

A great tool for communicating feelings

By Shannon Morell

The Feeling Thermometer is one of my favorite tools that we use at FOCUS. It helps kids and parents express how they feel. It also assists family members in understanding that each person in the family may have different responses to the same event. Most importantly, the Feeling Thermometer provides a common language for families to identify and share feelings.

The thermometer has 4 color zones:

The green zone is an area of comfortable feelings, such as happy, excited, or perhaps silly. Kids sometimes share that playing outside, or having a family movie night, is the type of activity that helps them feel "in the green."

The yellow zone represents feelings that are just a little uncomfortable, such as a little sad or a bit worried.

The orange zone describes more uncomfortable feelings, such as mad, sad,

or nervous.

The red zone is used to describe more intense feelings like fear, anger, or extreme sadness.

At FOCUS, we teach children and adults to use this tool to talk about their feelings, things that make them feel uncomfortable, and ways they can get back to the green zone.

I am always impressed at how easy it is for children to share and express their feelings with the Feeling Thermometer. While teaching the thermometer to a kindergarten class, one of the children expressed being in the "orange" due to his dad's deployment to Afghanistan. Another student came to a FOCUS group and was inattentive and having trouble participating. Once we went through the different colors on the Feeling Thermometer, he was able to share that he was in the "yellow" because his little brother kept him up all night and he was tired. Teachers have requested that we teach the Feeling Thermometer at the beginning of the school year to help



students adjust to a new setting. They like that their students, after learning to use the Feeling Thermometer, can talk about their conflicts without shouting or hitting.

FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress) is a resiliency-building program of the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED). FOCUS is an eight-session training program for military families that is grounded in more than two decades of research and experience serving families dealing with stress and changes. FOCUS is specifically adapted for the needs of military couples, children and families and provides training in core resilience skills. These skills increase closeness, support, communication, and adaptability.

Couples and families learn to work together to manage difficult emotions, set goals and problem solve, communicate clearly and effectively, and develop customized strategies to deal with ongoing stress and change.

For more information about FOCUS, visit us online at www.focusproject.org or www.facebook.com/FOCUSresiliencytraining

Contact your local FOCUS site today to learn more about FOCUS and to schedule your personalized training sessions.

- Marine and Family Services, Bldg. 13150, Camp Pendleton, 760-859-6079, camppendleton@focusproject.org

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