



cola can

Precipitating Factors

A lesson about recognizing anger triggers...and learning self-control



Cola Can Precipitating Factors

I based this activity on an activity I saw at CPI Training when the presenter talked about “precipitating factors” to student acting-out behavior. Students will talk about precipitating factors they are likely to experience in life, as well as how to manage their reactions to those factors. I’d use this on a day when the class was creating or adding to our Coping Skills Toolbox. More information about CPI training can be found here:

<http://www.crisisprevention.com/>.

Supplies

- 2 cans of cola
- 1 can of club soda
- 2 cans of tomato juice
- 2 clear jars/glasses with lids (the lids are important)

Activity

Get out one of the cans of cola. Explain that each of us is going to get a turn sharing out something that happened today that we found frustrating...but not so frustrating that we totally blew up/acted out. The teacher can start (example: “I needed to print some copies for class, but the machine was offline...again.”). Each person should share out something and give the can a good shake.

Once everyone has shared, the class should take the can outside and open it (use a clear, grassed area in order to avoid making a huge mess and angering the custodian!). It will fizz EVERYWHERE.

Discussion

What happened when the final person holding the can opened it? Why did that happen? Was the last person left holding the can the one who caused the explosion? (No.) What caused the explosion? (Repeated shaking...not just ONE shake.) Explain that the can of cola is a person without good coping skills who has had one thing after another happen today.

Set aside the can of opened/dripping Coke.

Activity (continued)

Get out the can of club soda. Pour half of it into one of the jars. Next open the second can of cola. Pour half of IT into the jar with the club soda. Make sure you only get the jar about half full; leave some “head room.” Put the lid on the jar. Repeat the “shaking and complaining” from step 1. Open the jar. It’ll be fizzy and foamy, but it probably won’t completely bubble out of the jar like the shaken can did.

Discussion

What happened when the final person holding the jar opened it? How were the results different than when we opened the can? Why? Explain that the jar with club soda and Coke represents a person who is young and is still learning the process of managing stressors.

Set aside the club soda and the jar full of liquid.

Activity (continued)

Get out the can of tomato juice. Pour half of it into one of the jars. Pour some of the cola from the remaining open can you used in step 2 into the jar with the tomato juice. Make sure you only get the jar about half full; leave some “head room.” Put the lid on the jar. Repeat the “shaking and complaining” from step 1. Open the jar. It’ll be fizzy and foamy, but much less than the can or the jar from the earlier steps.

Discussion

What happened when the final person holding the jar opened it? How were the results different than when we opened the can? Why? Explain that the jar with tomato juice and cola represents a person who is mature and has good skills for managing stressors. Make sure the kids understand that even someone who has good skill will still feel some upset/agitation (i.e. “bubbles”), but that those “bubbles” (i.e. feelings and reactions) are more manageable.

***Clean up all materials.