

Healing Young Hearts

A Handbook of Practical Teaching
Material for Disaster Recovery

Part Three: Healing Young Hearts Through Play



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Healing Young Hearts

A Handbook of Practical Teaching Material for Disaster Recovery

Healing Young Hearts was produced by a volunteer multinational team of foreign and Chinese educators, writers and psycho-social experts, who joined together in a cooperative effort to assist children and teachers in China after the devastating Sichuan earthquake in 2008. The book was approved for use in school by the China National Ministry of Education, and was used by the International Red Cross, as well as UNICEF's Child-friendly spaces projects within the quake zone.

It is our goal to provide "Healing Young Hearts: A Handbook of Practical Teaching Material for Disaster Recovery" to any school, NGO or government agency working with children affected by the disaster. This is possible because the authors of the handbook are accepting no profit from the printing of the material. We are devoted to providing teachers with the tools and training needed to help children along the difficult long-term road to recovery in the years following the earthquake.

Make Your Classroom a Haven of Healing

The Healing Young Hearts Handbook provides examples of activities and lesson plans that will aid the emotional healing of children traumatized by the earthquake. The material for different age groups may be incorporated into teaching curriculums during the ongoing recovery phase, or used by teachers and volunteers as a guide to create their own lesson plans tailored to the children's current emotional needs. The collection of activity worksheets, coloring pages, finger puppets, and character building stories for children can be used in classrooms or therapeutic recreational activities.

The practical teaching tools found in the handbook will equip teachers with material that can accelerate the children's recovery, and guide them along the path to a brighter, happier future. It is not a form of psychotherapy, but rather draws on the principles of positive psychology as children engage in uplifting activities and opportunities for emotional expression. It is possible for traumatized children to experience deep emotional healing, and we are convinced that teachers, and those working directly with the children, are in an excellent position to facilitate the process. The love and care they show each child will be the magic that brings about the miracle of recovery.

An Overview of the Healing Young Hearts Handbook

Part One: Healing Young Hearts Through Communication ***Puppets, Character Building Stories, Drawing and Discussion***

Children need to be able to discuss and express their fears, worries, hopes and dreams. Teachers can use the materials and activity suggestions in this handbook to facilitate active classroom communication. Children are magically drawn to puppets, and will often relate and interact with them more easily than with adults. They also love stories, and during a time when their world has been turned upside down, their young minds desperately need to hear tales that engender hope, love and personal triumph. Puppets and storytelling can be used to reach out to children who have been affected by disaster, both to comfort them as well as to encourage them to communicate.

Drawing is a nonverbal means of communication that allows children to express their feelings and work through conflict. This section provides lesson plan ideas, worksheets, stories, and tips for guiding children through activities that promote healthy communication skills

A section for teenagers has been included detailing ways to use discussion circles in classroom settings to help teenagers recognize the positive and negative coping skills they employ in their reactions to stress. Examples of discussion circle topics, dialogues, and activities to use when leading group discussion is provided. Additionally, get-to-know-you style "icebreaker" questions, and worksheet activities designed to help young people identify and express emotions, are included.

Part Two: Healing Young Hearts Through Music ***Chasing Away the Shadows of Trauma with Music***

Music is a medicine for broken hearts, a magic that heals wounded spirits. Therapeutic musical activities provide a healing emotional release for children haunted by the shadows of disaster. Untreated trauma can develop into problems that affect the way children interact and relate with others, affecting their performance in school, as well as their physical and mental health. Creative outlets involving musical activities can lift the effects of trauma. Often children and adults have no words to describe their pain, but the pure emotional release of participating in a creative art can aid in healing.

This section explains the principles of musical therapy, and guides teachers in conducting activities such as making simple musical instruments, using music to express emotion, ideas for musical games, combining story-telling and puppet activities with music, and teaching children self-soothing techniques.

Part Three: Healing Young Hearts Through Play

Games for Children in Disaster Recovery

Games can teach and heal. Learning to play again after a disaster is a vital part of recovery for young people, and it is one of the easiest therapies in the world to implement. Games provide an outlet for emotions in a playful way, in a safe environment. Unhappy individuals often lack the ability to identify and express emotion. Failure to successfully communicate emotional needs and interact with others in meaningful ways is often a root cause of depression.

This section provides detailed instructions for indoor and outdoor games for both large and small groups. Examples of guided discussions for use in games can help children work through issues such as overcoming fear, self control and anger management, hope for the future, bonding and making new friends, perseverance, and team-working.

Part Four: Healing For Teachers and Volunteers

The Effects of Stress and the Need for Self-care

This section is dedicated to helping teachers and volunteers understand their own needs after a disaster in both the initial and long-term recovery phases. It briefly outlines reactions to traumatic stress, and the importance of emotional and physical self-care for those working in disaster areas.

As you provide the children with opportunities to participate in comforting, uplifting activities, you will create a haven in your classroom and the healing process will begin.

Please contact us at: healingyounghearts@gmail.com

If You Want to Change the World, Love a Child

In the aftermath of disaster, love is a potent healing balm...

At the United Nations World Summit on Children, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child was created. This treatise, signed by all U.N. member countries, protects children's dignity as well as their moral, social, legal and cultural rights. Of the most basic rights of the Charter, one interesting and thought provoking point is included: the child's right "to be loved". Who is responsible to fulfill such an obligation? Is it a duty to fall only on the biological parents? The government? The school system? Who is ultimately responsible to provide a child with needed emotional support and care?

Love is not a commodity, like rice or sugar, which can be mass marketed or dispensed in bulk with relief supplies. It must be nurtured individually and passed on personally. In all our striving to provide swift aid, let us not forget the most basic human need of all, the care and concern of another human heart. The power of love to heal is unparalleled. Opportunities to give that love abound, especially after tragic loss. What lies within our grasp is the chance to change the world, by changing the life of a child through love.

What difference will loving one child make in the big picture of overwhelming disaster? Such a question reminds us of the classic story by Loren Eiseley, about the man, the boy and the starfish. After a fierce stormy night, the sea had washed thousands and thousands of starfish onto the inhospitable shore. As the morning sun arose high in the sky, a man walked along the coast and observed the situation, pitying the ill-fated creatures who would not survive for long out of the sea. He then noticed a small boy, diligently picking up a starfish nearest him and flinging it back into the surf. Again and again the child repeated his efforts, tossing one starfish after another into the waves.

Approaching the child, the man shook his head, pointed to the desolate beach that was covered for miles with stranded starfish, and remarked that the boy's efforts wouldn't make any difference at all. Without pausing, the child bent down, picked up another starfish, and flung it as far as he could out into the sea. The boy looked up at the man and wisely noted, "It sure made a difference to that one, didn't it?"

J. Riether and H. de Gaalon

INTRODUCTION

“Everything was gone. I lost everything – my teachers, my classmates. I lost everything in my life.”

“Every survivor was so scared. We huddled together and couldn’t stop crying.”

“I looked back and the building was gone...I sat on the playground and wailed.”

These heart wrenching statements from child survivors reflect the sorrow that shrouds a community devastated by a major earthquake. Personal injury, loss of loved ones, and the damage or destruction of homes and property can leave victims dazed and reeling. Even children far removed from the quake zone may grapple with fear following exposure to graphic images of death and suffering on media reports. The haunting question lingers in their young minds, “Could it happen to me?”

Even though the road to recovery may be long and winding, the care and concern of loving adults can help children come to grips with such terrifying experiences, and make sense of the tragedy that has occurred. The practical teaching tools found in these pages will equip teachers and volunteers with material that can accelerate a child’s recovery. It is not a form of psychotherapy, but rather draws on the principles of positive psychology to help motivate children by providing uplifting activities and opportunities for emotional expression. The inspirational worksheets, lesson plans, coloring projects, puppet figures and stories will guide them towards a future filled with hope. It is possible for traumatized children to experience deep emotional healing, and we are convinced that teachers, and those working directly with the children, are in an excellent position to be the instruments to bring this healing to pass. The love and care they show each child will be the magic that brings about the miracle of recovery.

The Unique Ability of Teachers and Volunteers to Help Students Recover Emotionally After Disaster

Teachers and volunteers who work with children in schools, shelters and temporary living facilities are in a unique position to help students.

- Teachers and volunteers have daily contact with the students and can observe student behavior, evaluate need and identify at-risk individuals.
- Teachers provide a stable environment in the classroom, offering an anchor during a stormy time when the child’s world has abruptly changed.
- By providing students with psycho-social support activities, teachers stand a greater chance of enhancing student academic performance. Students

who successfully deal with troubling emotional issues have greater success in their studies.

- Teachers who invest in the emotional well-being of their students will reap the benefits of better class-room atmosphere, since unresolved student stress increases the frequency of disciplinary disturbances.

In using the material in this handbook, teachers and volunteers can address the following problems:

- **Loss and Grief Issues:** The destruction of lives, property, community, and livelihood have affected the children emotionally and physically. Opportunities to communicate about their experiences will aid in emotional recovery.
- **Emotional and Cognitive Effects of the Disaster Event:** These include the symptoms of post traumatic stress, fear that another earthquake or traumatic event will occur, mood disturbances, somatic illnesses and anger management. Loving communication with a concerned adult about these issues aids healing.
- **Secondary and Long-term Emotional Trauma:** Economic pressures and post-traumatic stress affecting adult relatives may disrupt family stability over the long term. Children need emotional support not only immediately after disaster, but in the years following. The material in this handbook can be used to help children who are at risk of physical and emotional abuse, substance abuse and the breakdown of an emotionally supportive environment at home. In many cases such secondary trauma affects the children more drastically and directly than the earthquake event itself, further increasing the need for psycho-social support.
- **Displacement:** Children and families living in temporary shelters face unique challenges. Repeated moves, disruptions to family and community support, and cramped living environments increase stress levels. Communicating about the frustrations and challenges in a constructive manner can ease tension, and help survivors cultivate positive coping skills..
- **Lack of Trained Counselors:** Unfortunately after disaster there are often not enough counselors to meet the needs of the community, particularly in rural areas. In some low income communities teachers may be the only educated professionals in contact with the children. Teachers who have been thrust into the role of counselor with minimal training or resources will benefit from the material in this handbook, and the practical activities included within.

Part Three - Healing Young Hearts Through Play

Games can teach and heal. The value of play for children in post disaster recovery is important because of play's fundamental role in childhood learning and development. This easy-to-follow guide will help caregivers employ therapeutic play techniques with traumatized children. Learning and teaching principles are described, and helpful guidelines are given for conducting safe therapeutic play sessions. Detailed directions are included for games that teachers and volunteers can organize and conduct in either large or small groups, both outdoors and indoors, either with or without equipment.

. Learning to play again after a disaster is a vital part of recovery, and it is one of the easiest therapies in the world to implement because children want and need to play. Vulnerable children need to be restored to safety, health and a sense of normalcy, which play facilitates. In a child's world, play is a valuable life skill that can help them transition traumatic events, setting them on the path to recovery.

The Healing Power of Play

Therapeutic play is useful, not only in helping children recover from post-traumatic stress, but, in recovery from any emotional hurt.

Games can be useful tools to initiate communication with children, and instill in them positive character building values through guided discussion. However, let's not ignore the value and necessity of play itself, and how intrinsic it is to the learning process that occurs during childhood. Children under stress need to play, as it helps them recover emotionally and mentally.

How Can Games Heal Emotional Hurts?

Games provide an outlet for emotions in a playful way, in a safe environment. Unhappy individuals often lack the ability to identify and express emotion. Failure to successfully communicate emotional needs and interact with others in meaningful ways is often a root cause of depression.

Psychologist and author Irving N. Berlin observed, if there is little talking at home, children may have difficulty learning to communicate verbally. Instead they communicate with actions, which may range from sullen withdrawal to violent aggression. It is easy to see that a silent, somber child needs help to learn to communicate his emotional needs, but the child who bullies other children, is destructive or wild also needs this help. When children are able to verbalize their feelings effectively, often their destructive behavior diminishes.

Therapeutic play activities aid in this because:

- Games can help get feelings out into the open. Those who can express their feelings effectively in games -- victorious feelings of winning, or disappointed feelings of loss – are better able to express the feelings they experience in real life.
- Everyone has a need to win and be successful in life. Having a chance to win at a game can provide this for children, without even actually having to win. A game is a controlled event, and being able to win in a fair game encourages children to overcome feelings of helplessness.
- Games can teach children how to successfully react to disappointment. The enjoyment of a game, despite loss, illustrates the principle that life provides abundant opportunities for enjoyment, and that tomorrow always brings another chance for success.
- Games are a socially acceptable way to discharge anger and tension. Just getting out and running until all your energy is gone can do wonders to relieve stress.
- Participating in an organized game means playing by rules, and rules teach us self control. If you can learn to control your negative impulses on the playing field, you can learn to do so in life.
- Games require interpersonal reaction, and are especially effective in helping withdrawn children come out of their shell.
- Children with low self-esteem have difficulty relating to their peers. Games can provide a way to teach children to interact successfully, thus raising their feelings of self-worth.

What Type of Games Can Be Used in Therapeutic Play?

Internationally recognized child psychologist Lawrence Shapiro states, “There is virtually no game that children like to play... that can’t be adapted to some therapeutic purpose.” Any game the child enjoys can be used, for the real “magic” of therapeutic play takes place when a loving adult establishes a bond of trust with a child, and uses the game to nurture, communicate and teach.

Games are a handy multi-purpose tool, and how you use them depends on the needs of the children. They can be used to break the ice and bond with a new class or group. They are an effective means to win a child’s confidence through mutual play, so that he will talk to you about deeper issues troubling him. Action packed games can provide emotionally stressed children with a constructive outlet to burn energy. Quiet, communicative games can be used to help withdrawn children gain confidence. Games provide valuable ways to teach an array of positive character building traits, from team-working and camaraderie, to self-reliance and endurance.

Look for “teaching moments”, those special times when you sense that you’ve caught the children’s interest and attention, to use the game to convey the message you want to communicate. The game can become an object lesson, to illustrate a principle you wish to convey. Every good teacher learns to sense these moments and “read” their students. Like a treasure hunter, you search for clues to what the child needs. During those golden moments their minds and hearts open like rich plowed earth waiting for a seed to be dropped.

Use Games to Build Trust and Communication

It becomes easier for a child to talk about things that are important to him if you share a common enjoyable experience. A playful attitude and shared enjoyment of a game can win a child's trust. Your warmth, love and acceptance, coupled with letting him know you are available if he needs to talk, is what will allow him to open up to you when he is hurting inside.

Psychologists use games in this way to build a rapport with children in order to help them. In playing chess with students who exhibited self-defeating attitudes and poor classroom performance, American psychologist Larry Gaines helped students transfer the "never give up" mindset needed to master the game, to their attitudes towards schoolwork. As he helped them recognize negative behavior patterns that were causing them to lose in the game, it opened the door to the children recognizing similar negative behavior patterns that were hindering them from succeeding in school.

In an article written in "Adolescent Psychiatry" in 2000, Dr. Gaines observed that the students he worked with, "showed an increased willingness to change after becoming aware of hidden aspects of their behavioral styles" that caused them to do poorly in both chess and school. He credited this change to "the result of their having a new type of adult available—someone enthusiastic and playful."

A key element of success in his game therapy was the gracious acceptance Dr. Gaines showed when the children beat him at the game. He respected and acknowledged their skills while being willing to teach his own. He found if, "rather than humiliate them - in reaction to the fear of losing to them - the adult was willing to share his skills" a willingness to change was triggered in the students. By warning children of potentially bad moves in a game, and teaching them how to be better players, he earned their trust and admiration.

Dealing with Winning and Loss

Winning is an enjoyable experience for any child, but loss also teaches us much. Being able to handle disappointment in life is a major part of emotional stability. Games can be used as a type of "dress rehearsal" of normal life, to prepare children for the real thing.

A simple response to use when helping a child deal with defeat is "It's not easy to lose, but it's fun to play. Having fun together is even more important than winning." You have probably encountered adults who failed to master this principle in life. Those unhappy folks deal with setbacks and defeat by becoming angry, sullen, or slumping into despair. Learning to accept loss without becoming overwhelmed with discouragement is a necessary part of life. Competitive games can help prepare children to develop this emotional life skill.

To be able to participate in organized games, children must learn to control their emotions and negative impulses. Competitive games involve rules, which children generally accept. If they play well and stick to the rules, they have a fair chance to win. If not, they sit out the game and learn that their actions bear consequences. For children who have great difficulty with self-control, games can be an incentive towards better behavior. They can be taught to verbalize their emotions in a constructive way, rather than disrupting the game by acting out, and thus losing the opportunity to participate.

Cheating and Competitiveness

Dr. Berlin cautioned adults conducting therapeutic play in regards to competitiveness and cheating. If you are playing along with the children, don't let them win on purpose, or allow them to cheat, and certainly don't cheat yourself. Playing fair shows respect for each person. If you, an adult, are obviously faster or stronger you can handicap yourself in order to make things fair, such as letting them have a head start in a race, or giving them extra points. This demonstrates to them that playing a fair game is more fun than winning.

Your attitude towards winning is important, because the children will model themselves after your example. If you get so caught up in the game that you give in to the urge to become competitive, and winning becomes the all-encompassing goal, you risk derailing your therapeutic play session. While it is helpful to genuinely enjoy playing, and winning is part of the fun, it will quickly become counterproductive if you let a competitive streak get the better of you. Have fun yourself, but remember the goal is to teach the children how to communicate effectively, while building their trust and confidence through the shared enjoyment of a game.

Establishing Guidelines for Conduct: Consideration and Kindness

Play sessions are fun, and children should be encouraged to laugh and have a good time with each other. There is a difference however, between laughing with someone and laughing at them. When conducting therapeutic play sessions you will need to be on the lookout for hurtful peer interaction. Unfortunately, young people can at times be brutal in the treatment of their peers, especially with those who are perceived to be weaker, less attractive or less intelligent.

Every human being is gifted in some special and unique way, yet these qualities often go undetected, masked by low self-esteem or flawed physical appearance. Love and acceptance is the rich soil that nurtures our hidden qualities to fruition. Negative peer pressure, however, can stamp out the green shoot of promise in a child's life before it ever has a chance to bloom.

Children need to be protected from ridicule by other students, and if bullying or mocking takes place, the adult supervising the game session should be swift to respond. Psychologist James Dobson puts forth these principles in his book, "Hide or Seek". He recounts the sad story of Hazel, a homely and shy pre-adolescent girl being cruelly mocked and teased by the boys in her class during organized games. The teacher chose to ignore the situation and left the girl to fend for herself.

Dr. Dobson disagreed with such a tactic, first by suggesting "the embarrassment could have been prevented by discussing the feelings of others from the first day of school. But if the conflict occurred as described, with Hazel's ego suddenly shredded for everyone to see, I would have thrown the full weight of my authority & respect on her side of the battle."

Intervening in such situations is necessary because vulnerable children need protection, and aggressive children need boundaries and discipline. Ridicule hurts. Sometimes the offending children are oblivious to the pain they are causing while caught up in the "fun" of the moment. At other times their actions are calculated and intentional. Either way, the behavior should be stopped.

Dr. Dobson recommends establishing rules of behavior that include laughing together at things that are funny, but not by making another person feel badly. To teach children to live by the rule of treating others in the way we wish to be treated, it is important that the teacher, as a role model, never intentionally embarrass or ridicule the children in the class. Shaming and scolding a student may quiet a rambunctious youngster, but it will backfire if you then expect him to handle his peers with respect. By respecting the dignity of each child, the teacher sets an example he can expect his students to uphold.

The teacher's authority and control of the classroom is crucial, and this can be achieved by having clearly defined rules of conduct laid out for the students. Discuss together as a group how it feels to be ridiculed or mocked, and why such behavior is not acceptable. When clear rules of conduct are laid down, children feel protected, as they know their own rights will not be violated.

According to Dobson, "By defending the least popular child in the room, the teacher is demonstrating, 1) That he has no "pets"; 2) That he respects everyone; 3) That he will fight for anyone who is being treated unjustly. Those are three virtues which children value highly, and which contribute to mental health & peace of mind."

Positive Reinforcement:

“You did a really great job!” Who doesn’t just love hearing those words? Human beings respond positively to encouragement. When someone commends you for a job well done, or recognizes your value as an employee, you generally keep doing whatever you did that earned such approval.

Children particularly thrive on praise. We can encourage children to cultivate positive behavior and attitudes by acknowledging and complimenting their efforts. Psychologists call this “positive reinforcement”.

Positive reinforcement is effective even when a child is doing poorly. Often that is when it is needed most. Success usually arrives in “baby steps”, so you can commend any step of progress towards the goal. Don’t just compliment the winner, compliment a child on his good sportsmanship if he takes losing graciously. Talk about how proud you are that he plays fairly. Encourage him for playing by the rules and doing his best, even if he doesn’t win. Praise him for any small improvement that you wish him to repeat. Such positive reinforcement makes a child want to keep trying his best, and builds confidence.

You Can Be a Communications Role Model

You can be a role model for emotional expression during the course of play as you verbalize your own feelings. You will probably get a laugh from the children you work with when you try this, but this good humored tactic can prove to be a valuable bonding and teaching tool.

A successful use of such emotional display was documented by Dr. Berlin in the book, “Game Play: Therapeutic Use of Childhood Games”. During play sessions with emotionally troubled children, when losing, Berlin would playfully throw up his hands in mock despair and dramatically exclaim that the child was trouncing him. If he was winning, he would jubilantly crow over his impending victory with unbridled enthusiasm. This was all done in a humorous fashion to promote bonding and with the intent of helping the child become familiar with self-expression.

The children not only enjoyed his “ham acting”, but interestingly, they began to copy him. They mimicked his reactions, and expressed empathy and concern when he lost, as he had shown them. The closeness and warmth that developed over the course of their game sessions caused the children to be willing to share their feelings. A bond was forged and he was then able to help them with their deeper problems.

Communication is a skill we can learn at any age, however we can give children a head start by providing positive role models in effective emotional expression. There are countless ways to communicate your feelings, but here are a few examples of useful phrases that could be used during game sessions, as you interact with the children:

To express closeness:

- I like playing with you!
- I’ve really enjoyed this time together.
- You’re a lot of fun to be with!
- Playing with you is so much more fun than playing alone.
- I really like having fun with you like this.

To express joy, excitement and glee:

- Wow! This is great!
- This is so exciting!
- We’re going to do it this time!
- I love this game, it’s so much fun!

- Yahoo! We won!

To express playful mock “outrage” at loss:

- I don’t believe it! You won again!
- No way! How did you do that!
- You trounced me!
- Oh man! You’ve got me!

To express empathy and sympathy for loss:

- I know it’s rough to lose.
- I know how you feel.
- That must be frustrating, you were really close to winning.
- Don’t feel bad, you really did your best.
- I miss shots like that too sometimes.
- You’ll do better next time.
- I know it’s not fun to lose, but it sure is fun to play with you.

To express acceptance of loss:

- That was fun, even if you just trashed me!
- I can’t believe I lost again! But it was still a really fun game.
- Well, somebody’s got to win and somebody’s got to lose.
- Everyone had a good chance to win, and that’s what makes it fun to play.
- Boy, you beat the pants off of me! That was quite a game!
- That was so close! It was a great game though.
- Boy, you really got me this time. You played really well. It was fun!
- The important thing is that everyone had a chance to play and enjoy the game

To express admiration for others:

- Wow, you’re a natural at this!
- You’re so good at this!
- Your game is improving so much.
- Boy, you really put your heart into a game.
- I can see you really have been practicing.
- You are so patient when people miss, that’s really great.
- I really like how you wait your turn.
- You really have the team spirit, always encouraging others.

To express encouragement:

- Don’t give up, you can do it!
- Keep trying, you’ll get it!
- That was a great try!
- You really give it your all when you play!
- Don’t worry, you’ll catch on.
- It takes time to learn to how to play well. The important thing is to just have fun together.

How to Respond to a Troubled Child

When a child makes an effort to share his troubles with you, take the time to listen. Reassure him that the bad way he is feeling is a normal reaction to a difficult situation. There is enormous comfort in knowing that you are not alone, and that someone understands your sadness and grief. Sorrow is cyclical, and like the seasons, it takes time to pass from the winter of despair to the sunshine of spring.

Don't worry that you will need to know all the answers when a child turns to you for help. Hearing him out patiently is usually the best remedy. Often his greatest need is simply to find someone who will listen and acknowledge the difficulty he faces. He needs to be able to express his questions and fears to someone mature enough to hear him out. Don't jump to conclusions and try to fix all the problems. Often there is no simple solution, so a sympathetic word may be the best comfort of all.

Challenges and heartbreak can mold us into compassionate and resourceful men and women of character. Knowing this makes it easier to listen to the suffering of others, for we know it is not in vain. When a lump of coal, beneath the dark earth, is exposed to extreme and prolonged pressure, a change takes place. The black sooty rock is transformed into a brilliant diamond. So when you are called upon to wipe away the tears of a heartbroken child, remember that you may be witnessing the process of a diamond in the making.

Your compassionate heart will remind him that life is budding with hope and promise, even in the darkest of nights. Your greatest asset is a loving concerned heart. In communicating love, warmth, and acceptance, you will set the stage for healing to begin.

The following italicized text was adapted and compiled from “Immediate Psychological Support for Children After a Disaster: A Concept” by Drs. Milan Nadkarni and Ralph B. Leonard of the Dept of Emergency Medicine, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, North Carolina.

Therapeutic Play Immediately After a Disaster

An unfortunate consequence of the chaos immediately after a disaster and separation of family members is that some of these family members are likely to be lost children.

Herein lies a big problem. Volunteers, having no training or supplies, may have to be “baby sitters” for an indefinite length of time, caring for these frightened, upset children. They can help with food, water, and shelter, but “what to do with them” is a real problem.

The solution to this situation lies in the field of “therapeutic play”. All children, when presented with toys or art supplies, will spontaneously begin to use them. This is therapy for the child who is in a stressful situation. Emergency personnel can have the children engage in therapeutic play if they have a few very simple supplies and an instructional page of “do's and don'ts”.

If You Are Organizing Therapeutic Play:

You can help a child recover from trauma by encouraging him to play. Your role is simple: Be with the child, love him, and help him feel secure. The play itself is the therapy.

Therapeutic play sessions can be valuable activities for all children, and encourage the development of emotional and mental health. If you are organizing play activities immediately after a disaster however, you should pay special attention to issues of safety, in order to ensure that the session is as stress free as possible for the children.

Safety Points:

- *Make sure the play is conducted in a safe area, and be mindful of possible safety hazards.*
- *Time spent in organization and making a place for everything pays great dividends in enjoyable safe play.*
- *Always be around young children when they are playing in or with water.*
- *Items with sharp edges (scissors, knives, cutting tools, pins, thumb tacks etc) need to be well guarded and used with proper instruction and put away carefully after use.*
- *Keep any lines or ropes high enough so children won't run into them when playing.*
- *Have a first aid kits available*

Do:

- *Understand that children who experienced disaster are normal children, responding to a very abnormal event. Any behavioral problems they experience will be transitory*
- *Let the child know you care*
- *Talk to the child face to face and use language that is easy to understand*
- *Be gentle but firm with children who are disrupting or hurting others. Understand they are emotional.*
- *Ensure that any toys used by the children are sturdy and safe. (Simple wooden blocks make wonderful toys for young children, as they are virtually unbreakable and require no electricity.)*
- *Use praise, love, appreciation and reassurance liberally.*
- *If the children verbalize their fears while playing, acknowledge it. “Yes, it was scary”.*

Don't:

- *Don't promise things you can't deliver, such as “I will help you find your mommy” or “I will help you go home”.*
- *Don't tell the child “everything is alright” because it's not. But tell them that you understand it was frightening, but they are safe now.*
- *Don't become angry with a child who is misbehaving. If a child is hurting or disturbing other children, firmly stop him, but without anger.*
- *Don't dwell on the negative event or let the children overhear you discussing the disaster emotionally.*
- *Don't stop the child from discussing the disaster if they need to talk. Instead, listen and acknowledge their fears, and reassure them.*

Practical Steps for Using Games with Guided Discussion

Games are multi-functional tools that can be used in a variety of ways; as bonding exercises, to engender closeness and communication, to relieve tension, or to illustrate a teaching principle. Depending on your goal, you can use therapeutic play activities in one-on-one sessions with a single child or in guided activities with large or small groups.

You will find an assortment of useful games grouped in categories in the “Game that Teach and Heal” section. These categories include:

Action Games
Overcoming Fear
Self-control and Anger Management
Hope for the Future
Bonding and Making New Friends
Perseverance
Team-working
Non-competitive Games

You may wonder what relationship the games have with the categories listed. If you look over the games included in the “Overcoming Fear” category, for example, you will see that they are ordinary childhood games. So, how can such games be used to help children overcome fear? Apart from providing soothing activities that help children relieve stress, these games can be linked with guided discussion that can directly address the issue of fear.

What is the Purpose of Guided Discussion?

Through guided discussion you can introduce a theme, such as overcoming fear, during the play session while the children are in a relaxed and receptive mood. You can introduce edifying concepts by weaving them into the game through questions, comments and simple analogies. Guided discussions need not be elaborate or time consuming. If you make it fun, the children won't even realize they are being taught. The only real caution in the use of guided discussion is to avoid turning the presentation of a theme into a dutiful lecture that the children must endure. Keep it upbeat, simple and positive.

If you approach guided discussion as a teaching tool, and observe the children during play, you will be rewarded with opportunities in which to present the themes you wish to cover. Peer interaction is often the time when issues troubling children surface. Use times of play not only as a time to let the children release pent up stress, but also as a time to observe their needs. It will help you as you plan future play sessions and target the themes you wish to present with guided discussion.

It is important to understand that each game, by itself, is just a simple game. There is no magic formula, such as “play this game and the child will no longer be fearful”. However, these games can prove to be a magical tool to help you meet the children's needs – the “magic” being your own love, concern, reassurance and guidance. With a bit of forethought and planning, these games can be adapted to suit the particular needs of the children. The closeness that is

engendered while playing together can bridge the gap of silence, and help you move into the child's world, in order to help him.

Examples of Using Guided Discussion in a Game

Guided Discussion Using the Dictionary Artist Game

Let's try an example of using guided discussion with the "Dictionary Artist" game, listed in the "Overcoming Fear" categorical list in the "Games that Teach and Heal" section. The directions for this game are as follows:

Game # 4: Dictionary Artist (Indoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up, even teens enjoy this game.

Number of Players: Minimum of 6, though best played in larger class sized groups of 10 to 30 or more.

Goal and Purpose: A guessing game in which teams guess illustrated words or phrases. This game can work well with guided discussion on most topics, if the teacher suggests certain words or phrases to the team captain that can be used as a springboard to group discussion (i.e. draw items that symbolize peace, hope, happiness, etc, and discuss what they mean for different people).

Materials: Either paper and pencil, chalkboard and chalk, or whiteboard and marker.

Setting: Classroom

Directions: Form two teams, and appoint a captain for each group. By turns, the team captain whispers a word or phrase to another member of his team, who attempts to draw what the captain has said on paper, chalkboard or whiteboard. No clues may be given through actions, speaking or writing. The first team to correctly guess what is being drawn wins the point. Each team takes turns, using different team members to draw the picture. The first team to win 10 points wins the game.

The chosen theme is "Overcoming Fear". After letting the children play the game for a bit, pause the activity, go to the board, and tell the children, "I'm now going to draw something, and I want you to guess what it is."

You then draw a picture that illustrates the concept of the word "fear". Keep it simple - stick figures are fine. Don't worry if your artistic skills are limited, it will only make it all the more fun. You might try drawing a circular face with wide round eyes and an open mouth, hands flung in the air in surprise, etc. Or if you are more artistically inclined, you could draw a picture of a man fleeing a dog in fright, etc. Don't worry if you are hopelessly lost when it comes to drawing, as you can always choose a child in the class, whisper in his ear, and have him draw it for you.

Once the children have managed to guess that you have drawn a person who is afraid, ask them what is the opposite of fear. Encourage them to call out their answers. Keep the activity lively, while listing their ideas on the board. Their answers will vary, depending on their ages, and might include words such as "brave", "strong", "confident", "courage", "peace", "trust", "calm", "happy", etc. Let them think of, and list, as many words as they can.

Choose one of their answers, such as "brave", for example. Then tell the team captains to think of things related to the word "brave" for their teammates to draw. This could be a brave person, a brave act, or a symbol of bravery. Continue the game as before, with each team competing to guess what their teammate is drawing.

Some typical words that illustrate the concept of bravery might be “soldier”, “hero” “superman” “medal” “rescue” - any choice of word that illustrates something brave, or associated with bravery is fine. Younger children can be encouraged to draw pictures of brave or strong animals – lions, bears, horses, etc. Or they can draw pictures of the bravest thing they can think of. Allow for creativity – astronauts, mountain climbers, policemen and fire-fighters are brave, so if the children choose to draw them, applaud their ingenuity. Famous brave heroes throughout history also provide great drawing opportunities. The idea is to have the children focus on the opposite of fear, and have a fun time while doing so.

A simple conclusion to the game could be to tell the class, “That was fun. There are many ways to draw bravery. It’s been said that brave men and women are often afraid, but they have learned to overcome their fear. That is a good thing to remember if you ever feel afraid. You are learning to be brave.”

It’s as simple as that. The Picture Dictionary game is a fun one that promotes interaction, communication and team effort, all of which have therapeutic benefits. But when combined with guided discussion, the game can also be successfully used to help children learn the qualities of as bravery in the face of fear.

Guided Discussion Using the Limbo Game

In the above, ‘Dictionary Artist’ game, drawing is used to illustrate the theme of overcoming fear. You might be scratching your head, however, wondering how to weave a theme into a game that doesn’t involve drawing, or even use words. What if the game is pure action?

The key to remember is that the activity and the theme don’t have to be directly linked. Your job is to get the children involved in an enjoyable, physically beneficial activity, and then make reference to the theme and concept you wish to instill in them. You can do this through questions, chants, or any number of ways. Let’s say you choose the game, “The Limbo”.

Game #2: The Limbo

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of players: 6 and up

Number of players: Any number

Goal and Purpose: *To pass under an ever-lowering string while bending backwards. This game can be used with guided discussion on a variety of topics (overcoming fear, perseverance, etc.) If fear is the topic, use the game as an upbeat opportunity to discuss how viewing new and increasing challenges in the right way can help us overcome our fears, and find out just how much we are capable of doing.*

Materials: *String or stick (music optional)*

Setting: *Open area*

Directions: *Two players hold a piece of string or rope about chest height, or tape it on either side of a doorway. The players must pass under the string, leaning backwards to get underneath. They cannot touch the floor or the string with their hands, and anyone who does is eliminated. After everyone has passed under the string once, lower it 10 centimeters and repeat the process. Eliminate all the players until a winner is left. Lively music makes the game more interesting.*

This is a great, action packed game that the kids usually enjoy. Let them play one round, and then when it's time to lower the string just a little bit, call out playfully, "*Wow! That is challenge! Are you afraid you can't do it? Who is afraid?*"

It's good to start this when everybody will still make it under the string at least once if possible. This is a great opportunity to get the kids revved up and interacting with you.

Teacher: *Are you afraid you can't make it?*

Children: *No!*

Teacher: *Can you do it?*

Children: *Yes!*

Teacher: *I can't hear you! I asked, can you do it?!*

Children: *YES!!*

Teacher: *OK, we're going to learn a chant!*

Teacher and Children: *"We're not afraid! We're not afraid! Keep going, keep going! We're not afraid"*

Cheer them on each time they make a pass under the lowered string, keeping the activity lively and fun. Of course at some point some of the students won't make it under the string, which is the whole fun of the game. Applaud the ones who don't make it for their valiant try, and call out, "*He tried to do it! He wasn't afraid!*" The children are eliminated one-by-one until finally a winner, the "Limbo King or Queen", is crowned.

You could end the game by explaining, "*Were you ever afraid that you wouldn't be able to do something, and then when you tried you surprised yourself? Sometimes life is like the limbo game. If we face our fears we find out we can stretch a lot farther than we think.*"

Any game can be adapted to illustrate a theme with a little ingenuity. Suggested guided discussion dialogues, questions and chants are included in this book (see *Guided Discussion Dialogues*), but don't feel you must follow a script. Be creative and look for opportunities to weave teaching into play.

Do I Always Need to Use Guided Discussion with Games?

Guided discussion is a tool. If you are building a house, when you want to pound a nail, you use a hammer, and when you want to cut a board you use a saw. Similarly, guided discussion is a tool you can use when you want to encourage the children to reflect on a concept or mindset that will help them develop positive emotional coping skills.

You do not need to use guided discussion each time the children play the games, because the games themselves have valuable purposes and functions. Decide what you want to accomplish with a game, and then decide whether or not a guided discussion will help you meet your goal.

It may be helpful to make a plan to introduce the different categories of themes through guided discussion over the course of a year. This way, you can be sure to present the different emotional skills covered in each category on a regular basis. Do not be bound by this plan, however. Use guided discussions as a tool when you need them, and look for teaching moments as they present themselves.

When To Use Themes and Guided Discussion

Immediately Following Disaster:

If you are working with children in the days immediately following a disaster, a large part of your job will likely be calming and reassuring the children through organizing activities centered on the themes "Overcoming Fear" and "Hope for the Future". If a child in a group

seems particularly troubled, you might wish to use a game as a one-on-one opportunity to open an avenue of communication, in order to help him talk about his fears. Action Games are also very useful during this time as children need to release stress through energetic activity.

Temporary Shelters and Relocation:

Similarly, children who have been relocated or who are living in temporary shelters following a disaster face a new set of challenges and high stress situations. They may be separated from family, friends and familiar surroundings. They will benefit from themes centered on “Overcoming Fear”, “Bonding and Building New Friendships” and “Teamwork”. Such games are very useful as ice-breakers to help the children get over the apprehension of new situations and peer groups.

Long-term Recovery and Reconstruction Phase:

When the immediate danger of a disaster has passed, and the reality has dawned that life may likely not return to normal, depression and behavioral problems often surface. During the long term recovery and reconstruction phase following disaster, the children may exhibit difficulty controlling emotions such as anger or frustration. There may be increased tension at home, economic challenges and longing for former friends and loved ones. “Controlling Anger and Emotions”, “Hope for the Future” and “Perseverance” are very useful categories to explore with the children, as are “Action Games” that help them release stress in acceptable ways.

“Overcoming Fear” is a theme that is always useful, during any stage of recovery. As you work closely with the children, observe their behavior. This will give you clues as to what they need and how to help them.

Guided Discussion Dialogue Examples

During times of disaster, children need reassurance that love, hope and goodness still exist in the world. These uplifting themes can be woven into your game times. The following examples of dialogues may be used, but please don't feel you must follow these particular presentations word-for-word. Talk from your heart. Feel free to improvise and create examples of your own to reinforce the positive. Adapt your dialogues according to the age of the children, but remember, even adults enjoy stories and anecdotes. Be led by the children's need. Remind them that despite heartache and tears, the world is still a place full of wonder and joy. Fan the flame of hope in their young hearts, and the healing process will begin.

A. Dialogues for Overcoming Fear

We really exercised a lot of muscles in that game! Exercise is good for you, because each time you exercise a muscle it grows stronger. Maybe the first time you try to lift a weight, you can't do it. Or maybe you run a race, and you are tired out after the first 25 meters. That's because you start out with a weak muscle, and then you build it up through regular exercise. The more you train, the easier lifting, running and jumping become.

You know, there are many things in life just like that. Did you know that each time you face your fear, your bravery grows? Maybe the first time you face something that really frightening, it's too much for you. Sometimes just the thought of doing something you are afraid of can start your knees knocking with fear! But bravery is like a muscle. If you exercise your bravery, and keep facing your fears, your fears will shrink and your courage will grow stronger.

**

Wow, you were all cheering so loudly during that game! I bet you chased away every bird within 5 kilometers! Well, they'll come back, because birds know that even if something frightens them, it won't last. They are very resilient. Did you ever notice how they bounce back, and if they are looking for seeds or bugs to eat in a garden, even if you scare them off they will wait a bit, get over it, and then fly back to enjoy another meal? Even if it snows in the winter, the birds will still sing. They naturally know that things will get better. There is a lot we can learn from the birds.

**

That was great, you kept going, even if you thought you couldn't do it! Sometimes if you are afraid you can't do something, you've got to do what the oyster does with the pearl. Did you know that when a little grain of sand gets into an oyster's shell, it really bothers the oyster! But the oyster has a trick. It secretes a special smooth white liquid that coats the grain of sand to make it less irritable. It does that again and again, and the liquid hardens each time until the grain of sand is covered. It becomes nice, and smooth and round, covered by this shiny substance. That is how a pearl is formed!

So if something makes you afraid, or if there is something you can't do, keep coating it again and again with courage. Keep going, keep trying, and you will end up with a pearl.

B. Dialogues for Self-control and Anger Management

You really have to keep a cool head to play this game. Otherwise, you'll get all frazzled and then end up playing badly. I can tell you a trick. If you feel yourself getting angry, pretend you're a whistling tea kettle. Did you ever see one of those? You put the kettle on the fire, and turn on the heat. The kettle gets hotter and hotter, until it's at the boiling point. Then just when it's at its hottest, instead of exploding and sending boiling water flying everywhere, it lets off steam by whistling! It sits on the fire singing away, whistling a happy tune.

So if you feel yourself getting hot tempered and angry, you might try it. Whistle! Let's try it together! (*You can get the class whistling, and even have a whistling competition*) If you feel upset, you can whistle to calm yourself down. Tell yourself, "Be like the tea kettle, whistle a tune!" It can really help you control your feelings and keep a hot temper from spilling over onto others.

**

That was a fun game, it required a lot of fast action. If you want to play well you have to think on your feet. Just watch out that your feet don't start running faster than your mind, or you'll trip and fall, hurt yourself and really end up in a mess! Your feet can run fast, but your mind should run faster.

You know, anger can be like that too. When you get really angry, your mouth sometimes runs faster than your mind! We can hurt people if we say thoughtless things in anger. When we do, we end up saying things we regret later. So let's not get tripped up with either our feet or our mouth running too fast.

**

After a good game, a rule of sportsmanship is to shake hands with the other players. The winners and the losers shake hands together as a sign of respect. They show respect for the other person, but they also show respect for themselves, by being a good sport.

Let me show you something. Hold out your hand like you are going to shake someone's hand. Ok, now try this. Take your outstretched hand, and clench your fist like you are really

angry. Make a tight fist, like you are seething mad! Can you shake hands with someone if your hand is clenched in a fist? No, it doesn't work! You can't be a good sport if you don't learn to keep your temper under control.

So let go of the anger. Open up your fingers, and relax your fist. Good! Now everybody is ready to be a good sport and shake hands together! You may not win a game, but you can be a winner in life by being a good sport.

C. Dialogues for Hope for the Future

Boy, we really had to run to play that game! Running is good exercise. You can be like an Olympic runner if you run after your dreams. Find something wonderful you want to do in life, and run after that dream as hard and as fast as you can. Don't run for the wrong reason though, like the thief running from the law! Some people even run because they're so filled with fear they go through life running from things that aren't even chasing them. Run as hard as you can, but don't run away, run forward! Run towards your dream and you'll win the race.

**

You all did great, whether you won or lost! You did your best. And for those who lost, remember this little thought: the finest perfume in the world is made from flowers that have been crushed. How do you think that applies to losing a game? What can you learn in life when you lose sometimes? You learn to not give up, to not lose hope. Hope is the perfume you wear that comes from the flowers of crushed dreams. So if your dreams get crushed, make perfume from the experience and keep going until you win.

**

Congratulations, you won! At one point it looked like you were losing, but you didn't give up. It just goes to show there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Remember, never give up. Sometimes tunnels can seem pretty long and dark, but if you keep going you will eventually reach the light! If you live your life by that principle, the same way you played this game, you'll do fine.

D. Dialogues for Bonding and Making New Friends

I really enjoyed this game. I hope you did too. It's a great opportunity to make new friends and get closer to the ones you already have. Friendship really is one of the treasures of life. Don't neglect collecting as many treasured friends as you can. You know, if you were to peek inside a treasure chest, you'd probably see a collection of many assorted kinds of jewels. They're all different, but all valuable. You can have many different kinds of friends, too. If you reach out and make friends with someone you don't have much in common with, you might just be surprised to find a real treasure, and get a jewel of a new friend.

**

It's nice to have fun and laugh together when we play. Did you know a very famous writer, Victor Hugo, said, "Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." When you make friends with others, and laugh with them, it turns winter into spring in your heart.

**

Playing this game is a great way to get to know each other better. It has been said that, 'the person who sows seeds of friendship reaps an eternal harvest'. If you plant seeds of

kindness, and open your life to others in friendship, you'll gain much more than you give. I hope you all take the opportunity to make as many new friends as you can.

E. Dialogues for Perseverance

That wasn't an easy game, but you all did very well! Sometimes you have to try something challenging to find out what you can do. It might be a little rough at first while you learn, but if you stick with it, it brings out the best in you! I can think of something else that is like that. Can you guess? It's something most of you probably see every day. Tea! You don't know how good tea is until you put it in really hot water and keep it there for awhile. A real "hot", challenging situation brings out the best in you!

**

Congratulations! You kept going and won! You know, that's a great quality because you're going to encounter a lot of obstacles in life, and believe it or not they're good for us. Problems teach us not to quit. If you are on a path in life that doesn't have any obstacles on it then it probably doesn't lead anywhere worth going. So every time you encounter a problem or a difficulty in life, just tell yourself, "I am really going somewhere!" and don't give up.

**

If you really want to win this game you can't give up. It's a challenge. It reminds me of rocks in a brook. Did you ever hear a brook "sing"? It makes that happy bubbling sound, and it's so nice to sit beside it. Did you know that if you removed all the rocks from the brook, the singing would stop? The rocks are what make it sing. And if you took out all the difficulties in life, it would take out all the challenge. Challenges can really make us sing, just like the brook. So let's see who is going to be singing the winner's song!

F. Dialogues for Team-working

That game really required everyone working together! You did wonderfully! And it's a great way to look at life too. Somebody once said, 'You can be part of the solution, or part of the problem'. If you work together like you did today as a team, you can really be part of the solution and learn to overcome any problems you face.

**

You did well working together as a team. Part of being a good team is using everybody's strengths and talents. Few burdens are heavy when everybody lifts together. If you remember that in life, you will do well.

**

You make a good team. You aren't all the same, but you balance each other out. Do you know how to make a chocolate cake? You take very bitter chocolate, and combine it with very sweet sugar, add very sour milk, along with all sorts of things that aren't similar – flour, eggs, salt and baking soda. You combine them together, bake them in the oven and -- out comes a delicious cake! If you ate any one of those things on their own it would taste pretty bad. But

when you combine them together as a team, you get a something really great. People are like that too. Teamwork brings out the best in us.

Childcare Disaster Fact Sheet

Below you will find a brief list of important basic facts in dealing with children under stress. In a disaster situation one will not have people trained in the field of therapeutic play but rather will have volunteers or local citizens helping with children in distress. This list is aimed at such people and is very basic.

This fact sheet should be printed on a single piece of paper (it is likely not to be read if it is longer) and multiple copies put in the box containing the art/play therapy supplies.

Volunteer Fact Sheet

Helping Children During Therapeutic Play

- 1. Children who have been through a disaster are normal children who have experienced a great stress. Behavior problems are transitory.*
 - 2. Let the child know you are interested in them.*
 - 3. Promise only what you can deliver and don't say "everything will be OK" (it doesn't look like it will be to them).*
 - 4. Talk to the child face-to-face and use words they know.*
 - 5. Do something positive for them: get them water, wash their face, get them into a warmer/cooler place, etc.*
 - 6. Don't ask the child what he is drawing/making as he plays; he will tell you if he wants to – just be there with him.*
 - 7. The child may want to save his drawings or he may wad it up – both are OK.*
 - 8. The child may want you to join him in his play or he may not – both are OK.*
 - 9. Some children may verbalize their fears while playing. You should acknowledge their fears – "Yes, it was very scary" or "Yes, it was very sad".*
 - 10. Your job is to be with the child and help him feel secure. The art and play therapy in which he is engaged, however he does it, is therapy.*
-

GAMES THAT TEACH & HEAL

Having fun is part of the healing process. The following games require little or no equipment and include a variety of choices for activities that can be played indoors or outdoors, in situations where children need to burn energy, or in times when they need to be quiet and still. Games may also be combined with meaningful guided discussion in the categories suggested below, if desired.

Action Games:

High energy games to use when children need to release stress through physical activity and action.

Overcoming Fear:

Games to couple with guided discussion on the subject of fear and apprehension, and the cultivation of courage.

Self-control and Anger Management:

Useful games that can be combined with guided discussion to help students face the challenge of coping with negative emotions and anger.

Hope for the Future:

Games to use with guided discussion to motivate students to look ahead with hope and confidence.

Bonding and Making New Friends :

Games to use as icebreakers with new groups, and to encourage peer interaction, which may be coupled with guided discussion as needed.

Perseverance:

Games to use with or without guided discussion, to encourage problem solving, completion of tasks and overcoming obstacles.

Team-working:

Team and partner based games that encourage skills in group cooperation and working as a unit. Useful with or without guided discussion.

Noncompetitive Activities and Games:

Activities and games that do not have winners and losers. Useful when working with students with very poor social interaction skills or those who fear competitive activities. Some activities useful for younger children who do not yet enjoy competitive games.

Action Games:

Game #1: Stars and Comets

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: Adaptable for younger and older players, from 5 years up to mid teens.

Number of players: large or small groups, with 10 to 30 players.

Goal and Purpose: A lively, fun tag game that encourages listening and cooperation. Action games offer good opportunities to discuss positive ways to burn energy and relieve stress – such as running and playing with friends.

Materials: Rope, string or materials to mark boundaries and goals.

Setting: An area approximately 15 meters by 18 meters long, such as a large field or room, so children have ample space to run.

Directions: Mark a center line in the middle of the room or field, and then make goal lines about 8 meters from the center line, at opposite ends of the field. Divide the children into two equal teams, the Stars and the Comets, and have them face each other on opposite sides of the center line.

The game leader--an overseer or teacher-- calls out a team name, for example, Stars. The Stars team must then run across the field to reach their goal line on the opposite side, without getting caught by the Comets team. The Comets will try to tag as many players as possible before they are able to reach the goal line. If a member of the Stars is tagged, then he must join the other team. The game leader then calls out "Comets", and the action switches sides, as the Stars try to tag the Comets, before they reach their goal line.

Although equal chances should be given to both teams, the order the teams are called upon should vary, sometimes calling on a team several times in a row. This keeps the game fast moving and exciting. Also giving them false starts can keep it fun, as they have to return to their starting line if they run too soon. Tell them they can only go when they hear their team name, so keep them guessing with as you draw out calling the name, such as “On your mark... get ready...Wait!”, or calling out a name similar to Stars or Comets, but not the real name.

Game #2: Giants, Wizards and Elves

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 8 and up, fun for all ages.

Number of Players: 6 or more. Large groups are the most fun.

Goal and Purpose: This game is a tag style version of rock, scissor, stone, where teams decide roles and then chase each other back to free zones. Action games offer good opportunities to discuss positive ways to burn energy and relieve stress – such as running and playing with friends.

Materials: None

Setting: Large open area

Directions: In this game, giants conquer wizards, wizards conquer elves, and elves conquer giants. You become a giant by raising your hands above your head, a wizard by making a triangular hat over their head with your arms, and an elf by placing your hands alongside your head with your fingers extended to make pointy ears.

Divide players into two teams standing about a meter and a half apart. Assign safe zones for each team, such as a goal line, tree or other designated spot. Call the teams to huddle, where they decide together if they will be giants, wizards or elves, plus one back-up answer. Call the teams back to the starting lines and, on the count of three, each team yells what sort of creature they are, while motioning with their hands. If a team calls “Elves!” and the other calls “Wizards!” the wizards must chase the elves to their safe zone. Anyone caught joins the team who tagged them. If both teams simultaneously yell the same creature, do it again using the back-up answer.

Game #3: Time Travelers

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 7 and up

Number of Players: 15 to 60

Goal and Purpose: A tag game in which a chaser pursues a runner down changing row formations (dimensions in time). Action games offer good opportunities to discuss positive ways to burn energy and relieve stress – such as running and playing with friends.

Materials: None (Optional watch for timing rounds)

Setting: Large open space

Directions: All players but three form parallel lines, about 6 players per row, holding hands with arms extended. Players facing forward form the “future dimension”, and when they turn to the right to form new rows, they form the “past dimension”.

The three players not in rows are the “time travelers”: the chaser, the runner and the time machine operator. The time machine operator positions himself at the front of the rows, who are all facing forward, holding hands in the “future dimension” position. When the game begins the runner tries to escape the chaser, but they can only run up or down the rows, they can’t duck under or through players holding hands. (You may want to give the runner a brief head start, or have the runner and chaser positioned to start at different rows.)

At any time the time machine operator may shout “Travel back in time!” and players in rows must turn to the right to form new rows, holding hands. The runner and chaser must change direction, running down the new rows until the caller shouts “Travel forward in time!” and all players face forward again. This continues until the chaser tags the runner, or until 3 minutes has passed. Choose new time travelers and begin the game again.

Variation: When the time machine operator calls “Travel back in time!” the runner becomes the chaser and they switch roles, alternating roles as chaser and runner as they travel back and forth through time. Or players can literally run backwards when travelling back in time.

Variations on Tag Games:
(Outdoor and indoor games)

Tag games all follow a basic theme in which the catcher pursues the other players. The following variations of tag games are fun for all ages and may be played with any number of players, in large open areas. Have fun!

- **Freeze Tag:** (Outdoor game) One player is the catcher, and he must tag other players, who freeze in position when caught. They remain frozen until freed by other the players who are not yet caught. Change the catcher at intervals.
- **Tunnel Tag:** (Outdoor game) A variation of freeze tag. Players must remain ‘frozen’ in position when caught, until a free player crawls through their legs and then frees them. Change the catcher at intervals.
- **Chain Tag:** (Outdoor game) Two people hold hands and are the catchers. Each person they tag links hands with them, adding to the chain. When four people are in the chain they can choose to split in two if they wish. Chains can split and join at will, but they must split only when they have even numbers. The game continues until all players are caught.
- **Copy Tag:** (Indoor or outdoor game) Like all tag games, the catcher chases the players, but in this version the catcher chooses whether to run, hop, walk, or crawl, and all other players must copy him. Once the catcher tags a player they become his helpers until all players are caught.
- **Elbow Tag:** (Outdoor game) All but two players are divided into pairs, and link arms at the elbow. One of the unlinked players is the catcher, who chases the other free player. The player being chased can link elbows with any other paired person they choose, and the player on the other end of the linked pair then becomes catcher, chasing the previous catcher. If the player being chased is caught, he becomes the catcher. The game can continue indefinitely.
- **Horse and Rider Freeze Tag:** (Outdoor game) The catcher chases the players, but the player is safe if he can hop on another player’s back, becoming a horse and rider. Horse and riders cannot move, but they are immune from getting caught. Those who are

caught are frozen, and must wait to be freed by other players. To free someone, a rider must dismount his horse, and tag the frozen player. Change catchers occasionally unless all are caught.

- **Corner Tag:** (Indoor or outdoor game with 5 players) Mark four corners of a large square and have 4 players stand at the corners, with another player standing in the middle. Players must communicate amongst themselves which of the two players will trade position without getting tagged by the player in the middle. If a player is tagged he becomes the new middle player.
- **Coin Flip Tag:** (Outdoor game. Materials needed: a coin) Divide into two teams, one named 'Head' and the other, 'Tails'. Make two center lines a meter apart in a field, and then two boundary lines (safe zones) about 8 meters on either side of the center line. Teams stand back-to-back at the center line while a coin is tossed in the air. When the coin hits the ground, call out whether it is heads or tails. If it's heads, then the Heads team runs to their safe zone while the Tails team tries to tag them. Tagged players are eliminated. After each flip of the coin, players return to the center line and repeat until all the players on a team are caught.
- **Octopus Tag:** (Indoor or outdoor game) When a person is tagged they must sit down on the ground and help the catcher, but only by using their arms, like an octopus. If you play this indoors, have players crawl, hop or walk rather than run, for safety.
- **Cat and Mouse Tag:** (Indoor or outdoor game. Materials needed: newspaper). This is a fun game for young children. Place sheets of newspaper on the floor, which become the "cheese". Have the kids run around and pretend to be mice. Then shout, "Here comes the hungry cat!" The kids must then jump on the cheese to be safe. Anyone not on the newspaper can be tagged. Afterwards, the cat says, "I guess there's no food here" and goes away, taking one sheet of newspaper with him. The mice are then safe to run around again, until the cat reappears. Keep repeating until you are down to the last newspaper. Any kids who are caught become kitten helpers, catching the other mice.

Game #4: Grab the Monkey's Tail

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 5 to 12 years

Number of players: Large or small groups may play, preferably 10 or more players.

Goal and Purpose: There are ultimately no winners or losers in this game, as players assume a new position once the monkey's tail is caught. Players try to avoid the leader of the line catching the "monkey's tail", a small rope or piece of cloth tucked in their belt. Good for guided discussion on perseverance to accomplish your goals.

Materials: You will need a scarf or piece of string which will be used as the monkey's tail.

Setting: A large open space.

Directions: Players stand in a row, each with their hands on the waist of the player in front. The player at the end tucks a scarf or string into his back pocket, belt or waistband, to make the monkey's tail. The player in the front of the row tries to grab the tail without breaking the team's formation. After grabbing the tail, the player in the front rotates to the end of the line. Tucking the scarf into his belt, he becomes the new monkey's tail, which the child at the head of the line tries to grab.

Overcoming Fear:

Game #1: The Challenge

(Outdoor game, or indoor in very large area)

Age of Players: 10 years and below.

Number of Players: Groups of 15 to 60, the more players the better.

Goal and Purpose: Players navigate an obstacle course, known as 'The Challenge'. The activity may be combined with guided discussion on the topic of fear, and difficulties and challenges. Though life may present us with problems, like the obstacles in the challenge, we can overcome them.

Materials: None (Variation uses hoola hoops, rope, blankets, barriers, etc)

Setting: An open space.

Direction: Divide the children into two groups - those who will create the challenges and those who will navigate the course. Try to use as many students as you can to create the obstacles, leaving a smaller team to pass through the course. Have some of the children spread around the play area and encourage them to use their imagination to form themselves into an interesting and challenging human obstacle course. Working together, they can create barriers, tunnels, and bridges, with their hands, arms and legs, through which the remainder of the children must crawl. Afterwards the students switch roles, and create new obstacles, so that each student has a chance to experience playing both roles.

Variation: A variation of this game can be played with equipment such as hoola hoops, ropes, blankets, and other materials, to create a variety of obstacles. Students can use equipment to devise simple barriers, or to give students tasks to perform, such as passing through the jump rope, crawling under a blanket tunnel held by several students, jumping through the rings of hoola hoops, etc. Have the students use their imagination to create interesting obstacles.

Game #2: The Limbo

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of players: 6 and up

Number of players: Any number

Goal and Purpose: To pass under an ever-lowering string while bending backwards. This game can be used with guided discussion on a variety of topics (overcoming fear, perseverance, etc.) If fear is the topic, use the game as an upbeat opportunity to discuss how viewing new and increasing challenges in the right way can help us overcome our fears, and find out just how much we are capable of doing.

Materials: String or stick (music optional)

Setting: Open area

Directions: Two players hold a piece of string or rope about chest height, or tape it on either side of a doorway. The players must pass under the string, leaning backwards to get underneath. They cannot touch the floor or the string with their hands, and anyone who does is eliminated. After everyone has passed under the string once, lower it 10 centimeters and repeat the process. Eliminate all the players until a winner is left. Lively music makes the game more interesting.

Game #3: Tiger Hunt

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: Adaptable for younger and older players, from 5 years up to mid teens.

Number of Players: Minimum of 12. This game is also fun with very large groups, though if children are young you may wish to limit your group size to 12 to 25 children.

Goal and Purpose: A small team is chosen to be the hunters, who join hands to form a 'net' to catch the tigers in a type of tag game. A fun game, with useful opportunities for guided discussion about facing your fears when the 'worst' (getting caught) happens. Captured tigers join the team of hunters, and get to experience both sides of the chase.

Materials: None

Setting: A large playing area, no smaller than 12 by 15 meters.

Directions: Five players are chosen to be the hunters who form a net by linking hands and forming a line. The remaining children are the tigers who must evade the hunters. When the team leader calls out, "Run, tigers, run!" the hunters forming the net try to catch the tigers by surrounding them. When a player is caught they must join the hunters' line, linking hands with those who caught him. Once all members are caught, you can repeat the game, and the last five players caught form the new net.

Game # 4: Dictionary Artist

(Indoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up, even teens enjoy this game.

Number of Players: Minimum of 6, though best played in larger class sized groups of 10 to 30 or more.

Goal and Purpose: A guessing game in which teams guess illustrated words or phrases. This game can work well with guided discussion on most topics, if the teacher suggests certain words or phrases to the team captain that can be used as a springboard to group discussion (i.e. draw items that symbolize peace, hope, happiness, etc, and discuss what they mean for different people).

Materials: Either paper and pencil, chalkboard and chalk, or whiteboard and marker.

Setting: Classroom

Directions: Form two teams, and appoint a captain for each group. By turns, the team captain whispers a word or phrase to another member of his team, who attempts to draw what

the captain has said on paper, chalkboard or whiteboard. No clues may be given through actions, speaking or writing. The first team to correctly guess what is being drawn wins the point. Each team takes turns, using different team members to draw the picture. The first team to win 10 points wins the game.

Self-control and Anger Management:

Game #1: Fox Hunt

(Outdoor game or, depending on number of players, indoor in open space)

Age of Players: 10 years and below

Number of Players: Varied, approximately 8 to 20

Goal and Purpose: A fast moving, humorous game of tag between hunters and the fox, with children constantly switching roles as the balls are passed. The game can be used effectively with guided discussion about topics like disappointment, losing graciously, and the principles of good sportsmanship.

Materials: 3 softballs or beanbags. Two of them are equal in size and color, while one ball is smaller and distinctly different.

Setting: An area large enough to form a circle with the number of players.

Directions: Children stand in a circle and pass two larger 'hunter' balls from player to player, calling out "Hunter!" when they pass it to the next person. The balls should be passed directly to the person next to them, but the direction they are passed can switch at any time. The little ball is the fox, and can be thrown to anyone in the circle, calling out "Fox!" when passed.

Waiting for the right moment, a player holding one of the hunter balls throws it at a player holding the fox ball, to tag him. If the hunter tags the fox before he manages to pass the fox ball on, the fox is caught.

When caught, the fox should dramatically shout, "You got me!" to acknowledge he has been caught. This is an important part of the game, helping the child learn to employ humor to accept loss graciously. Losing can be turned into the most fun part of the game if the fox is encouraged to add drama to his capture, and 'ham it up' for laughs. The children learn to associate that loss is OK, and even an enjoyable part of the game.

You can choose to play this as an elimination game, having tagged foxes leave the circle, or simply acknowledge that the fox has been caught and continue playing the game. The advantage of having the players continue in the game is that they are provided with more opportunities to lose. The fun still goes on, no matter who wins or loses.

Game #2: Force Field

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: Adaptable for younger and older children, from 5 years up to mid teens.

Number of Players: Varied, between 12 and 30. (Slightly smaller groups can be used but it is easier to play with at least 12.)

Goal and Purpose: Students form a circular 'force field' and try to stop a student from using the ball to penetrate the force field. The game can be coupled with guided discussion about issues we sometimes let penetrate our own 'personal force field' – such as when we get upset and use hurtful words to lash out at others, or use other negative coping skills. This game can be used to discuss the difference between positive and negative coping skills, and how to keep our personal 'force field' intact.

Materials: A very soft, small ball (or material wadded and tied into a ball shape, such as a sock stuffed with cloth or foam) will be needed.

Setting: Spacious area that can accommodate a circle of students.

Directions: Have the players stand in a circle to form the force field, with their feet a little more than hip distance apart touching their neighbor's feet. One player is chosen to stand in the middle of the force field, holding a ball. He tries to throw it outside of the force field, either between two players, or through their legs, but cannot throw the ball higher than any player's shoulders, and must not hurt the other players while throwing. Those forming the circle try to prevent the ball from getting through the force field by blocking it with their hands.

The force field team gets one point for every time it blocks the ball from getting through. After a player penetrates the force field a new person is chosen to go to the middle. The force field team tries to beat their own record and win as many points as possible, blocking each of the players as best they can.

Game #3 Variety Volleyball

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 8 and up

Number of Players: 10 or more

Goal and Purpose: Varied rules turn the traditional game of volleyball into a cooperative group experience, as opposed to separate players simply racking up points against an opposing team. This makes for good guided discussion on topics such as having fun versus winning at all costs.

Materials: Volleyball equipment (optional blankets for blanket ball)

Setting: Volleyball area

- **Keep It Up:** The players see how long they can keep the ball in the air, hitting it over the net to each other. Players collectively keep points for how many times it goes over the net.
- **Hit and Change:** Play this game according to traditional volleyball rules, except that every time a player hits the ball over the net, he must then join the team on the other side.
- **Blanket Ball:** Use two large blankets, one for each team, and have each team member grasp a part of the blanket. Use the blanket to propel the ball across the net, while the other team waits to catch it with their own blanket.

Hope for the Future:

Game #1: What's Your Job?

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 8 to 12 years

Number of Players: Six or more. The more the better!

Goal and Purpose: Players pantomime an occupation, and when the opposing team guesses what it is, a game of tag erupts. Couple this game with guided discussion about future dreams, and what they would like to do with their lives. This can be a good way to get children to talk about things they'd like to do some day. Encourage them to find ways to make their dreams become reality, using examples of others who pursued their life's goals.

Materials: None.

Setting: Spacious playing field

Directions: Divide the playing field in half, and mark the center with a line. Players then form two teams, A & B, and each team designates a safety zone at opposite ends of the field.

Players go to their safety zones, and members of Team A huddle to decide which country they are going to be from (i.e. China, India or Brazil, etc) and which profession to pantomime (i.e. firefighter, doctor, astronaut, etc)

Teams A & B then begin to walk towards each other. As they walk, Team B calls out, "Where are you from?" Team A answers, "China", or whatever country they have chosen. Team B asks, "What's your job?" Team A asks, "Can you guess?"

By this time the two teams have met at the center line, and Team A will pantomime their profession, while Team B tries to guess what it is. If someone from Team B guesses correctly, Team B can then catch Team A, who try to escape by running back to the safety zone. If tagged they should join the other team. Each team takes turns choosing a country and profession to pantomime.

Game #2: Night Vision Guide

(Outdoor game or, depending on number of players, indoors in large space)

Age of players: 8 and up, with adaptable variations for older players up to teenagers.

Number of players: 4 or more

Goal and Purpose: Partners take turns helping each other navigate through a maze of obstacles while one player is blindfolded. (Important note: Be sensitive to player's response, in case any are reluctant to participate with eyes closed. The goal is to have fun, bond and learn to encourage and enable others to reach their goals, not simulate a frightening experience. Participation should not be coerced or mandatory. Let children choose to participate voluntarily.)

Players should be briefed on how to encourage and guide their partner through supportive instruction rather than personal criticism (i.e. say, "Move to the left. No, a little more to the right", not, "No, go left! What's wrong with you!") The game can be combined with guided discussion on topics relating to hope for the future and teamwork – i.e. life presents us with many obstacles and sometimes we need each other's help to reach our goals, but obstacles present opportunities for learning, etc.

Materials: Obstacles (see explanation below and improvise)

Setting: Large open space

Directions: Supervision is required for this game to ensure safety. Set up an obstacle course and make sure all obstacles are safe and players are well supervised. This is not a race, so players should move slowly along the course. Obstacles may be tangible objects, such as ropes, barricades, barrels, tables, chairs or other items, or simply chalked lines of zig-zags, curves and other shapes that must be stepped over, on or around. Use imagination, (like drawing small chalked circles for stones to cross a "swift flowing river", etc) and you can create a challenging age-appropriate obstacle course.

The players are paired and one is either blindfolded, or simply shuts his eyes. (Again note: if blindfolding makes a player uneasy, opt for simply shutting eyes.) Depending on the age and ability of the players and the difficulty of the obstacle course, they may guide their partner either by physically leading them by the hand, or by only using verbal instructions.

Explain the scenario: It is an extremely dark night, and they must make a long journey through rough terrain, but they have one pair of "night vision goggles" between them to share. They can make it if they work together, and take turns leading and helping each other. For the first half of the journey one player will wear the goggles, and on the second half the other player will wear them. Players will get special commendation for being supportive and encouraging in their role of instructing and guiding their partner. Players should listen carefully to the instructions of their partner, and work together to make it through the obstacle course.

Variation: If you are playing with a large number of players, you can use some of the players as the obstacles, so that all may participate.

Bonding and Making New Friends:

Game #1: Short Circuit Repair

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 5 to 12

Number of Players: 8 to 25

Goal and Purpose: Players form a circle and partnered robots create a “short circuit” by breaking another two players’ handhold. The robots then race their opponents around the circle. Players change positions regularly in this game, ensuring various partner combinations. You can expand this game with get-to-know-you type questions if you wish.

Materials: None

Setting: Large open area

Directions: All players, except for one pair – the “robots” - join hands, forming a circle. The robots hold hands and walk around the circle, looking for a place to “short circuit” by lightly tapping the handhold of the players in the circle. The tapped players release their hands, and the robots race around the circle, while the short-circuited pair race the opposite way. The first pair back to the empty space wins. The last ones back become the new robots, and call out, “Short circuit repair!” All players in the circle then quickly scramble into new positions and join hands, ensuring a continual change of partners for future robot pairs.

You can expand the game into a bonding exercise with get-to-know-you type questions if you wish. For instance, robots can ask a fact about each other before starting their search for a short circuit, such as age, name, likes/dislikes, hobbies, etc.

Game #2: Balancing Act

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up, with suitable variations for older players.

Number of Players: 4 or more.

Goal and Purpose: Partners balance a ball or other object between them while moving to a designated spot and returning. Partners learn to work together to accomplish a task.

Materials: A large rubber ball. For a more challenging variation for older players, use several smaller balls, blocks or other objects to balance in various ways.

Setting: Large, open area.

Directions: Players line up in pairs. The first pair faces each other and balances a large rubber ball between their bodies without using their hands, while walking to a designated area and returning. Upon reaching their goal, the next team will have a turn at balancing the ball, while walking to the finish line.

Variations for Older Players:

- ‘Race the clock’ by timing each pair
- Turn the game into a relay race
- Place the ball at various positions, such as between two player’s foreheads, or back to back, or knee to knee
- Have players jump, rather than walk, to the designated area
- Use several small balls or blocks, rather than one large one.

Game #3: Good Morning, Friend!

(Indoor game)

Age of Players: 4 to 7 years

Number of Players: Five to twelve.

Goal and Purpose: This simple, non-competitive activity can have a calming and encouraging effect on a group, helping young children bond in positive social interaction. Children walk around the circle and take turns greeting each other in a friendly manner, and ask a predetermined question. Guided discussion can help children focus on current positive experiences, and how to be a good friend.

Materials: None.

Setting: Indoor or outdoor area, seated on floor or chairs

Directions: Children sit in a large circle and the teacher explains how we can learn more about our friends by asking questions. Together they pick a question for the day. Good themes are, "What is the nicest thing that happened to you today (or last week, etc)?" or "What game do you like to play the most?" etc, encouraging the children to focus on current positive activities and experiences. Discuss how we can brighten someone's day with encouraging words and small acts of friendship.

After determining the question for the day, one player moves to the outside of the circle and walks around the seated children until he chooses another player to gently pat on the head. The seated player stands up, they shake hands, and greet each other with a, "Good morning, friend!" The player who walked around the circle asks the question of the day. The tapped player then takes a turn walking about the circle and chooses a new player to greet, continuing the friendly exchange until all in the circle have had a turn.

Variation: Use affirming statements rather than questions, such as "One thing I like about you is..." or "You are fun to be with because..." The other player replies, "Thank you" for the affirmation.

Game #4: Reflection in the Mirror

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 8 and up.

Number of Players: Working in pairs, as many players as you wish.

Goal and Purpose: Partners work together, learning to imitate each other's movements and anticipate each other's moves, like a reflection in a mirror. This game can be expanded with get-to-know-you style questions once the children are paired.

Materials: None

Setting: Indoor or outdoor, open space

Directions: Find partners. Two persons stand face to face, and one performs an action while the other imitates it, then the other follows in turn. The goal of this game is not to play

follow-the-leader, but rather to eventually anticipate the other's movements and fuse their motions together as one. Slowly, as the partners work together, they can reach a point in which their movements are nearly in unison, guiding each other in subtle cues. Experiment with waving motions, blinking, reaching, bending, facial expressions, leg lifts, etc. Move on to more complicated actions. Those who feel they've mastered the art can demonstrate for all! Change partners at intervals, and give get-to-know you questions to each pair if you wish. (Questions such as likes/dislikes, hobbies, favorite animals, activities, books, games, songs, etc. are good ones to suggest.)

Game # 5 Popping Paper Balloons

(Indoor game)

Age of Player: 8 and up

Number of players: Pairs of two

Goal and Purpose: Players draw balloons on gridded paper and take turns trying to "pop" their partner's imaginary balloons. Each time a balloon is popped players tell something about themselves they'd like to share: likes, dislikes, stories and other get-to-know-you facts.

Materials: Four sheets of paper per pair, and two pencils

Setting: Seated

Directions: Players take 4 sheets of paper and draw identical grids of 10 squares by 10 squares on each. Label the grids with letters for the vertical columns and numbers for the horizontal rows.

Each player then takes two sheets of paper. One sheet is for marking the position of balloons, and the other sheet is for recording guesses about the location of the partner's balloons. Without letting the partner see, each player marks his balloons on one sheet by drawing x's in the squares. He must mark:

- One balloon that is 5 squares in length
- Two balloons that are 3 squares in length
- Five balloons that are one square in length

The first player lets a 'dart' fly by calling out his guess on the partner's grid: for example, "A5!" The other player responds by calling out either "Hit!" or "Miss!"

After each turn the player records his dart shots on the extra grid sheet, marking 'x' for a hit and 'o' for a miss. Each time a player's balloon is popped he shares a get-to-know-you fact about himself with his partner. The game continues until the winner pops his partner's last balloon. (Tip: Mark balloons lightly in pencil so you can erase and use paper over and over again.)

Perseverance:

Game #1: Call the Doctor!

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of players: 8 and up

Number of Players: Minimum of 6 players. Large groups of 15 or more are more fun.

Goal and Purpose: Players hold hands and tangle themselves in a complicated formation and ‘the doctor’ must direct them in untangling themselves. Combine with guided discussion on how life’s problems can work us into quite a knot at times, but if you keep trying you’re bound to get results.

Materials: None.

Setting: Large open area.

Direction: Choose one player to be the doctor, who must stand apart from the other players with his eyes shut. The other players hold hands and form a circle. Then, as quickly as possible, without releasing their handholds, they tangle themselves together by crawling and climbing over and under each other, in the most complicated way possible. When the players are ready they shout, “Call the doctor!”

The doctor helps the children untangle themselves by giving commands, while the other players follow his directions. (Younger players may need to use their hands to guide the players, while older players can rely only on verbal commands).

Game #2: Team Transport

(Outdoor game)

Age of Players: 9 and up

Number of Players: Ten or more.

Goal and Purpose: Players work together to carry each of their teammates from one side of the playing area to the other, except the last player, who can run. Players attempt this several times, timing themselves and trying to beat their own record. Combine with guided discussion on working together to reach a goal, and how to brainstorm efficient strategies, i.e. what’s the best way to carry someone, how can they move more quickly, etc.

Materials: None. (Optional: Watch or clock to time the activity)

Setting: Large, open field.

Directions: All the players stand on one side of the playing field. One by one, each player is carried across to the other side of the field by however many people it takes to lift him. Once the player is transported, he is left there, and the team returns to carry the next teammate across the field. All players must be carried except for the last, who can run across to the cheers of his teammates!

Variations:

- Large numbers of players can form two or more teams to race each other.
- Make a rule that only players having something in common can carry each other. For example, only players wearing blue can carry others wearing blue, or only those whose names start with “C” can carry others with names starting with “C”. Improvise as you like.

Game #3: Slippery Coin

(Indoor game)

Age of Players: 7 and up

Number of players: 2 or more

Goal or purpose: To slide a coin across a smooth table or surface, with the object being to get the coin as close to the edge as possible without falling over the side. Good to combine with guided discussion on not giving up when attempting a goal, and how we often need to improve and get better in whatever we attempt before we can succeed.

Materials: Smooth table or countertop, or other flat surface; Coins. If you have no coins a smooth lid may also be used.

Setting: Anywhere with a tabletop

Directions: Players are at opposite ends of a table, and slide coins to each other, trying to get as close to the edge as possible without falling over. It's fun to keep score, taking turns of three slides of the coin each. Getting a coin to hang half over the edge on the first slide counts as 3 points, on the second slide 2 points, and on the third slide 1 point.

Game #4: Hidden Elf

(Quiet indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 9 and up

Number of Players: At least 2, but large groups work well also.

Goal or Purpose: This game is useful when players need to settle down in a small space, but need something interesting to do. In this imaginary hide and seek game, players try to guess where the Elf is "hiding" by asking questions. Good to combine with guided discussion about not giving up when searching for answers and seeking solutions.

Materials: None

Setting: Anywhere

Directions: One player is the Elf, and thinks about a place in a designated area, like a room or yard, where he'd like to hide. He can imagine himself to be any size at all, either shrunk or enlarged, and can hide any place he can imagine within the boundaries set. When the Elf is ready, the other players must ask questions to find out where he is hiding, however the Elf can only answer yes or no to these questions. The players can ask general questions, such as "Are you higher than my head?" or "Are you to my right?" or "Are you on something that is electric?" or "Are you on something smaller than my hand?" etc. However, once a player makes a direct guess, naming a specific place where he imagines the Elf to be, such as "Are you under the cup on the table?", if the answer is no, then the Elf gets one point. Three points and the Elf wins the game, so guess wisely. If you want to make it harder, you can limit the number of questions for the Elf, such as 20 or 30. Happy hunting!

Game #5: Telescope

(Quiet indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up

Number of Players: At least 2, but as many as you'd like

Goal and Purpose: One player describes an object while other players try to guess what he sees. Good for guided discussion on perseverance, and how it often takes us time to solve problems and answer questions in life.

Materials needed: None

Setting: Anywhere

Directions: One chosen player looks around through his imaginary telescope and thinks about an object he sees. He then describes it, stating something like, "I see something blue that's not very big..." describing it in a general way. He can talk about its general shape and size, what it does, who might use it, etc. ("I see something that people use in school") Try to go into as much detail as you can, but as vaguely as you can, to keep the players guessing. If the fellow players give up and have to be told the answer, then the player holding the "telescope" describing continues to play, choosing a new object to describe. If someone guesses the object, then they get to look through the telescope next.

Team-working:

**Game #1: Bug Walk
(Outdoor game)**

Age of Players: 6 and up

Number of players: 10 to 40, divided into evenly numbered teams

Goal and Purpose: Teams create strange "bug" formations and race to beat the opposing team to the finish line. Good for guided discussion on the topic of teamwork and developing skills necessary to work well with others. Though teamwork doesn't always come naturally, we can get better at it with practice, just like the bug walk.

Materials: None

Setting: Large open area

Directions: Divide players evenly in teams with a starting and finishing line about 10 to 30 meters apart. Each team must make a strange "bug" formation by joining hands, locking arms, lifting legs, riding piggy back, etc. However, the number of the bug's arms and legs are determined by subtracting 2 legs or arms from the total number of players. If there are, for example, 8 players on the team then the bug must only have 6 legs touching the ground, and 6

arms supporting or touching other players. The bugs get ready in formation, and on the count of three set off. The first bug to cross the finish line wins.

Variations: You can further reduce the bug's arms and legs; require bugs to walk backwards, or jump, etc; require all but the bug's head to close their eyes; specify certain formations, i.e. the bug's head must ride piggy back, the bug's tail must hop on one foot, etc. Use your imagination.

Game #2: Compass and Map

(Outdoor game or, depending on number of players, indoor in large space)

Age of Players: 8 and Up

Number of Players: At least 12

Goal and Purpose: Team members (the map) stand in position relative to the leader (the compass). The compass spins and then the map quickly tries to reassemble itself in relation to the compass. Good game to use with group discussion on working together to accomplish goals.

Materials: None

Setting: Open space

Directions: Divide into four teams, each team lining up to form one side of a large square, facing inwards to form the map. (This is fun when played spread out in a large open space, but also can be done in a smaller space.) The leader is the compass, and stands in the middle of the square. Each team must note their position in relation to the compass – facing him, in back of him, to the left of him, or to the right.

The compass then spins around several times and stops, facing a new direction. Teams on all sides of the map must quickly reassemble themselves in relation to the new position and end up again either in front, in back, or to the right or left of the compass.

The goal is to get all side of the map into position as quickly as possible, and regain a square formation. Team members must watch carefully and position themselves in relation to each other. The compass can count out loud, as team members try to beat their own record to see how fast all sides can reassemble.

Game #3 Body Boat Race

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 5 and up, though it's even lots of fun for teens.

Number of Players: Ten or more. More players make longer boats and more fun!

Goal or Purpose: Players squat on the floor in two or more teams to make "boats", and race across the floor. Lots of fun! Combine this fun task with guided discussion about sticking together through difficult times, because without a team we're sunk. Discuss after the race what worked best for each team : Did they count together as they leaped? Were they moving in short fast leaps or a measured pace? How did they figure out when to leap in unison? Did someone take on the role of team captain? Guide them in figuring out what strategies helped them work together successfully as a team.

Materials: None

Setting: Open space

Directions: Teams squat on the floor in a row and make “boats” by placing their hands on the player in front of them. When the race begins players move their boat by springing forward in unison, lifting both feet off the ground. Players must resume a squatting position after each leap. Any boats that break up into two or more pieces (when players no longer hold the shoulders of the player in front) have “sunk” and are out of the race. Give players a few minutes of practice to get the hang of it, then the race can begin. The first boat across the finish line in one piece wins the race.

Variation: Try switching teams around after each race. Or, try a backwards boat race in which all players face backwards and leap in unison towards the finishing line.

Non-competitive Activities and Games:

Game #1: Relay Fun

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up

Number of Players: 10 or more

Goal and Purpose: Noncompetitive relays involve moving and passing balls, batons or other objects in a continuous motion. They can be used as fun warm-up exercises, or as full game sessions in themselves, where everyone learns to work together to succeed. Good discussion topics for non-competitive relays are the importance of teamwork and learning to improve our skills to benefit the whole team.

Materials: A large rubber ball, plus batons, scarves, or other objects to pass

Setting: Open space

Direction: Ten or more players stand in a line, facing forward. The player in the front of the line holds a ball, and passes it over his head to the player directly behind him. After passing the ball, he then runs and stands at the end of the line. The players move one by one to the end of the line, so that the game can go on continuously.

After a few rounds of this style, change the pattern. Next, one player passes the ball over head to the next player, who passes it through his legs to player behind him, who then passes it over his head to the next player, and so on.

After awhile, change patterns again. Try lining up half of the players at one end of the play area, and the other half at the opposite end. The first player on one side runs across the play area, tags the first person in line, and then takes his place at the end of the line. The tagged player runs across the field and does the same, tagging the player at the front and taking a place at the rear of the line.

Vary this relay by having players pass scarves, batons, dribble balls, skip rope, hop, jump, or have a sack race. Use your imagination for as many types of action you'd like to add. Players can take turns coming up with new variations to keep it exciting.

Game #2: Noncompetitive Simon Says

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up

Number of Players: 6 or more.

Goal and Purpose: A non-competitive version of the traditional Simon Says game, that avoids elimination by rotating players between 2 groups when they are "out". Topics for discussion can include perseverance and how we usually get better at tasks the more we try.

Materials: None.

Setting: Open area

Directions: Two teams are formed, with a leader (Simon) on each team. Everyone follows the directions and actions of Simon, but only when he says, "Simon says..." (i.e. "Simon says touch your toes" , "Simon says jump up and down") If he doesn't say "Simon says", (i.e. "Touch your toes") the players should not follow him, and anyone caught is rotated to the other team. The game can go on and on.

Game #3: Needle and Thread

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 4 and up

Number of Players: 10 or more

Goal and Purpose: Children weave in and out of a circle, while players close the gaps by joining hands, thereby "sewing up the holes". This game is a fun non-competitive activity for younger children. Good for guided discussion on topics such as persevering with a task, seeing things through to completion, and working carefully to get a job done, and working as a team to complete a task.

Materials: None.

Setting: Open area.

Directions: All of the children, except for one player who is the needle, stand in a circle, hands resting at their sides. The needle will then run in and out of the circle, between any two players. Every time he passes between two players, they must join hands together to "sew up the hole". Soon all members of the circle will be holding hands. Choose a new needle and play the game again.

Game #4: Sock Fun

(Indoor or outdoor game)

Age of Players: 6 and up

Number of Players: 2 or more

Goal or Purpose: Keep a “sock ball” bouncing in the air without touching the ground, only using your feet. A good game to combine with guided discussion on teamwork, perseverance and learning to improve our skills over time to accomplish a goal.

Materials: 3 socks and a rubber band. Alternatively, rags, balloons, light weight beach balls, badminton birdies, or any other object that can be kept in the air using the feet, can be used.

Setting: Open space

Directions: Roll up two socks and fasten them shut inside a third sock using a rubber band. After the sock-ball is thrown in the air, its hands off! Using feet, propel the ball from person to person and keep it in the air as long as possible.

Credits, Bibliography and References

Credits:

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