

HOW THE COPING SKILLS STORIES ARE ORGANIZED

The stories in Adventures of Cosmos Crow are designed to be entertaining, and fun, but there is the necessity to also include material that will “teach” the coping skills necessary to deal with life effectively. We include material for the adults that will assist them in this learning process; “PARENT NOTES”, answers to advanced Worksheets Questions. We think that you will find these stories can provide learning opportunities for the child and adult.

The first part of each story is the Fable.

Each fable has characters that will think, feel and behave just like children. These fables are written to be understandable by the children and allow them to see themselves as one or more of the fable's characters.

Many of these stories do not have a "happily ever after" ending, because if you engage in ***Stinky Thinking***, life will not progress "happily." There is also a conscious attempt to ensure that the lessons of the fable are remembered. ***“Research on the therapeutic use of imagery suggest that memory for verbal information is enhanced when the material is organized and interesting, is mildly but not severely emotionally evocative and utilizes a number of sensory realms.”*** (Prins, Weber & McGaugh 1994).

The Cosmos Crow character, who is a bit of a smart aleck, understands the need for ***Good Thinking***, in each fable. We have found that having a cartoon character as the narrator seems to allow children to "hear" the message. You may recognize many of your own “adult” truisms coming out of the mouth of Cosmos. What may surprise you is that your children are more likely to retain these good parenting messages because they are coming from someone other than their teacher or parent. These fables is supposed to be enjoyable (although the main character may get in trouble). The fables are not preachy and if you choose to read them to your children, do so with this in mind.

The second part of each Story is Cosmos' Discussion (Worksheets).

In this part, Cosmos discusses various parts of the story and asks questions. As an adult, you may know the suggested answers to the questions, but it is not important that the children’s answers be

perfect. We want them to understand that the characters could change their emotions and behaviors and the outcome of the story, by changing their thinking.

The purpose of this part of each story is to reinforce themes and to see if your children understood the story. One goal in the “Cosmos’ Discussion is for them to be able to incorporate certain concepts and phrases like ***Stinky Thinking*** and ***Good Thinking*** into a child’s everyday vocabulary. You want to be able to use "cues" such as "Stinky Thinking" and "Good Thinking" as well as recognizing situations in which a child is acting like the various fable characters (“You are acting just like Mad Squirrel”) to help children learn more effective coping skills.

“You know that when you tell yourself that something is just “too hard” or that “I will never learn this,” you are like Sad Squirrel in our story and you make yourself afraid. When you are afraid, it is very difficult to learn something new or difficult. What did the “Happy Squirrel” tell himself about this homework?” The example illustrates how you can get your child to recognize that their thinking is causing them to be frustrated. It is not the task, but rather what they are telling themselves about the task. If they change their thinking, they will also change how they are feeling and be able to come up with acceptable alternatives to just quitting the homework.

You are now able to use something other than just your demanding that they complete their work. Your child is now able to understand that they can be “in control” and that they can implement effective coping strategies. These are valuable lessons that can serve them well for the rest of their lives. *The fables and worksheets are not to be just read once and forgotten. They can be read over and over, and their lessons incorporated into the fabric of your daily interaction with your children.*

The third part of most fables is the Quiz.

The quiz is designed to give the child motivation to pay attention to the story, and some immediate feedback about their understanding of the story and concepts. It also helps the adult see if the child understands the material or may need some additional help.

The fourth part of each story is the Rationale.

The Rationale is Cosmos' explanation of the fable. He explains how the character's thinking is what causes the upset feelings and problematic behavior. It is Cosmos who explains that unless the thinking changes, the bad consequences that happened in the story cannot be avoided. Cosmos

often relates the events of the fable to real life experiences of the reader. It is this comparing the fable to real life that drives home the point that we (all of us, adults as well as children) must take responsibility for our thinking. In so doing, we take charge of our lives and determine if we want to have a happier ending than what occurred in the story. Many of the points in the Rationale are also in the Fable Lesson Plan for that Fable. The Rationale is intended for the child and is shorter, and more to the point than the Fable Lesson Plan.

The fifth part of some stories is the Exercise.

Cosmos Crow has a phrase, "Knowing is not doing." He emphasizes in the fables that you must understand something but then you must do it. The Exercise portion of some "older child" stories is designed to help you and your children practice a skill. Each Exercise is designed to reinforce a skill that the main character in the story lacked or teach a specific real-life skill. The Exercises are not difficult and can provide you with interesting insights into your belief system and those of your children.

Finally, you have the "On Going" effort to maintain positive progress ... Situational Exercises.

It is difficult to get adults to change their "Stinky Thinking," and do what is in their "best self-interest," from appropriate diet and exercising to being considerate or assertive. It is even more difficult to get children to change their "Stinky Thinking," because they have not yet experienced the problems this type of thinking will ultimately cause. "Situational Exercises" can occur when a real-life situation presents itself that can be tied into one of the stories. "You are acting like Jeff the Monkey. Can you tell me what you are thinking right now"?

By referencing a story, you help children identify behaviors, which are related to ineffective or effective coping skills identified in that story. Using the story characters as a "cue" can encourage appropriate cognitive and behavioral change in children. By attending to and supporting appropriate behaviors, you increase the likelihood that children will incorporate these new skills into their reparatory of self-talk. Rewarding appropriate change is not "bribing." Rather, it is reinforcing and thereby increasing the likelihood that the change will continue. As a child experiences the positive consequences of "Good Thinking," there will be less need for you to provide positive reinforcement to get them to keep "Good Thinking" and "Good Behavior."