



## COOL OFF WITH FROZEN FLOWERS

This activity helps children explore how they “cool off” when they are feeling overwhelmed by their emotions. As they share, help them name their feelings (angry, annoyed, anxious, etc). Ask them if they can show you or tell you where they notice that feeling in their body and share examples they may recognize (i.e. knots in your stomach when feeling anxious).

When we help children understand that their feelings can manifest into physical reactions, we help minimize confusion about what is happening in their bodies and normalize their experience. We also assist them in noticing when certain feelings may be coming up for them so that they can determine how to best cope. This helps them feel like they have some control over what is happening.

This activity is great for starting the conversation about coping skills. Talk to your child about safe and unsafe ways to express their emotions. You can even help them make a list of things they can do or people they can talk to when they are feeling distressed.

Lastly, work together to create frozen flowers of your own that you can pull from the freezer when they need to cool off and calm their bodies and minds.

### Supplies you'll need:

- Water
- Flowers, grass, weeds, etc.
- Small cup, pots, or ice cube tray

### How to do it:

- Take a walk around your yard or explore a park together. As you are walking, check-in with your child about some of the feelings they have experienced since the death of their person or since the changes due to COVID-19. Invite them to share their struggles to cope and also what has been helpful for them.
- Next, explain that you are going to make some frozen flowers. Let them pick wildflowers, dandelions, leaves, and grass of their choosing. If applicable, you can talk about the resiliency of a dandelion. You can use other metaphors, too. Like making connections between weeds and some of the difficulties we face in life, or talking about why it is important that flowers and grass are taken care of by getting sun and water. Encourage them to share what nurtures them or helps them take care of themselves.

- Lastly, place what you have collected into your cup or pot and add water. The flowers and grass may rise to the top when you add water so add more flowers if needed to help weigh them down. Freeze for 24 hours and your frozen flowers are ready to be thawed!
- Let your child know that if they are feeling upset, they can grab a frozen flower to help them cool off. As they watch the ice melt, invite them to share how they are feeling and if they notice any changes in their bodies. Bonus—this activity is also great for sensory play!

### General talking tips to keep in mind:

- When you think there is a teachable moment that can be made, consider your child's age and developmental understanding. Certain topics may not be appropriate for every child or warrant a conversation. Gauge their understanding by paying attention to their reactions and asking open-ended questions like "I wonder what you think happened?" or "I wonder why you think they are (insert feeling)?"
- Use simple, concrete terms when talking about death. Young children struggle to understand euphemisms the way we do as adults. Use words like "dead", "died" and

"dying". While these words may seem blunt, they help children begin to understand basic concepts around death and dying, are less confusing, and help normalize the conversation.

- Look for opportunities to discuss feelings and be open about your feelings, as well. Give feelings a name and discuss healthy ways to cope with feelings.
- Don't put too much pressure on the conversation. You know your child best. Follow their lead and answer their questions honestly. Don't worry about having all the answers to their questions. In fact, it is perfectly okay to admit you don't know the answer. If it's a question you can explore together, we'd suggest doing so! Remember, it's okay for us to struggle with questions and feelings. When we offer opportunities for kids to share with us, we send the message that they don't have to struggle alone.

If you need additional support, please contact Erin's House:

- **By phone:** 260.423.2466
- **By email:** Info@ErinsHouse.org
- **Online:** ErinsHouse.org



#### OUR MISSION

Erin's House provides support to children, teens, and their families who have experienced a death.

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