

THE KI REPORT

A newsletter on Kindness and Inclusion for Root Elementary parents and families.

Character Word of the Month: Forgiveness

choosing to let go of negative feelings toward yourself or someone else.

Lessons from Lavender

It can be extremely hard to forgive yourself or someone else. You can talk with your children at home to help with understanding. Start by defining it: It's the choice to let go of anger, resentment, and revenge towards yourself or others. Talk with your child about what each of those words mean and how they can affect life and the people around you. If you choose forgiveness, it truly can change your life. Read books about it; share situations in your life where you had to choose forgiveness; explain that it's sometimes hard to forgive. You might encourage your student to write, talk, or draw a picture about a time when they needed to forgive and how they did it. The most helpful learning experience for forgiveness is to teach someone how to forgive and how it can benefit them.

In counselor this month, we are discussing the steps to becoming an empathic listener. Empathic listening helps when you're working through forgiveness. The steps are below, your student should be able to show you and tell about each step. Ask them to show you!

1. Eyes watching (point to eyes)
2. Ears listening (cup ears with hands)
3. Voice quiet (show #1 voice)
4. Body still (hug body)

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lavender



AMYGDALA ALARM

You and your family are peacefully strolling through the woods when suddenly, while letting out a blood-curdling scream, you quickly leap forward to keep your child from walking into the mouth of a venomous water moccasin. Thankfully, a part of your brain known as the amygdala sounded its alarm just in the nick of time; but, what do we do when we encounter false alarms?.

The amygdala is a primal part of our brain best known for its distress signal to the body called "fight or flight." It's also responsible for how we learn and process intense emotions, whether experiencing something really exciting or feeling more negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, or anger. When activated, the amygdala can override the thinking centers of our brain known for problem-solving, logic, and creativity. Stress hormones are also released into the body causing tense muscles, rapid heart rate, sweating, and sometimes even nausea. This is all useful when danger is truly imminent. However, when danger is not a real threat and the stress response is repeatedly triggered, this can cause interference with other processes like the social, psychological, and cognitive development of our children.

When considering the types of stressors our children endure, what may seem simple to us, can feel very real and big to them. Separating from parents, attending a new school, experiencing a newly divorced household, and struggling to find friends are just a few situations that may trigger on-going stress in the lives of our children. So, how can we help them manage the false alarm moments and find the "thinking" centers of their brains?

1. **Help them label their emotions and how their bodies are feeling** when they arise. You can help by modeling when you yourself are feeling scared, anxious, etc. Example: "Oooh, there goes the worry alarm. I'm feeling anxious again." This helps to validate their emotions while showing they are separate from them.
2. **Discuss ways to get calm.** Example: "I need to take a few deep breaths to help feel calm." The Choose Love program being implemented in your child's classroom uses similar techniques such as the Brave Breath and the Gratitude Breath. For the Brave Breath, start by having your child count to four while you inhale and then count to four while you exhale. Next, have them breathe while you count. Talk about how you both felt afterwards.
3. **Make a Peace Corner or Safe Space** in your home where your child can retreat to process their feelings and recharge. A low-lit area, lavender-scented pillows, squishy stress toys, feeling journals, and drawing pads are examples of items you can make available.