Facing Fears Parent Handout

DATE:

SOCIAL SKILL OBJECTIVE: Students face many challenges in overcoming their fears, whether real or imaginary. These fears can range from fear of animals to fear of entering a new building.

BOOKS: The Shark Who Was Afraid of Everything by Brian James; The Giraffe Who Was Afraid of Heights by David Ufer; Help is Here for Facing Fear by Molly Wigand; Sometimes I’m Scared by Jane Annunziata; Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes; We’re Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen; We’re Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury

GAME: Facing Fears


FOLLOW UP AT HOME:

Talk to your child about his/her fears and discuss how to deal with them.

Discuss how fear is sometimes good and keeps us on our toes, like when we have to perform or go in front of an audience.

Help your child face their fear by involving him/her in a fun activity like making spider cookies if they are afraid of spiders.

If your child is fearful, have them draw a picture of what they fear, tear it up and put it in their fear jar/box. This gives them power over their fear.

Fear of Speaking

First, practice relaxation strategies like calm breathing. Learning to relax can make speaking in public a little easier.

Next, have your child make a list of all the possible ways they could present in public from the least scary to the scariest. For example, presenting in front of their family may rate a 3 out of 10 on your fear ladder of how afraid they are, so the family as the audience could be a good first step. After they have mastered that, they might progress to inviting a couple of other friends over to hear them talk. Later steps could be talking in the classroom with just the teacher present, showing a video of themselves doing the presentation in front of the whole class, and later presenting in front of the class.
If they work on fighting their fear in small steps daily, they will be public speaking in no time! Remind them that everyone gets embarrassed sometimes and it doesn’t last forever – they’ll live! And if the worst thing they can imagine is others laughing at them for making a small mistake, plan for what they would do if that happened - the best strategy is to say “Whoops! Um, rewind!” and laugh. Rehearsing how they would handle some of those situations will help them feel more confident and shine.

Invite family members (who will be helpful rather than noisy or critical, of course), nice neighbors, pets, even stuffed animals to give your child the feeling of speaking to a larger group that better represents his or her class or peers.

**Acquiring knowledge and presenting this knowledge are two different skills.**

Can you imagine how many opportunities we miss as children and later on as adults due to the fear of public speaking?

The good news is we can change that and the younger we start, the easier it gets. It is very important for children to hear their own voice and get used to the sound of it. It is good to do it with a supportive audience and slowly extend it to presenting in front of others. The fear of public speaking is related to the fear of failure and the fear of being laughed at.

1. Let kids **play with sounds** and enjoy the sound of their own voice. Record them making noises and help them relax about hearing their recorded voice (it sounds different). I remember my daughter having a tape recorder as a child. Nowadays, it is so much easier, because you can do it on the computer or on a mobile phone. There are many opportunities – just let them enjoy their voice.
2. **Teach kids to tell jokes** and capture them on video with your phone or digital camera. Let them watch themselves and make sure you are not judgmental (if you do something that may seem judgmental, it only increases the performance anxiety and blocks their thinking).
3. Spend time listening to your kids **reading aloud parts of the book** they are reading. This can be done from the second they start reading and can continue later on when they are older and they read something funny and want to read it to you.
4. Tell your children **stories about your life**, when you had to do something and you were afraid to speak in front of others. It will make it easy for them to know that everyone experiences fear of public speaking.
5. Tell them **stories about celebrities** who were shy and afraid to speak in public. This is why I like to find videos of true stories from the DVD shop. I think it is essential for kids to realize that we are not born with this ability – we develop it.
6. At dinnertime, play some games (I like personal development games, like “Something wonderful that happened to me today”, “3 good things I can say about someone in the family” or “If I had everything I wanted, I would…”) and **make sure everyone gets a turn**. They can learn to say what they think and talk about something personal while everyone else is listening and giving them the attention they deserve.