item or two that will help you get your feelings out in a healthy way!



Pillow: Hit it when you are angry; cry into it when you are sad



Telephone: Call someone you trust and talk about your feelings



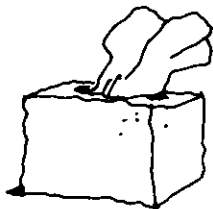
Notebook and pen: Journal your feelings; write a poem



Stationery with envelopes: Write a letter about your feelings and give it to someone you trust



Drawing supplies: Drawing or scribbling helps get your feelings out



Box of tissues: Sometimes you just need to cry!



Running shoes: Doing something physical helps get your feelings out



Large red heart: Talk to someone you love about your feelings. Ask for a hug.