



'Therapeutic writing and drawing can become a way of life for children. A regular practice for staying centred in the face of life challenges, and the winds of change.' (Lucia Capacchione)

REFLECTING FEELINGS:

When dealing with children, it is even more vitally important to acknowledge the reality of their feelings, because the way they are treated in the present affects not only how they feel here and now, but also lay down patterns of response for their later adulthood. If we deny children's feelings, and criticise them for showing them, not only may it teach them to bury their feelings, it will also affect the way they think about themselves.

If you acknowledge a child's pains, worries, fears and tempers, you are acknowledging them and their right to feel. If you deny them and their right to feel, you will make it difficult for them to feel good about themselves.

Most children, and many adults find it difficult to express their feelings appropriately. In these cases we can help them recognise the way they feel by saying it the way it looks to us - for example:-

"You look upset",
"You seem sad",
"Boy, you sound angry".

Destructive feelings pose a slightly more difficult problem.

Feelings need to be expressed, and not denied - but sometimes creative solutions are needed, for instance:-

"You sound really frustrated. It's okay to show it, and I think it's unfair to take it out on us. How about going and shouting somewhere else?" Or:-

"I can see that you're very angry, and I'm sure you must have a good reason to feel that way, but perhaps if you went for a little walk outside you'll come up with a more constructive way of resolving this issue".

When we were forced to deny our feelings as children, we never learned positive or alternative ways of coping with them, and this pattern can persist into adulthood. The emotions our parents had difficulty allowing us to express usually become the emotions we struggle to deal with in others.

Examples of these situations:-

- A father who is frightened of his own anger may have difficulty dealing with his child's temper.
- A mother who was never allowed to run, tumble or climb freely, may have difficulty in accepting her child's physical energy.



JOURNAL ACTIVITY:

Try out one or two of the suggestions above and write about what you did with your dominant hand.

With your non-dominant hand draw or write how you felt.

What new insights have you had?