

ELSA newsletter 4: Looking for the positive

Life is very different at the moment for our children. They may well be missing friends and family, school, clubs and activities or worrying about their own health or that of relatives. In all of this, while it is important to answer their questions honestly, and share with them the level of information you feel appropriate, we can also help them focus on the positive things in life, rather than getting overwhelmed with negative thoughts.

Hummingbirds and vultures

One way to think about this is to picture two different birds - a hummingbird and a vulture - and what they look out for.

A vulture feeds on dead animals. When it is flying over the landscape, it is trying to spot things that are rotten and bad, and ignores everything else.



A hummingbird feeds on the nectar from flowers. When it flies around, it is looking out for the bright, beautiful colours of the flowers it needs to feed on.

The vulture looks for what is bad, and the hummingbird looks for what is sweet and good - **and they both find what they are looking for.** Although they both live in the same environment (the deserts of North Africa), they seek out, and therefore find, very different things.

People are little bit like this too. If we look for things to be grumpy or miserable about, we WILL find them, because that is what we are focusing on. However, if we look for the positives in a situation - if we focus on the good - we will find them too. Two people can be in the same situation but interpret it in very different ways, which will affect how they feel and react to it. Encouraging your child to look for positives in situations, rather than dwelling on the negatives, will change how they feel.

Watch my video about the hummingbird and vulture here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHzj4cZVqLY>

“I’ve got” to vs “I get to”

Swapping a single letter can make a difference to how we look at things. Changing “I’ve got to do fractions with my children” to “I get to do fractions with my children” puts a very different emphasis on the statement. Encouraging your child to re-think “I’ve got to tidy my room” as “I get to tidy my room” reminds them that they are more fortunate than lots of the children in the world, in that they have a room to tidy!

Still acknowledge and empathise with feelings

Looking for the good does not mean ignoring or belittling a child’s feelings. If a child is sad, demoralised, anxious or frustrated about a situation, acknowledge that feeling and empathise with them. They need to know that it is ok to feel that way, and to learn ways to handle those feelings. However, if they see you regularly “being the hummingbird”, they will take their cue from you as to where their focus should be.

Gratitude journals or jars

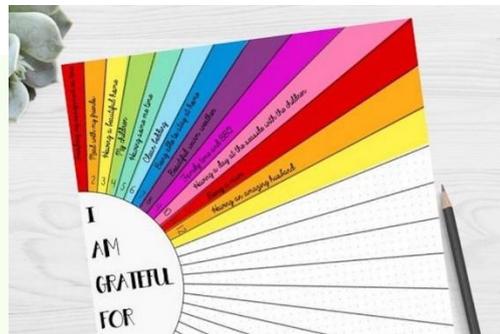
A practical way for your child to focus on the positive is to think of things they are grateful for.



You could help them create a gratitude jar by noting down something each day that they are thankful for - <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/gratitude-jar.pdf> - or keeping a gratitude diary at the end of each day; writing a letter to someone to say thank you or discussing things you are grateful for as a family. With so much bad news on the television, remind them to “look for the helpers” - there will be always be people who are looking out for others and showing compassion.

As a lockdown reminder, you could make a rainbow-themed gratitude list:

<https://coolmompicks.com/blog/2018/11/19/printable-gratitude-journal-pages-kids/>



There are more ideas for gratitude activities here:

<https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/grateful-children-printable-challenge>

I would love to see photos of any gratitude crafts you make and would like to share - email them into me at jfarrow@godalming-junior.surrey.sch.uk

