

FIZZY FEELINGS

This activity can help to explain to children the importance of safely expressing the natural feelings they may have when someone is seriously ill or has died.

Explain to children that our feelings can feel very 'fizzy'

When someone important is seriously ill or has died, we have many different and sometimes very difficult feelings inside us. All of these feelings are normal to have. It can help to think about these feelings as a bit like a bottle of fizzy pop; the feelings are like the bubbles inside the bottle. When someone we care about is ill or has died, we can feel like a bottle that has been shaken up and keeps being shaken. All our fizzy feelings inside are shaken and mixed up.

What happens to the feelings?

There are a couple of things that can happen to a bottle of fizzy pop when it is shaken and all the bubbles are churned up... and the same is true for us and the feelings inside us.



We explode

You could ask your child to imagine a bottle of fizzy water or pop. *'What would happen if we shook that bottle really hard and then opened it?'* (You can also do this with an actual bottle of fizzy water).

You can agree with them that it would explode everywhere and everyone nearby would get drenched. You can then explain that it can be like that sometimes with our feelings: our big feelings about someone who is ill or has died can become all churned up inside us. And if they stay inside they can feel like the bubbles in the bottle, becoming so fizzy and mixed up, and then – when it gets too much – exploding.

You could then also explain that everyone gets really upset or angry but if we hold all the huge, difficult feelings inside, we'll explode and get upset over smaller things (for example, being asked to tidy up).

We tighten the lid

The other thing that can happen with the bottle of fizzy drink while it is being shaken is that we tighten the lid. We don't want to let out all the shaken-up big, scary feelings, so we keep trying to screw the lid down tighter and the pressure inside the bottle becomes more and more intense. Eventually it just feels too much and needs to be gently opened.

You could explain to your child that sometimes we all keep the lid tightly screwed down on our feelings. You could ask them if they are trying to hold all of their feelings in. You could then explain that if we keep our feelings tightly screwed down for too long, it starts to affect our mental and physical health. And then it can be so difficult to open up – like the bottle where the lid has been tightened so much, we just can't open it.

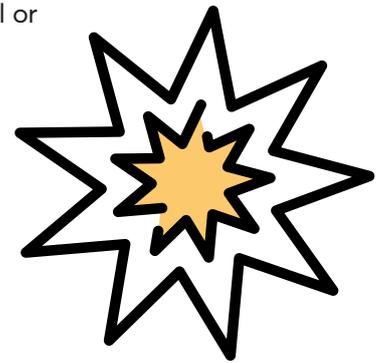
How to help our fizzy bottle of feelings

Ask your child what would be a safe way to open a shaken up bottle of fizzy drink: or you could demonstrate with another shaken up bottle of water. *'How can we open this without everyone getting drenched?'* Hopefully, they will suggest that the lid is loosened very slowly to let some of the fizz out safely.

You can then explain that we too can help our feelings become less pressurised and easier to manage by finding ways to let those feelings out safely. This might be by talking to someone about how we are feeling or doing an activity that helps us to let out some of our feelings (for example, doing some exercise, trying some arts and crafts or watching a film).

It is natural to have huge and fizzy feelings inside, especially when someone is ill or has died. Feelings like anger, sadness, confusion, resentment and so many more are all normal. We need, however, to find a way to express them safely to avoid explosions or holding on to them too tightly.

If we let a little bit of fizz out from time to time, we can eventually take the lid completely off. And, once we have done this, we can choose to close the lid again, until the next time we are ready to loosen it again.



What helps

You can talk together and share some ideas about things that help us all express our feelings safely without exploding all over each other.

For example, if someone is feeling angry and that anger is coming out physically, you could talk through the idea of fizzy feelings. Acknowledge that feeling angry when someone is ill or has died is completely normal and natural. This anger needs to be expressed but it needs to be expressed in a way that doesn't hurt anyone or anything.

Ask them for some ideas and suggest your own. These could include: kicking a ball against a wall, hitting a pillow, using a punch bag, running fast, doing star jumps, singing loudly. Or you could talk to someone, write down how you are feeling, listen to music or do some exercise. All of these are okay things to do (and what is not okay is to hit out at people or things).

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