Emotional Regulation Therapy Box:
A Manual and Activity Box to Facilitate Regulation Skills

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The procedures in this manual are meant to be used by agency staff or clients under the supervision of the agency staff.
ABSTRACT
The Emotional Regulation Therapy Box: A Manual and Activity Box to Facilitate Regulation Skills was developed by the researcher for the use of parents and facilitators to implement with young children (ages 0-6) who possess symptoms of emotional dysregulation. The manual is a session-by-session treatment plan that will help facilitate basic emotional regulation skills. These skills include identifying emotions and how they are triggered, appropriately expressing emotions, and how to cope with and accept emotion. Furthermore, the manual encompasses information relevant to emotional regulation/dysregulation, including an Emotional Development Table that outlines typical emotional regulation development. The manual’s main purpose is to promote user-friendly strategies, tools and activities to increase overall emotional regulation skills in young children. This thesis also includes a literature review that uses empirically based evidence to support the best practices for assisting emotional development in early childhood. Further research is required to assess the effectiveness of the manual and activity box.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Emotional dysregulation is prevalent in many psychological disorders identified in early childhood (Macklem, 2008). According to Greenspan (1992), emotional dysregulation is associated with over half of the disorders identified in the revised third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-III-R) (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) which is a precursor of the current DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Emotional dysregulation, which can be defined as “the inability to express, cope [with] and regulate a variety of emotions” (Macklem, 2008), in early childhood has been shown to be related to developmental disorders and other risk for other diagnoses later in life (Wittmer, Doll, & Strain, 1996). Disturbances in emotional development during the initial 6 years of life can influence attention, communication skills, expression of affect, relationships with others, style of interaction, motivation, and experience of pleasure (Greenspan, 1992). Not only does this affect the child directly, it also puts relationships with parents, caregivers and others at risk (Simpson, Robin, & Cohen, 2005). In order to reduce the symptoms of emotional dysregulation, it is essential to target the child’s emotional and behavioural needs in early childhood. These needs include the child’s ability to cope with, identify, and understand his or her emotions, which will be further discussed in the literature review.

Although many articles discuss emotional dysregulation within the general population, there is a gap in research specific to emotional regulation and emotional dysregulation in early childhood. It is important to implement intervention as early, and as effectively as possible; as emotional dysregulation, is significantly more prevalent in adults who have experienced adverse early life conditions than adults who have not (Campbell et al., 2014). As reported by Campbell et al (2014), early treatment programs that are implemented in early childhood can provide “substantial benefits in reducing crime, raising earnings, and promoting education” (p. 1478).

An activity box consisting of play-based activities was constructed. The activity box is comprised of educational activities that help to facilitate the skills needed for children to begin regulating their emotions. It also includes a training manual that consists of general information pertaining to emotional regulation. The training manual has clear instructions and a list of materials that are needed to perform each activity. The manual sets up the activities based on a 6-week program. Each week is comprised of three activities relating to the skill based on the weekly program. A facilitator from Pathways Children and Youth in the Early Years is intended to be the primary facilitator of the program. The purpose of developing the emotional regulation activity box is to provide children with improved skills to help regulate emotions.

The chapters covered in the thesis include: an extensive literature review on the topic of emotional dysregulation, a description of the method of constructing the emotional regulation therapy box with training manual (see Appendix B), the results of this project are described, the conclusion/discussion chapter gives an overview of the thesis including elaboration of the limitations and recommendations of the thesis while providing a general summary.
Definition of Terms:
Empotional Dysregulation: An impairment in regulation of emotional states.
Emotional Regulation: The ability to express, cope with and regulate a variety of emotions.
Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature review for this thesis consists of four sections: the prevalence of emotional dysregulation, the importance of identifying emotional dysregulation, the diagnoses associated with emotional dysregulation, and the treatment of emotional dysregulation. The literature review discusses general information regarding emotional regulation and emotional dysregulation, which includes: the typical development of emotional regulation in early childhood, the application of treatment that is commonly used for emotional dysregulation in children, and treatment effects for children who are diagnosed with disorders associated with emotional dysregulation. Research studies that support the rationale the thesis in support of early intervention for children who display traits of emotional dysregulation are discussed. This literature review examines and evaluates the best practices used to increase skill building and emotional regulation in early childhood.

The Prevalence of Emotional Dysregulation

Offord, Boyle, Szatmari, et al. (1987) conducted the Ontario Child Health Study to determine the prevalence of mental health disorders and the rate of service utilization in 1,869 children aged 4-16 years of age who resided in Ontario, Canada. The researchers focused on conduct disorder, hyperactivity, emotional disorders, and somatization, as well as the pattern of services for mental health and social services, medical care, and special education. The authors developed a 40-item survey of items adapted from the Child Behaviour Checklist that was completed by teachers, parents, or the children themselves (if over the age of 12), which captured the intensity and duration of the symptoms of emotional or behavioural disorders if present. The results of this study showed that nearly 1 in 5 (18.1%) of children between the ages of 4-16 experienced an emotional or behavioural disorder that was severe enough to cause significant impairment at home, school or within the community, i.e. that merited a diagnosis, but had not necessarily been diagnosed. It was also found that children who were diagnosed with an emotional or behaviour disorder were four times more likely to have received special services within the six months preceding the study than the children who had not received a diagnosis. Furthermore, five in six of the children who had not yet received the specialized services in the previous six month period. The results from this study demonstrated the disadvantage to young children who had not yet received a diagnosis or might not receive a diagnosis, as they were less likely to receive treatment than children who received a diagnosis.

Although this is an older research article, it provided information about the impact of emotional and behaviour disorders on children and shaped policy for the provision of treatment for youth in Canada. There has not been a recent follow-up to this particular study, but current research continues to show stable or increased rates of children who have an emotional or behavioural disorder (Boyd et al, 2006).

The Importance of Early Identification of Emotional Dysregulation

According to Bradley, Atkinson, Tomasino and Rees (2012), infancy is when emotional regulation first begins. An infant observes and learns to understand mother-infant interactions, and how to self-regulate experiences of intense and overwhelming emotions, both positive and negative (Bradley, Atkinson, Tomasino, & Rees, 2012). The
Ages and Stages model developed by the Child Development Institute (n.d.) holds that between the ages 2-5 children become more interactive with their surroundings. Language development begins to significantly accelerate, as does physical, intellectual, and emotional development. During this early developmental period, emotional regulation can be challenging and difficult for parents to cope with and understand without information and appropriate parenting skills (Macklem, 2008). The Child Development Institute (n.d.) states that with the appropriate strategies to do so, children as young as 3 years of age are capable of beginning to learn and practice self-regulation skills.

Zeman et al. (2006) conducted a review that established the importance of emotional regulation and the need for treatment and further research on the topic. According to these researchers, the ability for a child to regulate his or her emotions is contingent on previous interactions with the social environment (e.g., child-caregiver relationships and interactions with peers). The competent use of emotional regulation skills can be an indication and explanation for adaptive psychosocial functioning. These skills provide individuals with instrumental information not only about themselves, but also with their environment, and the relationship with his or her environment.

It was also reported by Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, and Robinson (2007), that children learn about emotional regulation through observational learning, modeling and social referencing. Morris et al. (2007) also reported that parental practices specifically related to emotion and emotional management affect emotional regulation.

As stated by Fox and Calkins (2003), the process of emotional regulation involves both intrinsic (e.g., temperament, cognitive processes) and extrinsic (e.g., caregiving environment, sibling/peer relations, cultural expectations) factors. The extrinsic and intrinsic factors affect the monitoring, evaluating and modifying of emotional reactions (Thompson, 1994). These processes are critical factors in the development and maintenance of relationships with others (Zeman et al., 2006). These processes are important when focusing on the development of emotional regulation in toddlerhood, as this developmental stage is responsible for the ability to begin to navigate between external and internal emotional regulation (Premo & Kiel, 2014).

In a review conducted by Powell, Dunlap, and Fox (2006), the authors discussed the recognized challenging behaviours and repertoires of toddlers and preschoolers, and presented a model of prevention and intervention. The researchers defined challenging behaviours as “the disruption of eating and sleeping routines, physical and verbal aggression, property destruction, tantrums, self-injury, non-compliance and withdrawal” (2006, p.25). The model was presented as a support triangle with hierarchical framework, displaying four levels of activities for prevention and intervention to promote children’s social and emotional development within the school, home and other care environments. The triangle’s levels consisted of building positive relationships with children and families, prevention practices in home and classroom settings, social-emotional learning strategies, and intensive individualized interventions. It recommended that the first two levels of the triangle (i.e., building positive relationships, and prevention practices) be used for all young children, as it is important to support social and emotional competence for healthy development; however, it was recommended children at risk for challenging behaviours be given more specialized services to enhance their social-emotional learning strategies. The template developed by the researchers created a
framework designed to help address challenging behaviours and identify need for intervention and prevention in early childhood. The framework needs further development to effectively address challenging behaviours in early childhood, but the model provided insight into emotional development and its relationship with challenging behaviour.

Boyd et al. (2005) reviewed and evaluated multiple studies that measured the social and emotional skills of children entering kindergarten. They reported that 20% of children entering kindergarten classrooms lack the requisites of fundamental social and emotional skills that are essential to learning and functioning effectively in school. The investigators concluded that high-quality preschool education can support early childhood development that can yield long-term social and emotional benefits.

As discussed previously, the inability to regulate emotions (i.e., emotional dysregulation) is associated with over half of the disorders illustrated in the DSM-III-R (Greenspan, 1992). Greenspan concluded that “the treatment and prevention of emotional, behavioural and developmental problems in infancy and early childhood may be the most important frontier in behavioural science” (1992, p.1). In addition, it is exceedingly important for children to learn to regulate and cope with their emotions from early childhood (Zeman et al., 2006). Bradley et al. (2012) reported that, as important as emotional regulation skills are to children, there is a deficiency of education regarding age appropriate strategies for teaching children to learn about, understand, cope with, and regulate emotions. Problems with socio-emotional development in preschoolers and school-aged children can develop into challenging and socially disruptive patterns of behaviour. Without early intervention, emotional dysregulation can progress into antisocial behaviour such as aggression, bullying and adolescent delinquency (Powell et al., 2003; Wilson et al., 2001; as cited in Bradley, 2012). To help reduce the challenges that stem from lack of emotional regulation skills in early childhood, it is important to support young children in learning emotional regulation skills through age-appropriate techniques (Bradley et al., 2012). Providing coaching through encouragement, support, and guidance to the child will help to facilitate regulation skills, and prevent further challenges in the child’s development (Child Development Institute, n.d.).

The review by Zeman et al. (2006) discussed two prevention programs focusing on emotionally competent behaviour. One of the programs, The Roots of Empathy™, developed in Canada, used normative data on emotional development research to develop a school-based program for children from kindergarten to eighth grade (Gordon, 1996). This program facilitated education about the understanding of emotional regulation skills along with empathy skills (e.g., empathetic concerns and perspective taking). The program focused on the correlation between emotion and social competence, but with a primary goal of reducing aggression and antisocial behaviour, which tend to be related to emotional dysregulation.

One of the only peer-reviewed articles to evaluate the effectiveness of the Roots of Empathy™ program was conducted by Schonert-Reichl, Smith, Zaidman-Zait, and Hertzman (2012), using a quasi-experimental, control-group, pretest-posttest, multi-informant design to study 585 children in grades 4–7. The same skills, with modifications of presentation for the age of the learner, were taught across all groups. The study showed significant improvements in the experimental groups’ social-emotional competence, including prosocial behaviour (e.g., sharing and cooperation), antisocial
behaviour (e.g., breaking rules and multiple forms of aggression). The results suggested that children who received this treatment were positively impacted because their emotional understanding and emotional skill development improved.

Previous studies, involving clinical practice had suggested that it is important to identify emotional dysregulation at an early age (Zeman et al., 2006). Identifying emotional dysregulation at an early age is commonly associated with the successful accomplishment of many of developmental tasks that may be crucial to successful lifelong development (Macklem, 2008). It is important for caregivers to understand the typical emotional regulation cycle in youngsters so that they are able to identify emotional dysregulation that may need behavioural intervention and thus mitigate the symptoms of possible diagnoses in the future (Greenspan, 1992).

**Treatment of Emotional Dysregulation**

Among the many treatments used to treat emotional dysregulation, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and multiple other protocols and programs have been implemented. There have been many treatments to help facilitate emotional regulation in children. According to Trosper, Buzzella, Bennett, and Ehrenreich (2009), CBT that incorporates skills training is one of the main intervention strategies used when treating children with emotional dysregulation. In their study, Trosper et al. (2009) designed a unified protocol for the treatment of children with emotional disorders. The authors reviewed multiple studies that have highlighted the fact that anxious and depressed children have difficulty managing a range of emotions, including sadness, anger, and anxiety, which suggested deficiencies in effective emotional coping methods. The application of CBT intervention has been associated with a reduction in the symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as other internalizing disorders in both childhood and adulthood (Borkovec et al. 1995; Brown et al. 1995 as cited in Trosper et al., 2009). Trosper et al. (2009) explain that the lack of emotional focus in current treatment may be due to the lack of availability of CBT. Although this CBT program focuses on children over the age of 6 who have a diagnosis (e.g., ASD, ADHD) the components of this treatment are thought by the researchers to help children under the age of 6 without clinical diagnoses to develop emotional regulation skills.

In a program constructed by Bradley et al. (2012), 375 children aged 3-6 were trained by teachers in key emotional and social competencies: recognizing and understanding emotional states, how to self-regulate emotions, strengthening the expression of positive feelings, improving peer relations, and developing skills for problem-solving, through educational and play-based activities. The program targeted schools in lower socioeconomic areas that were high in minority populations for the intervention group in order to compare the intervention effects on the control group (i.e., children from higher socioeconomic areas). This program was thought to support teachers and students to regulate stress, improve test anxiety, and overcome other emotional barriers to learning and performance. It incorporated many play-based activities and techniques, broken into categories, which helped to facilitate learning in young children. Children were taught the connection between emotion and physiological experience (specifically the heart) through interactive models. Through visual cards, children were taught about basic emotions (e.g., happy, sad, angry, afraid, peaceful) to facilitate a better understanding and recognition of each emotion. Learning to problem-solve through a variety of skills was taught through posters, songs and role-playing with peers. Specific
techniques to deal with emotional regulation, including the Shift and Shine™ technique and the Heart Warmer™ technique, were taught. Each technique was designed to bring attention to the children’s heart rate, draw a connection to the way they were feeling, and incorporate breathing techniques. A 50-item observational protocol was completed on each student at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. It was found that there was a strong and consistent pattern of positive results in the developmental growth of the children who took this program, as opposed to the children that did not. The combination of the components used in this particular study was thought to better educate children to understand emotional regulation.

Hannesdottir and Ollendick (2007) believed that school aged children with anxiety disorders should be taught to regulate their emotions through the use of CBT, because many children with anxiety disorders display poor emotional regulation skills. The researchers argued, however, that CBT may not be the most effective treatment, especially for children who do not have emotional regulation skills. The authors included fundamental components to the CBT including problem-solving techniques, relaxation training, cognitive restructuring and exposure training. These components were specifically included because a regular CBT is only effective for 60% to 70% of children. This review concluded that it is important to help children cope with regulating emotions for the purpose of reducing their anxiety. The authors explained that each CBT program should be tailored to the needs of the child, who may or may not display a disorder. The conclusion of this review was that anxiety disorders are directly related to poor emotional regulation skills as opposed to just a cognitive phenomenon.

Although Hannesdottir and Ollendick (2007) focused on children with anxiety disorders, other studies have taught emotional regulation skills in the context of disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Macklem, 2006). COPEing with Toddler Behaviour (CWTB), run by the Community Parent Education Service of McMaster Children’s Hospital, is a manual-based group program that focuses on developing strategies for parents to promote positive behaviour in their toddlers. CWTB acknowledges the importance of implementing treatment in early childhood to prevent future difficulties, which are likely to be a direct cost to society in terms of suffering, violence, and damaged property, and that are often difficult to treat (Reid, 1993, as cited in Niccols, 2004). The facilitators provide information about the typical development of toddlers. A variety of tools are used to facilitate learning, including video examples, work sheets, along with small and large group discussions. According to Offord, Boyle and Szatmari (1987), (as cited in Niccols, 2004), the most prevalent reason for referral to this program is disruptive behaviour, “acting-out”, or aggressive behaviour from toddlers, which could be a direct result of lack of emotional regulation skills. This program is predicated on early implementation, interactive learning, and relationship values.

Diagnoses Associated with Emotional Dysregulation

Macklem (2008), who emphasizes the significant impact that emotional dysregulation plays in childhood disorders, created a practitioner’s guide, consisting of theory and evidence-based interventions. Diagnoses that are often related to emotional dysregulation include: ASD, ADHD, bi-polar disorder, borderline personality disorder, anxiety disorders, and other emotional disorders. Waller and Scheidt (2006); as cited in Macklem, 2008) connect these disorders to a “decreased ability to experience and
differentiate emotions as well as to the inability to express emotions in a healthy manner” (Macklem, 2008, p. 14). Although emotional dysregulation is not necessarily causative in these diagnoses, the management of emotional dysregulation may reduce the impact of the disorders.

Waller and Scheidt (2006) conducted a perspective research study of the role disturbances associated with the development of somatoform disorders (i.e., mental disorders that cause bodily symptoms). The researchers examined multiple previous developed theory and research regarding the disorder; one of which linking emotional regulation and somatoform disorders. The researchers concluded that somatoform disorders are directly related to the inability to experience, differentiate, and to properly express emotions. Given the link between the somatoform disorders and emotional dysregulation, it was suggested that interventions should include emotional regulation strategies to promote awareness to encourage healthy development.

Maedgen and Carlson (2000) conducted a study that compared 30 children with different subtypes of ADHD to a control group of 17 children without a diagnosis. The purpose of this study was to reveal the features of social functioning and emotional regulation between children with ADHD and typically developing children. The study used parent-teacher scales (pertaining to social status and performance), self-report and performance measures to test knowledge of social skills, and, made other observations that provided insight into the emotional regulation abilities of the children. The data showed that children with the diagnosis of ADHD have higher social dysfunction than children without the diagnosis. According to Maedgen and Carlson (2000), Specific subtypes of ADHD, (i.e., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder combined type [ADHD-C], and predominately inattentive type [ADHD-I]) were compared to a control group of children with no diagnoses. ADHD-C is defined as children who display both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms, and ADHD-I is defined as children who only display attention deficits without hyperactivity and impulsivity. The results showed children with ADHD-C were more aggressive and displayed higher signs of emotional dysregulation (i.e. categorized by high intensity and high levels of positive and negative behaviour) than the children with ADHD-I and the control group. Children with ADHD-I were observed to be more socially passive, but did not show any evidence of emotional dysregulation. Maedgen and Carlson (2000) intended to define the nature of the social deficits that children with ADHD display. Although the study discussed the social deficits of ADHD children, these social deficits were closely linked to emotional dysregulation. Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) also frequently have emotional dysregulation. Mazefsky et al. (2013) conducted a review of emotional regulation in children with ASD. The authors discussed previously designed methods of measuring emotional dysregulation, and the methods were compared in order to determine a conceptual and methodological framework for the treatment of this population. The literature in regards to this topic was examined as a measure to identify contributing factors to emotional dysregulation in ASD. It was found that emotional dysregulation may be inherent to children with ASD, and may provide a detailed explanation for socio-emotional and behavioural problems within the population. This study concludes that, although emotional dysregulation is common in children with ASD, further research is required to pinpoint more details about the relationship between ASD and emotional regulation to effectively build treatments for the individual.
These articles identify a strong positive correlation between emotional dysregulation and children who are diagnosed with autism or ADHD. The diagnoses are already known to be associated with emotional regulation, but each article specifies that more research is needed to identify the most effective intervention to treat these populations.

**Conclusion**

The articles discussed in the literature review have shown a clear need for early intervention to address emotional dysregulation during early child development. With the high prevalence rate of emotional dysregulation in early childhood, it is considered important to start intervention with young children to moderate future problems later on in their lives. Treatment strategies typically used to facilitate emotional regulation in children most often target children above the age of 6. The literature suggests that intervening in early childhood may be effective in preventing or decreasing symptoms of mental health diagnoses; however, there is still a significant gap in the research on treatment of dysregulation in early childhood. Play-based intervention in early childhood is, however, a promising modality for delivery of treatments like CBT to young children to reduce the negative impacts of emotional dysregulation on their health, relationships, communication skills, and overall wellbeing.

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Chapter III: Methodology

Description of Setting and Service

Pathways for Children and Youth is a goal-focused, family-oriented, community and government agency that provides services to children from birth to the age of 18. Pathways has multiple services that are intended to help children and youth with a range of difficulties; these may include behaviour or emotions, mental health, family violence or distress, trauma, substance abuse, or parent-child conflict. Pathways uses a central intake system that allows potential clients to have direct contact with a staff member who can determine the best services to address the needs of the child. Pathways ensures that clients and families have the tools needed to assist their children at home and within the community. The community services that Pathways offers include consultations, individual, family, and group counseling, parenting programs, and intensive services (e.g., Intensive Child and Family, Early Years, and Nexus [Day Treatment])

The Early Years Program is a short-term, intensive service that offers family-centered and goal-based programs in home, school, or community locations. This service involves consultations to schools, childcare, and early childhood education programs, training programs on children’s mental health, and parent-education programs on children’s mental health. Children who are referred to the Early Years Program are under the age of six and display challenging behaviours that interfere with school, relationships, or their wellbeing (e.g., school, safety, family and peer relationships). The Early Years Program’s counselors develop goals for the family and offer a range of strategies that will help them achieve their goals.

Emotional Regulation Therapy Box

This treatment approach was originally suggested and developed at the request of agency counselors. To support their ongoing work an Emotional Regulation Activity Box was developed for the use of the counselors delivering in-home services in the Early Years Program for use with children showing symptoms of emotional dysregulation.

The Emotional Regulation Therapy Box was based on a 6-week program, each week consisting of a set of skills incorporated into activities that help children learn to self-regulate. The topics included are: identifying emotions, knowing how emotions are triggered, expressing emotions, coping with emotions, accepting emotions, and an overview of the topics learned throughout the sessions. Each skill was broken down into three play-based activities suited for children under the age of six. The goal is for participating children to begin to conceptualize and incorporate the content presented in the emotional regulation box into their daily lives.

Each weekly session will take 30 to 40 minutes and will focus on three activities underlying the designated skill. The setting of the intervention may be the Pathways location, in home during a session with the counselor, or in home without a counselor. Specific activities that were originally designed for adolescents were obtained from online sources and from the agency and simplified to be suitable for younger children. The Community Child and Youth Counselors have approved the activities used in the Emotional Regulation Activity Box. The materials needed for the activities were included as well as pen and paper to record feedback.
The Manual

A user-friendly training manual for the use of parents and counselors has been included in the Emotional Regulation Activity Box. This manual first introduces general information and facts about emotional dysregulation. A chart that displays typical emotional development was developed so that parents can assess if their child is achieving emotional milestones. An overview of the activities is presented, followed by detailed descriptions of each activity including the purpose of each activity, materials needed, instructions for implementing the activity, variations of the activity, and cautions to be aware of before using the activity. It is suggested that the manual be read before the implementation of the activities and used as a reference during the activities.

Participants

The targeted participants are children under the age of six (no minimum age), and their parents, who have been referred for in-home treatment in the Early Years program of Pathways, for problems with regulating their emotions, and the facilitators who are delivering the program. The counselor and parent or caregiver using the activity box and manual will be responsible for the delivery of the activities and the completion of the feedback questionnaire.

Informed Consent

The participants will follow the consent procedures that are required to enroll in the services offered at Pathways. This entails consent to therapy with treatment services contingent on the needs of child. Additional consent should be obtained from the participant to obtain data from the Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire. Although data was not collected in the current project, it is recommended that parents of future participants be asked to give informed consent and be given an opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns that they may have in regards to the activity box. They should be informed that information regarding the child’s age and gender will be required for the feedback questionnaire and that confidentiality will be maintained.

Measure: Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire

To assess satisfaction with the Emotional Regulation Activity Box and manual, a feedback questionnaire was developed (Appendix A). The questionnaire was specifically designed for parents or counselors to complete after the use of the manual and activity box. The feedback questionnaire measures the readability and comprehension of the manual and how it corresponds to the emotional activity box. The questionnaire also measures the satisfaction the participants had while using the tool.

The feedback questionnaire consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and three “yes or no” questions. The Likert scale consists of ratings entitled “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.” The feedback questionnaire also provides a blank space for the counselor, parent, or caregiver to write comments based on his or her experience with the manual and activity box and/or suggestions to improve the tool. The questionnaire also provides spaces to identify the age, gender and date of the feedback completion. This information can be used to determine if the activities in the activity box require adjustment for developmental and gender appropriateness. Although data was not collected in the current study, the feedback questionnaire was incorporated for future use.

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Chapter IV: Results

The Emotional Regulation Therapy Box was constructed and ready to implement by the winter of 2015. The completed manual is located in Appendix A. The effectiveness of the therapy box was not measured in this thesis due to time limitations; however, a measure was created to evaluate the satisfaction of the participants with the therapy box. The Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire is intended for the use of participants after the therapy box has been completed.

An outline of the manual is provided in Table 1. The manual contains information regarding emotional regulation as well as skill-building activities. The manual was created to accompany the Emotional Regulation Therapy Box that uses activities that help to facilitate regulation skills.

It is suggested the box should be used at least once a week. The sessions should last 30 to 40 minutes in length. The session should start out with a brief explanation of what the box is, and what it consists of. Minimal rapport prior to treatment should be built. After the treatment sessions, the facilitator will provide a conclusion to the activities, and ask the child if they have any questions regarding emotions or the activities within the box.

Table 1. Emotional Regulation Therapy Box: A Manual to Facilitate Regulation Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Section Content</th>
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</table>
| One     | All About Emotional Regulation | Emotional Regulation Statistics  
What is Emotional Regulation?  
Why is Emotional Regulation Important?  
Emotional Dysregulation Facts |
| Two     | Typical Emotional Development | Typical Emotional Development in early childhood from one month of age to 5 years of age |
| Three   | Session Overview             | Identifying Emotions  
What Triggers Emotions  
Expressing Emotions  
Coping with Emotions  
Accepting Emotions  
Session Review |
| Four    | Activities                   | Emotional regulation activities  
Materials, instructions, variations of activities, and intended purpose of learning are included in each activity |
| Five    | Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire | Intended for completion of Emotional Regulation Therapy Box to measure effectiveness of weekly sessions |
Chapter V: Discussion

Overview

Symptoms of emotional dysregulation are prevalent in many psychological disorders (Macklem, 2008). Emotional dysregulation that is present in early childhood has been related to developmental disorders and risks for other diagnoses later in life (Wittmer, Doll, & Strain, 1996). Attention, communication skills, expression of affect, relationships with others, style of interaction, motivation and experience of pleasure can all be affected by failure to develop underlying skills needed to regulate emotions (Greenspan, 1992). Many articles discuss emotional dysregulation within the general population; however, there is a gap in research targeted at emotional dysregulation within early childhood.

The purpose of the present study was to design a parent-friendly manual and an activity box that would promote emotional regulation skills in children aged 0-6. The manual and therapy box were created for the use of counselors in the Early Years Program within Pathways for Children and Youth, parents and caregivers to implement with a targeted child. The development of the manual and activity box was based on evidence of best practices found within research relative to emotional dysregulation. The therapy box includes a training manual that consists of general information pertaining to emotional regulation. The training manual also includes clear instructions and materials, which are needed to perform each activity.

The chapters of this thesis include: an extensive literature review on the topic of emotional dysregulation, a description of the method of constructing the emotional regulation therapy box with training manual, which are presented in the appendices of the thesis (Appendix B), the results of the final thesis are described, the conclusion/discussion chapter gives an overview of the thesis including elaboration of the limitations and recommendations of the thesis. A satisfaction feedback questionnaire was developed to evaluate overall user satisfaction regarding the manual and the activity box. It is aimed to assess the user’s satisfaction pertaining to aesthetics, relevant information, and recommendations for potential improvements. It is hypothesized that counselors, facilitators and parents will find this manual useful when implementing the therapy box to children emotional regulation skills. The major thesis did not evaluate the effectiveness of the manual and therapy box. Future research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness and satisfaction with the manual and therapy box using the satisfaction feedback questionnaire.

Strengths

This treatment approach was originally suggested by the Pathways staff. It is the first official project geared towards the development of emotional regulation skills in early childhood at Pathways. A strength of the Emotional Regulation Therapy Box: A Manual and Activity Box to Facilitate Regulation Skills is that it was originally developed in for use in the Early Years program at Pathways for Children and Youth, which means that the counselors in the program are available to provide assistance to parents or caregivers if any questions or concerns arise concerning the manual or therapy box. Another strength of this study is that it is based on the available empirical research that suggests important features to incorporate in the program. These features include play-based learning, implementation
of emotional regulation treatment strategies in early childhood, and use of best practices for maximum effectiveness. The project can be adapted and modified to develop the best possible practices to facilitate emotional regulation skills in early childhood.

Limitations
Due to time constraints, the thesis was not tested for effectiveness. Further research will be essential to determine the overall satisfaction and effectiveness of the manual and therapy box. Adaptations and adjustments to the manual and activities should be created based on the feedback provided. Sufficient educational and literacy levels are a requisite for parents and caregivers using the therapy box. They must be able to read the manual and appropriately interpret it to effectively deliver the activity and related set of skills to the child. Additional variations that would meet a diverse range of children’s needs could also be included within the manual.

Contribution to Behavioural Psychology Field
Emotional dysregulation in early childhood is an area that has not been adequately researched to date. This study makes a original contribution to the behavioural psychology field by providing an intervention approach to emotional dysregulation in early childhood, based on current literature. Although the project did not provide evidence of the effectiveness of the manual and therapy box, an extensive literature review was done to compare and contrast the limited research that surrounds emotional dysregulation in early childhood. The thesis not only provides additional information about emotional regulation, but it could lead to future research surrounding emotional regulation in early childhood.

Multilevel Challenges
There are many challenges involved when developing a manual in relation to emotional development in early childhood. At the client level, it may be difficult for parents to implement the program on their own without experience with program implementation. The manual relies on the facilitator in order to deliver appropriate instruction to help facilitate the emotional regulation skills in the child. If the facilitator does not have experience with teaching skills to children or program implementation, the delivery of the program may not meet the child’s needs.

At the program level, the challenge was creating structured activities within the manual, that could be implemented in a variety of settings (e.g., clinical settings or home setting) and creating detailed instructions that would provide an accurate description of how to implement the activity. Another challenge at the program level was how to ensure delivery of proper communication between the facilitators and the clients receiving the treatment. It was important to develop the manual in a manner that the facilitator would understand, and that the instructions be to appropriate to the skills to the child.

At an organizational level, facilitating emotional regulation may be neglected and controlling overt challenging behaviours may be the primary focus. Although other services of Pathways teach skills and strategies to older children and youth who present challenging behaviours, it is important to also prevent these challenging behaviours from developing by teaching the skills and strategies to children at a younger age. Emotional development in children is often overlooked in early childhood at a societal level. Many individuals think that treatment is not necessary for the emotional development in
children or that children are too young and will not benefit from this type of treatment. This is a challenge because children with symptoms of emotional dysregulation are often overlooked and do not receive the treatment that they require.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research is essential in order to evaluate the effectiveness of ‘The Emotional Regulation Therapy Box: A Manual and Activity Box to Facilitate Regulation Skills’. The satisfaction feedback questionnaire was designed to facilitate such research. A longitudinal study of the short-term and long-term effectiveness of the box is recommended.

WORD COUNT: 1114

FINAL WORD COUNT: 6,355


Appendices

Appendix A: Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire

Date of Completion:

Age of Child: ______
Gender of Child: ______
Settings (i.e., home, school, etc): __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided / Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The activities were age appropriate for the child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child participated in all of the activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child enjoyed the activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child used skills learned in emotional regulation therapy box within sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child used skills learned in emotional regulation therapy box outside of sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual is visually appealing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual includes pictures that are relevant to the presented information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual is organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual is easy to understand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual’s information is helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activities took the amount of time as referenced in the manual.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements should be made in the “General Information”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the manual and therapy box was enjoyable to use.

1. The manual was read before activities were put in place. YES/NO
2. The manual was used for reference during the activities. YES/NO
3. All 6-week session activities were completed. YES/NO

Notes (Improvements that could be made to the manual, and other comments):

________________________________________________________________________
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Appendix B: Manual

Emotional Regulation Therapy Box:
A Manual and Activity Box To Facilitate
Regulation Skills

Written by: Sydney Hudson
# Table of Contents

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Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire.....................................................................................

References.............................................................................................................................. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Introduction

The ‘Emotional Regulation Therapy Box: A Manual and Activity Box to Facilitate Regulation Skills is an activity box and manual set that are designed for the use of counselors, parents, and caregivers. The therapy box includes multiple activities that are designed to help promote emotional regulation skills: including identifying emotions, what triggers emotions, how to cope with emotions, expressing emotions, and accepting emotions.

The manual is designed for a 6-week program using the activities from the therapy box, which encompasses skills that are essential for emotional regulation. The manual teaches the facilitator to properly and effectively deliver the activities to the child participating in the program. The manual also provides information regarding emotional regulation. This includes definitions, facts, and a typical emotional development chart. The program is designed for children under the age of 6 who display symptoms of emotional dysregulation; however, all children are welcome to participate in the program.
Dear Counselor, Parent or Caregiver,

It’s true—emotional regulation is a process that is often overlooked in early childhood. It is important for children to learn the basic skills and strategies needed to regulate their emotions to reduce the likelihood of future problems.

This manual was designed for the use of the Early Years Program within Pathways for Children and Youth. The Early Years program is a short-term, intensive service that offers family-centered and goal-based services. Children who are referred to Early Years are children under the age of six who display challenging behaviours that interfere with school, relationships, or their overall wellbeing.

This tool was developed for children to begin learning the skills needed to facilitate emotional regulation. The play-based activities incorporated in this manual aim to help children become more comfortable sharing emotional experiences. Children are often hesitant to discuss feelings, but when approached in a fun manner, they’re often more likely to share.

The activities described in this manual provide variations to ensure the child is effectively learning the skills addressed by the program. This discussion-based program offers the child a safe space to talk about his or her feelings and emotions, and to ask questions as needed.

I hope this manual provides the information and activities that best fit the needs of the child to help enhance his or her emotional regulation skills.

Sincerely,
Sydney Hudson
St. Lawrence College Student
B.A. Behavioural Psychology
All About Emotional Regulation

Emotional Regulation Statistics

• **20%** of children entering kindergarten do not have the requisite social and emotional skills to enter the school system. (Boyd et al, 2005, as cited by Bradley, et al., 2012).

• **1 in 5 children** in early childhood are affected by emotional and behavioural disorders. (Offord, Boyle, & Szatmari, et al., 1987)

• Traditional Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is only effective for **60%-70%** of children (Hannesdottir & Ollendick, 2007)

What is Emotional Regulation?

Emotional regulation is the ability to express, cope with and regulate a variety of emotions (Macklem, 2008). These emotions may include anger, sadness, happiness, or frustration. When an individual is unable to express, cope with and regulate these emotions, it is called **emotional dysregulation**.

Why is Emotional Regulation Important?

It is often thought that emotional regulation does not play a significant role in early childhood, when in fact, it plays a very significant role. Emotional regulation begins in infancy, and continues to develop on into adulthood. (Bradley, Atkinson, Tomasino, & Rees, 2012).

Promoting appropriate emotional regulation skills in early childhood has been proven to enhance overall long-term well being; furthermore, without the appropriate emotional regulation skills and strategies in early childhood, it is more likely for the child to develop problems in adulthood (Greenspan, 1992).
These problems may include: negative impacts on the child’s health, relationships, communication skills, and overall wellbeing (Greenspan, 1992).

Inability to regulate emotions is associated with many diagnoses that are identified on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM) (Greenspan, 1992). Prevention and intervention in early childhood is known to be one of the most effective strategies to decrease symptoms of mental health diagnoses (Greenspan, 1992).

**Emotional Dysregulation Facts**

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders are associated with emotional dysregulation (Macklem, 2008).
- Emotional dysregulation can cause significant impairment for a child in the home, at school or within their community (Offord, Boyle, & Szatmari, et al., 1987).
- Implementing treatment in early childhood is the most effective method to prevent negative impacts on child’s health including: relationships, communication skills, and overall wellbeing (Greenspan, 1992).
- Techniques that are the most effective when teaching emotional regulation skills include: problem-solving techniques, relaxation training, cognitive restructuring and exposure training (Hannesdottir & Ollendick, 2007).
Emotional development milestones vary from child to child and depend on many contributing factors. It is important to recognize typical emotional development in early childhood, as well as warning signs, or ‘red flags’ that may help you identify if a child has a problem with regulating his or her emotions.

Recognizing typical and atypical development will help you gain understanding of the child’s needs, and if it is appropriate to provide the child with extra help.

The chart below depicts the typical emotional development and red flags in early childhood from birth to the age of six.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Typical Emotional Development</th>
<th>Red Flags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The chronological age of the child.</td>
<td>✓ Milestones that are expected to occur based on the age of the child.</td>
<td>Signs or symptoms that the child may be experiencing emotional dysregulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Typical Emotional Development</td>
<td>Red Flags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1 mo.</td>
<td>✓ Cries for help&lt;br&gt;✓ The needs to feel calm, safe and routine&lt;br&gt;✓ Makes eye contact&lt;br&gt;✓ Responds to caregivers’ smiles and voices</td>
<td>❖ Unpredictable responses&lt;br&gt;❖ Not showing interest in other children of the same age&lt;br&gt;❖ Limited or fleeting eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 mo.</td>
<td>✓ Expressing emotion through smiles, frowns, body movements, gurgling, and cooing&lt;br&gt;✓ Comforted while being fed and cuddled&lt;br&gt;✓ Beginning to settle into a regular routine&lt;br&gt;✓ Recognizes familiar faces and smiles at them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6mo.</td>
<td>✓ Beginning to show fear around unknown people&lt;br&gt;✓ Able to laugh and make happy sounds&lt;br&gt;✓ Calmed when picked up and when hearing a familiar voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12mo.</td>
<td>✓ Clings to parent&lt;br&gt;✓ Enjoys attention&lt;br&gt;✓ Resistance with not preferred task&lt;br&gt;✓ May sooth him/herself with toy or thumb sucking&lt;br&gt;✓ Emotional expression increased-including fear and sadness</td>
<td>❖ Does not imitate gestures&lt;br&gt;❖ Seeks comfort with strangers&lt;br&gt;❖ Does not like to be held or cuddled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18mo.</td>
<td>✓ May fluctuate between being cooperative and uncooperative&lt;br&gt;✓ Needs comfort and reassurance from parents/caregivers&lt;br&gt;✓ Afraid of being apart from caregiver and cry when they see him or her leave.</td>
<td>❖ Extremely rigid about routine and upset when they change&lt;br&gt;❖ Extreme difficulty waiting for items he or she wants&lt;br&gt;❖ Requires constant attention to stay at activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Typical Emotional Development</td>
<td>Red Flags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 years | ✓ Shows extreme behaviour-dependent/interdependent very aggressive/calm, and helpful/stubborn  
 ✓ Gets angry when stopped doing something that is unsafe  
 ✓ Temper tantrums are common and  
 ✓ tends to cry, scream, kick, bite and can be rough with other children  
 ✓ Easily distracted because of short attention span  
 ✓ Has little concept of sharing – plays alone alongside other children  
 ✓ Likes routine and any changes are upsetting  
 ✓ Beginning to show feelings of sympathy, pity and pride and aware of praise and smile  
 ✓ Afraid of noises, trains, thunder and flushing toilets. Separation from parent, especially at bedtime is still frightening  
 ✓ May be able to hold picture of loved one in mind which will help child to cope with separation from main caregiver (18 months – 3 years)  
 ✓ Fear of strangers decreasing | ✓ Extreme difficulty separating from caregiver  
 ✓ Showing abnormal aggression  
 ✓ Extreme fears that interfere with activities |
| 3 years | ✓ Play is the main activity of this stage and is important in the development of identity and confidence  
 ✓ Demonstrates a balance of happiness and contentment  
 ✓ Continues to be self-centered and may feel responsible for everything that happens  
 ✓ Vivid imagination and can have imaginary friends  
 ✓ Ability to bargain but not to reason  
 ✓ Distraction techniques still work  
 ✓ Less frustrated and angry  
 ✓ Fear of dark remains and may have fear of moving objects and fear of being abandoned by parent | ✓ Wants to be dependent on caregivers for everything  
 ✓ Extremely passive or fearful, does not want to try things other children are doing  
 ✓ Not able to share with others |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Typical Emotional Development</th>
<th>Red Flags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>• Enjoys jokes and silly games and loves showing off&lt;br&gt;• Play still very important&lt;br&gt;• Can still demonstrate stubbornness, aggression, kicking, biting and blaming others for their naughtiness especially older siblings&lt;br&gt;• A sense of past/future developing&lt;br&gt;• Fear of dark continues&lt;br&gt;• May compete with parent of same sex for attention of parent of opposite sex&lt;br&gt;• Needs parent for support and reassurance</td>
<td>• Extremely rigid about routines and becomes extremely upset when routines are changed&lt;br&gt;• Not interested in playing with other children&lt;br&gt;• Passive and fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 6 years</td>
<td>• Becoming more independent and can be serious and realistic at times&lt;br&gt;• Demonstrates anger by slamming doors and stamping of feet and verbally by saying ‘I hate you’.&lt;br&gt;• Friendly &amp; talkative to strangers&lt;br&gt;• May worry that something might happen to a parent while the child is not there and parents will not be available to them when needed&lt;br&gt;• Protective and kind towards parents, younger child or pet&lt;br&gt;• Becoming less frustrated and less angry&lt;br&gt;• Easily embarrassed&lt;br&gt;• Concerned with pleasing adults</td>
<td>• Extreme fear that interfere with daily activities&lt;br&gt;• Extreme difficulty separating from caregiver&lt;br&gt;• Unable to share or take turns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from:
http://www.kamloopschildrenstherapy.org/social-emotional-infant-milestone

http://www.uic.edu/classes/sped/sped506/milestones.html
Session Overview

The activities listed below are based on a 6-week program that is designed to help build the skills that are needed to develop emotional regulation. Each week consists of 3 activities.

1- Identifying Emotions
2- What Triggers Emotions
3- Express Emotions
4- Coping with Emotions
5- Accepting Emotions
6- Session Review

Week 1- IDENTIFY
   A) Fishing for Emotions
   B) Make a Face!
   C) Match the Feelings

Week 2- TRIGGERS
   A) Feelings Jenga
   B) Therapy Hopscotch
   C) Emotion Mix and Match

Week 3- EXPRESSION
   A) Emotional Animal Game
   B) Feelings Catapult
   C) Emotion Masks

Week 4- COPING
   A) Puppet Show
   B) Muffin Tin Toss
   C) Our Feelings - Story

Week 5- ACCEPTING
   A) Box Of Feelings
   B) Emotion Wheel Work Sheet
   C) Feelings Memory Match

Week 6- REVIEW
   A) How Would My Friends Feel?
   B) M&M Game
   C) How Do I Feel Today?
Identifying Emotions

The purpose of the “Identifying Emotions” session is to help the child recognize basic emotions through the set of activities listed below. Identifying emotions is the first step to learning how to regulate emotion. Labeling basic emotions is important to the child being able to learn appropriate coping strategies and when to appropriately utilize them. The child may already recognize and label the emotions listed in these activities. If this is the case, ask your child to list different emotions that could be associated with the basic emotion (i.e., a sad face could also represent shy or frustrated).
**Fishing for Emotions**

**Materials:** Magnetic Fishing Rod, Emotion Faces (Bag #1) and emotion cube. (Bag #1)

**Instructions:** To begin this game, introduce the child to the emotion faces (located in bag #1). The emotions in this game include:

- Happy
- Sad
- Mad

Place the emotion faces face up on a flat surface (so you can easily see each face). Explain to the child that this is a turn-taking game, and you will go first to demonstrate how to play.

First, roll the dice located in Bag #1. Identify the emotion that is located face up on the cube.

Hold the fishing rod and place the magnet on top of the face that was located on the top of the dice. Once the correct emotion has been identified, take it off the fishing rod and say out loud which face you selected. Ask the child to take the next turn. The object of the game is to collect all of the faces until there are none left. If the child selects the wrong face during his or her turn, label the face for him or her and say, “You selected the ____ face. Try again.”

**Variations:** Spread the faces further apart for an easier game. Put the faces further together for a more difficult game. If the child already recognizes basic emotions, try finding different emotion words for each face.

Example: Happy can also be glad or excited. Sad can mean disappointed or down.

**Cautions:**
- Paperclips located on the back of the emotion faces.
- The magnet on the fishing rod may be heavy.
Make A Face

Materials: Blank Face Sheet, Play Dough

Instructions: Place the Blank Face Sheet on a flat surface with the gender of your choice facing up. Discuss with the child what each emotion looks like on a face:

Example: Happy looks like: smiling, eyebrows raised
Sad looks like: frowning, crying,
Mad looks like: frowning, red face, furrowed brows

Many more facial features can be added.

After the discussion, provide a Blank Face Sheet to the child. Go through each discussed emotion and ask the child to add facial features to the blank face. After the child is finished, go through each facial feature and ask him or her why that makes the blank face look like the chosen emotion.

Emotions may include: Happy, sad, mad, excited, or shy

Talk to the child about what changes your face can make when you are experiencing different emotions.

Variations: If the child has difficulty creating the facial features, pre-make the pieces for him or her so he or she can place them on the blank face. If the child appears to need assistance creating the face, use step-by-step guidance to help the child create the facial features.

Example: First the eyes, then the eyebrows, then the mouth, etc.

Cautions:
- Play dough easily sticks to furniture or clothing. Set up your activity station in a safe area.
- Play dough is not to be ingested. Make sure the child knows that play dough is not edible.
**Match The Feeling**

**Materials:** Match the Feelings Board, Match the Feelings Faces (Bag #2)

**Instructions:** Prop the Match the Feelings Board on the side of the wall, or lay the board down on a flat surface.

The emotions labeled on the board are happy, sad, and mad. The pictures in the bag are both cartoon and real-life pictures.

First, ask the child to choose one face from the Match the Feelings Face bag.

Next, Ask the child to identify what emotion he or she has selected. The child will then stick his emotion on the board in the correct location.

Example: Child picks a happy face. The child will then place the happy face on the happy column of the board.

The child will continue placing the emotions on the correct column of the board until the bag is empty.

**Variations:** Try finding your own family pictures and choosing what spot they would go on the board based on the emotion.

**Cautions:**

- Be sure to help your child discriminate between sad and mad faces to avoid confusion.
What Triggers Emotions

The purpose of the “What Triggers Emotions” is to match the skills learned in this week, and allow the child to learn what causes his or her emotion. Recognizing the causes, or ‘triggers’ to emotion, is important for the child to understand, so he or she can begin to learn more appropriate solutions to regulate emotions. Sharing stories and events that elicit certain emotions is an important part in this week’s set of activities. Think of stories that have made you feel happy, sad, mad, or other emotions before beginning this activity with the child. This may help him or her become more comfortable sharing stories and create discussion.
**Feelings Jenga**

**Materials:** Coloured Jenga Pieces (Red, Blue, Yellow) and Jenga Sheet

**Instructions:** Align a red, blue and yellow Jenga piece to make a perfect square. 

Example:

Stack another square in the opposite direction, so all the ends of the blocks are visible. 

Example:

Continue to stack blocks until a tower of all the blocks is created. Ask the child to remove a block from the tower, without breaking it. Once the block has been removed ask the child to identify which colour he or she removed from the tower. The child must coordinate the colour of the Jenga block to the Jenga Sheet to identify which feeling matches his or her colour. Once the emotion has been identified, ask the child to share a story of what made him or her feel that emotion. Take turns sharing stories about the different emotions listed.

Eventually, if desired, when the tower falls over, ask the child to identify how he or she felt when the tower fell over and label his or her emotions.

**Variations:** Stack as high as possible for children who are able to easily remove the blocks. If the child is having difficulty, take away blocks to make a shorter tower.

**Cautions:**

- Be sure that the child is above the tower to ensure that the blocks will not harm the child.
Therapy Hopscotch

Materials: Coloured Paper and Coloured Stone (Bag #3)

Instructions: Set up the coloured paper as displayed in the picture below.

<Insert Picture>

Ask the child to throw the stone onto the hopscotch paper. The child must jump from the first square to the square where the stone was placed. When the child picks up the stone, he or she must identify which square the stone landed on. Each square has a corresponding emotion. Ask the child to explain a situation where he or she felt that emotion. (i.e., child landed on angry. It makes the child angry when a sibling takes a toy from him or her.)

Variations: Organize the paper into different patterns to make the game more or less difficult. Try jumping with one foot to increase the difficulty of the game!

Cautions:

- Set up materials in a safe, open area where the child will not be harmed if he or she falls.
**Emotion Mix n’ Match**

**Activity:** Emotions Mix n’ Match

**Materials:** Emotions Mix n’ Match card set.

**Instructions:** Place the blue cards face down so the child is unable to see the cards. Take the red cards and place them face up so the child is able to see the emotions. One card at a time, ask the child to pick a card. If the child is able to read the card, ask him or her how the event on the card would make him or her feel by selecting the correct emotion shown on the red cards. Flip up the blue cards one by one until the child has solved all of the cards.

**Variations:** Switch the game up by turning the red cards face down. Read the cards to him or her or have the child read them to you.

**Cautions:**
- Be sure to assist the child with the meaning of the cards to avoid frustration while playing this game.
Express Emotions

The “Expressing Emotions” session provides multiple activities that involve acting out emotions with the child. It allows the facilitator and the child to take the emotions learned in previous sessions and display what they look like. Expressing Emotions is an opportunity to gain an understanding of how the child reacts when he or she feels a certain emotion and to provide examples of appropriate ways to express his or her emotions.
## Animal Dice

**Activity:** Animal Dice

**Materials:** Two large foam dice.

**Instructions:** Ask the child to roll the two dice. One die corresponds to an emotion, and the other die corresponds to an animal.

Act out the animal and the emotion rolled.

**Variations:** Ask the child to roll the dice in private, and for the other player to guess what the child is. Take turns!

**Cautions:** Make sure to use this activity in an open space where no one can get hurt.
Feeling Catapult

Materials: Miniature Popsicle Stick Catapult, Pom Poms (Bag #4), Emotion Plates

Instructions: Place the Popsicle Stick Catapult in front of the child on a flat surface. Place the Emotion Plates, on which different emotions are depicted, within reach of the catapult. Ask the child to place a pompom on the cap of the catapult and press down on the lid. Aim the catapult towards a plate and fire the pompom into one of the Emotion Plates by pushing down on the green cap. The child must share a story of what made them feel the emotion of the plate on which the pompom landed in a tone of voice expressing that emotion.

Example: If the pompom lands on the happy plate, the child must share a story that about what made him or her feel happy. The child must share this story in his or her happiest voice.

Variation: Spread the plates further apart or a further distance to adjust the difficulty. Put plates closer together and closer to the child to make the game easier. Create your own plates with new emotions to make the game more challenging!

Caution:
- Press gently on the catapult to avoid damage.
- Be sure that the child is capable of using the catapult.
- Provide assistance if needed.

Step 1: Press down on cap.  Step 2: Release the cap!
Emotion Masks

Materials: Paper Plate Masks

Instructions: Prepare a story for the child that involves a time where you felt happy, sad, mad, or surprised. To begin this activity, place the paper plate masks in front of the child. Tell the child that you are going to share a story that made you feel an emotion, but you are not going to tell them what it is, and that they have to guess.

While you tell the story, you may question the child about others emotions throughout the story.

Example: How do you think that made _______ feel?
How do you think I felt?

Variations: Creating new paper plate masks to make new emotions.

Ask the child to share a story, and as the facilitator, guess how the emotions they were feeling in his or her story!

Cautions: Seeing may be difficult with the masks, be sure to have mask at least a few inches away from the face.
Coping with Emotions

Now that the child has a basic understanding of what emotions look like and what may trigger them, “Coping with Emotions” provides the child with appropriate strategies to deal with emotion.
Puppet Show

Materials: Finger puppets.

Instructions: Using the side of a table (or other areas that could replicate a puppet stage), ask your child to identify each emotion that the puppets have. Talk to the child about a situation where a puppet could feel the emotion that he or she may have. Develop a problem that revolves around one of the puppets.

i.e., Sally is sad because Jenny took her favourite toy.

Once a problem has been stated, talk to the child about how this problem can be resolved.

i.e. Sally took three deep breaths and asked Jenny for her toy back.

When creating these situations, if appropriate, explain to your child that regulating his or her emotions will help him or her feel better, but not necessarily get him of her what he or she wants.

i.e., If Sally did not receive her toy back, she could ask a teacher.

Variations: Countless situations can be created using puppet shows. Ensure that the child learns how to approach situations using appropriate strategies.

Cautions:
- Before this activity, plan out the possible solutions to situations that your child may choose for his or her puppet story.
- Preparing scenarios that are best suited for the child will help promote the skills they need to appropriate cope with the situation.
**Muffin Tin Toss**

**Materials:** Muffin tin, Happy face ball

**Instructions:** Place the muffin tin a couple feet in front of the child. Ask the child to throw the hacky sack ball into the muffin tin. Once the child has thrown the hacky sack into the muffin tin, ask the child to retrieve the hacky sack. Ask the child what emotion he or she landed on and what he or she will do when feeling that emotion.

Example: Adam threw the ball on the happy face. Adam says that when he feels happy, he laughs and sometimes jumps up and down.

Facilitator: “Great! That’s what we do when we are happy”.

If the child identifies an undesired way of coping with an emotion, suggest an appropriate strategy to try next time he or she is feeling that emotion.

Example: Adam threw the ball on the mad face. Adam says that when he feels mad, he screams and hits.

Facilitator: “That’s not what we do when we’re mad. When we’re mad, we should try to take 3 deep breaths and take a break from what we’re doing.”

Continue to play Muffin Tin Toss until all of the emotions have been landed on.

**Variations:** Put the Muffin Tin closer or further away to adjust the difficulty of the game.

**Caution:**
- Place the Muffin Tin within reasonable throwing range of the child to avoid frustration.
Our Feelings- Story

Materials: Our Feelings Story Sheet, Our Feelings- Emotion Faces

Instructions: Place the Our Feelings Emotion Sheet in front of the child. Begin with telling him or her that you will read a story. The story will consist of multiple blanks that the child will need to fill in using the Our Feelings Emotion Faces.

Example: “Now I am going to read a story. As I read, hold up the feeling stick you think goes into the story.”

Variations: If the child is unable to pick up the sticks, ask him or her to point to the emotion face instead.

Depending on the age of the child, repeating sentences and prompting the question may help the child better understand the question.

Example: The sentence may be “Becky woke up in the morning. Today she was going to the park to play with her friends. That made her feel so ________.”

“How did this make Becky feel? Pick up one of emotion faces!”

Caution: Be sure to have your child pick up the stick end of the emotion faces to avoid injury.

*activity and image adapted from http://ayearoffhe.blogspot.ca/
Accepting Emotions

It is important for your child to identify emotions, discover what triggers his or her emotion, along with expressing and coping with them, but it is also important for children to learn that it is okay and normal to feel emotions. This section provides the child with further coping strategies, but also entails knowing that it is okay to feel what he or she is feeling and how to handle his or her emotions appropriately.
Bag of Feelings

Materials: Bag of Feelings, Emotion Faces (Bag #5)

Instructions: Place the Bag of Feelings in front of the child and arrange the Emotion Faces face down in front of the him or her. Ask the child to choose one of the Emotions Faces and identify that emotion. Then, ask the child to, without looking, pick an item/ picture out of the Feelings Bag. The Child then must think of a way to use that item to cope with that emotion.

Example:

**Emotion → Feeling Bag Item → Solution to cope with emotion**

Sad face → Running Shoes → Going for a walk
Happy face → Paper Heart → Asking for a hug
Mad Face → Pillow → Taking a break in his or her room

This is a chance for the child to think of different ways that would help him or her best cope with an emotion.

Remind the child that is okay to feel happy, sad, mad, and other emotions, but it is important to deal with emotions in a safe way.

Variation: Taking turns with this game may help the child to think of more solutions and strategies to deal with his or her emotions.

Caution:

- When placing hands in the Feelings Bag, be sure that the child gently grabs an item to prevent injury and damage to the Feelings Bag items.
**Emotion Wheel Work Sheet**

**Materials:** Emotion Wheel Work Sheet, Box of Crayons

**Instructions:** On a flat surface, place the Emotion Wheel Sheet and crayons in front of the child. Read to the child the quote on the top of the page that says “It’s okay to have feelings. This is how I handle my feelings:"

Below the quote, show the child the emotion wheel, and label the different emotion sections. Ask the child to draw a picture of how he or she would manage the emotion in each section of how they would manage the emotion.

Example: Happy → Laughing, playing with friends
Sad → Asking for a hug.
Mad → Taking three deep breaths and taking a break.

Once the child has completed the wheel, ask him or her to describe what is happening in each picture. If the coping mechanism is not appropriate for a section, help the child to brainstorm new ways of managing that behaviour.

Once the wheel is complete, hang up the wheel in a well-seen area and have the child refer to it often.

**Variation:** If the child chooses not to draw, have him or her point to different sections of the wheel and then you draw a simple picture of how to manage his or her emotions.
Feelings Memory Match

Materials: Memory Match Cards (Bag #6)

Instructions: Obtain the memory match cards located in bag #6, and lay them face down on a flat surface. Flip over any two cards. If the cards match, ask the child if it is okay to feel this emotion (the answer should *always* be yes). Next, ask the child how he or she would handle that emotion. If the cards do not match, flip the cards back over and try again.

Remind the child at the end of the game that we have a lot of different emotions and it is okay to have feelings, but it is important to deal with them in a healthy way that does not hurt him or her or anyone else.

Variation: This could be a turn-taking game, or you could allow the child to play on his or her own.
Session Review

For the final session, activities have been created that review all of the skills learned in this program. This also provides the child with an opportunity to make questions or comments about emotional regulation or the therapy box. This session is mainly discussion based and closure for the end of the program.
How Would My Friends Feel?

Materials: How Would My Friends Feel Cards (Bag #7)

Instructions: Take the deck of cards located in bag #7 and place them one at a time in front of the child. Ask the child to identify the situation on the card.

In each picture, ask the child to identify how each person in the picture may be feeling about the situation. Ask the child to suggest a way that that person could handle the situation.

Continue through the deck one by one, creating discussion about each individual card until the deck is finished.

Variation: If desired, role-play the situation on the card with the child if it makes it easier for him or her to think of a coping strategy.

Caution: Be sure to review the cards in advance to develop an appropriate way of handling each situation labeled in the cards.
M&M Game

Materials: M&M Game Sheet, Bag of M&Ms

Instructions: Place the M&M Game Sheet in front of the child. Have the child pick out an M&M and identify the colour. Next, ask the child to find the colour located on the M&M Sheet. Read the question located beside the colour and have the child answer before he or she eats the M&M.

Caution:
- Be sure that the child does not have any allergies to this candy before ingestion.
- Adjust M&M intake based on how many pieces of candy the child is able to eat in this activity.

*image obtained from Pathways for Children and Youth*
How Do I Feel Today?

Materials: How Do I Feel Today? Work Sheet, Box of Crayons

Instructions: Place the worksheet in front of the child. Ask the child to draw how he or she is feeling in the blank face located on the picture. Beside the picture is a box for the child to draw ways to cope with the emotion.

This exercise may be used as a coping strategy when the child is feeling sad or mad and to remind the child of what to do to manage his or her behaviour.
## Satisfaction Feedback Questionnaire

Date of Completion:

Age of Child: _______
Gender of Child: _______
Settings (i.e., home, school, etc): ____________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided / Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The activities were age appropriate for the child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child participated in all of the activities.</td>
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<td>The child enjoyed the activities.</td>
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<td>The child used skills learned in emotional regulation therapy box within sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child used skills learned in emotional regulation therapy box outside of sessions.</td>
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<td>The manual is visually appealing.</td>
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<td>The manual includes pictures that are relevant to the presented information.</td>
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<td>The manual is organized.</td>
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<td>The manual is easy to understand.</td>
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<td>The manual’s information is helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The activities took the amount of time as referenced in the manual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improvements should be made in the “General Information”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, the manual and therapy box was enjoyable to use.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. The manual was read before activities were put in place. YES/NO
2. The manual was used for reference during the activities. YES/NO
3. All 6-week session activities were completed. YES/NO

Notes (Improvements that could be made to the manual, and other comments):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
References

Research Articles:


*All images obtained from: http://pixabay.com*