

Cool and Calm Feather Breathing Dragon

Joanne Gobeil, in:
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Theme: Coping and Problem-Solving

Recommended Age Range: Three to Eight

Treatment Modality: Individual, Group, Family

Goals

- Understand that it is normal to feel angry and worried
- Learn, practice, and implement a relaxation strategy for coping with anger and anxiety

Materials

- Dragon puppet (optional)
- Feathers
- Small candies, cookies, or dragon stickers

Description

The practitioner asks the group if they have ever seen a dragon on television or in a book before. The practitioner tells the children that she/he has brought along a dragon to help the group learn a special technique to cope with angry or worried feelings. (If the practitioner does not have a dragon puppet then the client can be shown a picture or a video of a fire breathing dragon.)

The practitioner introduces the group to the *Cool and Calm Feather-Breathing Dragon* puppet. The dragon puppet tells the group that he sometimes gets angry or worried. The dragon puppet asks the children what makes them angry or worried. After hearing the answers, the dragon puppet asks them what they do when they are angry or worried.

The dragon puppet then says that he blows feathers when feeling angry or worried, which makes him feel better. The dragon puppet demonstrates how he puts a feather in his paw, and blows the feather into the air when he is angry or worried.

The dragon puppet then asks the group to put their feathers in the palms of their hands, and show him how they can blow their feathers. Following the group's demonstration, the practitioner can praise the children for doing a good job blowing the feathers. The practitioner then asks the group to put their feathers in the palms of their hands and blow them again, but this time, to think of a time when they felt angry or worried. The practitioner reinforces the message that blowing feathers (breathing out) is a good way to let out angry, worried feelings.

The practitioner then tells the children that they are going to have a dragon race to see who can blow her/his feather the farthest. The facilitator has the children stand side by side, put their feathers in the palms of their hands, and blow the feathers as hard as they can. Dragon treats (i.e., candy or stickers) can then be distributed to each child.

Discussion

Many children have difficulty managing anger or anxiety in appropriate ways. Young children sometimes do not understand the concept of deep breathing. This activity provides a concrete and appealing way for children to comprehend the process of deep breathing. Children will be able to easily grasp the concept of deep breathing, have fun while deep breathing, and decrease their anger and/or anxiety. Rewarding the child for having successfully carried out this activity will reinforce appropriate behavior.

In order to integrate skills learned in the session, the children's caregivers can be invited in at the end of the session and taught the feather breathing technique so that they can coach the children to practice deep breathing at home.

About The Author

Joanne Gobeil, BA, MC, is a registered psychologist. She maintains a private practice where she works with clients aged two and up. Her clients include individuals, couples, families, and groups. She deals with a wide variety of issues including autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, anger management, learning disabilities, attachment disorders, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. She does contract work for various agencies, private schools, and universities. She has also taught at the college level.