



PEACE FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN & YOUTH

Workbook for Supporting Children and Youth:
Ideas and Activities

January 2022

Includes Activity Worksheets that can be downloaded and printed.



Prevention
Education
Advocacy
Counselling
Empowerment

PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth: Training and Peer Mentorship for Women's Shelters in Northern, Rural and Remote Communities to Build Specialized Supports for Children & Youth Survivors and Witnesses of Gender-Based Violence.



This project has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

PEACE project materials or other BCSTH resources available online may be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever as long as acknowledgement to the BC Society of Transition Houses is included in the product.

Information found in **PEACE Canadian Children & Youth, Supporting Children and Youth Workbook: Ideas and Activities** was drawn from the following resources developed by the BC Society of Transition Houses, available online in English:

PEACE Program Toolkit

<https://bcsth.ca/publications/peace-toolkit/>

PEACE Program Policy and Template Guide

<https://bcsth.ca/publications/peace-program-policy-template-and-guide/>

PEACE Use of Technology Program Template Guide

<https://bcsth.ca/publications/peace-program-use-of-technology-policy-template-guide/>





Table of Contents

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKBOOK: IDEAS & ACTIVIES	4
I - MAKING A CONNECTION.....	5
<i>“Getting To Know You” Jenga, Ages 9–12.....</i>	6
<i>Helping Hands Exercise, Ages 3–5.....</i>	7
<i>Anger Thermometer, Ages 3–5</i>	8
<i>Feelings Board, Ages 3-12.....</i>	9
<i>Scribble Tag, Ages 3-12.....</i>	10
<i>Helping Children and Youth Ground, Settle, and Be Present, Ages 3–8.....</i>	11
II - IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME: INDIVIDUAL THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES.....	12
<i>Space Spin: The Case for Personal Space, Ages 3–8.....</i>	13
<i>Interviewing Your “Worry Monster”, Ages 6–12</i>	14
<i>“House Of...” Activity, Ages 3–12</i>	16
<i>Cool-It Kit, Ages 3-8.....</i>	20
<i>How Is Your Bucket? Ages 3-12.....</i>	21
III. IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME: GROUP THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES	22
<i>Step Inside the Circle/Come On The Boat If... Ages 9-18</i>	23
<i>Naming Violence In Our Lives, Ages 9-18</i>	25
<i>How Do I Know If I Am Experiencing Abuse in A Relationship? Ages 13–18.....</i>	26
<i>My Boundary Group Exercise, Ages 3-8.....</i>	28
<i>My Safe Space Exercise, Ages 3-8.....</i>	29
<i>Angry Animal Parade, Ages 3-8.....</i>	30
<i>Anger In My Body, Ages 3-12</i>	31



SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKBOOK: IDEAS & ACTIVITIES

This ***Ideas and Activities Workbook*** offers a variety of ideas and worksheets that can be used to support children and youth staying in shelters or transition houses. PEACE counsellors in British Columbia have created the activities included here, unless otherwise indicated. This PDF document can be downloaded and pages printed for use as needed.

In Section I, **Making Connection**, you will find activities that can be used by all frontline support workers to connect with children and youth staying at the shelter.

Section II, **If You Have More Time: Individual Therapeutic Activities**, offers ideas and activities for working with children and youth one-on-one that could be used if your shelter has more time and space dedicated to providing support to children and youth.

Section III, **If You Have More Time: Group Therapeutic Activities**, provides examples of activities to be used specifically with groups of young people who have experienced violence and/or abuse in their homes. For use if your shelter has enough time and space to work with children and youth in groups.



I - MAKING A CONNECTION

If there is time and space to connect with children and youth in the shelter through a focussed activity, here are some ideas that may be helpful for all frontline support workers.

Since much of your contact with young people may happen on the fly, in a busy family room or the kitchen while making meals, it may be really helpful to stock the transition house with some of the following games or tools like a Jenga Game, Anger Thermometer or Feelings Board.

Please remember the importance of consciously working within your comfort zone and choose activities that feel like a good fit for you and the children and youth you are supporting.

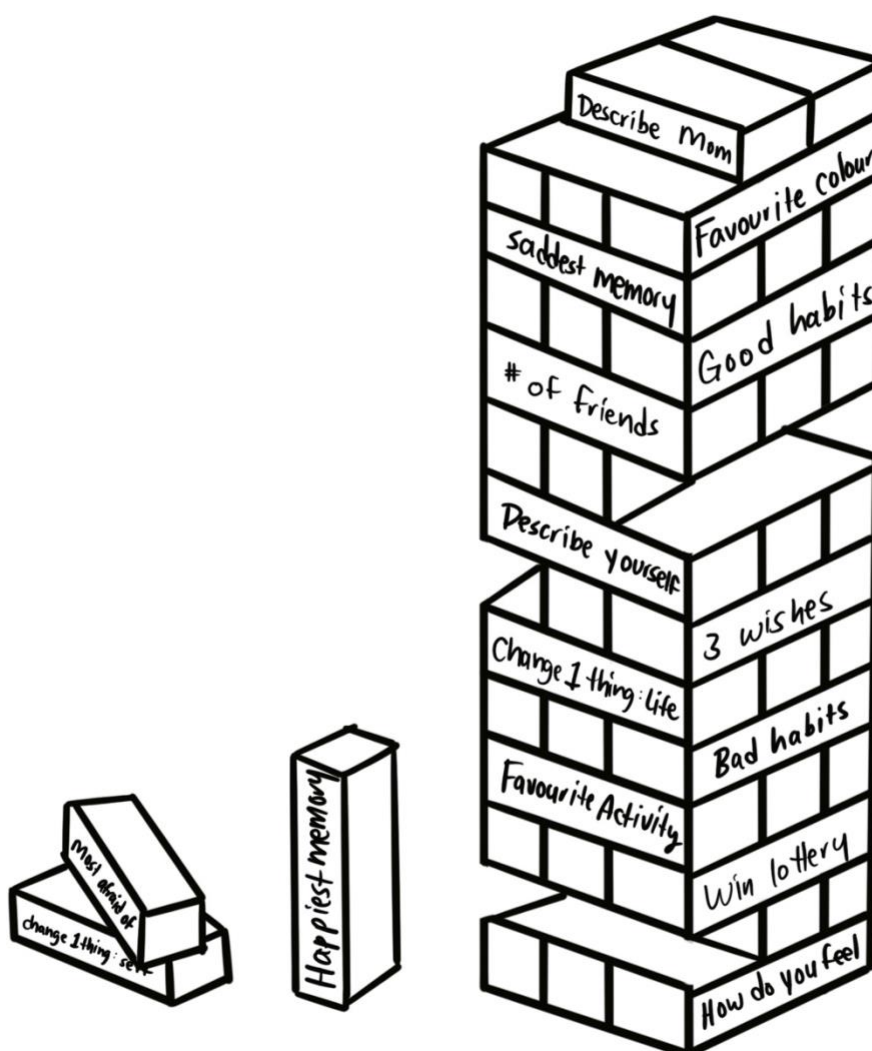


“GETTING TO KNOW YOU” JENGA, AGES 9–12

Having a Jenga Game like this one in your shelter can be a fun and easy way to get to know a young person.

Questions can be added to the wooden blocks over time that provide opportunities for discussion. The game can be made up of ‘low risk’ questions like: What is your favourite colour? and What is your favourite game to play? Or, the game can also include what might be called ‘higher risk’ questions that provide opportunity to express emotions. Questions like: If you had 3 wishes what would they be? And Who is someone special in your family and why?

Shelter staff can decide what kind of Jenga game to offer families. It is a fun and easy way to play, build rapport, and to have conversations about the answers.



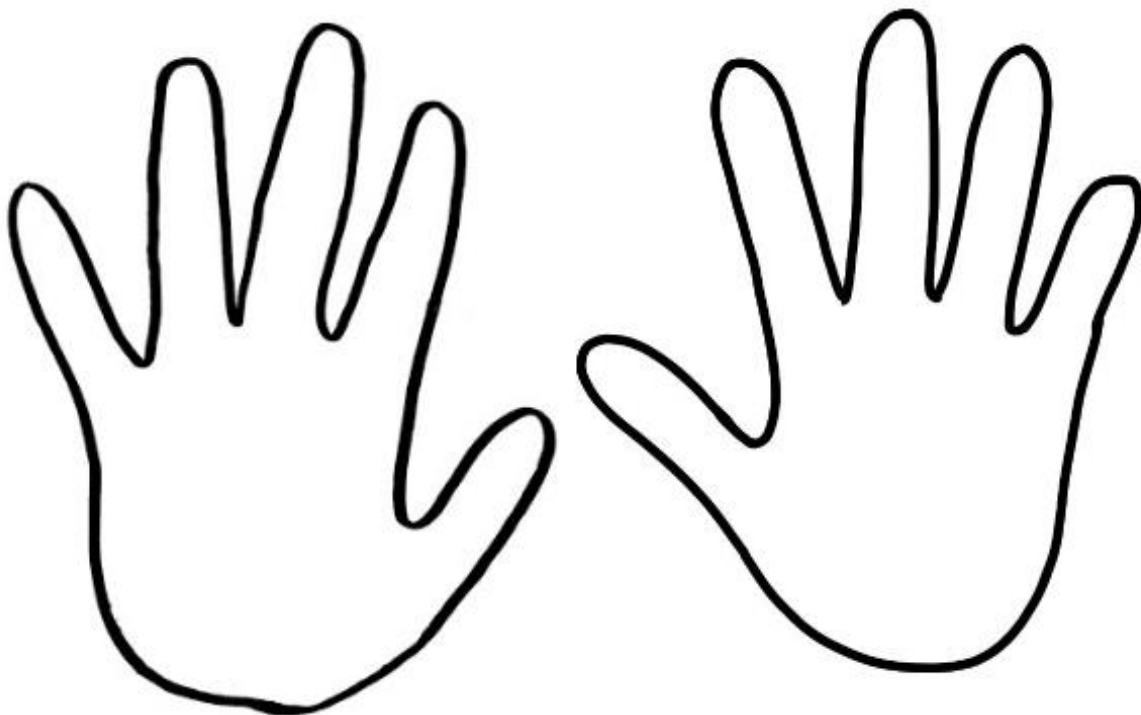


HELPING HANDS EXERCISE, AGES 3–5

This activity allows children to explore five ways they can use their hands to be helpful. Shelter staff can ask the child to trace their hands on a piece of blank paper, and to list five helpful things they can use their hands for. The child can write the five things on their fingers, and the worksheet will have a list which corresponds. Or, it can be a fun and quick way to engage a child simply by holding up your hand and asking for suggestions of safe things your hands can do.

HANDS ARE FOR:

1. Waving
2. Washing
3. Clapping
4. Holding
5. Drawing



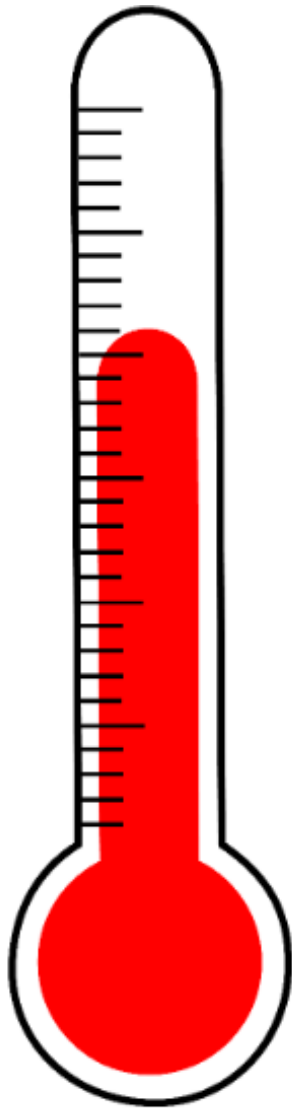
If your shelter can get a copy of the book “Hands are Not for Hitting,” by Martine Agassi – moms can read it with their child to help reinforce these ideas.



ANGER THERMOMETER, AGES 3–5

Having a picture of a thermometer on the wall can help children and their moms share experiences they have had with anger on a scale of 1–10.

Depending on the context and time you have this activity could include a short description of their angry experience, how they noticed the feeling in their body and what things help when they are feeling this way.



10 _____

9 _____

8 _____

7 _____

6 _____

5 _____

4 _____

3 _____

2 _____

1 _____



FEELINGS BOARD, AGES 3-12

Shelters may also want to post Feelings Boards to support children, youth and their caregivers to identify and share their feelings. This could be used as a way to check in after school or before sharing a meal.

Some people believe and express the idea that there are 'negative' feelings. We can help families know that there are no 'negative' feelings- there are just feelings. What we chose to do with how we feel is where we all could use some help.

It is important to distinguish between anger and abuse because for many of the people we serve abusive behaviour has often been described as 'anger'. Talk about anger warning signs using the example of what happens to a cat's tail when you pet a cat's fur 'backwards'. What is the tail telling you as it swishes back and forth? Is this a bad thing? What do anger, warning signs look like in people? What are your signs?

It is true that some human emotions are more difficult for us to express and we may find some emotions challenging. It can be really hard for caregivers to see their children experience sadness, disappointment or anger. It is important to encourage moms to notice what happens for them when they see their children coping with their emotions. We have these human emotions for a reason and they are all valid and deserving of expression in ways that do not harm or hurt others or destroy or damage objects.



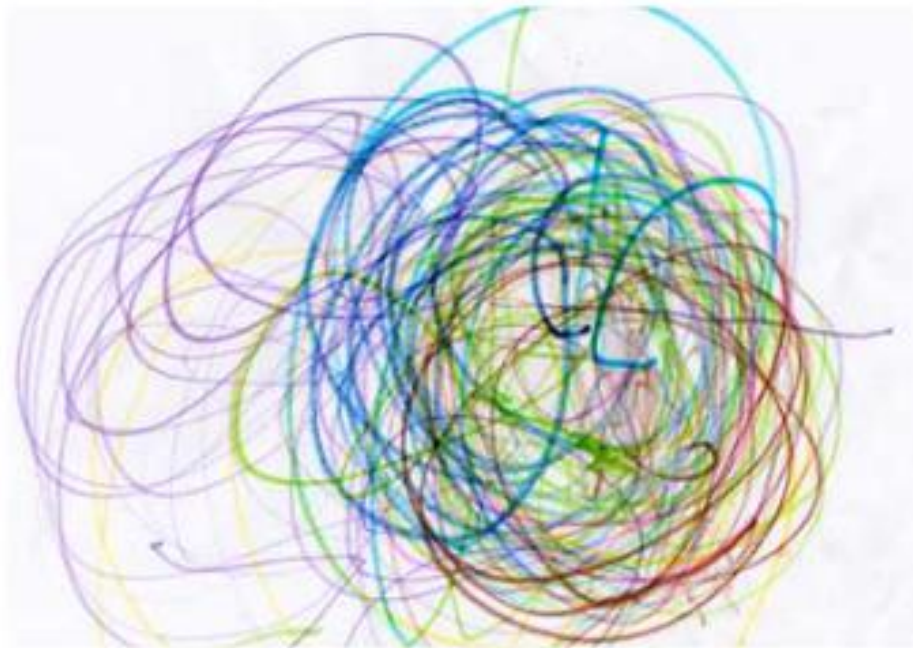


SCRIBBLE TAG, AGES 3-12

This game is a fun icebreaker that helps explore boundaries. It is fun and easy with minimal 'equipment. Scribble Tag is a variation of the chasing game "tag," played on paper.

With markers, pens, or pencils, the shelter staff person and the child will both block off a certain area of the sheet of paper they are playing on, to be their "home base" or "safe zone." This safe zone is considered out-of-bounds for the other player. Both players can retreat to their safe zone when they choose. Both players will chase each other on the paper using crayons, coloured pencils, or markers. Each player should use a different colour.

Shelter staff may want to use this game with the child's mother as well to support them to play together. Noticing feelings as the game is played and the amount of space needed by each player for their 'safe zone' are ways to explore the meaning of boundaries for each participant.





HELPING CHILDREN AND YOUTH GROUND, SETTLE, AND BE PRESENT, AGES 3–8

Here are some exercises and activities to use when a young person needs support to be grounded, settled, and present. These exercises may also be helpful to mothers in supporting their children. Staff can pick and choose a few to do with families.

- Milkshake straw breath—inhale like you were sucking a milkshake through a small straw!
- Run cool, or warm water over hands
- Balloon belly breath—exhale like you were blowing up a balloon
- Breathing ball (Hoberman Sphere)
- Rubbing hands together
- Rubbing feet
- Listening for nature sounds outside
- Visualize a peaceful place
- Sand play in a tray
- Fanning face
- Humming a song
- Drumming
- Buddha Board
- Naming as many of a specific thing as you can (e.g., fruit)
- Stroking a pet
- Cuddling a stuffy
- Hugging a hot water bottle



Hoberman Sphere



II - IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME: INDIVIDUAL THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

If your shelter has more time and space dedicated to providing support to children and youth, the following activities for 1-1 support may be useful.

The activities are a starting place to address themes like building rapport, identity and self-esteem, emotions, personal space and boundaries.

Please remember the importance of consciously working within your comfort zone and choose activities that feel like a good fit for you and the children and youth you are supporting.



SPACE SPIN: THE CASE FOR PERSONAL SPACE, AGES 3–8

Some children have difficulty with the concept of “personal space.” The Space Spin is an activity to do with children to help teach the concept.

The basic concept of personal space is an important social rule and a simple idea: Each of us has an “invisible bubble” around us where we feel safe, and if someone crosses into it we become uncomfortable. Most children instinctively sense when they enter someone else’s personal space and when theirs is crossed, but some children may need help learning these boundaries. They might forcefully invade their peer’s space, oblivious to how their action makes others feel; this could cause them to be rejected by their peers, and to have difficulty making friends. A child’s inability to recognize when her own personal space has been invaded, could also potentially make her vulnerable to inappropriate conduct.

Space Spin:

Have the child stretch out their arms out straight on both sides, and turn them slowly in place, in a complete circle. Explain that this area is their “personal space.”

The adult should do the same, and demonstrate “your” space. This helps the child to visualize what your personal space “looks” like.

Put your arms down at your sides and have the child slowly walk toward you. Tell them to stop just before they think they have reached the edge of your personal space.

When they have made their guess and stop, raise your arms out straight and slowly turn in place. If you bump them with your arm, they must try again:

“Nope, you’ve invaded my personal space and you’re cast out of the galaxy!” The “arms outstretched circle” created in this example may create a bigger bubble than what true personal space encompasses for some people, but it doesn’t hurt to exaggerate when first teaching the concept. You can explain that the bubble changes in size, depending on our relationship to others and how safe we feel.

Adapted from Crow, K. (2017). Activities that Teach—# 7 The Case for Personal Space. Retrieved from <https://www.families.com/blog/activities-that-teach-7-the-case-for-personal-space>



- Anything else?

- What does it like to make you THINK and FEEL?

- Does it cause other people to become ANNOYED or ANGRY with you?

- What gives it STRENGTH or makes it grow bigger?

- What kind of TRICKS does it try to play on you?

- What makes it LESS powerful?



“HOUSE OF...” ACTIVITY, AGES 3–12

This “House of...” activity allows you to explore worries, hopes, and dreams with children and youth, to gain some insight into both the current challenges and positive aspects in their life.

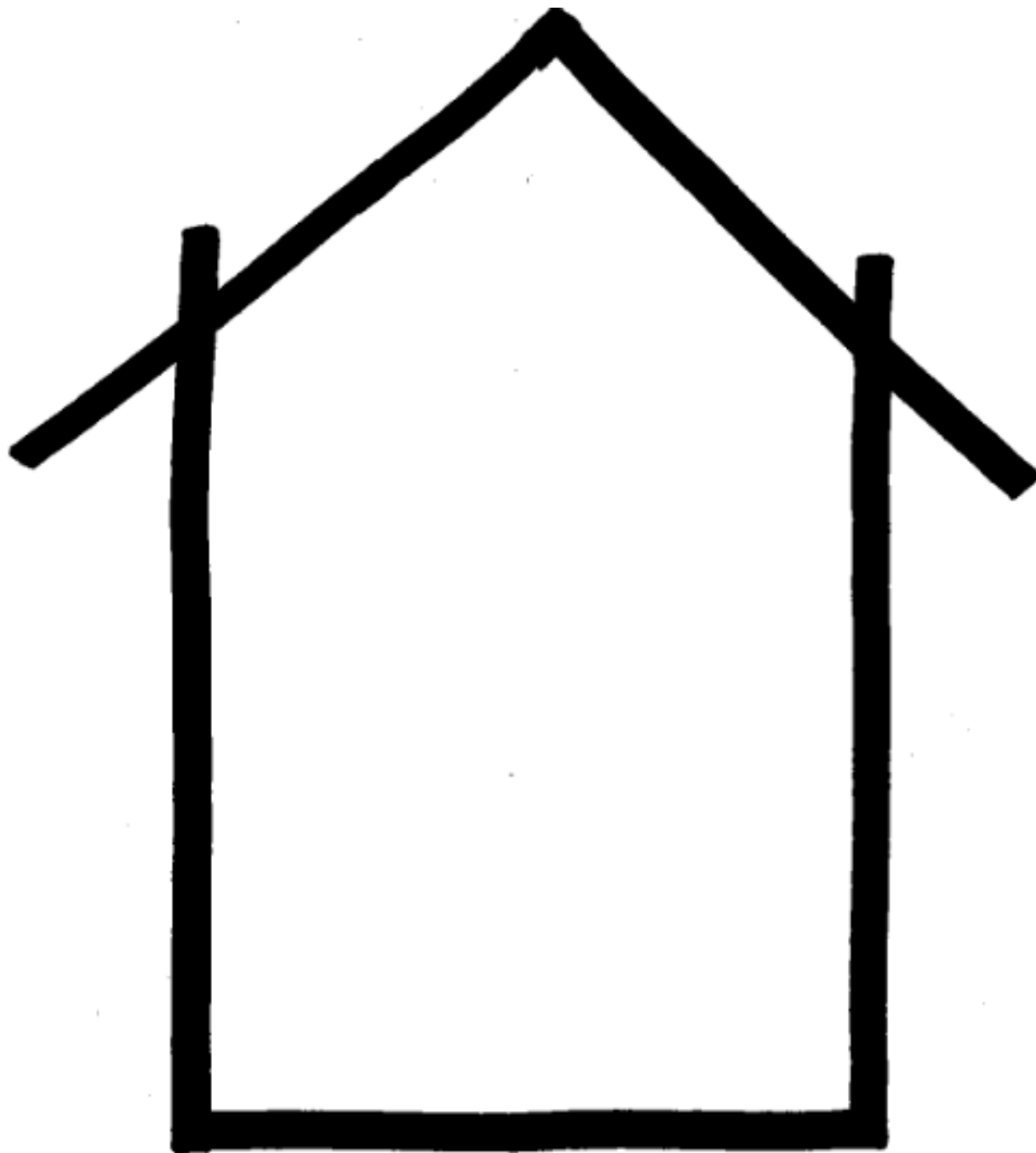
Invite them to identify some of the good things in their life, their worries, and their hopes and dreams, and list them or draw them in the appropriate house.

See the next three pages for:

- House of Good Things
- House of Worries
- House of Hopes & Dreams

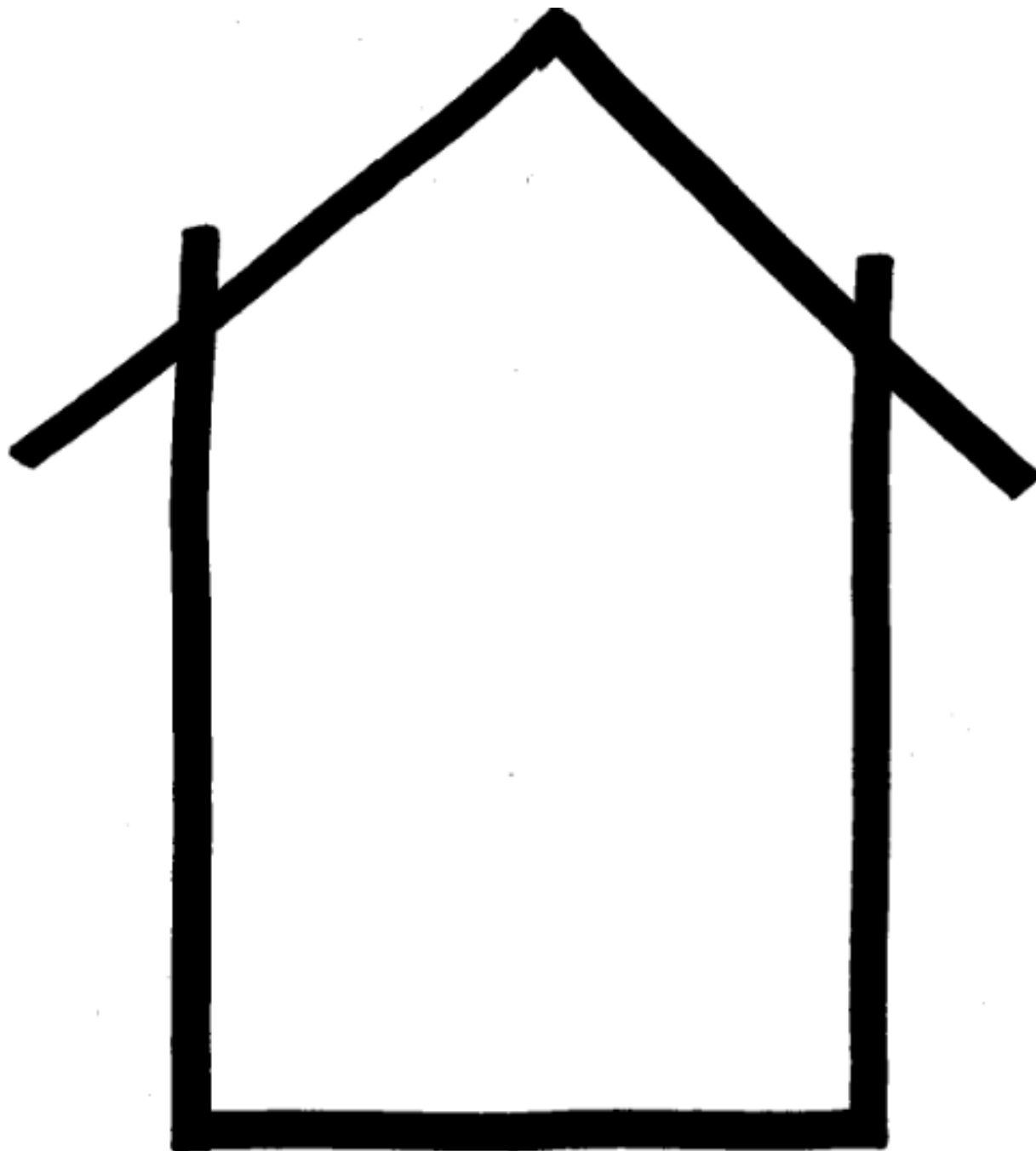


House of Good Things...



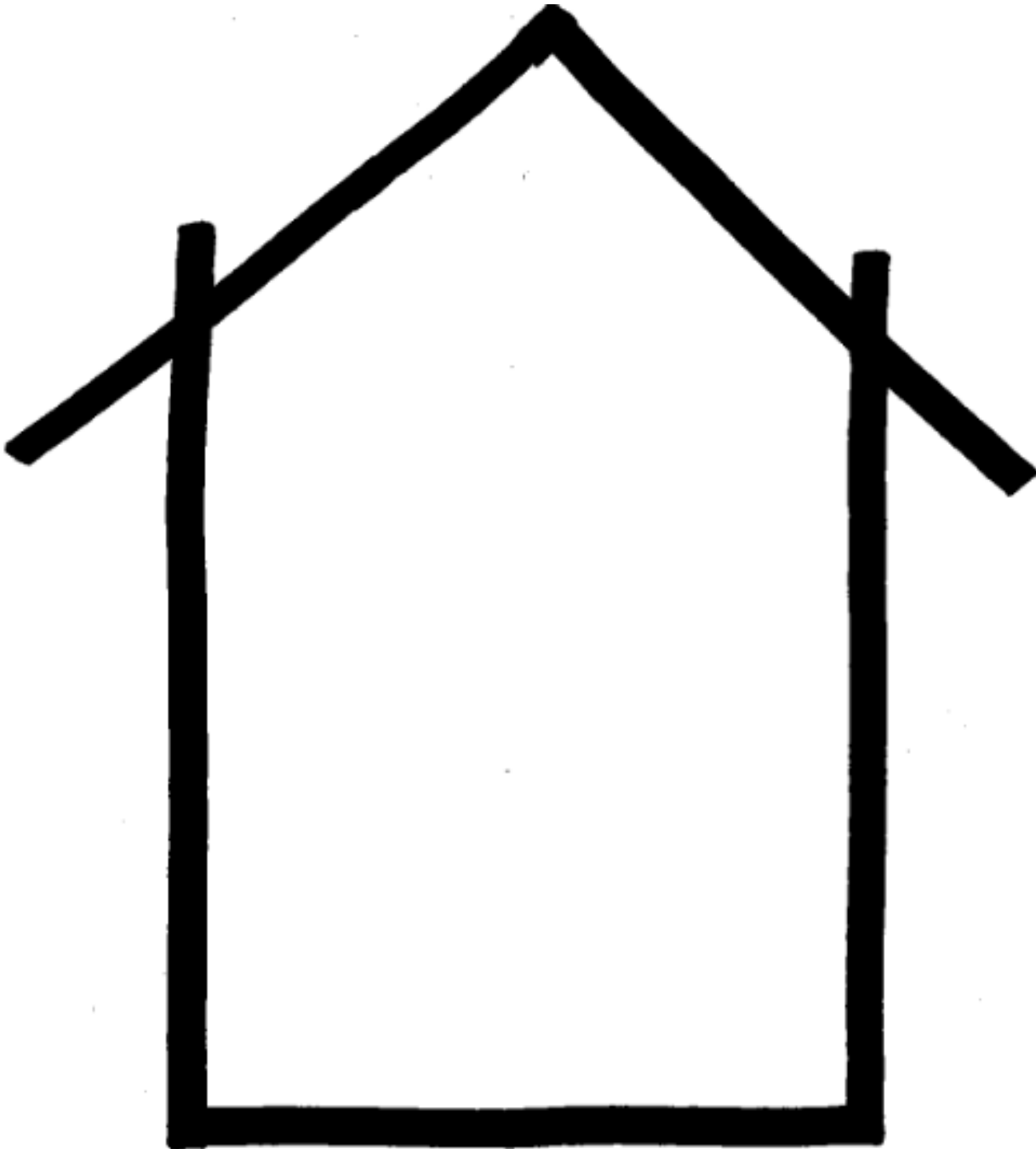


House of Worries...





House of Hopes & Dreams...





COOL-IT KIT, AGES 3-8

Creating a Cool-It Kit can help teach children ways they can help themselves “cool down” when their emotions are high. This can be a great activity to do together with the child, so that you can share ideas on what helps you to cool-down.

Begin by finding a box, basket, or bag to put items in. This will be a work in progress, as you may need time to pull some of these tools together. Next, brainstorm things that help the child cool-down (some ideas are listed here). Finally, have the child put their kit in a special spot that is accessible to them. Ideas for cooling down:

Create a set of flash cards with techniques like:

- Count to 10 (or 5 depending on age)
- Take a deep breath then blow out your upset feelings
- Think of 3 happy thoughts (or have them write down 3 happy thoughts they can read)
- Ask for a hug
- Whisper the alphabet
- Read a book
- Write down or scribble out your feelings
- Do a dance
- Sing a song
- Pray
- Wrap yourself in a blanket
- Do some jumping jacks (or other exercise)

If you are able to support mom to get these Items you may want to include:

- A CD with calming music (e.g., waves, drums)
- A fuzzy blanket
- Stress balls (or squishy balls)
- Bubbles
- A picture album with pictures they like
- A stuffed animal
- Smooth worry rock
- A massage tool (rolling balls they could run along their arms or back)
- A small windmill (they could blow on and make it spin)



HOW IS YOUR BUCKET? AGES 3-12

Everyone has an imaginary bucket they carry around with them. Our job is to try and keep our buckets as full as we can.

There are people, places and things that help to keep our buckets full. Someone that makes you feel good about yourself helps to fill your bucket up, or doing an activity that you're good at, or being somewhere you feel safe. These are things that help keep our buckets full or help us to re-fill them if they are low.

There are also people, places, and things that can take from our buckets such as when someone says or does something mean to us, or when we can't seem to get the hang of something we are trying hard to do. Our bodies have ways to tell us when are buckets are full or getting low.

When our buckets are full we usually feel pretty good about ourselves and the way things are going. When our buckets are low you might feel sad or down, or maybe you get a bit grumpy or mad. Sometimes if our buckets are really low then we might get tummy aches, headaches, or act out at home or school by saying or doing things that are hurtful to ourselves or others - which makes our buckets go even lower. This is when we have a job to do! We need to fill up our buckets!

Let's think of some ways that we can fill up our buckets when they are low - Here are some examples to get you started but remember this is your bucket and only you know what helps to make you feel better, so be creative!!



Ways to fill up your bucket:

- Talk to someone that makes you feel good
- Write in a journal
- Take a really deep breath
- Have a bubble bath
- Play or cuddle with your pet
- Blow some bubbles
- Have a rest
- Think of a time you felt proud of yourself
- Think of 3 things you like about yourself



III. IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME: GROUP THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

The following activities are examples of activities to be used specifically with groups of young people who have experienced violence and/or abuse in their homes.

In a group environment, it is best to invite children and youth to participate in the activities and to share their thoughts and experiences, but not require them to do so. Some might feel shy or nervous speaking in a group; it is important to respect this and not push them to do anything they do not want to do. For the group to feel like a safe space, children and youth need to have choice about what and how they participate in the activities and in the group circle.

Begin every group with a conversation about safety and confidentiality. It is helpful to come up with group agreements and use the group to generate ideas of what they need in order to feel 'safe enough' in this group.

Shelters may offer weekly drop-in groups because attendance will vary based on who is in the house. The group agreements can be generated each time the group meets or you may want to develop a list of general agreements and have each group see if they need to add anything. Due to the temporary nature of transition house settings, confidentiality should be included in every list of group agreements.

Always have resources and activities available for group participants to do if they decide they feel uncomfortable participating in a certain activity and always provide children and youth with the option of passing if they do not feel comfortable speaking in the group. Offering colouring, beading or doodling activities can help young people feel calmer in their bodies. Participation and attendance should always be voluntary.

Please remember the importance of consciously working within your comfort zone and choose activities that feel like a good fit for you and the children and youth you are supporting.



STEP INSIDE THE CIRCLE/COME ON THE BOAT IF... AGES 9-18

Invite program participants to form a large circle, then invite them to step inside the circle if they have experienced any of the things as they are read out loud.

This activity is done once some safety and connection has been established. This can be a powerful exercise and participants may need to discuss how they responded.

Use your discretion around the sentence stems. You can include low risk sentences such as: “if you love the colour blue and if your favourite food is ice cream”.

Step Inside the Circle if:

- I live with my mom
- I live with my mom and dad
- I live with someone other than my mom or dad
- I live with my dad
- I have a sister
- I have more than one brother
- My parents live together
- My parents are separated or divorced
- I have a pet
- I have changed schools before
- I have moved houses before
- I have a step-parent
- My father lives out of town
- My father lives in a different country
- I can speak another language
- My dad has a new girlfriend
- My mom has a new boyfriend
- My mom is afraid of my dad
- My dad has hurt my mom
- My mom has hurt my dad
- I have seen or heard my mom being hurt
- I have seen or heard my dad being hurt
- I sometimes feel sad about the hurt that has happened in my family



Come on the Boat if:

- You have a parent who lives out of town
- You have ever heard your parents yelling at each other
- You ever have nightmares
- You ever heard or saw your dad hit your mom
- You ever hear or saw your mom hit your dad
- The police ever came to your house
- Your mom or dad ever had to go to the hospital because they were hurt
- You have ever been to a shelter
- You have ever had to go to relatives or friends houses to be safe
- You have ever felt like running away from home
- You have ever lived with someone other than your mom or dad
- You have ever been scared when you're your parents were fighting
- You have ever been physically hurt when your parents were fighting
- You have ever tried to tell someone that there was violence in your family
- You have ever had trouble listening because you were worried or scared about someone in your family
- Your mom or dad has ever been to court
- You have ever been to court
- Someone in your family has ever been to jail
- You have ever had to move because of the violence
- You have ever been confused or worried about where you were going to live
- You have ever had to lie to hide the violence in your family
- You have ever felt confused about whether it was okay to love both your parents
- You have ever felt like you have to take care of or protect your mom or dad
- You have ever felt sad about the violence in your family
- You have ever felt so bad about the violence in your family that you felt like hurting yourself
- You have ever wanted the violence to stop



NAMING VIOLENCE IN OUR LIVES, AGES 9-18

This exercise is designed to help program participants identify, name, and acknowledge the violence that is in their lives. This can be a difficult thing to do; the violence in our culture has many forms, and lives in many places. Invite the group to name a few places where they encounter violence (e.g., home, school, T.V., movies, music, magazines, newspapers, news, sports fields, community centres, the street). Then as you read the list below, the program participants are asked to notice how they feel. (The bead portion of the exercise is done in silence.)

Place a jar in the middle of the circle. Invite program participants to place a bead (or a few beads) in the jar if they *or someone they know* (this options protects confidentiality) has ever...

- Had their feelings or wishes ignored
- Been put down by an older person
- Been called names and ridiculed
- Not had their secrets kept
- Been ignored
- Been hit
- Been kicked
- Been punched
- Been physically hurt by an adult or someone older
- Been threatened
- Been afraid because of violence that was around them
- Been bothered by someone on the internet
- Had their boundaries ignored
- Had someone close to them threaten suicide
- Been pressured to do something that made them uncomfortable
- Been pressured sexually

This exercise is best followed by an exercise related to feelings in our bodies and how to support ourselves with emotions. You may also want to include conversation about creating safety, and collectively coming up with group rules and a commitment to a violence-free zone.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM EXPERIENCING ABUSE IN A RELATIONSHIP? AGES 13–18

It can be helpful to have simple descriptions of behaviours that make use of abuse and violence.

The following can be used as a checklist about being in a relationship with an abusive person. It could also be used to open up dialogue with a youth about what is happening in their relationship, and offer support.

You could ask participants put a “yes” or “no” next to each statement and keep their responses to themselves. Ask, “What do you notice as you look at this list?” or “Does anything surprise you about your responses?”

Does your friend/partner....

- Ignore your feelings and wishes?
- Call you names and put you down?
- Tease and ridicule you about things that are important to you?
- Not keep your secrets?
- Ignore or pretend not to hear you?
- Act more, or less, friendly when you are alone vs. when his/her friends are around?
- Keep you away from your friends or puts your friends down?



- Sulk when you do not do what he/she wants?
- Threaten suicide?
- Show anger and use threats/violence to get his/her own way?
- Encourage or pressure you to do things that make you uncomfortable?
- Refuse to accept your limits about sexual activity?



MY BOUNDARY GROUP EXERCISE, AGES 3-8

This activity is useful during a group session on “boundaries and self-care”.

Divide the group into pairs. Each pair stands across the room from one another. One person is invited to start walking towards the other, while the other stands still. The person standing still is examining their boundary. As the person walks towards you, you say “STOP” when you don’t want them to be any closer. This is a kind of boundary. Ask the program participants to remain in eye contact while they do this. You can normalize that this may feel very silly, and we all feel like giggling when we do this. It is a difficult exercise.

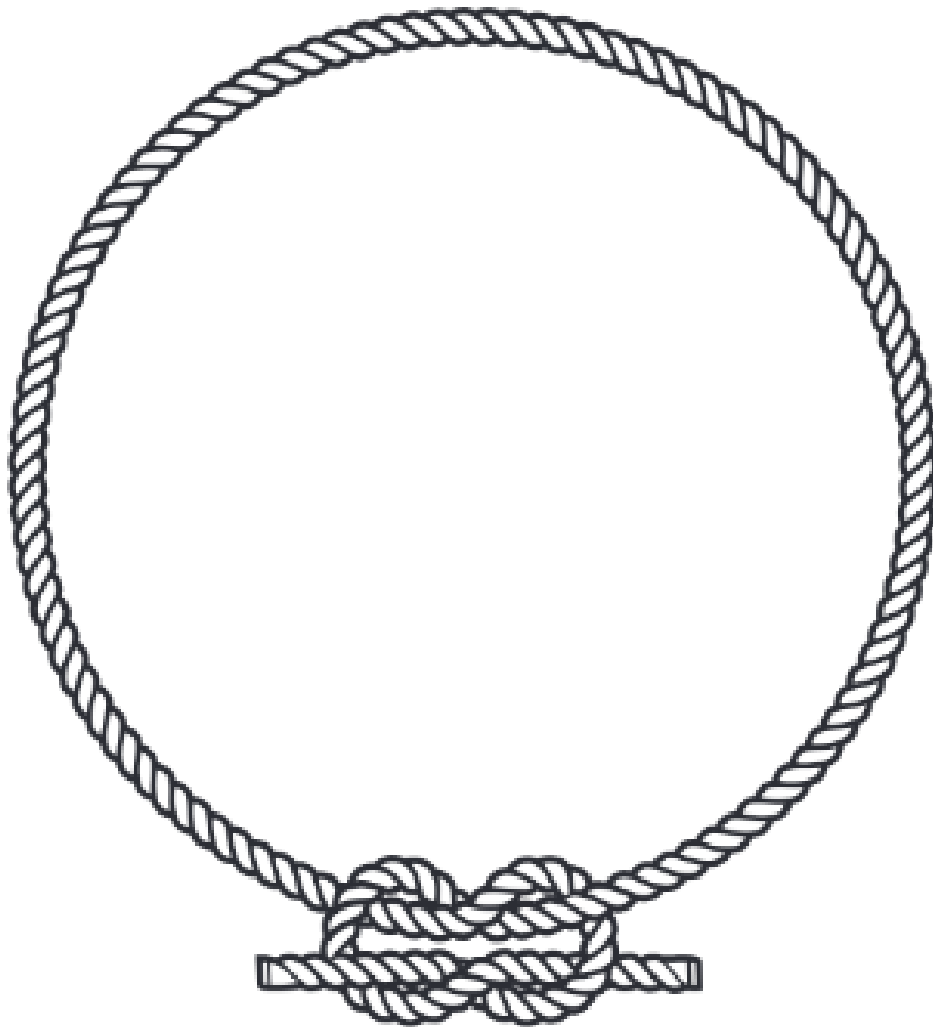
Everyone’s boundaries will be different, and at certain parts of the exercise, ask the children to freeze, look around the room and take note of this.



MY SAFE SPACE EXERCISE, AGES 3-8

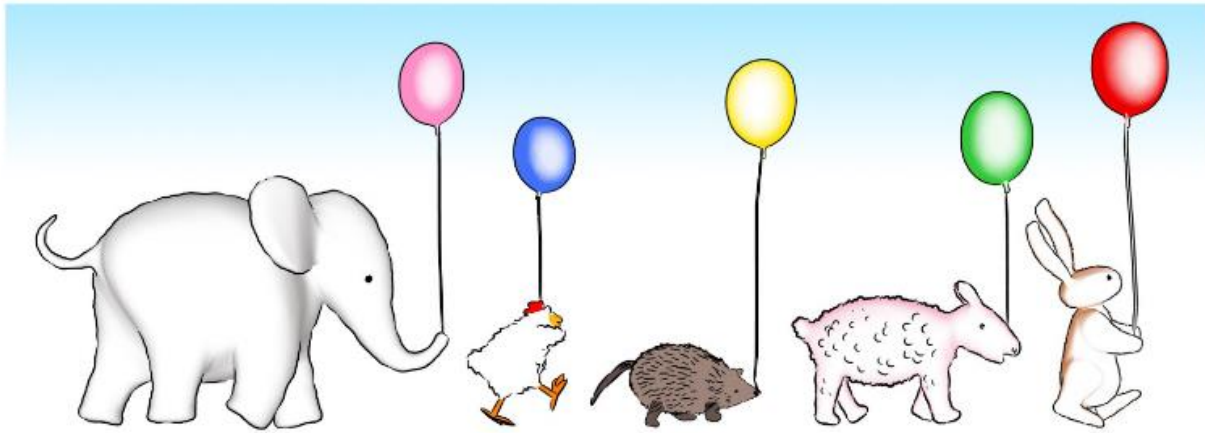
Use a skipping rope or yarn and have each program participant make a circle around them. They can make it whatever size they need. Have another child stand outside the boundary and make eye contact. Notice how this feels. Then have the partner step inside the boundary, notice how this feels.

Come together as a large group and have each child share their experience, and their understanding of boundaries.



ANGRY ANIMAL PARADE, AGES 3-8

This is a good group activity when discussing anger, and it is a good icebreaker as it gets program participants up and moving. It also encourages them to think of how angry animals would behave, and to notice warning signs of anger, and how anger makes them feel.



- Ask children to imagine what animal they would be if they were angry.
- Have each child demonstrate their angry animal.
- Have a parade, where all the children act out their angry animals.
- After the parade, have children go around the circle and discuss their animal, how they were feeling, what it felt like, and behaviors.
- End the group by making a list together, on a flip chart or poster board, about ideas on how they can manage their anger.
- Discuss together ideas for anger management strategies that are appropriate behaviors for both inside/outside the house.



ANGER IN MY BODY, AGES 3-12

Use this group activity when discussing anger and emotions in our bodies.

Ask the program participants where in their bodies they feel anger, sadness, or fear. The goal behind this activity is for children to become aware of what their bodies are telling them, and for them to proceed with caution; for example, once they recognize they are getting angry, they can start doing anger management techniques to bring themselves down.

Provide the program participants with a body outline cut out, and provide them with choice. They can draw a body outline on a piece of paper, or have them outline their bodies on a large piece of paper. Ask them to choose a color to represent the different feelings and to colour or draw the feeling on the part of the body where they are having that feeling.

This activity allows children to think of the warning signs they experience in their bodies, when they feel a certain emotion. After the program participants have completed this activity, put all the body outlines on the wall and have each child explain theirs to the rest of the group. Also use this as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for what the children can alternatively do when feeling angry.

