

Growing and Changing



PDMU STRAND: Personal Understanding of Health

Activity

- Distribute a blank sheet of paper and a crayon or colouring pencil to each child.
- Invite them to draw around their non-dominant hand carefully and to colour it in.
- These can be displayed on the wall.

Chat to the children about their drawings using these or similar questions:

- Look around at other children's hand drawings. Are they all the same size? Why or why not?
- Was your hand print always the same size as it is now? Why or why not?
- Are you the same height as you were last year? How do you know?
- Does everyone grow as they get older? When do people stop growing? Is it possible to get smaller? (e.g. older people)

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- What helps you to grow bigger and stronger? (e.g. healthy food, lots of sleep, exercise)
- What do you like about getting bigger? Is there anything you don't like?

Story: 'I Don't Want to be Big'

Ronan was six years old. He lived with his mum and gran in a small house in Derry. He didn't have any brothers or sisters so he slept on his own in the smallest bedroom in the house. He loved his bedroom, but sometimes he was scared of the dark. His mum would read a story to him at night and give him a kiss as she was leaving the room. He always said, 'Don't forget to leave the door a little bit open,' and Mum always said, 'Don't worry, I will.'

One night his mum read a story about a boy who was eight. The boy in the story had just learned to ride a big bike. He was allowed to stay up late and the story said he was not afraid of the dark now. 'I don't want to be big,' Ronan said to his mum. She laughed and said, 'Of course you do.' But when Mum went out of the room Ronan began to worry.

There were some things he liked about getting bigger. He liked that he was allowed to go next door to his friend's house on his own now and that Mum let him make his own breakfast. He liked that he was old enough to play football with the club and that he was taller than his cousin. But there were lots of things he didn't like about getting bigger. He worried that his mum would stop reading stories for him. She sometimes said, 'You're nearly big enough to read the story yourself now.' He wanted his gran to still hold his hand walking home from school. Her hand was so soft and she was so nice and kind. And he was definitely still afraid of the dark and was not ready to start closing the door at night.

The next night his mum came into his room to read the story she noticed that Ronan was very quiet. Then she saw a little tear in his eye and she asked,



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'What's wrong?' Ronan burst into tears and told her all the things he had been worrying about. His mum hugged him for a very long time. Then she patiently explained to him, 'You will always be my little boy, Ronan. Everybody grows and changes but there is no hurry. You take as long as you like. One step at a time. Growing up is fun, I promise. Now let's think of all the great things you can do now that you couldn't do when you were three.'

When you have read the story ask questions such as:

- Why did Ronan not want to get bigger? Did you ever feel like that?
- Ronan was afraid of the dark. Are you afraid of anything? Who helps you when you're scared?
- Do you think growing up is fun? Why or why not?
- Can you think of something you can do now that you couldn't do when you were three? (e.g. button your jacket, tie laces, ride a bike, prepare food, etc.)
- Encourage the children to talk to their parents about growing up – how they have grown and changed since they were babies.

Reflection:

Invite the children to close their eyes and read the following reflection:

Sit very still with your eyes closed. Imagine when you were a tiny, helpless, baby. You couldn't walk or talk or feed yourself. Adults had to do everything for you. Then you learned to sit up ... and crawl ... and you said a few words. Eventually you could walk and talk all on your own.

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When you got good at walking and talking you tried to run and sing and jump and climb. You were always trying new things. Your arms and legs grew longer and stronger and your mind was always learning new things.

Now you are at school and you're even bigger again. You can do so much now that you couldn't do before and you will continue to grow and learn so much more.

We thank God for our amazing bodies and minds. We know we need to look after ourselves by eating well, sleeping and keeping ourselves safe. We also know that God wants us to take care of each other. Thank you, God, for my wonderful body. Thank you, God, for my family and friends. Thank you, God, for me.