

Monica

Teacher Workday

Facilitator Discussion Guide

EYFP

Synopsis

Monica has a day where nothing seems to work out like she had hoped. She oversleeps, discovers that one of her rabbits has an abscess (say “ab-sehs”) in its foot, gets scolded by her father, and has to feed the chickens. When she finally gets to go eat breakfast, she is delighted to smell fresh baked cinnamon rolls...only to find out that they have all been eaten already. The only thing left for her is a pile of dirty dishes.

Monica gets a text from her cousin, Layla, while she is cleaning up the kitchen. Layla invites her to a party that evening. Monica doesn't really know the person throwing the party, but Layla explains that the host is a cheerleading friend who is a little older than they are and already at the high school. Monica is excited and agrees to go.

That night, Monica gets into a fight with her father and grandmother over the outfit she wants to wear to the party. She ends up missing the party and falls asleep sadly.

Facilitator Notes

This episode aligns with Sessions 1-2 of the Powerful Families curriculum. The goal of this discussion guide is to help participants reflect on Dr. Gottman's “Magic Relationship Ratio” and to practice perspective-taking.

The opening questions ask participants to think about hard days they have had and the kinds of feelings they experienced. Recognize that some participants may be uncomfortable with sharing their ideas out loud, or they may have difficulty finding words to best express how they feel. Give participants time to reflect, but it is not necessary to ask them to share.



Vocabulary Alert!

In Episode 1, Scene 2, Monica sees that one of her rabbits has a small **abscess** (say “ab-sehs”) in its foot. An **abscess** is sort of like a giant pimple. It is filled with pus and is very painful.

Many different animals, and even people, can get abscesses. People usually do not need to go to the doctor if they have an abscess. Rabbits are different. Abscesses are very dangerous to rabbits. A rabbit should go to the vet for help.

You can learn more about abscesses in people at go.ncsu.edu/abscess. To learn more about abscesses in rabbits, contact your [local 4-H agent](#).

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Art may be one way to support participants during this lesson. Show the painting *Tide* (<https://ncartmuseum.org/object/tide/>) by North Carolina native Kenneth Noland (<https://www.ncdcr.gov/blog/2014/04/10/kenneth-noland-and-abstract-art>). Explain that Nolan was part of the “Abstract Expressionist” movement in the middle of the 20th century. Abstract Expressionists were interested in depicting pure emotions. They mainly used lines, shapes, and colors instead of recognizable objects to tell stories. You could ask participants to guess which emotions the painting might express. Then, provide participants with paper and crayons or markers. They can create their own abstract expressionist artwork as they reflect on their feelings during the opening or while watching the video.

Talking Tips

If the discussion turns towards whether a character is “right,” take time to help participants unpack the difference between feelings and behaviors. You could also use this to practice perspective taking. Challenge participants to imagine how the story would change if Dad or Grandma was the main character instead of Monica.

- *What were the “hard day” events that you noticed in this Episode?*
- *Which of the events in Episode 1 were out of Monica’s control?*
- *Which of the events could Monica have controlled?*
- *What kinds of feelings did Monica display during events that were out of her control compared to events that she had some control over?*
- *How did Monica’s interactions with her family members affect her feelings?*
- *How might her interactions have affected her family members’ feelings?*

Other notable Abstract Expressionist works in the North Carolina Museum of Art collection:

<https://ncartmuseum.org/object/orange-outline/>

<https://ncartmuseum.org/object/two-figures/>

<https://ncartmuseum.org/object/berkeley-no-8/>

Opening

Have you ever had a “hard” day where nothing seemed to work? Think about your feelings on that day. (Optional: Use the drawing supplies to show how you felt.)

Now, think about a day when everything seemed just right. How did you feel on that day? (Optional: Use the drawing supplies to show how you felt.)

We all have days that are harder than others. As we watch the episode, count the events that make this seem like a “hard” day for Monica.” (Optional: Use tally marks, dots, or another way to keep track of your count.)

After Watching the Video

After the video, facilitate a discussion with the group. Begin by reminding the group of the expectations set during Session 1.

Round-Robin Question

It is important for everyone to contribute to this question as a way to build trust and practice listening. You can choose to go in a circle or let participants “popcorn” respond. An option that doesn’t involve speech is to hold up a piece of paper with tally marks or a number written on it.

How many “hard day” events did you notice? For right now, just say the number you counted. We will talk in more detail once everyone has had a chance to respond.

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Comprehension Questions

These are suggested questions. It is not necessary to ask every question in this list. Participants may answer some of the questions before you ask them, or they may bring up their own questions to explore. As a facilitator, your job is to listen far more than you speak. In general, ask a new question only if conversation has hit a dead end and 30 seconds of silent time doesn't break the stalemate, or if you sense the discussion veering into unproductive territory. You may also want to ask follow up questions if a participant makes an interesting point that no one else takes up spontaneously. Finally, if you have some very vocal participants, you may need to occasionally break in to invite quieter participants to speak or to repeat a point that might have gone unheard.

Closing Questions

There are two closing questions. The first question asks participants to apply their ideas to the fictional story shown in the video, while the second question asks them to personalize their ideas and apply the same principles to their own lives. Participants may spontaneously ask one another the first question, but be prepared to ask it if they do not.

The closing questions can be addressed in a discussion or they could form the basis for a creative outlet for participants. For example, participants could create artwork showing their ideas or they could act out their ideas as an alternative scene for Episode 1.

- What are some things that Monica or her family members could have done to turn the “hard” day into a better day?
- What are some things you could do to turn a hard day into a better day, either for yourself or for a family member?