The Feelings Exercise

We believe it is important to be able to recognize and name feelings and be able to listen to and affirm another person's feelings as they arise in everyday situations. Emotions or feelings are an important part of the process of developing expectations, rules, and consequences for your child. The following exercise is designed to provide adults with an opportunity to examine how they each might feel in certain situations and to check their feelings vocabularies. There are no right or wrong answers. Simply list what you might feel in these situations. Following this exercise is a feelings vocabulary list. Feel free to use it to locate those feelings that are hard to name.

Part A

We encourage each parent and/or other significant adult in the family to attempt to list three emotions he or she might feel in the following situations. Each person works on their own list individually, without discussing the situations. Later you will be asked to share your personal responses for comparison and discussion.

Here is a list of fictional situations in which people might find themselves. Please list three emotions you might experience in each of these situations.

1. Everyone joined in cleaning the house and it looks great.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

2. In the middle of the night your telephone rings. A male, adult-sounding voice says, "I am sorry to tell you that your child has been involved in an accident." There is a pause, so you say, "Oh no, what happened?" The voice says, "Fifteen years ago tonight your child wet the bed." He laughs and hangs up.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

3. You are driving a long distance on your vacation. Two hundred miles from your destination, you encounter stalled traffic on the interstate. The last exit was five miles back. Up ahead you see police vehicles, flashing lights and several people crowded at the front of the stalled traffic line.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

4. A good friend tells you she is moving to California in the following week to care for her ailing and extremely wealthy grandmother. It is apparent your friend has been planning this move for quite some time, but she says she didn't know how to tell you until now.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

5. Your teenager has a curfew for 11:00 p.m. on weekends. It is Saturday night at 12:30 a.m. and your teenager is not home yet and has not called to explain why he or she is late.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

6. While you are out working in the yard, your next door neighbor runs out of her house. She is bleeding from her lower lip. She runs to you, grasps your arm and says, "He's done this before. But promise me one thing, you won't tell anyone about this or the other times, no matter what, OK?"
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________

7. At Wal-mart, your child has been hassling you to purchase something for him. Repeatedly you refuse. The situation escalates until the child is wailing uncontrollably, to the obvious discomfort of the other shoppers.
   List three feelings you might have: ________________ ________________ ________________
8. While watching the lottery drawing on TV, you realize that you have the winning numbers. You go to the kitchen counter to get the ticket and discover it is no longer there. You ask everyone if they have seen it. Your teenager states that he thought it was an old one and threw it away. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

9. You have been offered a new job at a substantial increase in salary. In order to accept the new job, you must be willing to relocate. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

10. You have left your only child at home with a neighbor's daughter in order to attend an important social gathering downtown. At 1:30 a.m. you turn down your street and see fire trucks in front of your house. Your child and the sitter are nowhere to be found. Moments later, the sitter drives up in another car. You see your child is safe. You ask, "What happened?" The sitter says, "I don't know. I went to visit a friend and I stayed a little later than I planned. I'm sorry, I thought I'd get back before you did."
List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

11. As a single parent, you have recently started dating a new person. Your children, who have not met your new friend yet, express a desire to meet him/her. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

12. A new family moved into the house next door. Your children become friends with their children, who are about the same age. You begin to notice that your children always seem to have something new when coming from the neighbor's house. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

13. Your child has just graduated from high school with honors. He has received a scholarship to attend a prestigious college in New England. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

14. You've had a stressful day at work. You come home to lots of chores. Your six-year-old wants your immediate attention to show you his school work. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

15. You're going to a family gathering for Thanksgiving dinner. You'll be reunited with some relatives that you haven't seen for years. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

16. Your mother calls. She says she hasn't been feeling well and may need an operation. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

17. You're in the mall and you notice that the sales clerk has waited on someone who came in after you. List three feelings you might have __________ __________ __________

If you are completing this exercise at home, use the following instructions to process the exercise. If you are completing this exercise in class, then your trainer will lead you in processing the exercise.