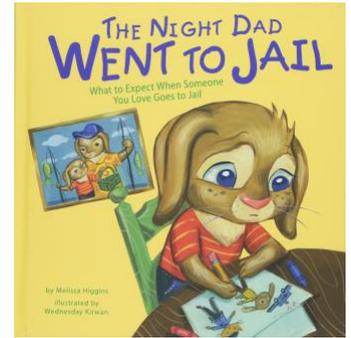


The Night Dad Went to Jail

By Melissa Higgins

When a loved one goes to jail, a child might feel lost, scared, and even mad. This story offers age-appropriate explanations to help with difficult conversations when a parent or caregiver goes to jail. Told from the experience of a young rabbit, this picture book is intended to make a parent's incarceration a little less frightening.



Discussion and Questions:

- The characters in the book share many emotions (e.g., embarrassed, mad, sad). While reading, ask children to identify how a character is feeling. Look at each picture and have the child identify how the character might be feeling.
- What kind of face or body language do you show when you feel sad? Mad? Worried?
Note: It may be necessary to explain the concept of body language to young children. Having a mirror handy can provide an opportunity for a child to “see” what their face looks like when mad, angry, scared etc.
- This book shares strategies for talking to trusted adults to help us feel better. Ask children to name an adult that they would feel safe talking to, if they were scared, sad, etc.

Activities:

- **“Scribble Feelings”**
 - On page 14 the main character, Sketch, draws “scribble feelings.” Have the children draw what different emotions look like using different colors, shapes, etc.
 - Demonstrate how you would draw an emotion. For example, frustration might be red or black, calm may be blue, and happy may be pink. While drawing, emphasize your facial expressions and movements to demonstrate the emotion. For example, while drawing *frustration* you might scrunch up your face and draw fast, whereas, when drawing *calm* you may smile and take your time.
 - Give children a small white board or piece of paper and name an emotion for them to draw. Ask questions such as, “What color makes you think of anger?” When they complete a picture ask them to talk about it and why they chose certain colors/shapes, etc. They might also describe a time when they felt that emotion.
 - Do a new emotion word each day or week and display each child’s work in a book or on the walls. Refer to the pictures when children are having big feelings and/or ask them if they’d like to draw their emotion at these times.
- **Cool Down Choice Board**
 - Point out the things Miss Sanchez and Sketch thought about doing when they had big feelings (*walk away, draw pictures, talk to someone I trust*).
 - Ask children to think of things they can do when they have big feelings. Provide examples, if needed.
 - Using the children’s ideas, create a classroom choice board like the one to the right. These can be found online for purchase, or you can make your own. Encourage children to refer to the Choice Board when they are experiencing intense emotions.



Image from [The Counseling Kind](https://www.thecounselingkind.com/)

- Demonstrate for children how to use the choice board when they are feeling big emotions. Invite them to pick an activity to do that will help them cool/calm down and feel better. Affirm children for using the choice board to regulate their emotions. Reflect on how it helped them after they have calmed/cooled down.
- **Feelings and Forgiveness**
 - In the story, Sketch is working on forgiving their dad. Talk with the children about what it means to forgive someone. Ask them, “When might we need to ask for or show someone forgiveness?” Share examples of someone accidentally knocking down their block structure or bumping into them on the playground.
 - Brainstorm with the children how we can ask for and show forgiveness in the classroom and at home. Remind the children that forgiveness doesn’t always happen right away. Sometimes we or our friends might need to think for a bit first, or calm down, before we can forgive.
 - Some preschool children are not ready to say sorry or forgive others. Adults should not force children to say these things. Instead, adults can help children learn about apologies/forgiveness by talking about they mean and modeling them as appropriate.
 - Offer alternative ways for children to express apologies and forgiveness to one another such as encouraging children to identify what others are feeling, draw a picture for someone who got hurt, giving a hug or high five, asking someone nicely to play, or bringing someone their favorite toy.
 - Demonstrate ways children can respond to an apology without saying “It’s okay” or “I forgive you” if they aren’t ready. For example, a child could respond to the apology by saying, “Thank you” or “I heard you and need time to think.”