

Butterflies in My Stomach

*from Creative Interventions for Troubled Children and Youth
by Liana Lowenstein, MSW, p. 9-11*

Topic: Self-Esteem – Feelings (Butterflies in My Stomach)

Developmental Level: Elementary and Middle School

Purpose: To assess problems and concerns, to create awareness of how the body reacts to stress, to promote problem-solving skills, and to verbalize feelings.

Materials Needed: Butterfly outlines handout, Scissors, Glue sticks, Banner paper

Description of Exercise: The parent introduces the activity by pointing out that everyone has problems and worries. The parent outlines the different ways the body reacts to stress. For example, when a person is scared, the heart might pound faster, or when a person is sad and about to cry, that person might feel like there is a lump in their throat. The parent then asks the child if they have ever heard of the expression, "I have butterflies in my stomach." If the child is unfamiliar with the expression, the parent can offer an explanation such as, "When you are worried or nervous about something, your stomach might feel funny or jittery, as if you have butterflies in your stomach. You don't really have butterflies in your stomach; it just feels like you do." Next, spread the banner paper on the floor. The child lies down on it, while the parent outlines the child's body. The parent may also allow the child to draw an outline of their body as well to make it fun for the child. Then the parent gives the child the paper butterfly outlines, on which the child writes their worries. Bigger worries are written on larger butterflies, smaller worries on the smaller ones. The butterflies are then glued onto the child's body outline, inside the stomach and vice versa with the parent. As the child identifies each worry, the parent can open a discussion by asking open-ended questions as listed below. At the end of the exercise, the child can decorate the body outline.

Discussion Questions:

1. What can you share about each worry?
2. Is it ok to have worries?
3. Does it surprise you that other people have worries, too?
4. What could you do about this worry to help yourself feel better?
5. Is there anyone who can help you with this worry?