



a world premiere by Elaine Jarvik

Fifth Annual Free Elementary School Tour
created specifically for grades K-3 (running time 35 minutes)
Email Education Coordinator Sarah Merservy at sarah@planbtheatre.org
to bring this FREE assembly to your school this fall!



Last fall, our Free Elementary School Tour brought the issue of body image to life through THE EDIBLE COMPLEX. In 2013 and 2014, differences were celebrated and affirmed through DIFFERENT=AMAZING and RUFF!

Schools across the country are being called upon to create trauma-safe spaces where students with a history of trauma can thrive. Even when no obvious trauma is present in a youth's life, trauma-sensitive environments are more supportive of all students.

This year's Free Elementary School Tour offering, RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN., is an innovative and thoughtful starting point.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. by Elaine Jarvik [running time 35 minutes, including a 5-minute post-show discussion] is the story of five-year-old JJ (who has lots of questions) and eight-year-old Izzy (a know-it-all who doesn't know it all), siblings who have recently lost their grandmother. They embark on a funny and touching hero's journey to try to make sense of loss, grief, death and life.

Researchers Vincent Felitti and Robert Anda discovered just how prevalent childhood traumas are, finding that 50% of their study's participants had experienced at least one childhood trauma, while 25% had experienced multiple traumatic incidents.

Felitti & Anda defined trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACES), as one of the following: substance abuse in the home, parental separation or divorce, mental illness (including anxiety and depression) in the home, witnessing domestic violence, suicidal household member, death of a parent or loved one, parental incarceration and abuse or neglect.

Currently, the National Survey of Children's Health reports that nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced at least one type of childhood trauma, which takes a toll on a person's physical well-being. Additionally, a student's troubles in school rise correlationally with every traumatic event they experience. Schools are realizing that they play a vital role in supporting students with traumatic backgrounds.

According to the National Alliance for Grieving Children, 1 in 20 children will experience the death of a parent and 1 in 4 will lose a significant family member.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. explores this timely topic with humor and heart. The characters of JJ and Izzy invite K-3 students along on their hero's journey, one that ultimately leads to greater understanding of their grandmother's death.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. explores resiliency and "sticky" emotions. Your students will discover the power of their own imagination as they travel alongside JJ and Izzy.

As your students explore their own life challenges, whether it be the loss of a pet or family member, they will be able to see themselves reflected in these characters and draw support and strength from their experience with RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 2-3 (before you see the play)

Make a t-chart with "Physical Journey" on one side and "Emotional Journey" on the other. Discuss with students that Izzy and JJ go on an emotional journey, meaning that they are trying to understand and work through all the emotions that we feel when someone we love dies. Encourage students to discuss their own emotional journeys. Then encourage students to think about physical journeys that people go on (hikes, vacations). This could lead to a writing activity where students write about physical and emotional journeys they have taken and what they learned from each.

Have students enter words they will hear in RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. into their vocabulary journals or word banks: momentous, journey, outlandish, scallywag, humdrum, spectacular, treasure, humungous. Have students create two columns next to each of the words. Use the words in a sentence and have students predict what the definitions might be:

- o Outlandish—The story that she told to her friends was outlandish and no one believed it.
- o Momentous—Jose was looking forward to celebrating the momentous occasion with a big celebration.
- o Humdrum—Alice tried to get through the humdrum of her weekend by entertaining herself with books and imaginary friends.
- o Journey—The family went on a journey through the woods to see what they could find.
- o Spectacular—The fireworks display was spectacular and made me open my mouth in awe.
- o Scallywag—The girl called her brother a scallywag because he was such a troublemaker.
- o Treasure—The leprechaun found a treasure chest of jewels at the end of the rainbow.
- o Humungous—The building was humungous compared to all the other buildings surrounding it.
- o Vigorously—The players competed vigorously and finally won the game.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

RIVER SWAMP CAVE MOUNTAIN

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 2-3 (after you see the play)

Have students divide a paper into fourths and draw each of the four parts of Izzy and JJ's journey. Discuss the meaning of metaphor and how Izzy and JJ's journey is a metaphor for what it feels like to do something difficult that we don't completely understand. Have students write about a difficult experience from their own lives and the journey they had to go on to get through it. Be sure they include a description of how the journey changed them—how they were different afterward than they were before.

Discuss: What does your body do when you are feeling upset? What could you do about it? What do you do about it? Izzy and JJ discuss punching a pillow, counting to ten and smashing ice. Discuss options like deep breathing and talking to a trusted adult. Perhaps list the names of trusted adults at school and display this list prominently in the classroom with pictures of the individuals as a resource.

Discuss the concept of courage and that it can change depending on the circumstance. Courage is sometimes depicted in books, plays and movies as doing something big and brave like fighting monsters, but courage can also be just getting through a difficult situation.

Discuss how Izzy and JJ help one another get through the sadness of losing their grandmother.

Discuss whether or not you think this play has a happy ending. Why or why not? How do you know?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES SPECIFICALLY FOR GRADES K-1 (before you see the play)

Read the book "The Way I Feel" by Janan Cain. Discuss the emotions in the book. Help students understand that emotions are part of everyday life and that there are many ways of expressing them.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES SPECIFICALLY FOR GRADES K-1 (after you see the play)

Provide students with instruments such as boomwhackers, tambourines, maracas and drums. Discuss some of the emotions that Izzy and JJ experience in the play: happy, sad, angry, scared. Invite students to use their instruments to "express" the emotion through rhythm and sound. The teacher can debrief with students: How does your body feel when you are feeling one of these emotions? Playing an instrument is one way of seeing and hearing these emotions—what are some other ways? How do these emotions look when they come from you?

Play some classical music that demonstrates a mix of tempos. Many classical music compilations for kids are available through iTunes or Apple Music. Have students move to the music and assume poses that express some of the emotions Izzy and JJ experience in the play. Discuss with students: How can expressing our emotions in this way help us?

Provide students with small mirrors. Have them make facial expressions representing each of the emotions from the play and beyond. They can observe how this expression looks in the mirror and then record this expression on a face-shaped template. The self-portraits for each of the emotions can be assembled into a mini self-portrait book. On each page of the mini-book, invite students to complete this sentence stem: I feel _____. Extension: Students may draw a picture of what they do when they are feeling this emotion.

Discuss: What are all the ways we have expressed our emotions? We have drawn them, we have danced them, and we have made music out of them. There are positive ways to share our emotions and ways that are hurtful to others. When you are feeling angry, what are some hurtful ways to share this emotion? What are some positive ways to share this emotion?

HOW THE PLAY TIES INTO THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S CORE CURRICULUM

Kindergarten social studies-Standard 2, Objective 2

- o Identify school personnel to whom students can go to for help or safety.

Kindergarten Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information and feelings.
- o Identify and express ideas, information and feelings in a variety of ways (*draw, paint, tell stories, play make believe, dance, sing*).
- o Express emotions by selecting and playing a variety of simple rhythm instruments.

1st grade Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information, and feelings.
- o Recognize and express feelings in a variety of ways (*draw, paint, tell stories, dance, sing*).

2nd grade Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information and feelings.
- o Express personal experiences and imagination through dance, storytelling, music and visual art.

3rd grade Health Curriculum, Standard 2 Objective 2

- o Determine how building relationships with helpful people can be beneficial. (SS)
 - o List and classify helpful people; e. g., within family, neighborhood, community.
 - o Identify the benefits of building relationships with caring adults.



**Sometimes, listening is the
very best thing you can do
when someone is sad.**

PLAN-B
Theatre Company

from RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

**Email Sarah Merservy, Education Coordinator
at sharah@planbtheatre.org
to bring this FREE assembly to your school this fall!**

*Source for classroom discussion/activities: Souers, K., & Hall, P. (2016).
Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom Alexandria, WA: ASCD.*

Based in Salt Lake City, The Sharing Place (thesharingplace.org) provides a safe and caring environment for grieving children, teens, and their families to share their feelings while healing themselves.

When a child tells you about the death of a loved one, The Sharing Place uses a technique called reflective listening. It is a simple process of repeating what the child said. An example would be if a child says, "My dad passed away," the person speaking to the child would say "Your dad passed away." By using reflective listening, you are giving the child two messages; one is that they were heard and the other is that it's okay to talk about their person. If you act shocked, scared or awkward it gives the child the message that it's not okay to speak about their person. Reflective listening is a safety net to use when you don't know what else to say.

If the child gives you signs of wanting to talk more, it's okay to follow up your reflective statement with a simple question about their person, like "What was your mom's name?" or "What was your favorite thing to do with your dad?" Another appropriate reaction would be to say "I'm really sorry your grandma died." Avoid using statements that assign feelings to the child or puts your own experiences on the child like "I bet you miss you her." or "My dad died when I was young."



The
SHARING
PLACE
Grief Support for Children