



Sample Scripts for Puppets and Teachers Talking with Children During the Coronavirus

In these 6 video clips with the Incredible Years puppets, Carolyn Webster-Stratton the developer of the Incredible Years programs talks to the child puppets about their feelings. She encourages the child puppets to share their feelings in response to the Covid-19 virus and helps them remember times when they have felt nervous or lonely or afraid in the past and how they have learned to cope with those uncomfortable feelings in order to feel safe, less bored, patient, fair, less lonely and brave.

Teachers can share these video clips with other children and by pausing the clip when the puppet is talking about particular uncomfortable feelings such as boredom, nervousness, unfairness, loneliness, and feeling unsafe. When the child puppet shares ways to cope with these feelings the teacher can encourage their students to share their solutions for ways they can think and behave to feel better.

Teachers and parents may also watch these vignettes to learn ways they can use puppets themselves with their children to address their specific feelings. Since children ages 4-8 years are cognitively in what Piaget calls the pre-operational stage of cognitive brain development, the use of pretend and imaginative play can be a powerful way of helping children to talk about their feelings and for learning ways to not only manage any uncomfortable feelings but also ways to manage their behavior responses in healthy ways.

Hot Tip: With puppets you can open the door to helping children talk about their feelings or to write stories about or draw pictures about their experiences. It is important not to pressure these discussions and to focus when possible on positive feelings such as being brave, confident, strong, healthy, helpful, caring, happy, curious, creative, patient and loving.

Wally talks about Feeling Bored and How to Get Unbored

Puppet: My mother said it was okay to talk about my feelings so I wanted to talk about feeling bored.

Adult: What is the bored feeling you have?

Puppet: Well it not like a board (shows board) but it is a feeling inside like when my pet mouse feels when he is going around a wheel and has nowhere to go.

Or, I'm stuck with nothing exciting or fun to do.
Or, like waiting for my turn on the phone to talk to Nana or my TV program to start.
Or, waiting for mom to finish making dinner.
Or, I feel bored when I am doing something monotonous like cleaning my room.
Or, doing that part of the homework I don't like.
Or, when I am waiting for Mom to finish working so I can play with her.

Adult: Oh I see how do you look when you are bored.. what is your face like?

Puppet: shows face

Adult: Okay that helps know your feeling when I see that face. What do you do when you feel that way?

Puppet: Sometimes I annoy my sister. Sometimes I tease the dog.

Adult: What happens then?

Puppet: My sister and my dog get bored with me!

Adult: Is there a way to get unbored?

Puppet: Sometimes it helps if I find a game to play. Or, call my friend. Or, lie on my bed and imagine I am an astronaut in a rocket ship. I imagine adventures going in my rocket ship to strange lands that have dinosaurs on them.

Looks at children on video... so I am calling you now to ask if you will share with me what you do when you are bored?

Because if you share that with me maybe I could write a story about a boring day that won't send you to sleep because it won't be boring. Then I could read it to my friends so they have ideas for how to be less bored. Wow already I don't feel bored!

Adult: That would be lovely, maybe we could draw pictures together for your book about those nonboring day adventures. I hope you would read your boring book it to me too because sometimes I get bored too because I can't be playing tennis with my friends or go rowing. We could help each feel less bored with some new rocket ship adventures. You could even teach me about how rocket ships work.

Felicity Feelings Talks about Feeling Lonely

Puppet: Not being able to go to school for 5 months makes me feel lonely because I won't be with my friends.

Adult: What does it feel like to feel lonely?

Puppet: Lonely is like being left behind on a hike... when everyone had gone ahead without you. Or, not being asked to a birthday party when some of your friends are going. Or, being left in the classroom to finish my writing assignment when everyone else is outside. Or, when no one wants to play with me on the playground. Or, when my baby sister is taking too much of dad's time. Or, when I can't get to sleep at my friend's house and I miss my parents.

Adult: So it is kind of like when you feel like you have been forgotten or you don't have a friend. What do you do when you feel lonely.

Puppet: Sometimes I pretend not to be lonely and not to care. But it is hard not to feel lonely. Sometimes I play with my puppet and pretend we are having a party and I am meeting someone new. Sometimes I take my puppet to my sister and involve her in the play. Sometimes I call Gramps. Sometimes I read my favorite book, Winnie the Pooh.

Adult: Does this help?

Puppet: It does help because I feel curious when I am pretending and I feel loving when I include my sister. Or happy when talking to Gramps. Or excited

Adult: Yes and do you know that Gramps was lonely too because Nana went to the hospital and when you called him he felt less lonely. Do you think there is another way you could help Gramps feel less lonely?

Puppet: I could send him my picture.

Adult: Yes he would like that... and you know what you already look like you are less lonely. You have some good ideas for feeling less lonely. Also I would love to be involved in your puppet stories and bring Winnie the Pooh to help us because he says you can't stay in our forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.

Puppet: That's right. Maybe I could make a book about how not to be lonely. And you kids watching this could you send me some stories about how you help others not to be lonely.

Adult: That's a good idea, they you could read your book to them when you next call.

Antonio Awesome Talks about it Not Being Fair

Puppet: I feel it's not fair I have to stay home and can't see my friends.

Adult: What does it feel like to feel something isn't fair?

Puppet: I feel kind of trapped inside in a cage behind bars. I feel kind of angry about missing playing with my friends. Or, not fair is like when my sister got a new bike and I didn't get one. Or, when my friends get to watch more TV and I am not allowed. Or, when I wasn't picked to be on the soccer team. I didn't think that was fair. Or, when my brother doesn't let me have a turn on the computer even though it is my turn. Or, he gets to stay up later than me.

Adult: Oh I see those things seem like they are not fair. What do you do when you feel this way.

Puppet: Sometimes I stomp my feet and scream.

Adult: Does that help you feel better?

Puppet: No sometimes it makes me feel worse because I get in trouble.

Adult: Do you think other kids or your brother or sister might also feel some things aren't fair.

Puppet: Yes I guess they miss their friends too. My sister feels it isn't fair that she has more homework than me. Some of my friends think it isn't fair that I can go to my cabin on the weekend or that I get to have a dog. Gramps might feel it is not fair that Nana is going to the hospital. My dog doesn't like it when I won't play with him.

Adult: I guess everyone has times they experience unfairness. What is really unfair is when someone hurts someone else on purpose like calling them names or being cruel. Do you think you can do to show fairness to others?

Puppet: May be I could share some of my books with my friend who doesn't have any books? Or, send Nana some cookies or a card? Or share with my friend who also didn't get on the team that the same thing happened to me and say we can make our own game.

Adult: You are right those are ways to try to be fair.

Puppet: Can you kids share with me how you practice being fair with others? If you do that maybe we can make a book together and share it with others.

Luciana Awesome Talks about Being Nervous

Puppet: Hi friends, Today I wanted to talk to you about feeling nervous.

Adult: What does nervous feel like? And when does that happen?

Puppet: Well it feels like I have butterflies in my stomach and a pounding heart, sometimes I get angry or fidgety when I am nervous. When I am nervous I am not hungry, can't get to sleep. I can't concentrate on my school work. Sometimes I cry.

Adult: When does this happen?

Puppet: Well I used to be nervous when I first learned to how to ride my bike because I thought I might have an accident. Or when I went to the doctor for a shot. Or when you left me in preschool. I think I cried and had a fit.

Now it happens sometimes when I am trying to do homework at home. I worry I will make a math mistake because my teacher isn't here to help me. Sometimes it happens when I hear the news about the Corona virus and sometimes when I hear you talk about it with your friends or when you and dad fight.

Adult: I know this is time when some things are a bit scary. I am glad you are talking to your friends about this and to me. I am going to help you get through this. Remember how you managed your nervousness when learning to ride your bike?

Puppet: I guess I remember you saying I could do it. And I did it. Now I'm pretty good at riding and don't feel nervous.

Adult: Right your feelings changed as you kept trying.. and worked hard to learn. Well I think the same thing can happen when doing your homework. We can have a plan that you can ask me to check your work. So you can keep going. Then I am sure you will be good at math.

Puppet: I like that. I just remembered I learned Tiny turtle's secret of going into his shell and taking deep breaths and telling himself he could do it.

Adult: That's a good idea. Do you remember you had a happy place you thought about when you went in your shell.

Puppet: Right going to the beach to swim.

Adult: So thinking about that might help your stomach butterflies. I also want you to know I think we are watching too much news on TV about the virus so your dad and I won't do that because too much of that makes us nervous too. We could watch some fun adventure movies you like.

Puppet: I just remembered sometimes I find when I do painting I feel less nervous and happier. Can I show you a painting I did yesterday?

Molly Manners Talks about Staying Safe

Puppet: I wanted to talk to you because I have been home from school now 3 weeks with my annoying brother Wally and I wanted you to know how I am feeling. When I first came home I felt nervous and felt a bit unsafe because I worried I might get sick or my Gran and Gramps might get sick. I had a little trouble sleeping & didn't want to do homework while my mother worked.

Adult: Yes I understand that, I felt a little unsafe too sometimes because this virus is something we have never experienced before. Something new always is always a bit scary. Remember when you first started school & didn't want to go and how you love school.

Puppet: Yes that I remember that.

Adult: How are you feeling now?

Puppet: I feel safe most of the time now. My mother told me this virus wasn't my fault. I learned that the virus problem wasn't my fault nor was it because some strange creature from outer space was attacking us. That helps.

Adult: So it sounds like you got information that helped you feel safe. Anything else?

Puppet: Well I decided I need to build up my **safe muscles**. So I **exercise** and do activities every day.. to build my safe muscles. I play hide and seek with my parents, I **jump rope, and do wheelies** on my bike. Sometimes I **blow bubbles** with my annoying brother. I think working on **staying strong** is important.. so I eat healthy food. I also work on my happy places book.. where I draw pictures and write stories about all the things that make me feel happy.

When I do this it helps me build my **waiting muscles**... because I know that if I do something fun I will be able wait until we finally go back to school.

Another thing I like to do is build a fort in my living room and play dress up wearing my mommy's clothes. Today I am going to paint Easter eggs and hide them to see if my brother and mother can find them. I am also working braiding my hair for Easter day.

Adult: I can see how doing those help you feel safe and build your waiting and feeling safe muscles.

Puppet: That's what I wanted to share with you.. my friends today. I hope you will write me to tell me all the ways you are working on feeling safe and building your waiting muscles.

Adult: Wow those are good ideas..

Freddy Feelings Talks about Patience

Puppet: Well I know my sister Felicity Feelings talked about feeling lonely and how she plays with her puppets and reads her book about Winnie and like Winnie she tries not to stay in her forest but to reach out to her friends on face time. That's okay for her and I am a little bit proud of her. But I am older than her and not really into puppets so much, or reading about Winnie. Also I know I am really cool and that I have a lot of friends so my feeling isn't really being lonely.

Adult: Well Freddy you said you wanted to talk about your feelings.. what are you feeling now?

Puppet: Well you know I am a very active person and usually am playing soccer or basketball.. and I really miss that and I just want this social distancing stuff to be over... and I don't know how long I can keep doing this. I guess I am feeling impatient..

Adult: I see you are feeling impatient.. and are finding it hard to wait for when you can do your sports again.

Puppet: That's right I find it hard to wait and get frustrated. But I do understand that I need to do this so that everyone can be safe and healthy. I do get it..

Adult: Is there anything you do to practice your patience? Like in basketball I see you are patient with getting the right throw or right move.

Puppet: Oh see what you are saying learning patience is just like learning basketball I have to practice and build my patience or waiting muscles...
Okay I can physically work on that. So I will race around the back yard 10 times every day, I throw hoops and do wheelies on my bike.
Will that help by building my waiting or patience muscles?

Adult: Yes that will help but you know building patience or waiting ability is also something in your brain... as well as something physical. I wonder if you can work on training your brain muscles too?

Puppet: Hmm.. that is an interesting idea to control my brain muscles. Well I wonder if I can train my brain to think something different.. like instead of thinking "I can't stand this" I could think, "I can do this, I can be strong, I can wait." Or, instead of thinking, "this is the pits, I could think, "I can spend more time with Gramps talking about what he was like when he was my age." I guess I could try to train my brain to think about things I can do rather than what I cannot do.

Adult: Those seem like good things to try... maybe like basketball it is about trying different moves or to see what works best or waiting for the best move.

Puppet: I see so like my coach does I could coach myself to keep trying and eventually my brain muscles will learn how to be more patient. Wow what an awesome idea. I didn't know that patience was something you could learn.. everyone just told me I was impulsive and impatient and I just thought that was the way I was.

Okay kids I am sure some of you feel impatient at times like me and I would love your ideas for how to be more patient... or rather how to wait and try something different to be more patient. Well I know I love science... maybe I could build volcano or see if dad would share what he does with his microscope ..already I am feeling more patient as I think about new moves.