TOOTHPASTE ACTIVITY

WORDS HURT

This activity requires an adult and a child, but more than one child can participate! Explain to the child/ren that you are going to do an activity to show how words affect people.

1. Ask your children to come sit at the table. Tell them you are going to play a game where every nice thing you say you want them to leave the toothpaste untouched, and every mean or hurtful thing you say you want them to squeeze some (not all) of the toothpaste out onto the paper towel or newspaper.

2. Start with a few nice things to say. Here are some examples of positive things to say, but you can change them up as you see fit…
   “You’re a really great listener.”
   “You’re so smart, you must be a great student!”

3. Then say some negative things. Try to switch up your negative and positive comments. Here are some examples of negative things to say…
   “I don’t think you’d fit in with me and my friends, you’re kind of strange.”
   “Did you mean to wear that weird outfit today?”

NOTE: Remind them that this activity is just pretend.
At this point there should be a good amount of toothpaste on the table, and you can make a comment on how much of it has come out. Then ask for help to clean it all up!

Hand the child/ren a popsicle stick to scoop up the toothpaste while you hold the tube. Instruct them to put the toothpaste back inside the tube. Let them try for a few minutes. What they will find is that it’s nearly impossible!

DISCUSSION:
Ask the child/ren how they felt when you were saying nice things vs. mean things. Explain that the toothpaste is a symbol for our words. Once they come out of our mouths, we can’t put them back in. The person we say them to can’t un-hear them. We can try to “clean up” our mean words by apologizing and being kind in the future, but our words have still left a stain even after we’ve tried to clean them up.