Module 4: How Our Actions Affect Our Feelings

**Objective**

Identify the helpful and unhelpful ways our actions affect our feelings, which then influences the results we get. Reflect on the question: “Do my actions create the results I want?”

**Procedure**

1. Present the expression *“A watched pot never boils”;* and ask the children what they think that statement means.
2. Summarize the responses by stating that this expression warns us that our actions don’t necessarily create the results we want. Explain that just because we might be hungry and want to eat right away, it takes time for water to boil and pasta to cook. Watching the pot may get you to boil by increasing your impatience and frustration but it won’t get the water in the pot to boil.
3. Explain that this expression is a reminder that our actions in a situation can impact our feelings. If you are constantly checking to see if the water is boiling it will just make your wait seem longer and will escalate the negative feelings of impatience and frustration triggered by having to wait.
4. Offer an example to further explore this concept.

*Example:*

* *I was really thirsty after recess and went to get a drink of water but when I got to the water fountain there was a long line.*

Discuss that we have a variety of different actions to choose from, which will impact how we feel. **Some actions will increase our frustration and make us feel worse, while other actions will decrease the frustration and allow us to feel calmer**. Encourage the children to think about what actions would increase their frustration making them feel worse and possibly get them into trouble and what actions would decrease their frustration, making them feel better?

1. Elicit responses and list ‘unhelpful’ and ‘helpful’ actions in 2 columns. Write responses on the board or in a notebook.

*Examples: Actions you can take while waiting on line at the water fountain.*

| **Unhelpful actions** | **Helpful actions** |
| --- | --- |
| *Glare at the kids while they are drinking and get mad at them because they got there before you* | *Talk to a classmate on line to pass the time* |
| *Negative self-talk for not getting to the water fountain faster* | *Look around at people and bulletin boards in the hallway while staying on line to distract yourself* |
| *Shout at the kids in front of you blaming them for taking too long* | *Go over to the water fountain by the gym where there usually isn’t a line* |
| *Push people in line* | *Drink the water you have left in your water bottle from lunch instead* |

Explain that our actions impact our feelings. Point out that if you just stare at the water fountain or the kids drinking water in the line in front of you, it will seem like the line never moves and your frustration is likely to lead to anger. On the other hand, if you distract yourself while waiting on line, the time will go by more quickly and you will reduce the negative feelings triggered by having to wait.

1. Ask children what they think might happen it they choose an unhelpful action. Will it get them what they want? Could it get them in trouble? How would it make their friends feel?
2. Offer another example to further explore this concept.

*Example: I wanted to finish my report on the computer but the computer I chose wasn’t working and all the rest were taken.*

| **Unhelpful actions** | **Helpful actions** |
| --- | --- |
| *Yell at another student to get off of the computer he is working on so that you can use it.* | *Do other work until a computer becomes free.* |
| *Rip up your paper.* | *Ask if you can use a computer in the school library.* |
| *Get angry with your teacher for having a broken computer in the classroom.* | *Ask your teacher if you can go on a computer later in the day.* |
| *Negative self-talk for picking a computer that was broken.* | *Ask your teacher if you can go on the next computer to open up.* |

**Discussion Points**

* Things can’t always go your way. Take action to distract yourself or find some other way to solve your problem knowing that things cannot always work out as you had wanted, expected or had looked forward to them happening.
* Diverting your attention to something else will help you to work through disappointment.
* It is important to recognize which actions are helpful and which are unhelpful in regulating our negative feelings and solving our problems.
* What actions you choose in the moment will affect how you feel and what consequences you could receive.
* Knowing why you feel the way you do and being able to solve our own problems when possible, helps you to stay calm and move on from disappointing situations.
* Being able to cope with and work through your emotions without becoming overwhelmed is something that only you can do for yourself. It is a skill you will use over your entire lifetime.