

COPING SKILLS LLC

USE OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPUTIC FABLES

Understanding Important Concepts

Why We do What We Do

Our Most Common Irrational Beliefs

Defining the Terms used in our Stories

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How to Present the Coping Skills Material in a School Setting

WWW.COSMOSCROW.COM
COPINGSKILLSFABLES@GMAIL.COM

COPING SKILLS

WHY YOU DO THE THINGS YOU DO

A common misconception of most children and many adults is that they are powerless over their emotions and behaviors. We believe that emotions and behaviors are the result of something of which we have no access or control like the subconscious, or that we are simply reacting to someone else's behavior "what he said made me so mad."

In our attempt to identify why we do what we do, man has attributed his motivations to gods, devils, ids and egos, inner child, and so on. Today, we have made a significant shift away from any form of supernatural, magical or external explanation of human behavior and are focusing on our self-talk and what determines much of that self-talk...our Core Beliefs. You have an ongoing "silent" conversation with yourself, about your environment, others, the future, the past and everything in-between. This conversation is often at the "automatic" level, just out of your awareness, but it influences your emotions and behaviors continuously.

When the toast burns in the morning, and you are running late for work, do you feel a surge of intense anger, followed by a string of invectives, culminating in threats to "beat the living hell" out of your offending toaster. You now rush to work, without proper precautions while driving. Your coworkers avoid you because your mood is radiating, "Get the hell out of my way and leave me alone." All the while, you feel perfectly justified in your behavior, because that stupid toaster has caused you to have to go to work hungry.

This example seems harmless enough and will never cause any nasty repercussions...maybe. Of course if your "bad mood," allows you to curse out a client or supervisor, the toaster could justifiably be accused of plotting to ruin your career. This is universal enough for almost everyone to recognize himself or herself as the character being manipulated by the toaster. The reason it is such a universal example is that we are all alike in a very important way. As humans, we tend to have a lot of irrational (Stinky) beliefs and these beliefs are the basis of much of our self-talk. As such, your private personal conversations are often filled with misinformation ("That toaster did that on purpose"), overgeneralizations ("Something always happens to make me late), and external blaming ("I am in a bad mood because of the toaster").

This type of thinking is so common that it is considered normal. The only time your irrational thinking will be brought to your attention is when your mood or behavior is so unacceptable that you are threatened with dire consequences, "If you come to work once more with this type of attitude, you're fired." This threat will not cause you to change your irrational thinking, but it will cause you to modify or subjugate your typical behavior, at least for a while. As time passes, the threat loses its "power" and when the alarm clock decides not to ring or the car stubbornly refuses to start, your unacceptable behavior will reappear at full force. In this illustration of someone with anger problems, your coworkers will comment that you are behaving like a jerk again.

Ironically, most adults who get counseling because of irrational thinking that is common to most of us do so because they have become substance abusers, are depressed or have marital problems. The irony to this is that the typical irrational beliefs of the substance abuser, the depressed adult and couple with marital issues are the same beliefs of much of the general population. These same beliefs are present in childhood but are rarely dealt with until they cause significant life problems.

In this program, you introduce the participants to the concept that what they think about a situation or event will cause them to experience emotions and engage in behaviors. Although this is not a new concept, only recently have systematic studies confirmed that our thinking (belief systems) is the cause of our emotional upset and dysfunctional behavior.

Consequently, cognitive-behavioral talk therapy has become the preferred therapy for treating substance abuse and other problems such as depression. This therapy helps the client become aware of their self-defeating beliefs and how to change these irrational beliefs to rational, more functional ones. Despite being very effective, cognitive-behavioral therapy with adults is difficult because of the adult's long standing irrational belief system.

Most of our beliefs whether functional or dysfunctional are outside our immediate level of awareness, they are called automatic thoughts. We have a "flash of anger" when someone cuts in front of our automobile. We want to smash into the back of their car, sending them through the rail into a rain-swollen ditch. Your automatic thought is something like, "No one has the right to cut in front of me, and they must think I'm a real pushover. I would like to beat them up." You probably are not aware of what you just told yourself but you are aware of the strong negative emotion of anger.

The second reason that changing irrational beliefs is difficult, is that these thoughts have been habituated, that is, they have been with us for so long and used so often that they are "natural." How often have you heard someone say, "Well that is just the way I am," or something similar, when doing something that is obviously not in his or her best self-interest. We all know the co-worker who can't accept any constructive suggestion but rather becomes resentful and takes the suggestion as a criticism. Or, the friend who takes every inconvenience as a personal affront meant for them personally, "It's raining and I can't play golf, why does this always happen to me?"

Children learn their belief systems, emotional and behavioral reactions by modeling adults and by the reinforcement of others. All children start off with a deficit of what we would consider functional beliefs. They must be taught to be nice, to share, accept adversity, be fair etc., by the guidance and support of others. Unfortunately, some children do not have the opportunity to develop a functional, that is, a mature belief system. It may be part of their personality to be resistant to changing, or they may not have effective role models.

Therapists working with clients who have chronic substance abuse problems notice that their thinking is very immature. Their core beliefs are similar to that of a young child, for example; "It is everyone else's fault," "I just can't stand being bored," "I can do it on my own and don't need to do what you are suggesting." These beliefs and many more of the adolescent and adult substance abuser have their genesis in the naturally occurring beliefs of childhood and as such have been habituated and reinforced over time, making them resistant to change.

Since you are working with youth, you may not encounter many of them using drugs or alcohol. But their irrational thinking is just as destructive for them as it is for the substance-abusing adult. These children will be the bullies and the social outcasts. They will be the ones overly quick to anger or tears. They will be the ones who daydream, don't do their homework and fail in school. These children with their irrational beliefs about life, themselves, others and their future, are at the greatest risk to become substance abusing adolescents and adults.

This program is designed to let you help those children learn how their thinking controls their feelings and behaviors. They need to understand how this works and how to control it. If their thinking is incorrect, they will be able to change it to something that makes sense and take control of their lives. This is done with fables and exercises that are designed to be fun and non-threatening. At the same time, quizzes are used to motivate and to insure that all of the students understand the concepts being taught.

But learning more effective coping skills is just like learning a foreign language. You learn the basics and then you practice and practice. Better yet, immerse yourself in an environment where this new skill is expected and rewarded. It becomes your task as the instructor/teacher to insure that the students learn the material and are in an environment where these new skills are used.

The Adventures of Cosmos Crow series, uses metaphorical stories (Fables) to help you and your children understand and remember the therapeutic concepts and techniques. Those are big words for using stories to teach "Good Thinking" skills. Such an idea is not new and its very "oldness" is the reason it is such a powerful technique. *"The logic of the emotional mind is associative: it takes elements that symbolize a reality, or trigger a memory of it, to be the same as the reality. That is why similes, metaphors and images speak directly to the emotional mind, as do the arts-novels, poetry, song, theater, and opera. Great spiritual teachers like Buddha and Jesus have touched their disciples' ears by speaking in the language of emotion, teaching in parables, fables and stories. Indeed, religious symbol and ritual makes little sense from the rational point of view; it is couched in the vernacular of the heart."* (Goleman, 1995)

We dislike change, even change for the better. We also dislike coming to grips with our personal inadequacies. In order to accomplish the goals of "Good Thinking", you will need to do both, thus the need for the fables. The some characters in a fable think irrationally (Stinky), their emotions are too intense or inappropriately (Not OK) and their behavior is self-defeating (Thumbs Down) just like all of us. These story characters also incur the negative consequences of this Stinky, Not Ok, and Thumbs Down sequence. Seeing story characters' behavior in such a light is less threatening than someone pointing out your personal Thumbs Down behavior. When we recognize that we are much like the story's characters, we are more receptive to understanding how we are the cause of our own personal problems.

The fable allows us to see the SEQUENCE from start to finish. You see the situation, the thinking involved, how that *thinking* generates specific emotions and behaviors and how those lead to the ultimate consequences. In our real lives, we are privy to only bits and pieces of this sequence. The goal is for you (and your children) to be able to identify the thinking in a particular situation, evaluate it and anticipate the emotional and behavior reactions, plus the possible consequences.

The fables allow for different "thinking" by the stories' characters that will change the emotional and behavioral reactions and therefore, the consequences. A process can also occur in your real life.

Another rationale for using fables is their power to cause us to remember the lessons. In many of the fables, the main character, who refuses to change their irrational (Stinky Thinking) experiences very negative consequences. Just as in real life, there will be no "happily ever after," for those who have poor coping skills. We can recognize the obvious sequence leading to disaster in the story, but would never recognize (or admit) a similar event in our real life. With the metaphorical story in our memory, its similarity to our real life difficulties will trigger recognition of our "Stinky Thinking" and may keep us from going down this unproductive path.

Many of us are reluctant to recognize the futility in our habitual reactions to certain situations. We continue in these patterns and resist the most insightful suggestions of others. But metaphorical stories can break that bond, allowing us to consider alternatives, which may prove more effective and productive for our happiness. Philip Barker in Psychotherapeutic Metaphors states that we often "*get in fixed, ridged patterns of behavior and seem unable to break out of them ... Metaphor can help provide the new perspectives needed. Situations are common in which people keep attempting 'solutions' to problems, but their solutions do not work. A metaphor is a way of offering new choices and new perspectives. These can lead to the resolution of conflict and the solution of many other problems.*" These fables are designed to provide you and your children with rational alternatives, which because of their metaphorical nature are more readily accessible than mere rules and expectations.

The Adventures of Cosmos Crow attempts to tackle two very difficult tasks.

First, to help the adult (parent, instructor, teacher) understand the impact of common irrational beliefs of humans and how to change those irrational beliefs to more rational beliefs. **Second**, to help this adult to teach these same skills to their children.

It is the premise of this effort is that learning how to cope with life's difficulties is the greatest skill you can have and that it is extremely important that you teach these skills to your children. The central message is, **Good Thinking = Coping**. Now let's define...**COPING**. **'The ability to experience a less than optimal situation, face it, accept it, and proceed forward with an adaptive response. (Kendall, 1992)**

Facing your fears, accepting that they exist and have a right to exist, and then proceeding with an appropriate, effective and rational strategy to deal with them ... how great would that be! All of us seem to have a predisposition to think, feel and behave in very immature, maladaptive (as defined by our modern adult society) ways. But because many of our poor coping behaviors were very effective at an earlier time in our life, we have a hard time changing them. This next section will help you understand how our most common irrational beliefs that are with us in childhood can be maintained though out our lives causing us many life difficulties.

OUR MOST COMMON IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

As you progress through the fables in the Adventures of Cosmos Crow series, you will have the opportunity to recognize the most common irrational beliefs we humans maintain. These beliefs are strongly held by many children and adults. These same beliefs can be found (or something similar) in the self-report of those adolescents and adults who are substance abusers or who are experiencing many of life's other difficulties. This booklet will try and help you understand why these beliefs are so common, how these beliefs affect your life, those of your children and how to go about modifying or changing these beliefs.

The Adventures of Cosmos Crow is geared for those who want to teach their children how to cope with life. You will have an opportunity that most of us have lacked ... an opportunity to understand how your thinking influences your life and how you can control that thinking for your betterment. It is not an easy or short-term task. It will necessitate a level of vigilance and effort that few people currently are willing to attempt. But in time, as with most things, it will become a habit and you will suddenly realize that you have effortlessly dealt with a situation or person in an effective, appropriate manner, which before, had been outside of your realm of capabilities. *You will become all that you can become, no longer held back by your irrational thinking or the irrational thinking of others.*

This understanding and ability to overcome your irrational, "Stinky Thinking" and change it to more effective, rational, "Good Thinking" is a skill to share with and teach to your children. We often hear that children of substance abusers are more likely than others to become substance abusers themselves. It can be suggested that the truth in that statement has as much to do with the modeling and reinforcement of irrational thinking, as with any other factor.

Most of the interpersonal, school, work and home problems that you and your children experience are tied to this immature (**Stinky**) thinking. The stories in this series will help you understand how your thinking works in determining your feelings and behaviors. It will help you recognize it in your child, and teach you how to help them change their **Stinky Thinking** to **Good Thinking**.

If your child develops the habit of **Good Thinking**, they will naturally have **OK Emotions** and **Thumbs Up Behaviors** and that will make everyone's life better. You may not be able to control the events in your life. You may not be able to control the behavior of others. You may not be able to change your talents and limitations. But you can control what you think and in so doing, control yourself (your emotions and behaviors) and thus control all that is within your control.

The stories in the Adventures of Cosmos Crow series are organized around the typically occurring irrational thinking of children. We have done this so that you will understand the role that thinking plays in emotions and behaviors. In the next part of this booklet we will illustrate how these childhood beliefs are still present in adults, experiencing adult problems.

It is important for you to understand the correlation between the typical irrational beliefs of children and the attitudes and behaviors these beliefs may cause. Next you will find the ten most common strongly held beliefs of children (in the bold print) from a 1982 study by Virginia Waters. You will also find some of the problem attitudes and behaviors these beliefs may cause.

10 Common Irrational beliefs of children (Virginia Waters, 1982)
Some of the emotions, behaviors and attitudes that they cause

This shows the ten most common irrational beliefs of children from a 1982 study and the emotions, behaviors and attitudes that irrational “Stinky Thinking” beliefs may cause.

1. I'm bad if I make a mistake.

Gets upset with any imperfection...hesitant to start/quick to quit
Find normal school and home expectations threatening

2. Things should come easily to me.

Easily frustrated and frequently angry
Unable to be patient or persistent

3. It's awful if others don't like me.

Anxious about any perceived criticism
Easily manipulated and unable to see others realistically

4. There is only one right answer.

Anxious in school situations may tend to isolate
Unable to see alternative solutions to problems...stubborn

5. I shouldn't show my feelings.

Unwilling to put self in threatening situations (reading aloud)
Excessively shy and timid

6. I shouldn't have to wait for anything.

Impatient and Demanding...angry
Sees normal frustration as a confirmation of “That’s not fair”

7. Everything should go my way and I should always get what I want.

Manipulative of others regardless of negative consequences
Whinny and passive aggressive with those “In Power”

8. The world should be fair and bad people should be punished.

Sees normal life frustrations as a serious personal problem
Hold grudges...vindictive...unable to see alternatives

9. I must win.

Unable to just “do your best”...unrealistic in expectations
Views normal difficulties as unacceptable...prone to quit

10. Adults should be perfect.

Unrealistic in expectations of self and others
Gravitate to those who will “Tell me what I want to hear”

What is important to realize, is that these beliefs are irrational in the context of our modern adult society. The fact that they are so common may illustrate that these beliefs were very valuable in a more primitive time and at a younger age. Many of these beliefs may have been necessary for human survival in a small hunter/gather band. Those in that band who did not have these types of beliefs may well have been at a disadvantage. The same can be said for young children.

Consider one of the beliefs listed from Water's work is, "It's awful if others don't like me." The behavioral consequences of this belief are behaviors designed to gain favor with others. In a small group of cave dwellers, with the pressures survival being paramount, such behaviors would be necessary. As a clan member, you would not want someone in your clan who is not overly concerned about the "group's acceptance." That person have a negative impact on the survival of the entire clan.

The same can be said for the young child and their need for acceptance by their family and peers. How often do you hear of a young child being "different" or "loner" or the "black sheep." All these may be euphemisms for the child who is not overly concerned if others like them. In young children, and in the primitive clan, not being concerned if others like you can be a distinct disadvantage. But in our modern world, being overly concerned with the approval of others can cause many problems.

This particular belief is associated with being easily manipulated by others, co-dependence in substance abuse relationships, and so on. The ability to draw personal boundaries, deal effectively with personal and workplace conflicts all hinge on being able to successfully override this particular belief. This is not the same as saying, "I should never be concerned with the opinions of others." That belief, although counter to the other, is still just as irrational. A better belief is, "It would be nice if they like (love, admire, etc.) me, but I don't need that to be happy."

But changing this common (core) belief (and the others supporting irrational beliefs it generates) is difficult. The purpose of the Adventures of Cosmos Crow is to help you understand these common irrational beliefs and to help you teach your children how to effectively deal with these beliefs and many other beliefs that limit their opportunity for success and happiness. The fables and "Cosmos Discussions" are designed to present your child with metaphorical examples that are easy to remember. These examples will be available in their memory to counter the influence of these personal irrational beliefs and the irrational beliefs of others.

The stories in the series are not designed to dictate a specific set of rational beliefs or to even suggest when certain beliefs are more appropriate. Rather, it is designed to help you and your children develop the skills necessary to evaluate situations and select the most appropriate beliefs pertaining to that particular situation. From that process will emerge the most accurate emotions and productive behaviors to deal with that situation. These are skill-building opportunities that will take time and practice to master. You cannot leave to chance that somehow you and your children will realize that Good Thinking will lead to Good Feeling and Good Living.

This next page illustrates examples of more rational beliefs that you will help children learn to use rather than the more typical “Stinky Thinking” so common in youth.

10 Common Irrational beliefs of children (Waters, 1982)
Examples of alternative rational “Good Thinking” beliefs

If you want your children to climb the “Ladder” to success and happiness, then you need to help them change those childhood “Stinky Thinking” beliefs to “Good Thinking.”

1. I'm bad if I make a mistake.
I don't like to make mistakes but that does not mean I'm bad
Everyone makes mistakes that is how we learn
2. Things should come easily to me.
Just take it a little at a time and you can understand it
Nothing worth doing comes easily
3. It's awful if others don't like me.
Not everyone is going to like me all of the time
Did I cause this? If no...forget it. If yes...can I fix it?
4. There is only one right answer.
There may be other ways to do something...just try
It won't hurt anything to try something different
5. I shouldn't show my feelings.
Others can't hurt me unless I let myself be hurt
Be strong...be brave...do the right thing
6. I shouldn't have to wait for anything.
Everything good takes time...relax and breath slowly
If you don't get it this time, there will be other times
7. Everything should go my way and I should always get what I want.
It is okay to let others “win” because I am big enough to lose
Let them have it this time, it is really no big deal
8. The world should be fair and bad people should be punished.
People can be wrong or mean but I don't need to stay upset
I choose not to think about it and get upset...I am in control
9. I must win.
I did my best and that is all I can do
It's foolish to think you can always win and I am not foolish
10. Adults should be perfect.
People are just people and sometimes they are wrong or foolish
Always listen and decide if what others tell me makes sense

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF THESE CHILDHOOD BELIEFS GO UNCHANGED

The following illustrates how there are marked similarities between these irrational childhood beliefs and those of adults experiencing serious life problems.

10 Common Irrational beliefs of children (Waters, 1982)

10 Irrational Ideas-A New Guide to Rational Living (Ellis & Harper, 1975)

Strongly held Adult Irrational beliefs (Substance Abuse Belief Questionnaire)

1. I'm bad if I make a mistake.

Emotional misery comes from external pressures and that I have little ability to control or change my feelings.

People will take advantage of me if I give them the chance.

2. Things should come easily to me.

I can achieve maximum human happiness by inertia and inaction or by passively and uncommittedly "enjoying myself."

I should avoid unpleasant situations at all costs.

3. It's awful if others don't like me.

I must have the love or approval from all the people I find significant.

I must do nothing to offend my supporter or someone who cares for me.

4. There is only one right answer.

People and things should turn out better than they do and that I must view it as awful and horrible if I do not find good solutions to life's grim realities.

It is important to do a perfect job on everything.

5. I shouldn't show my feelings.

If something seems dangerous or fearsome, I must preoccupy myself with and make myself anxious about it.

I need to be in complete control of my emotions.

6. I shouldn't have to wait for anything.

I can more easily avoid facing many life difficulties and self-responsibilities than undertake more rewarding forms of self-discipline.

If I want something, I should do whatever is necessary to get it.

7. Everything should go my way; and I should always get what I want.

My past remains all-important and that because something once strongly influenced my life, it has to keep determining my feelings and behavior today.

I cannot tolerate boredom.

8. The world should be fair and bad people should be punished.

When people act obnoxiously and unfairly, I should blame and damn them and see them as bad, wicked, or rotten individuals.

People often say one thing and mean something else.

9. I must win.

I have to view things as awful, terrible, horrible and catastrophic when I get seriously frustrated, treated unfairly, or rejected.

Being controlled or dominated by others is intolerable.

10. Adults should be perfect.

I must prove thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving.
Details are extremely important to me.

DEFINING TERMS USE IN "THE ADVENTURES OF COSMOS CROW"

STINKY THINKING: The beliefs you have about situations, yourself, others, the future, etc. that are not based on facts. These irrational beliefs may be call prejudice, or immaturity or stupidity or whatever. Ask yourself, "What evidence do I have that this (belief) is true (or always true)?" If you honestly don't have any real evidence, you have found some **Stinky Thinking**.

GOOD THINKING: The beliefs you have about situations, yourself, others, the future, etc., that are based on facts. This rational style of thinking consists of the things you tell yourself after evaluating a situation, based on the facts of the situation. You do not let preconceived ideas, prejudices or irrational beliefs of others determine how you view a situation (event or person).

NOT OK EMOTIONS: These are the emotions that are the result of **Stinky Thinking**. You can recognize them by their inappropriateness and/or intensity. These emotions may be called rage, humiliation, depression and so on. They don't seem to fit the situation or even if they do, their intensity is out of line. Some of the terms in these stories may be new or strange to you. They are designed to be memorable and descriptive. It is important that you have access to the information presented in these stories not just today but for a lifetime. The use of "program specific" words as "cues" is intentional and you should use them not only in the story presentation but in your everyday language, "What were you thinking just before you ... Was that Good or Stinky Thinking? If it was "Stinky", what "Good Thinking" could you use and how would that have changed what happened."

OK EMOTIONS: These are the emotions that are the result of **Good Thinking**. You can recognize them by their appropriateness and usually, lack of intensity. These emotions are often neutral or positive. If negative, they may be called anger, frustration, embarrassment, sadness and so on. They fit the situation and their intensity is at the appropriate level. They are the result of the reality of the situation. You are not recalling past transgressions or similar events to conger up a more intense emotional reaction. You may not like how you are feeling but you are in control.

THUMBS DOWN BEHAVIORS: These are the behaviors that are the result of **Stinky Thinking** and **Not OK Emotions**. You can recognize them by their inappropriateness and/or intensity and that they usually go against your best self-interest. They are frequently a behavioral habit to a presenting situation. Something happens or someone says something and you react in a manner that is inappropriate or too extreme. You may even react in a manner that is going to get a result that you really don't want. You may not know why your reacted so inappropriately. You may say, "They just made me mad" or "No one talks like that to me" and the classic, "I don't know." You have gotten into the habit of behaving in a certain way when you have certain **Stinky Thinking** and/or **Not OK Emotions** and you are not in control.

THUMBS UP BEHAVIORS: These are the behaviors that are the result of **Good Thinking** and **OK Emotions**. You can recognize them by their appropriateness and that they usually are in your best self-interest. For example, a situation occurs and you think about it in a rational manner.

You have emotions that are appropriate and manageable. You consider your alternatives and the consequences to those alternatives. You then choose the most appropriate behavioral reaction and do it. You stick with your decision and accept the consequences of your behavior.

HOW THE "ADVENTURES" COPING SKILLS STORIES ARE ORGANIZED

The first part of each story is the Fable.

Each fable has characters that will think, feel and behave just like children. These fables are written to be understandable by the children and allow them to see themselves as one or more of the fable's characters. Many of these stories do not have a "happily ever after" ending, because if you engage in ***Stinky Thinking***, life does not progress "happily." There is also a conscious attempt to insure that the lessons of this book are remembered. *"Research on the therapeutic use of imagery suggest that memory for verbal information is enhanced when the material is organized and interesting, is mildly but not severely emotionally evocative and utilizes a number of sensory realms."* (Prins, Weber & McGaugh 1994).

The Cosmos Crow character, who is a bit of a smart aleck but who understands the need for ***Good Thinking***, narrates each fable. We have found that having a cartoon character as the narrator seems to allow for children to "hear" the message. You may recognize many of your own truisms coming out of the mouth of Cosmos.

What may surprise you is that your children are more likely to retain these good parenting messages because they are coming from someone other than their teacher or parent. The fable is supposed to be enjoyable (although the main character may get in trouble). The fables are not preachy and if you choose to read them to your children, do so with this in mind.

The second part of each Story is Cosmos' Discussion (Worksheets).

In this part, Cosmos discusses various parts of the story and asks questions. The "Parent Notes" in each story have suggested answers to the questions but it is not important that the children be perfect. We want them to understand that the characters could change their emotions and behaviors and the outcome of the story, by changing their thinking.

The purpose of this part of each story is to reinforce particular themes and to see if your children understood the story. One goal is for them to be able to incorporate certain concepts and phases like ***Stinky Thinking*** and ***Good Thinking*** into their everyday vocabulary. You want to be able to use "cues" such as "Stinky Thinking" and "Good Thinking" as well as the various characters ("You are acting just like Mad Squirrel") to help you and your children learn more effective coping skills.

If your child is unwilling to do their homework, you can now use the material from the stories as cues for more effective thinking and therefore...more effective behavior. "You know, when you tell yourself that something is just "too hard" or that "I will never learn this," you are like Sad Squirrel in our story and you make yourself afraid. When you are afraid, it is very difficult to learn something new or difficult. What would the "Happy Squirrel" tell himself about this homework?"

This example illustrates how you can get your child to recognize that their thinking is causing them to be frustrated. It is not the task, but rather what they are telling themselves about the task. If they change their thinking, they will also change how they are feeling and be able to come up with acceptable alternatives to just quitting the math homework. You are now able to use something

other than just your demanding that they complete their work. Your child is now able to understand that they can be in control of themselves and this situation if they can implement effective coping strategies.

These are valuable lessons that can serve them well for the rest of their lives. ***The fables and worksheets are not to be just read once and forgotten. They can be read over and over so that their lessons can be incorporated into the fabric of your daily interaction with your children.***

The third part of most stories is the Quiz.

The quiz is designed to give the child motivation to pay attention to the story, and some immediate feedback about their understanding of the story and concepts. It also helps the adult see if the child understands the material or may need some additional help. The answers code is at the bottom of the "picture board" (the last page of each fable, just before Parent Notes).

The fourth part of each story is the Rationale.

The Rationale is Cosmos' explanation of the fable. He explains how the character's thinking is what causes the upset feelings and problematic behavior. It is Cosmos who shows that unless the thinking changes, the bad consequences that happened in the story can't be avoided. Cosmos often relates the events of the fable to real life experiences of the reader. It is this comparing the fable to real life that drives home the point that we (all of us, adults as well as children) must take responsibility for our thinking. In so doing, we take charge of our lives and determine if we want to have a happier ending than what occurred in the story.

The fifth part of many stories is the Exercise.

Cosmos has a phrase, "Knowing is not doing." He emphasizes in all of the fables that you must understand something but then you must do it. The Exercise portion of each "older child" stories is designed to help you and your children practice a skill. Each Exercise is designed to reinforce a skill that the main character in the story lacked or teach a specific real life skill. The Exercises are not difficult and can provide you with interesting insights into your belief system and that of your children.

Parent Notes are provided in each story.

The Parent Notes section of each story explains the concepts and purposes of the story. It will provide guidance to the various sections of the story as well as suggested answers for worksheet questions.

Finally we suggest that you have an "On Going" effort called Situational Exercises.

It is difficult to get adults to change their "Stinky Thinking," and do what is in their "best self-interest," from appropriate diet and exercising to being considerate or assertive. It is even more difficult to get children to change their "Stinky Thinking," because they have not yet experienced the problems this type of thinking will ultimately cause. The Situational Exercises occur when a real life situation presents itself that can be tied into one of the stories.

By referencing a story, you help children identify behaviors, which are related to ineffective or effective coping skills identified in that story. Using the story characters as a "cue" you can encourage appropriate cognitive and behavioral change in children. By attending to and supporting appropriate behaviors, you increase the likelihood that children will incorporate these new skills into their reparatory of self-talk. Rewarding appropriate change is not "bribing." Rather, it is reinforcing and thereby increasing the likelihood that the change will continue. As a child experiences the

positive consequences of "Good Thinking," there will be less need for you to provide positive reinforcement to get them to keep "Good Thinking" and "Good Behavior."

HOW TO PRESENT THE MATERIAL IN SCHOOL SETTING

The Coping Skills "Adventures of Cosmos Crow" is unique in that it uses specifically designed stories to teach effective cognitive (thinking) coping skills by having the characters of the stories illustrate how most of us think (Stinky Thinking) feel (Not OK Emotions) and behave (Thumbs Down Behaviors) in many life situations. The narrator of the stories, Cosmos Crow will explain the story and help the participants recognize that they can use "Good Thinking" to make their lives happier and more successful. The keys to Coping Skills are that it should be INTERESTING, FUN, REALISTIC and USEFUL.

The design of the Coping Skills program makes it possible to teach these lessons incrementally in a classroom or therapeutic setting.

1. You will start with the **FABLE** portion of each story. The Cosmos Crow website (www.cosmoscrow.com) provides Instructor Manuals of each story. You can follow the directions in this manual when to stop the audio to discuss something with the participants. If you read the fable, do so with as much animation as possible. As you become more comfortable with the fables, you can pause the audio or stop reading to interject questions, "What do you think is going to happen?" At the conclusion of the Fable, please use a few minutes to discuss the fable with the audience.
2. In the **COSMOS WORKSHEETS** part of each story, **STOP** the audio for each worksheet page if you are using it, when you come to the **questions** part of the worksheets part of the story. Ask the questions and use the provided answers as a guide. Do not worry about the participants getting the answers exactly as it is in the Instructor Manual. You want the participants to be able to recognize "Stinking Thinking" and its consequences as well as being able to identify alternatives to their stinky thinking.
3. You may choose to read the **QUIZ QUESTIONS** section (not have audio) and let the audience respond. You can copy the quiz questions from the Instructor Manual for that story, in our "Adventures Library" and provide it to the participants. This is an opportunity to give them some positive reinforcement and to see if there are any significant problems with someone not paying attention. Make this a positive portion of the process. If used in a school setting, you may want to use it as a home assignment for bonus points. Either way it is a good method of encouraging students to pay attention and to provide them with positive feedback.
4. Play the Audio or read the **COMOS EXPLAINS** (Rationale) section and use a few minutes for discussion. This may give you some excellent insights into the repertoire of coping self-messages of your audience. This may be a good time to do additional illustrations of "Good Thinking" self-messages, "Who can give us another example of what the character could have told himself when confronted by the Grizzly Bear."
5. Most "advanced" stories conclude with an **EXERCISE**. If time permits, go through the exercise with the audience or you may want to use it as a home assignment for bonus points. It is often a good idea to have them talk about "real world" uses of the exercise whenever possible.

6. In the weeks following the reading of the story use **Situational Exercises (real world occurrences)** and your own wisdom to point out and reinforce examples of Good Thinking, Okay Emotions and Thumbs Up Behaviors. In your interaction with students, you will find frequent situations that will call to mind some character or lesson from previous stories. Because students will remember the fables, your statement, "I am pleased that you are not acting just like Jeff in story from early in the year ... do you remember what happened to him?" In a short time, the children will also attend to these positive components and will modify and improve their behavior.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION SEQUENCE FOR COPING SKILLS STORIES IN A CLASSROOM SETTING

This suggested presentation sequence is designed to make a school based program more compatible with the time limitations in a classroom setting and allow for more effective training. By braking the story (which includes are parts, fable, worksheets, etc.) up into smaller segments you do not need large blocks of time for any specific part. For example, a story that may take 20 minutes to read could be broken into two 10 minute sections presented during the same week. The following week you could cover two worksheets at 5-10 minutes each.

The 10-25 minute time frame for each presentation is short enough to keep most children's attention. The weekly exposure to the story will increase the likelihood that children will retain the concepts of each story and will allow the adult opportunities to reference "real world" (classroom) situations that are similar to the story (or previous stories).

Please remember that the goal of this program is to teach effective cognitive coping skills and to have the participant use and retain these skills. Feel free to determine the length of time you can devote to the presentations and work within those parameters.

Consistent presentations and tying in real world similarities to the fables will help the students understand and retain the skills you are teaching.