

Feed the Mouse

Materials: Mouse Puppet

Time: 15 Minutes

Age: 5 years and up

Why it works:

We teach kids the different brain parts and what their job is. But we also stress that these parts must work together to be effective. They learn that the amygdala can hijack that partnership if it feels threatened, leaving the brain compromised until settled. The amygdala resides in the mammalian area of the brain which focuses on "approaching rewards." In this exercise, we take Rick Hanson's new concept of helping that brain region feel rewarded, satisfied, and fulfilled: in a word, "fed."



When children have regular opportunities to experience their physical and emotional self positively, they learn the feeling of satisfied, or "fed." They rely on adults to provide those opportunities. For example: When a child is coloring together with an adult, that adult can attune with her by stating what he sees and feels about the child's work. He can notice out loud that the child seems happy when she is coloring, or even focused or intent. They can talk about the colors she is using, or what the picture is about, or how the picture makes him feel. The noticing and stating out loud connects the child to the experience. This reflection builds the child's vocabulary for naming experiences that not only connect her with her own positive emotions, but she also begins to sense the power of her actions to affect others positively. The resulting good feelings reduce stress, strengthen resilience, and build inner resources. For a child, this supports healthy brain functioning while it is developing. It also gives her the experience of filling herself with her own actions, rather than seeking external rewards.



What to say

1. Introduce the mouse puppet as that little furry part of your brain that wants to feel rewarded, satisfied, and fulfilled. Do you know what that means?
2. It is when you do something you feel proud of, and makes you happy to be who you are. It might even make other people proud or happy, too!
3. Can you think of some things that make you feel this way? Examples: lay in the grass with the sun warming your body, helping a friend, reading a book to your parent, kicking the soccer ball just where you want it to go...
4. Have each child talk through the mouse and tell one thing that makes them feel satisfied and rewarded.
5. Write the list on a piece of paper or poster board for placing on a wall. The list is available to review when we need to remember what makes us feel good, and then we can do it.
6. As teacher, try to notice when a child is doing one of these things and remind them to feels how it feels, and how it makes you feel to see him doing this thing.
7. Parents can do this with their children, and even expand it to a family list.
8. Gratitude circle: Have each child thank the mouse for helping them identify what things they can do to feel proud of themselves, and promise to "feed" the mouse regularly.

Summary

This exercise is for children who have integrated the initial brain lesson, and have experienced their senses in many ways using mindful exercises. As with prior activities, practice helps the child integrate the strategies. Example: during snack or meal time suggest that we take pleasure in eating, and know that we are getting enough. The mouse is satisfied! Using the mouse to notice, or just referring to the mouse as being "so happy" the child is feeding it right now, strengthens those neuro-pathways to lock in what feel satisfied so we can feel calm and ready for the next adventure.

Goal

At FocusedKids our primary goal is to help young children develop self-reliance and self-control. When they learn what "feeds" them, they add to their repertoire of ways to care for themselves, They also begin to learn that feeding themselves can feed others as well.

Links: Rick Hansen: <http://www.rickhanson.net/feed-the-mouse/>

FocusedKids:



Feed the mouse to feel good about yourself!



Color me satisfied...add other things that feed you!

