

## Getting In Touch With Emotions

**Background Information:** We all experience a wide range of emotions. It is important for us to learn how we experience different emotions, where they occur in our body as well as in our mind, and how to respond to the emotions we are experiencing. Emotions are biological, they are a natural phenomenon. How we react (acting without thinking) or respond (by choosing what we will do), is a choice we make each time we experience an emotion.

Below is a graphic which shares different strategies we might use to deal with the emotions we are experiencing, and perhaps giving ourselves time to determine what our response will be.

Squeeze a stress ball	Pet an animal	Exercise	Take deep breaths
Play a game	Talk about your feelings	Get or give a big hug	Make a list of happy things
Create an art project	Tell or listen to jokes	Listen to music	Dance to a silly song

If you would like to make copies of these strategies for youth, please do. Or you could make a poster and have youth make their own charts, selecting those which work best for them.

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**Background Information:** Everyone feels fear at times. It can be due to a situation such as a loud noise which makes us fearful for our physical wellbeing. It could also be words spoken by someone else that we consider threatening and we feel emotionally and socially unsafe. We can also feel fear of the unknown, apprehension as we try to do something new or different and are fearful we won't be successful or appear to be foolish to others. A helpful way to manage fear is to KNOW that just like any other emotion, it will pass. It may take a few minutes or a few days, but fear will not last forever. When we are fearful, our bodies feel different. We might have a change in appetite, cry, our heart rate may increase, our hands will shake and our mouths will feel dry. Any number of things can occur when we are afraid. There is a saying that when you feel fear, you need to do it anyway and that is the meaning of courage. The best way to calm our fear is to face the situation head-on, even though that seems like the last thing we should want to do.

### What you will need:

- Chart paper
- Marking pen
- Drawing paper
- Crayons, colored pencils

### What you will do:

1. Bring youth together and talk about the emotion of fear
2. Invite them to share a time when they felt afraid (record on the chart)
3. Invite them to remember a time when they felt very afraid. Ask them where they felt that fear in their body. Ask them to think about how they responded to the feeling of fear.
4. Invite them to think about how long the fear lasted and how they moved out of being afraid.
5. Invite them to think about which of the coping strategies they used. Share with them that one way to deal with fear is what is called "Deep Belly Breathing". To practice Belly Breathing, sit on the floor or in a chair, keeping your back straight. Place your hands on your belly. Breathe in deeply, so deeply you can see your hands move. Try to inhale enough air to completely fill your belly like it was a balloon. Then slowly exhale. Do this a few times and see if your fear has lessened.
6. When you have had this discussion, distribute the drawing paper and crayons or colored pencils to each youth
7. Ask them to fold the drawing paper into 4 quadrants

8. Invite them to create in drawing and/or writing the following items in each of the quadrants

What were you doing before you became afraid?	What occurred that made you afraid?
Where did you feel your fear? How did you respond to your fear?	What helped you stop feeling afraid?

9. Invite youth to share their poster with a partner

**Debrief:**

- What was your key learning about fear today?
- What is your “go to” when you feel afraid?
- What are things which generally relieve your fearfulness?





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**Background Information:** Behavior—the things we choose to do—can lead to fear. Those choices can also lead to calm awareness. Sometimes we make choices, and realize the results of those choices make us very afraid, and then we find a way to take what we’ve learned and make choices which can change our lives or the lives of others. Another word which describes fear is anxiety. When we feel fear or anxiety we tend to opt for one of three behaviors: fight, flight, or freeze. We have two videos to suggest. The first is about anxiety/fear and explains what happens when we feel this emotion. This first video, Fight, Flight, Freeze will be best suited for older youth. The second, Small Talk, is for younger kids and is kids sharing their advice about how to face fear.

### What you will need:

- Fight, Flight, Freeze <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp0lpKTWrp4>
- Small Talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyHlgXnMrsg>
- Paper and pencils
- Put questions on chart paper so all can see them. Show the questions only after watching the video

### What you will do:

1. Prior to sharing the video with youth, divide them into groups of three.
2. Bring youth together to view one of the two videos. Please review and select the best video for your group.
3. Show the video
4. When the video is over, show youth the chart of questions, invite them to discuss each of the questions within their group, making notes of their responses.
5. Question for the chart:
  - a. What are some things you learned about being afraid or fearful?
  - b. What are some strategies you might use to be able to “face your fears”?
  - c. What about knowing other people feel fear too is helpful for you in facing your fears?
  - d. Sometimes we realize our fear is in thinking about something, not just experiencing it. Do you have any fears like that? If so, what might you do to change your thinking?



## Getting In Touch With Emotions

### What is fear? Part #1

**Background Information:** Quinn has been being bullied by a “mean girl” named Regina. This bullying has been going on for several weeks. Quinn is definitely afraid of Regina. Quinn wants to take action and has to choose how she will confront Regina. Read the story to find out what happens.

#### What you will need:

- Chart of questions for Choice 1 and Choice 2
- Scenario (copy for every group of 2-3 youth)

#### What you will do:

1. Divide the youth into groups of 3-4
2. Distribute copies of the scenario Homesick and invite the youth to volunteer to read parts of the scenario aloud. If they do not volunteer, you will read it to them. If you have no volunteers are first, start reading yourself and then invite them to read.
3. When finished, share the chart of questions for Choice 1 and Choice 2
4. Invite the groups to determine which Choice would be the best and why they would make that choice
5. Have the small groups share with their peers.

#### Debrief

- What is your take-away from this scenario?
- How might you relieve your fear in a similar situation?
- How can fear keep you from making a choice that would lead to happiness?

# The Confrontation

"Here comes Quinn," taunted Regina loudly as the school cafeteria filled with sixth graders eager to eat lunch. "Good thing your parents gave you a boy's name since you never dress like a girl."

Quinn felt her face burn red with embarrassment as Regina continued her attacks. "Why do you dress like that? You know you're supposed to be a girl, right?" Regina sneered with disgust as she pointed at Quinn's basketball shoes, cargo shorts, baggy T-shirt, and short haircut.

Quinn whispered, "These clothes are comfortable for me," as she grabbed her lunch tray and hurried to sit next to her best friend, Ari, who was saving her a place at the lunch table. Quinn's hands were shaking as she set her tray down and slid onto the bench.

Ari noticed the familiar look of fear on her face and said gently, "Why do you let her talk to you like that? She is so mean to you and you just let her continue to be awful."

Quinn sighed and replied, "I never know what to say to Regina. I feel so afraid of her because I never know what she is going to do. Every time she teases me, I feel so small and want to hide."

Ari nodded with sympathy but said, "You really should talk to someone about her. She acts like a bully, and the school won't tolerate that."

Quinn just shrugged and answered, "I'm afraid to tell someone because if she gets in trouble the mean comments could just get worse."

Ari nodded in agreement. "You're probably right, but I still hate seeing her talk to you that way." Quinn smiled at her best friend's support and handed her a cookie from her lunch tray as a thank you.

Quinn ate her sandwich and gazed over at Regina sitting in the center of the cafeteria, eating her lunch and smiling as if she didn't have a care in the world. A few years ago, Quinn and Regina had been friends. But something shifted, and Regina began hanging out with new friends and seemed to want nothing to do with Quinn. She teased Quinn for not dressing the way the other girls did. There were a few times that Regina passed Quinn in the hallway and intentionally bumped Quinn so hard that Quinn stumbled. She didn't understand why Regina was so mean to her, but as the teasing increased, Quinn's fear of Regina did too.

A week ago, Regina posted a photo of Quinn from when they were friends in second grade to her social media account. She tagged Quinn in it, and the caption read, "Long ago, Quinn really was a girl." Quinn felt humiliated. Ari was always reminding her that she needed to tell someone about Regina's behavior, but the fear held Quinn back. She was afraid that everyone would somehow side with Regina. The other kids often laughed when Regina made comments about Quinn. Instead of reacting, Quinn chose to spend most of her time as far away from Regina as possible.

That afternoon, Quinn and Ari were walking home from school together just like they always did. They went their separate ways after reaching the tiny market in the center of town. They each lived in neighborhoods on the opposite sides of the main shopping center. Quinn loved the familiarity and safety of her small town. The girls waved goodbye as they parted, and Ari told Quinn she'd call her that night to work on their math homework.

# The Confrontation *(cont.)*

Quinn smiled and felt the warm sun shining on her face. She stopped inside the market to buy herself a drink. The store manager greeted her warmly and asked how her school day had gone. Quinn shrugged and said, "It was okay, but I am glad it's over," as she handed him a dollar for her cup of lemonade. She turned and left the market and ran right into Regina and a group of three other girls.

Regina rolled her eyes when she saw Quinn. "Ugh. I thought I got rid of you at school, but you seem to just show up everywhere I go," Regina quipped.

Quinn tried not to make eye contact as she felt her palms grow sweaty and her heart rate increase. Regina was terrifying, and Quinn didn't know what to expect from her. Regina glared at Quinn and said, "Step aside," before giving Quinn a slight bump as she pushed past to walk into the market. Quinn lost her grip on the lemonade, and it spilled all over her shirt and the street. "Nice one," Regina laughed, and the other girls giggled and followed her into the market, leaving Quinn on the sidewalk dripping with lemonade. Quinn felt the tears welling in her eyes as she picked up her lemonade cup, threw it in the trash, and walked the rest of the way home.

When Quinn got home, she called Ari and told her what happened. Ari listened quietly and responded that she would support Quinn in whatever she needed to do but urged her to report the bullying. Quinn agreed and decided to talk to her dad.

During dinner, Quinn was so lost in thought wondering what she could do to face Regina that she barely touched her food. Her dad asked if she was okay, and she exhaled slowly and replied, "Dad, do you remember Regina? We used to be friends." Her dad nodded. "She's bullying me at school, and I'm afraid of her. She teases me and embarrasses me every day. I want to get back at her by doing something to show her what it feels like to be bullied."

Her dad frowned and gave her a hug. "You need to stand up to Regina and tell her to stop. If she doesn't stop, then we need to talk to your teacher. However, bullying her back is not the right choice, Quinn. Don't lower yourself to that level," her dad said gently.

The next morning as Quinn got ready for school, she felt clammy and shaky. She realized that she was afraid to face Regina, and she hadn't worked out a plan. Quinn thought about her conversation with her dad and knew he wanted her to confront Regina and tell her teacher about the bullying. But Quinn dreaded the confrontation. She remembered a photo she had of Regina from when they were friends in second grade. They had a crazy and silly hairstyle party. Quinn thought that if she posted the photo online, Regina would be mortified and maybe that would show her how it feels to be bullied.

**Should Quinn post the photo of Regina?**

# Making Choices

## Choice 1–Yes

Quinn didn't stop to think about the consequences of posting the photo. She wanted revenge against Regina and posting the photo was easier and less scary than confronting her face-to-face. She posted the photo on her social media account and tagged Regina and included the hashtag "#loser." Then she finished getting ready and walked to school.

As soon as she reached school, Ari walked up to her and said nervously, "Quinn, you shouldn't have posted that photo. I heard that Regina showed it to her mom, and now I'm worried that you'll get in trouble." Quinn felt the fear rise up in her chest, and she realized that she was going to look like the bully now. She didn't feel more powerful than Regina. She just felt bad about herself for doing the same thing Regina did to her.

As the school bell rang, everyone headed for class and Quinn felt a shove as Regina passed by and hissed in her ear, "You'll get what you deserve for that."

Quinn realized that trying to bully Regina wasn't going to fix her problem and that she should have listened to her dad and reported Regina first. After school, Quinn got called into the principal's office and was surprised to see her dad already waiting for her. She fought back the tears as she explained what she did. She tried to show them the photo that Regina had posted of her, but Regina had deleted it.

Quinn's face burned with embarrassment. Her dad explained the bullying situation to the principal but told Quinn that he was disappointed in her retaliation. The principal told Quinn to delete the photo and that she would meet with both her and Regina to work out the situation and determine the correct disciplinary action. Quinn nodded her head solemnly.

## Choice 2–No

Quinn got ready for school and thought about the photo. Initially, she thought it might make her feel better to get revenge against Regina. But she knew that bullying is wrong, and she didn't want to act like Regina. Instead, she decided it was time to confront her fear and face Regina.

At school, Quinn asked Ari if she would be her support. Ari agreed and together they marched determinedly up to Regina, who was surrounded by her group of friends. Quinn felt her palms grow sweaty and shaky, and she felt a chill on her arms. She paused for a moment and closed her eyes and tried to calm the fear. "What do you want?" Regina jeered.

Quinn looked Regina straight in the eyes and said, "You need to stop bullying me now or else I will report it. Delete the mean photo you posted of me. Do not touch me or talk to me again."

Regina shrugged her shoulders, rolled her eyes, and declared, "You're not worth my time anyway," before turning and walking away.

Quinn exhaled slowly and Ari's face broke into a huge grin. "You did it," Ari whispered. Quinn felt her body shaking as she calmed down with a few more deep breaths. She knew she would never be friends with Regina but believed that the bullying would stop. That night, she told her dad what she said to Regina. He proclaimed that he was so proud of her for confronting her fear and reminded her that if Regina tried anything again, Quinn needed to involve her teacher. Quinn promised that she would.





**What do you think?**

**Choice 1**

Why did Quinn post the photo of Regina?

How do you think Regina felt when she saw the photo?

Do you think Quinn regretted her decision?

What do you think will happen when Regina and Quinn meet with the principal?

**Choice 2**

Why did Quinn decide not to post the photo?

Do you think having Ari with her gave Quinn more confidence? Why do you think as you do?

How did Quinn calm her fear enough to approach Regina?

Do you think Regina will try to bully Quinn in the future? Why do you think as you do?



## Getting In Touch With Emotions

### What is fear? Part #2

**Background Information:** Think about Quinn and her choice to stand up to Regina. Write about your experience being afraid and what you have learned. Did you face your fear? (If children are too young to write about this, have them tell the story.)

#### What you will need:

- What You Would Do handout (attached)
- Pencils

#### What you will do:

1. Have youth return to the group or 3-4 they were in during the last session
2. Invite them to review what they have learned about fear. Discuss the story about Quinn and Regina and also the choices Quinn could make—both Choice 1 and Choice 2.
3. Distribute the What Would You Do handout and ask the groups to complete the questions
4. When finished, ask youth to share with the entire group

#### Debrief

- What have you learned about fear?
- What is something you might do if you are feeling afraid?
- What might you do for or with a friend or family member who is feeling afraid?



## What Would You Do?

Have you ever had someone bully you? What happened?

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Have you ever had to make a difficult choice when you were afraid? Explain.

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List one or more things you can do to feel better when you are afraid.

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