

The Big Red Bird and the Red Feather Game

The story features a zany bird who, in her quirky way, teaches children a calming game with the use of feathers and simple directions. Included in the book are discussion questions, bookmarks, and activities related to the development of self-regulation.





Once upon a time in a magical forest lived a Big Red Bird. The Big Red Bird loved to fly high in the sky and keep watch over the forest below.



One day, the **Big Red Bird** noticed some children playing. She was extremely excited because she loved children and was crazy about playing games. So, the Big Red Bird decided to join their fun.

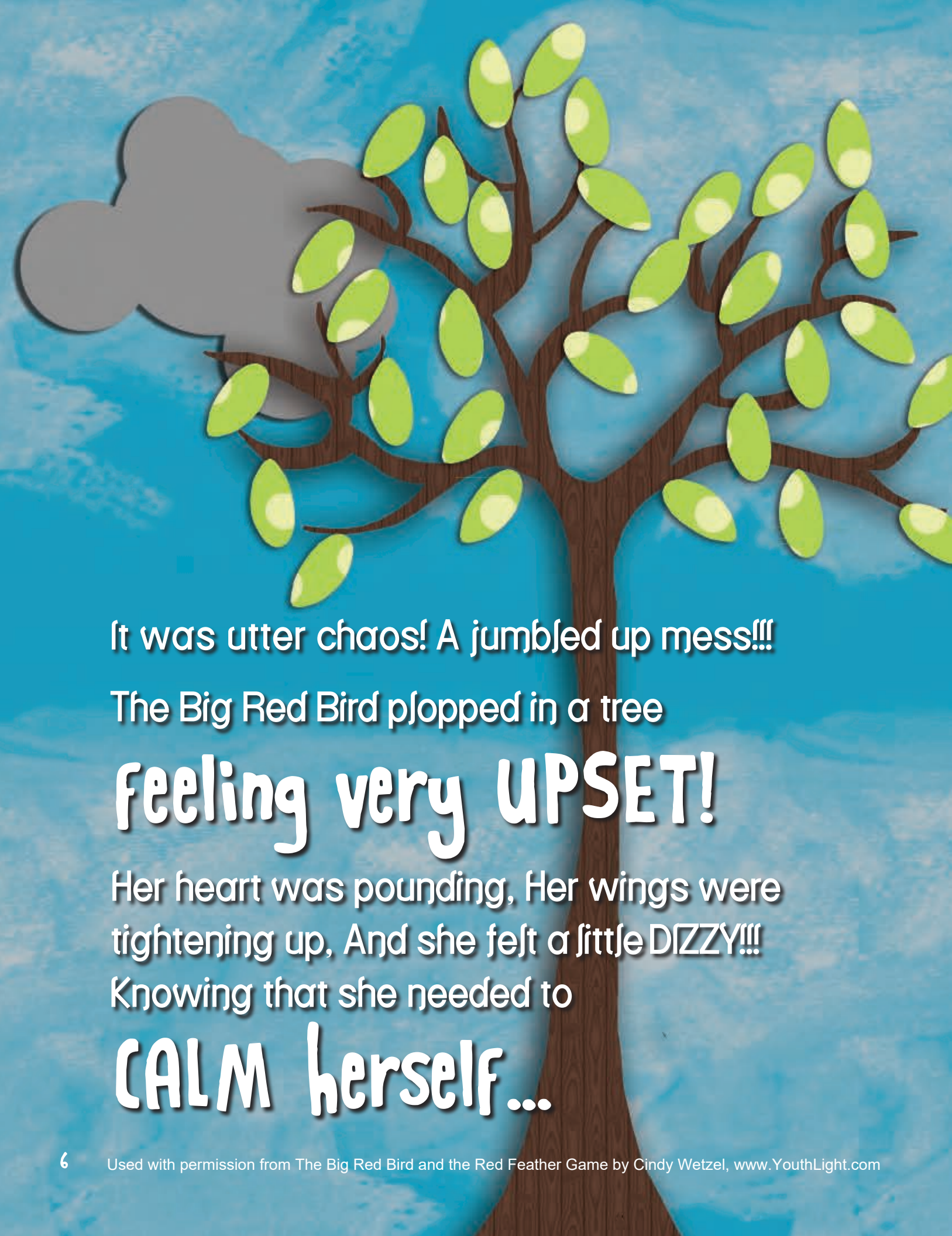


As she flew closer, the Big Red Bird was expecting to hear laughter, friendly words and voices,

BUT instead she heard...



UNFRIENDLY YELLING, ARGUING, and NAME CALLING!



It was utter chaos! A jumbled up mess!!!

The Big Red Bird plopped in a tree

feeling very UPSET!

Her heart was pounding, Her wings were
tightening up, And she felt a little DIZZY!!!

Knowing that she needed to

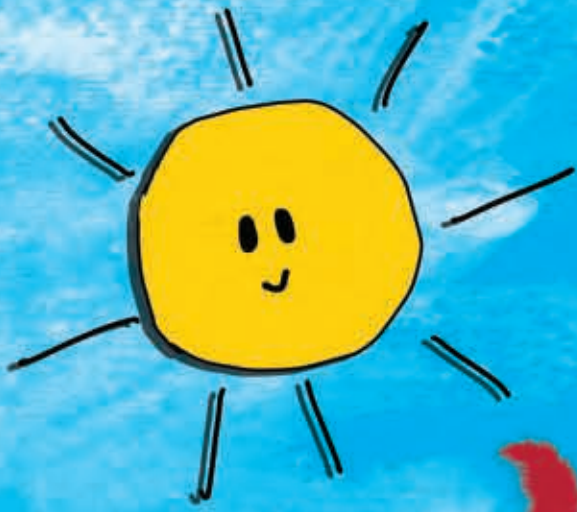
CALM herself...



The Big Red Bird... **PAUSED**

BREATHED... slow, deep breaths
THOUGHT about her wonderfulness, her “Gifts
Within” – kindness, respect, and self-control

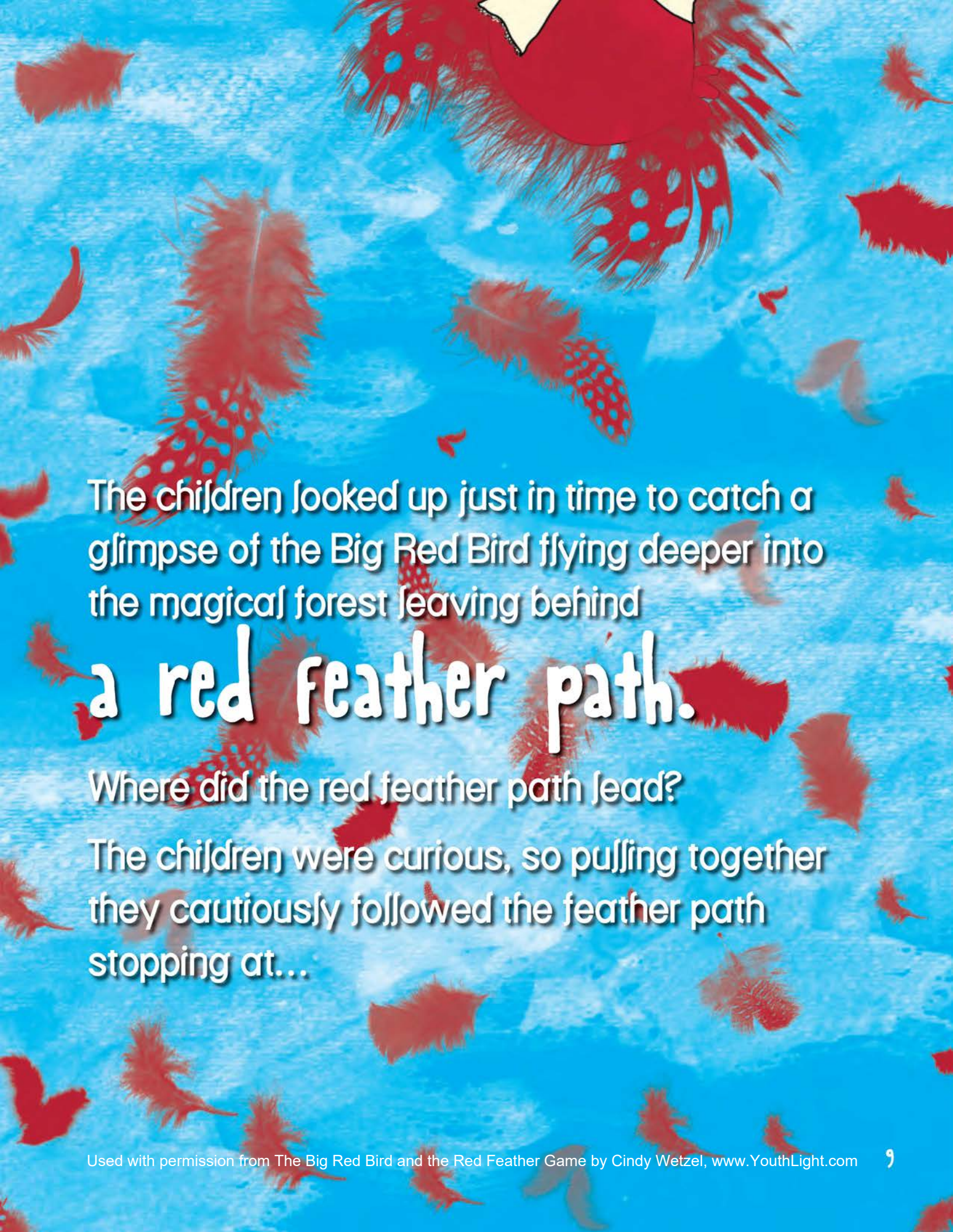
THEN DECIDED just what she needed
to do. I’ll teach the children a calming game!



To get the children's attention, the Big Red Bird
dropped red feathers.

Some feathers fell gently to the ground like
snowflakes. Others looked silly as they spun
and twirled like dancers.





The children looked up just in time to catch a glimpse of the Big Red Bird flying deeper into the magical forest leaving behind

a red feather path.

Where did the red feather path lead?

The children were curious, so pulling together they cautiously followed the feather path stopping at...

... a TREASURE CHEST!

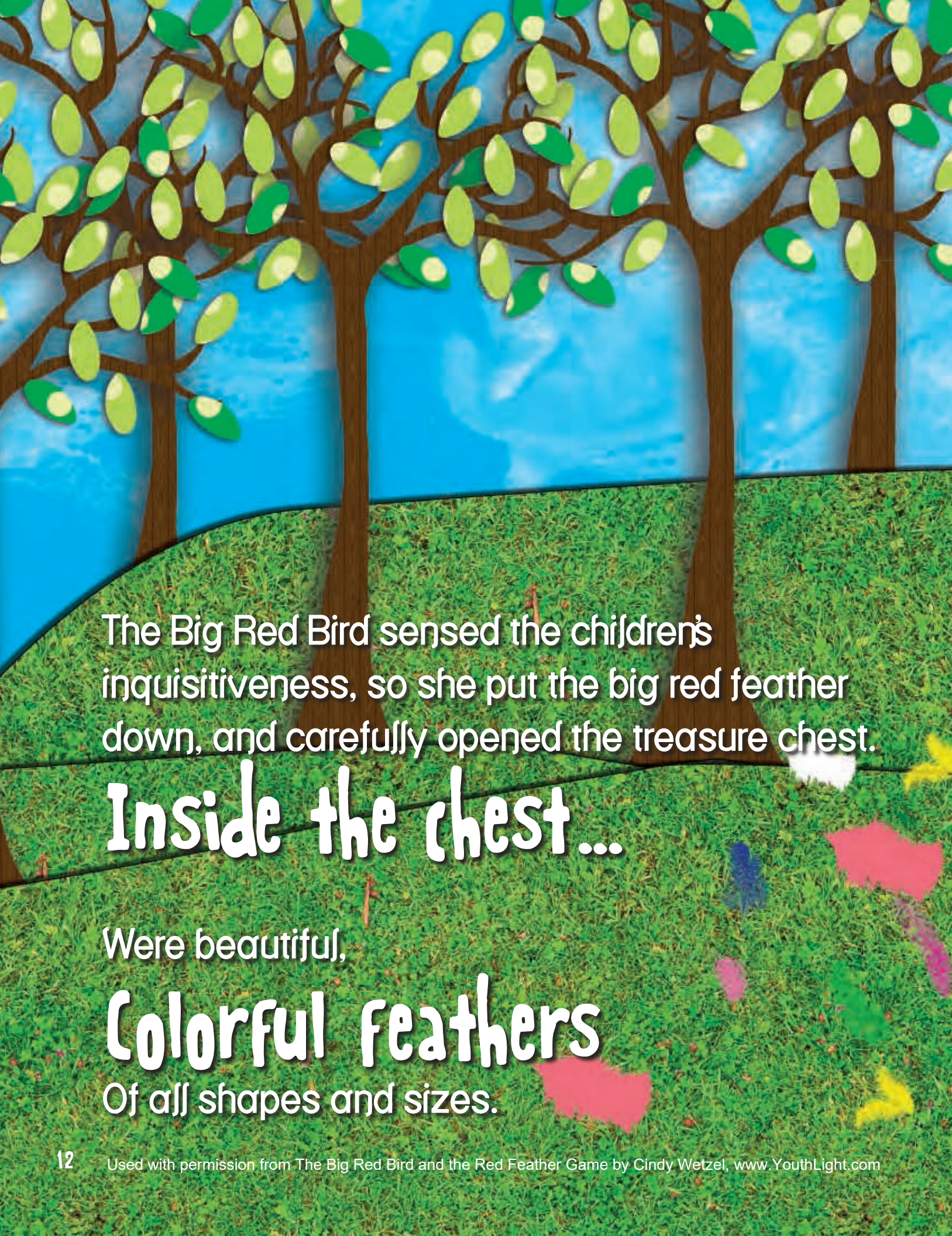
The Big Red Bird was sitting next to the chest holding a big red feather up to her beak. She was slowly breathing out air onto the feather – up one side and down the other. After some time passed, she began to feel calm and peaceful.



The children were dazzled by the Big Red Bird and the red feathers. They could only imagine what

magnificent treasures
were hidden inside the chest!





The Big Red Bird sensed the children's inquisitiveness, so she put the big red feather down, and carefully opened the treasure chest.

Inside the chest...

Were beautiful,

Colorful feathers

Of all shapes and sizes.



Using a quiet, low voice, the Big Red Bird said...
We can't stop others from being unfriendly to us.
We sometimes think we can make them stop by
Fighting and yelling back at them,
But... it just keeps the unfriendly going.
I know a game that will help calm Big Feelings.

Feelings like...



MAD!



SAD



HURT!

WORRIED!



PAUSING BREATHING SLOWLY

THINKING about your wonderfulness
–your “Gifts Within”

THEN DECIDING what to do, using good
judgment, will help you get along better
with your friends, family, and teachers.

Let's play The Red Feather Game.

The Red Feather Game



The Red Feather Game is a fun and memorable way for children to learn the skill of self-control. This interactive game is designed to teach children the basic skills of following directions, sitting quietly, taking turns, and cooperation. Children discover the secret of calming big feelings with the use of colorful feathers and slow deep breathing.

You will need: 4 or More Colorful Feathers, 1 Red Feather, 1 Colorful GOOFY Feather (To create a GOOFY Feather, twist, bend, and separate the plumed part of the feather—it will look and float differently.)

Leader's instructions:

- The Leader will determine the number of feathers to be played depending on the size of the group and the time available, as well as the ability of the group participants to be successful.
- Fewer feathers will be used for participants who are just learning self-regulation, while more can be used as their self-regulation increases.
- The Leader reinforces appropriate behavior, showing how to use self-control by modeling, using cues, and a low voice tone.
- The Leader begins and ends the game.

Instruct the players with the following directions.

1. Everybody sit in a circle being very quiet and still. It takes a lot of self-control to not talk, wiggle, or giggle, or correct others while playing this game! No worries if a mistake is made. Reset and try again!
2. Always pick up the feather by its tip, holding it above your head. Take a deep breath, and then slowly breathe out onto the feather while releasing it into the air. Catch the feather with cupped hands and pass it to the next participant, gently dropping it into their cupped hands.
3. Watch for the GOOFY feather! You never know what to expect with this feather or when it will be played! (You may specify that the GOOFY Feather will be the third feather played for those who are just learning the skill of self-control.) It may spiral down quickly, maybe twirl like a dancer, or splatter like a raindrop falling from a tree. Only with the GOOFY feather can you laugh, talk, and be silly, then it's back to being very quiet and still, using self-control.

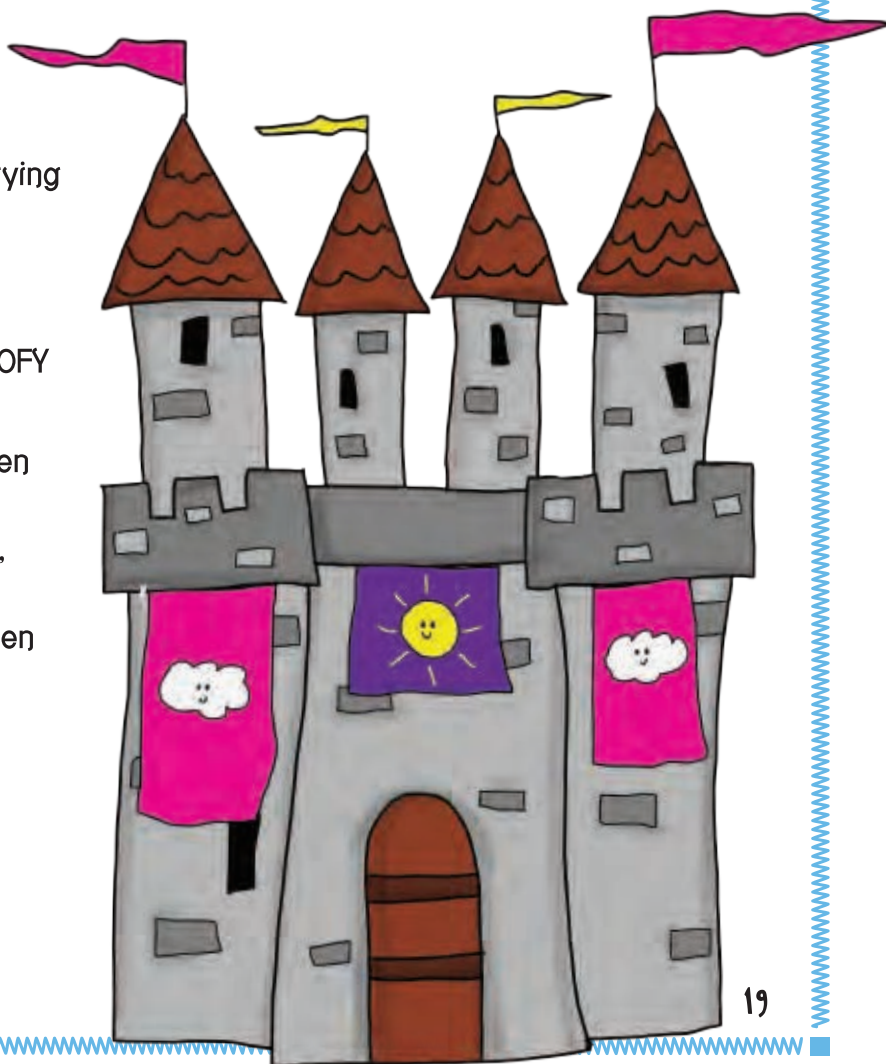
WARNING: Don't be tricked by feathers acting like a GOOFY feather! Be quiet and still, practicing self-control, while playing The Red Feather Game.

4. The Red Feather is the last feather to be played. Hold the Red Feather by its tip above your head, NOT letting go of it this time. Take a deep breath, then slowly breathe out air onto the feather, up one side and down the other, while watching it gracefully wave. Carefully pass the Red feather to the next participant by its tip until everyone has had a turn. The Red Feather ends the game.

Notice how it feels to be calm and peaceful after playing The Red Feather Game.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the Big Red Bird decide to teach the children a calming game?
(she noticed that the children were fighting.)
2. What were the children feeling before they played the Red Feather Game?
(mad, sad, hurt)
3. How did they feel after they played the Red Feather Game?
(happy, calm, friendly)
4. What did you differently when the GOOFY Feather was played?
(talk, laugh, and be silly)
5. What did you need to do after playing the GOOFY Feather?
(sit quietly, using self-control)
6. Was it easy or hard to sit quietly and use self-control after the GOOFY Feather was played?
7. Can you think of another time when you will need to use self-control after having fun laughing, talking, and acting silly?
(after recess, in the cafeteria, when it's time to go to bed, on the bus)



STRATEGY #75

Get your Zzzzzz's

Making sure your child's body gets the right amount of rest is very important when dealing with a stressed child. Your child's ability to deal with stressful situations will be improved with adequate sleep. Be sure to provide the child with an environment that invites peaceful sleep. Let your child help decorate their room to make it a place they feel comfortable in. Having items nearby that are important or special to the child can provide comfort. Developing a night time routine will help your child learn when it is time to begin settling down and preparing for sleep.

STRATEGY #76

Peaceful Place

Help children find a quiet place to calm down when they feel over-anxious or sensitive. In school, they may be allowed to sit quietly in the reading center with a favorite book or move their chair by the window for a few minutes. At home the child may like to sit in a special chair or in a special place. Sometimes removing themselves from the situation briefly can help them regain control.



STRATEGY #77

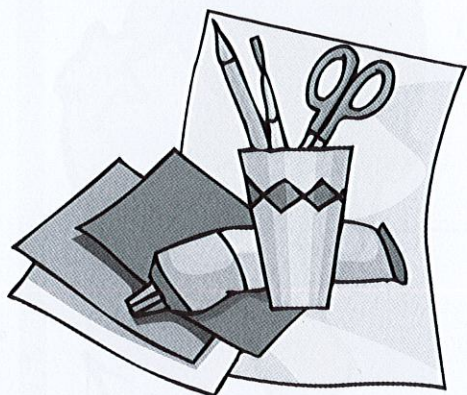
Work Out Wonders

When children feel over anxious or sensitive exercise can help to relax their mind and body. Any type of activity such as walking, bike riding, roller blading, skateboarding, scooter riding, or stretching can be a quick stress reliever.

STRATEGY #78

Calming Collages

Work with children in a small group or individually to make a collage on topics such as: good memories they have of a loved one who passed away, favorite things about school, relaxing pictures, people they love, pictures of favorite items from home, notes from friends and family, etc. The children can draw pictures, cut out pictures from magazines, use clip art on the computer, or paints to illustrate the collage. A file folder can be used to glue the collage onto so that it can easily fit in places like a book bag or desk at school. This will make the collage easily accessible so the child can refer to it when they are feeling anxious or stressed.



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PHYSICAL/EXERCISE STRATEGIES

Introduction

Physical activity reduces some stress through body chemistry. The strategies in this section are popular with children. These may be helpful to use prior to relaxation or cognitive strategies with active children.

STRATEGY #79

Stress OR Stretch!

This game teaches physical relaxation in a fun way! You will need some mats (your PE teacher may be able to provide these).

Have the class members volunteer things that stress them in any location. Ask other students if they have ever experienced the same stress. For those who raise their hand in agreement, have them stretch on the mat (this will vary but be sure they really stretch). Continue this as the students discuss things that make them anxious.

After about 15 minutes, stop the game, have the children return to their desks and ask how many were helped by this exercise. Then allow discussion of whether talking or stretching was the most helpful (answers will vary). Finally, ask them to transfer this lesson and use the techniques that worked the best when they encounter a stressful situation again.



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