

JUNIOR AND SENIOR INFANTS

Parent Support Sheets

Lesson 1: My Wellbeing

Lesson Summary:

In class today, the children were introduced to the story “Along Came a Cloud”, where characters experience the four big feelings - Happy, Sad, Angry and Fearful. The children played a game where they thought of times that they have felt good, happy or joyful. They also watched a video of a rhyme “A Cloud of Colour” about how every feeling is okay.

The “Along Came a Cloud” story is available to download for free as an E-Book on <https://alfschools.com/parents/>.

Try It At Home Activity: “What makes me feel good”

In this “Try It At Home” activity, children are asked to draw a picture of them doing something that makes them feel good and share this with you. The yellow cloud at the top of the page corresponds to Part One in the story, where Orion is playfully galloping in the field. Show genuine interest in your child/the child in your care’s picture, and explore with them:

- What makes this special for you?
- Do you think everyone in your class would draw the same thing as you?
- What else do you do that makes you feel good?’

Talk to your child/the child in your care about why it’s important for us to know what we like, and why doing these things nurtures our relationship with ourselves so we can learn to be our own good friend. If you like, further the discussion and tell your child/the child in your care what makes you feel good and why.

Dr. Malie and Linsey’s Top Tips:

Children (and adults alike!) often struggle with big feelings which they find difficult to understand and express. In the “Along Came a Cloud” story, we included techniques to support children with their four big feelings, each represented by a coloured cloud. Explaining to your child/the child in your care that their feelings are just like clouds, that they’re always changing and moving, never staying the same, can be a comfort to them.

Co-Regulation: Children are not born knowing how to soothe themselves and their big feelings. They need our help to regulate their feelings, because they are too young to do it on their own. When parents repeatedly help children to soothe their feelings, they will learn to do it for themselves as they grow. In order to be able to do this as parents, we also need to stay regulated in our nervous systems. This is called ‘co-regulation’.

In the story, we included several examples of ‘co-regulation’. This is when the animals soothe each other through the challenges they face, knowing it’s okay to feel different feelings and supporting each other through them, building their sense of security and trust in the world.

As you read these underlined examples of co-regulation from the story, *think about how you might apply these when your child/the child in your care next experiences a big feeling*:

In Part One, Orion the horse stops to **nurture himself** (a 'self-regulation top-up!'), which is essential for his ability to regulate the other characters' feelings throughout the story.

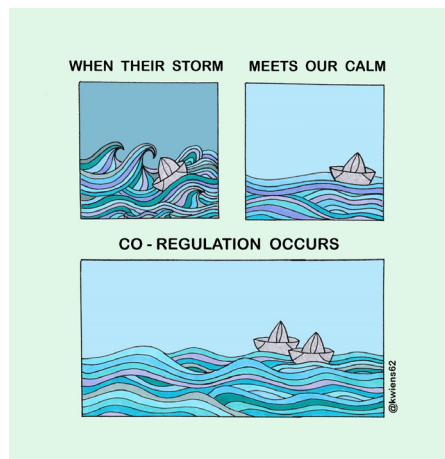
In Part Two, Orion validates Amari the bull's anger **by placing his hoof on him**, and teaches him a great technique for dispersing excess adrenaline called '**Shaking on Purpose**'.

In Part Three, Orion soothes Riley the sheepdog through her sadness by **nudging her closer and rocking back and forth**. By **enabling Riley to feel** sadness, she moves towards regulation.

In Part Four, Orion helps Maja the caterpillar with her fear **by sitting close and breathing in and out with her**. He also encourages her to **let the worry know that she is the boss** of it.

In Part Five, Orion becomes fearful himself, which shows that we all experience big feelings sometimes. **Maja acknowledges his fear** and encourages him to **create a silly version** of the scary thing. Because play is the opposite of fear, being playful often helps to lighten fears.

Finally, we love the image below "**When their storm meets our calm, co-regulation occurs**". When children are struggling with big feelings, they feel as if they are in a small boat on rough seas trying very hard to navigate away from the rocks. But when their chaotic boat meets the parent's/caregiver's calm boat, the parent/caregiver is able to calm their child right down. Essential in a parent/caregiver managing to calm their sea is nurturing their own self-care.



Resources:

- Dan Siegel 'Parenting' video series based on his amazing 'Whole Brain Child Book': <https://dalailamacenter.org/programs/speakers-series/daniel-siegel>
- A child-friendly movie about this topic is 'Inside Out', with the second movie coming out in 2024: <https://www.common SenseMedia.org/movie-reviews/inside-out>
- A Lust for Life online article on how to validate children's feelings: <https://www.alustforlife.com/tools/mental-health/validation-of-childrens-feelings-promotes-positive-mental-health?app=true>