

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

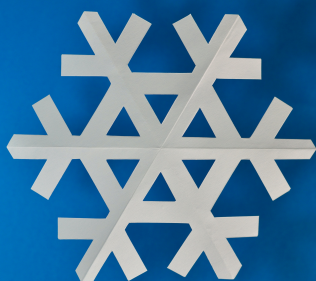
Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build this trait in yourself, your family or your class.



◆ As a class or a family, watch a river, ocean waves, rain falling, clouds rolling by or another element of nature. Discuss how it operates outside of your control. Practice noticing it and accepting it. Discuss or try ways to influence it. Notice how it feels to accept it. How did trying to influence it feel? What other areas of life could each person work on accepting?

◆ *Every snowflake is different yet all are beautiful.* As a family or class, fold paper and cut out shapes to create a snowflake. Practice noticing the details and accepting each snowflake as it is. Talk about if that was easy or hard to do. How does this apply to people



Acceptance

Acceptance is defined by [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) as “favorable reception, approval and favor”. As we are continuing to experience a world that has been radically changed over the past few years, this topic is an important one from many different angles. This month is a great time to focus on receiving things (and people, emotions and ideas) favorably. Doing so has proven to have many psychological benefits.

One angle to view acceptance from is self-acceptance. Building self-awareness and tuning in to how we each feel is a primary step to self-acceptance. Recognizing our emotions in the moment is a foundational skill for building mental health. When our first instinct is to run from emotion, it’s actually healthier to recognize and accept our emotions. As Carl Rogers, an American psychologist stated:

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change”.

Another angle is to view the importance of accepting others, even across differences. Surely as teachers and parents, there is guidance we wish to have on kids in our lives, but consider how emotionally freeing it is to be accepted for who we are by those who love us most. In their classic book “How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk”, authors Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish start the first chapter addressing the importance of accepting children’s emotions. Take today to notice how you speak to your children or students, and how often you accept or deny their feelings.



in a family, class, school, neighborhood, or country?

◆ As a class or family, choose 2 people to stand back to back. Others state one thing that is different about the 2 people. With each difference, the pair take a step away from each other. Have them turn to face each other. The group states things that are similar about them while they take a step toward each other. When back together facing each other, repeat the differences while the pair high fives or cheers for each difference. Discuss accepting differences, and how it felt to move farther, closer, and high five each other. Brainstorm ways to "high five", cheer on or accept differences in others.

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If you notice yourself saying things like "You're not tired, you are just sleepy" or "How could you be cold? It's so hot in here", know that you are not alone. The authors share that most parents grew up not having emotions accepted and may need practice to build their own skills to listen and accept the emotions of children in their care.

The book is packed with practical advice to help parents and others who care for children to build the skills to practice acceptance and other skills. With respect to accepting emotions, they offer 4 practical points:

- 1) Listen with full attention
- 2) Acknowledge their feelings with a word (short response)
- 3) Give their feelings a name
- 4) Give them their wishes in fantasy.

Using comic-like illustrations, they demonstrate how asking questions, giving advice, denying the child's feelings, using logic/explanations or solving a problem for a child (often the first responses of parents and teachers) are less useful for child and adult. Instead, accepting how the child is feeling, and communicating that understanding can help the child cope with difficult circumstances. In many cases, feeling accepted and understood leads the child to see the situation more fully and even generate their own solutions to problems.

Look for ways to increase your acceptance this month, of yourself and of others around you.

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1982). *How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk*. New York, N.Y.: Avon.

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