

The Volcano Room

At SandCastles we teach children, teens and adults that your feelings are not right or wrong, it is what you choose to do with those feelings that may be inappropriate. Many times individuals will express that they feel that being angry is a bad thing or makes them a bad person.

We emphasize that we all have the right to our feelings. We explain that there are all kinds of feelings and no one can take those away from us. We add that our feelings do not make us bad people. What creates a negative behavior is when one chooses an inappropriate response to their feelings or way of handling their anger or frustration.

The SandCastles Grief Support Program provides a unique way for families to express their feelings. We have created a room filled with fun things to play with, toss, throw, tear, jump on and destroy. The room is supplied with stuffed animals, punching bags, popping bubbles, old phone books, hula-hoops, building blocks and batonca's (soft foam covered bats).

Each age group of children and teens (and adults too) has an opportunity during the program to visit the volcano room. Here they are supported as they express their feelings in a physical way. As each individual is unique in their grief, each person is unique in their way of expressing themselves. Some people need to express themselves very physically, loudly and aggressively, others are quieter, more reserved and focused.

It is important for people to remember it is vital that they are able to express and cope with their feelings in a way that is comfortable for them. When emotions and feelings are held in, the body starts reacting to the pent-up energy. A chemical reaction starts to occur. One might experience headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, colds/flu, anxiety and muscle tension. There are many appropriate ways that people can cope with their feelings and express themselves. We have a few ideas listed.

Ways to express and cope with your feelings:

Call a friend, write in a journal, rip up old magazines, stomp your feet somewhere safe, watch a sad movie/ read a touching book and let yourself cry, dance around the house, exercise, go for a walk, kick a ball outside, draw a picture, write a poem or short story, yell into a pillow, punch your pillow, run around the block, jump rope, stretch, breath, sing a song, garden, clean the house, bake, take a nap, spend the day by yourself, spend the day with friends, look at photos, rearrange the furniture, paint, take a bath, take the day off, visit a friend or family, go to the batting cages, hit some golf balls or any thing else that you can think of that's safe.

How to make your own volcano room at home

Find a place that is safe in your house or outside that you can cause a ruckus. You want to have enough space so you can move around if you wish. As a family you can decide what you would like to put in it. Remember everyone deals with their grief and feelings differently so you might want to come up with a variety of different items.

Examples: Old phone books, catalogs or magazines to tear; packing bubbles to pop; crayons, markers and paper to draw or scribble; pen, pencil and paper to write with; old pillows to punch; a drum or something you can pound or beat; nerf balls to throw; Kleenex; building blocks to knock down; paper lunch bags to blow up and pop; blowing bubbles; play doh to sculpt and pound; old clothe rags to rip up; wet towel to ring out; or anything else that you can imagine.

As a family, decide how you are going to use your volcano room. For example, family members can gather and decide that when someone is feeling angry, one can take a time out and go to the volcano room. They can then let others know when they have calmed down and are ready to talk. When all family members are in agreement to a plan it can be helpful in showing respect to each other and their feelings as they journey through their grief. Everyone has permission to feel what they are experiencing and then have the time and space to do so without taking it out on other family members.