

Creating Tolerance for Feeling All Emotions

Matthew and the Rock

Matthew is seven years old. He loves his grandpa, David, very much. Matthew lives in Illinois, and last summer he visited his grandpa in Colorado. Everyday Grandpa and Matthew explored beautiful places in nature. They walked through the forests, strolled by the streams, and even hiked up in the mountains. Matthew had a great time, and it was very hard for him to say good-bye to his grandpa and go back to his home in Illinois. Matthew started to cry when he was saying good-bye to his grandpa, and his grandpa had tears in his eyes, too. Grandpa handed Matthew a smooth rock and told him to keep it in his pocket. Grandpa told Matthew to put his hand in his pocket and feel the rock if he ever missed him.

The rock was really important to Matthew and he carried in his pocket everywhere he went. One day he was standing in line at school and felt a little scared, so he put his hand in his pocket to feel the rock, but it was gone. Matthew felt very sad and tears started to roll down his cheeks. All of his classmates started to say, “Don’t cry, don’t be sad—it’s okay,” and some even told jokes and tried to get Matthew to laugh. But he wasn’t feeling better, even though all his classmates were trying to help. Matthew started to feel like it wasn’t okay to feel sad at school. He started to think, “Why isn’t it okay for me to feel sad?”

Meav and Soccer

Meav was six years old and she loved playing sports. She asked the boys if she could play soccer with them at recess. The boys said, “No, you’re a girl—go play with the girls, go play with dolls.” Meav felt angry when the boys said this and she took a deep breath, stood very tall and proud, and in a very strong voice said, “Yes, I’m a girl, but I really like soccer and I’m good at it.” The boys ignored her and went back to playing soccer. Some girls in her class saw the anger and hurt in Meav’s eyes and said, “Don’t be angry, who cares? It isn’t okay to act that way—you are always supposed to be nice.” The girls were trying to help Meav, but she wasn’t feeling better. Meav started to feel like it wasn’t okay to feel angry at school. She started to think, “Why isn’t it okay for me to feel angry?” Did I do something wrong?