FAMILY ACTIVITY: PINWHEELS & DEEP BREATHS

Pinwheels are a fun tool that can be taken outside or placed in your yard to see how hard (or if) the wind is blowing. They also can be a prop to help children practice taking deep breaths. Deep breathing can be a tool to calm ourselves down or focusing on our breath can be a mindfulness technique.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Materials
- Small dowel (straw, chopsticks or food skewers work too) and thumb tack (can substitute a toothpick if you are using a straw)
- Sheet of paper
- Thumbtack or toothpick
- Scissors
- Coloring tools (markers, crayons, or colored pencils)

Instructions
Make a pinwheel
1. Cut out a square piece of paper
   a. You can fold the corner of a sheet of 8x11 paper down and then cut off the extra piece to make a square.
2. Decorate your piece of paper on both sides (optional).
   a. Designs work best - we will be cutting and folding.
3. Fold your square twice on the diagonal to make a triangle.
4. Cut down the lines as shown in the image (cuts were made on purple lines)
5. Fold alternating corners toward the center (loosely)
6. Poke your thumbtack through the tips of the paper (in the center)
7. Attach to your dowel (be careful not to poke the thumbtack all the way through.
8. Take your pinwheel outside and watch it blow in the wind (or blow on it yourself to test it out).

Practice Deep Breaths
1. Deep breaths can be helpful in calming our bodies down and sometimes having a visual aid helps us to take deeper breaths.
2. Practice taking a deep breath with your pinwheel
   a. Take a deep breath in (try to breath in for 5 seconds)
   b. Hold your pinwheel up and slowly blow the air out- making it spin
      i. If you have more than one pinwheel, see who can keep theirs going the longest
3. Practice using deep breathing to calm your body down
   a. Run around (or run in place for one minute)
   b. Grab your pinwheel and use it to take 3 deep breaths (as described in step 2).
   c. Reflect: did that help slow your body back down?

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. When does your pinwheel move the fastest?
2. Where should we put the pinwheel so that it catches the most wind?
3. Could you take deep breaths without the pinwheel?
4. When might it be helpful to use deep breaths to calm your body down?

IDEAS TO INCLUDE YOUNGER SIBLINGS! (ADAPTATIONS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS)

- Close supervision of little ones is essential when you are using sharp objects such as scissors and thumb tacks. If your young child will let you take the lead on these steps, even better. The littlest ones should only be invited to watch.
- It’s important to keep in mind that really young children may not understand what it means to “blow” so demonstrate and be patient - and use other ways to get the pinwheel to move. Watching it spin in the wind can also be calming.
- Focus on shared attention and bring language to your interaction by describing what you are doing, what you observe and what you notice your little one is focusing on. Consider the size of your paper and dowel to accommodate smaller hands and little ones who are still developing the fine motor skills that will be needed to complete this task.