

Making Books With Children

A wonderful tool to help children understand what is happening in their lives and to build emotional literacy is to make special books for them. Books help children know about their experiences, as well as supporting them with their feelings. They let children know that we take very seriously what happens to them. It is a healing experience for a child to have his/her experience validated. It can be compared to the journal writing that many adults use to support themselves in their lives.

Writing books with children is an important language literacy tool as well. We are communicating to the children that writing and reading are valuable ways to access the world. We let them know that we value the printed word, and that there is a lot to discover by reading.

Books also help parents have a way to communicate with their children in a clear and simple manner. They are able to teach the lessons of life that they want their children to learn. Making books is a tool to resolve conflict and to change negative anger into supportive teaching. Books can be used to prepare children for a change that is going to happen, or to help them understand something frightening.

Books are easy to make. Take two or three pieces of paper, fold them in half to make four to eight pages, and staple them. For young toddlers, books can be one unfolded piece of paper. Draw simple pictures and write words that explain the feeling or experience you are writing about. This is not about drawing an artist's sketch! Simple stick figures work well. Use standard printing (upper and lower case), just as children will learn when they start school. It is the adult's words that are used. Older children can contribute their words and may want to draw on the last page. For younger toddlers, the words need to be very simple: "Alex sad! Crying! Fall down!"

Name the book with the child's name and the subject: *Andrew's Book About Going to the Doctor, Mary's Book About Her Angry Feelings*. Each page has a picture and tells a bit of the story. Write the situation followed by the child's feelings.

There is nothing that can't be made into a book. It may feel awkward at first, but with practice parents and teachers will find making books a wonderful activity to help children understand their world.