# Psychosocial Play and Activity Book For Children and Youth Exposed to Difficult Circumstances

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# Section 1: How Emergencies May Impact Children and Youth

#### Objective of this section

This section represents a brief overview of the main issues related to understanding the psychological reactions children experience after stressful events and losses. In the later sections more detailed plans are presented for work with children, parents and teachers themselves. The theory and information that is provided in this section should form the basis for implementation of psychosocial activities in schools. Remember that there are very many similarities between the reactions seen in children and in adults after stressful events, and it is useful both for children and for adults to learn more about these reactions. That is why the objective of this program is to share information, to educate, to promote an open communication both between adults and between adults and children. This section is important to read and discuss for everyone that participates in the program, as the content of this section represents a key element when you later will work with children, parent and teachers.

#### Understanding children when they are NOT in distress

Around the world, when children are protected and feeling safe they tend to naturally engage in two primary activities as they select and expand their natural attachments to other humans inside and outside of their biological families. These two primary activities are **playing** and **learning**. An important component to be successful at either of these activities is the capacity for empathy.

Empathy literally means to feel with others - to be able to feel happy when others are happy, and to be able to feel sad when others are sad. Like all other emotions, feelings of empathy strongly affect our behaviors. They lead us to rejoice with others when they are happy, to console them when they are sad, and to condole with them when they grieve for the loss of loved ones. And finally, our ability to empathize with others hinders us from being inconsiderate, harmful or cruel to others.

Normally, when children get sufficient love and attention from their caretakers and when they feel safe and secure in their surroundings, their ability to empathize with others will develop and grow spontaneously, without any form of explicit learning. And when children are safe and calm they are usually able to use their developing faculties of attention, concentration, focus and memory to increase their learning both at home and in school.

When children and young adults have both an internal and external sense that their environment is safe and their caretakers can be consistently trusted, youth are naturally predisposed to practice and develop play skills and learning skills, and perhaps most importantly youth are willing, even excited to share their experiences with others. These sharing processes are necessary prerequisites for children's intellectual and emotional development. These sharing processes are the essential foundation upon which organized and safe attachments are built and nurtured. By being aware of the nature and function of developing attachments, care providers can better understand the behavioral reactions of children and young adults in safe times and in times of distress, and thereby also support them better.

#### Understanding children when they are in distress

It is normal for children to experience a broad range stress reactions after scary and painful experiences. When children are frightened, insecure or angry, their reactions will be expressed in at least four different ways: intellectually, emotionally, physically and behaviorally. Therefore, when working with distressed children it is important for teachers and pedagogues to keep in mind some fundamental characteristics of human reactions to life threatening events.

We have little direct control over our stress reactions during and after life threatening events Emotions, thoughts, physical reactions and behaviors are usually normal expressions of our will to survive in the face of extreme threat; we do not have any control over how these reactions occur initially. These reactions, which are many times uncomfortable and distressing, are not something we would ever chose to experience, nor is the threat we are faced with something we would ever choose to experience. Many normal stress reactions to extreme threat, or perceived threat, do have great influence on our behaviors immediately after exposure to the threat.

So in the widest psychological sense, traumatic stress reactions manifest themselves in four different ways:

- 1. Thoughts (e.g. "My parents/teachers cannot keep me safe", "I did something wrong that made this happen-this is my fault", "This terrible thing could happen again" "I am vulnerable-I am not safe".)
- 2. Emotions or Feelings (e.g. "I am angry", "I am frightened", "I anxious and nervous", "I am sad and hopeless, "I am guilty".)
- 3. Physiological changes in the body (e.g. blood rushing to the face, increased frequency of heartbeats, restricted breathing, increased muscle tension, extreme sweating, chills, disturbances in appetite and digestion and sleep etc.)
- 4. Behaviors (e.g. The child yells and attacks a classmate. The child does not play with other children and isolates or appears very numb. The child clings to its caretakers when strangers come visiting. The child engages in high risk or destructive play.)

#### Traumatic Stress Reactions are difficult to verbalize

There is probably not a single thinkable thought that human beings cannot express through their language, but the same cannot be said about their emotions. Due to the extreme changes that occur in our brain biology during traumatic stress reactions our emotions are exceedingly difficult to verbalise, or to process using the spoken word. In addition, bodily sensations usually accompany strong emotions and these bodily reactions are often difficult to describe using the spoken word.

Yet the expression of these very strong emotions may be the threads that support the reintegration of our sense of safety and justice in the world after terrible things have happened. To express to others our feelings of pain when we lose loved ones or when our life, health and integrity have been threatened is often very difficult, especially using the spoken word immediately after the terrifying event. Prior to asking children to talk about their emotions using the spoken word, a safe and stable environment must be established that will allow children to decrease their overall arousal from the traumatic stress response. Once kids have had the opportunity to decrease their threat detection behaviors and increase their safety seeking behaviors verbalising their emotions can often define and increase their sense of self-worth and well being.

Lastly, emotions may also be difficult to verbalise because of limitations in our language and cognitive ability. This is especially true for children below 6-7 years of age. It is important to note that children between 7 and 10 years old may have difficulties using the spoken work to express strong reactions, especially to fearful events, due to shortcomings in their meta-cognitive ability. (The term meta-cognitive ability describes our ability to monitor and regulate our own thought processes, which allows us to clearly distinguish between the 'self' and the reactions of the self to a frightening event). Although there is great variability it is usually not until the age of 11 or 12 years that children are both able to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, and have a vocabulary large enough to put these thoughts and feelings into words.

#### Traumatic Stress Reactions are an automatic part of our survival

Stress Reactions have an important function - they are involved in the survival of the species. Different reactions are involved in different survival functions – startle response allows us to detect danger and seek safe exits; increased heart rate and heightened sensory awareness allow us to prepare for appraising whether it is best to fight or flee from perceived danger. The reaction of fear is both a thought and an emotion and it is essential to survival because fear generally acts the as the "great mental mobilizer" allowing us to develop response plans that maximize our chances of survival when we detect danger and are seeking safety.

#### Prolonged Traumatic Stress Reactions may lead to maladaptive coping

Prolonged traumatic stress reactions can be considered survival reactions that continue to remain active more than 30 days after exposure to life threatening or perceived life threatening events and may include:

- > Continuing hypervigilance in order to detect perceived threat and danger
- Acting as if the traumatic event is still occurring or about to occur again
- Seeking out dangerous activities or high risk relationships in order to' practice' gaining control over uncontrollable events
- Disturbed sleep, appetite and digestive functions
- > Decreased ability to empathize or to take another's social perspective
- Decreased ability to contemplate future events (sense of foreshortened future)
- > Decreased ability to concentrate, focus, attend, memorize or learn
- > Decreased interest in safe play or social engagement
- > Difficulties in communicating with pre-incident social milieu

#### Overlapping behavioral responses to traumatic stress and traumatic bereavement

There are generally held and unsubstantiated prevailing opinions about the "stages of grief" or the "types of reactions" traumatized children and youth may exhibit after exposure to life threatening events or sudden violent loss. Current research and field experience indicate that a majority of children and youth may cycle rapidly through non-linear stages of behavioral reactions in order to regain their equilibrium and re-establish trust in significant attachments.

1. Children may experience a phase when they will act out their emotional difficulties Children may act out their difficulties by becoming aggressive and demanding. They may try to dominate their peers, defy their teachers, or take to different forms of destructive behaviors. They may exhibit restlessness both physically and mentally, which may manifest itself in an inability to sit still in the classroom or an inability to generate safe and reasonable solutions to problems. These youth may blame others for their behavioral problems.

2. Children may experience a phase when they will hide their emotional difficulties Children may attempt to hide their distress and intense emotional reactions in a normal effort to seek the attention and assistance of adults who can regain control over the chaotic and random events produced by the traumatic event. These children and young adults may react with helplessness, self-blame, apathy, fatigue and depression. These children often show signs of social withdrawal by "blocking out" the usual two-way communication with their close social environment. They may become excessively quiet and detached. They may show little interest in play-activities and will limit contact with friends. 3. Children may experience a phase when they will become passive, numb and choose more dependency

Some children react to the scary and painful events they have experienced by becoming numb and passive, and by taking refuge in their fantasies. Numbing and passivity may be further exhibited by choosing to revert to earlier developmental stages whereby the child will obtain assistance and attentive care from adult caretakers. A good example of this may be children who will not sleep in their own bed after a traumatic event, but rather insist on sleeping with their adult caretakers. Although this has been pathologized and many times labeled as "regressive", it is actually a highly adaptive coping mechanism that allows the youth survivor to revert to an earlier developmental stage where they feel in control and can practice some mastery. That is to say that they attempt to regain control over their lives by behaving in ways that they did at an earlier stage of their development. In some cases, younger children can take to clinging to their parents, wetting their beds at night or even to stop talking. Older children may become overtly dependent on their caretakers and teachers. Some children may become so fearful of being separated from their parents that they may refuse to go to school.

All the behavioral responses to stressful experiences we have described above can range from mild to severe. Children's traumatic stress reactions are considered severe when they become very intense, last for a long time and significantly disturb their day-to-day functioning. In such cases these children require more specialized help than their teachers can offer. However, a large majority of children who experience traumatic events will be able to resume living normal lives provided they are given adequate support in the natural settings of their home and school environment.

# It is important to rebuild a sense of safety and stability before asking children what they experienced or what they are feeling about the traumatic event

The first step when supporting a child who is significantly distressed after exposure to traumatic events will be to establish an environment in which the child can feel safe; a physical space and a strong psychosocial relationship(s) in which the youth survivor can practice safety seeking rather than threat detection. It is critical to understand that early exploration of the traumatic narrative, or asking the youth to describe in detail the horrifying experience of the traumatic event can cause great harm and actually significantly increase, rather than decrease, any number of traumatic stress reactions. At the same time it is important to realize that it is possible to engage in communication with children about their experiences even if the situation is still marked by instability. One can establish a sense of safety in children even during times of distress, and this is one of the important tasks we face when working with children during and after disasters.

#### Reactions to traumatic events and losses

In disasters many children experience something we call a "traumatic event". With this we mean an event that is "outside of the ordinary or common life experience which would be extremely upsetting and difficult to cope with for any person". Examples of such events are many, like seeing people being wounded or killed, experiencing the physical destruction and that ones own life is in danger. Everybody who has experienced and survived a disaster knows how scary it can be. A child can also experience a traumatic event in normal times, like eye witnessing or being part of a traffic accident or some other event that involves loss of or threat to life.

During disasters there are two main exposure scenarios. The first type of exposure includes eye witnessing very dramatic events and/or being in extreme danger, sometimes resulting in severe traumatic stress reactions. Although completely normal, these reactions can be very strong and frightening for both children and adults. For the vast majority of children and adults these

reactions decrease over time, but in some they may last for a long time. That is why this program encourages you, the teachers, to share information about these reactions with other teachers, with parents and with the children themselves.

The second exposure scenario includes the experience of loosing very close friends and family members, as well as homes and belongings during and after the disaster. It is normal to feel grief reactions after such experiences, and in some children these reactions may be lasting and result in more depressive type of reactions. It is important to understand that there are significant discreet differences between traumatic stress reactions and traumatic bereavement and this program in not designed to address such complex differences. This program will normally allow teachers to observe if youth are experiencing significant difficulties in recovering from either a traumatic stress reaction or traumatic bereavement. If teachers observe these difficulties it will be most important to refer these youth to professionals for additional assistance.

#### How to help children who have experienced losses or traumatic events?

All these different reactions we have described here are often seen in children who have experienced traumatic events and losses. Children display different behaviors that reflect what they have experienced. In many children, the reactions decrease over time but some will show many reactions even if half a year has passed since the disaster. By helping children to express their fears and worries in a warm and receptive environment, play leaders can convey to them that they are healthy and strong people who have survived a terrible disaster.

#### Adults are role models

Both during and after the experience of stressful events, the children look to disasters adults to see how they cope with their lives and to seek support from them. Therefore it is so important that caretakers come together, learn about and discuss how the disaster has affected both the children and themselves, and what they need to do to become even better role-models and helpers for the children. In training seminars these difficult issues can be dealt with both through verbal and written information to the participants. The participants and trainers will be asked to discuss in small groups how specific issues related to grief in children can best be addressed in the everyday lives of children.

#### Cultural differences

Ways of communicating pain, suffering and loss may differ from place to place and from culture to culture. There may be cultural differences between how a rural family communicates about death to that of a family from an urban environment, as well as differences between other groups of the population. It is important to discuss and learn about these cultural factors, for instance how different habits may exist related to children's attendance in funerals, or how the messages about death of a family member is communicated to a child. That being said, it should also be stressed that it is a common finding from many parts of the world that the adult culture is not adequately sensitive to the needs of the children. If there is one thing the training should emphasize, it is that the adults should be open and honest in their communication, and include the children in the sharing of information that adults do. The typical example of a misunderstood way of trying to "protect" children is to keep information away from them when something very sad has been confirmed, for instance that a close relative is confirmed killed in the disaster. Sometimes adults may choose not to share this information with the child, hoping that the child will be better off in this way. This is of course not true. Firstly, children will recognize changes in the adults' behavior when something has happened, even if the child is not directly informed. Secondly, the child will usually learn about the sad news from someone else, rather than from the

parents/caregiver that optimally should tell the child such news. Thirdly, the fantasies connected to not knowing anything may be worse then the knowledge of actually knowing what has happened.

#### Summary

In this section we have reviewed some basic theory regarding how children understand and process things they experience, and how their emotions and reactions are influenced by these experiences. In disaster many children experience events that can be very sad, distressing or traumatizing. These experiences can result in some very specific reactions, and these reactions can be very strong and distressing. Trauma and grief reactions are, however, a normal reaction to abnormal experiences, and it is important for the schools to normalize and validate the children's experiences. With this we mean that it is important that the children understand that their reactions are normal, and that others have had or have similar reactions.

Children (1.5 years to 7 years) and youth (8 years to 18 years) usually depend on their adult caregivers to protect them from terrible loss, fear, threat or other potentially harmful situations. During and after difficult circumstances, like political and community violence, natural disasters, or becoming a refugee, children and youth may see their world as out of control, no longer dependable.

Youth survivors may think and feel extremely threatened, unsafe, isolated, even hopeless and angry with themselves and with the adults who were supposed to protect them from harm. Sometimes these confusing thoughts and feelings may make youth survivors:

- ➤ Act younger than they really are;
- Expect adults to take care of them as if they have become a baby again;
- Become very startled at loud or sudden sounds;
- > Exhibit a lot of nervousness in their body motion and in their thinking;
- Experience feeling numb and/or depressed;
- Experience difficulty sleeping;
- No longer care about food;
- Refuse to be with anyone except their parents or primary caretaker;
- Refuse to go anywhere without their parents or primary caretaker;
- Become very agitated when asked to make changes in location or activities;
- No longer have control of their emotions;
- Lose their tempers and cry or scream frequently;
- > Act as if they no longer care any more about their future;
- Revolt against their regular daily routines;
- Disrespect or ignore their parents or adult caregivers;
- > Or try hard to take care of their parents, as if their parents are now the children;
- Have difficulty paying attention and learning;
- > Have extreme difficulty talking about the emergency or other difficult circumstance;
- Practice very inappropriate or risky play activities or risky social behaviors;
- > Engage in play or activities that remind them of the emergency or difficult circumstance;
- Experience constant reminders of the emergency or difficult circumstance;
- > Try hard to avoid any reminders of the emergency or difficult circumstance;
- > Be disrespectful and even harmful to their siblings, their peers and themselves;
- Not understand when it is okay to play again or be joyful again.

All of these reactions can sometimes be confusing to adults but they are normal reactions of youth survivors who are trying to understand a suddenly changed or consistently frightening world. Much of the time children and youth survivors can greatly benefit from playing or doing activities

in groups with their friends, especially when the groups are lead by trusted parents and other adults who have structured play and creative activities for the youth to do.

# Section 2: Using Psychosocial Play and Creative Activities with

# **Youth Survivors**

# HOW CAN PLAY AND ART ACTIVITIES BE USED AS A PYSHCOSOCIAL INTERVENTION?

The games, play and art activities each have several purposes:

# RELAXATION

- Relief from inner tension
- Share joy again, and to experience the relaxing feeling laughter give
- Opportunities to use gross motor skills, which also helps to let go of inner tension

# **INCREASE THE ABILITY TO DEAL WITH REACTIONS**

- Increased awareness of the diversity of personal reactions
- Express a wide variety of reactions in appropriate ways
- Gain control of the reactions, especially hypervigilance, isolation and aggression

# **INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY**

- Increase awareness of own individual characteristics
- Build a positive self esteem
- Regain a sense of being able to influence the events in their life through own capabilities

# INCREASE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Increase awareness and tolerance of individual differences
- Increase ability to express thoughts and feelings in a positive way
- Develop good social communication skills, both in non verbal and verbal language

# **PRINCIPLES:**

- 1. There is no right or wrong in the way the children perform in the games and activities.
- 2. The process of discovering and getting to know things is to be emphasised.
- 3. The result is not important. The process, the activity in itself is what matters.
- 4. The child needs to be carefully listened to and observed, and we need to show respect towards the child feelings and behaviour.
- 5. The children should be given the opportunity, but NOT forced, to share their experiences and knowledge.
- 6. The individual differences are identified and honoured.
- 7. The adult supports, encourages and makes an atmosphere of trust; he/she doesn't insist or make suggestions on how the games should be performed.
- 8. The adult shows joy when the child achieves something.
- 9. The adult respects the negative as well as the positive feelings of the child.
- 10. Very Important: Please review the basic guidelines for cooperative play on page 14

# BENEFITS OF INTERVENTION THROUGH PLAY AND ART ACTIVITIES:

- Great number of children can be reached
- The children get's channels for expression
- The children get emotional support
- The children get a chance to feel part of a group
- The children get help to regain and strengthen the sense of his or her identity
- The games are from everyday life and they can be played everywhere
- The games inhibits inappropriate behaviour
- The games are of a educational nature
- The child learns from the experiences of the others
- The child learns better to understand the present, the past and the future
- The child learns to express difficult emotions
- The child learns better social skills and communication
- Helps the caregiver recognise signals and reactions through which children ask for help.

#### Why use Play and Creative Activities in groups?

Life threatening experiences and other difficult circumstances can make children and youth survivors so confused, afraid and sometimes numb that it is hard for them to use words to express what they are experiencing and of course younger children have a harder time using words, even under normal circumstances. Sometimes, during and after difficult events experienced by children and youth, other methods of expression may be much easier to use such as:

- > Silent story telling: Drawing pictures or making sculpture about the difficult event;
- > Writing the story about the difficult event and then reading the story to the group;
- Reading favorite stories or poems out loud to the group;
- Singing favorite songs out loud in a group;
- Playing games which let them really move all their big body muscles;
- Using movement, music and drama games to tell the story of the difficult event;
- > Doing activities that challenge the survivor's physical ability to balance;
- > Doing activities that challenge the survivor's mental ability to solve fun problems;

Youth are highly sensitive to threat, fear, loss and suffering and to the reactions that adults express during and after threat, fear, loss and suffering. Many times during and after difficult events youth do not know exactly how they should react and do not know how their parents and other adults want them to react. Yet, no matter what has happened to them, most kids still want to have fun, to engage in play; they still need to have fun in order to remain a kid, in order not to grow up too fast, in order not to become the caretakers of suffering adults.

So perhaps the most important thing adults can do for youth survivors is to **give them the permission to play**. Think of giving youth permission "to play" in the same way as giving them permission "to leap". How many children in the world, no matter their circumstances, will spend hours jumping on the bed, jumping from walls, jumping from boxes and trees, jumping rope and jumping on each other. Leaping to the sky defies gravity. Leaping allows youth to abandon the reality of the world, if only for a moment. Leaping can safely challenge all the rules, if only for a moment.

Allowing youth survivors to play, giving them the structured opportunity to play games and be part of challenging creative activities, will usually let them regain a positive sense of themselves

and their world, especially when they play in peer groups, acting as witnesses to the leaping, to the fact that there is still simple joy in the world. When adults give the permission to play and adults participate in the play, youth survivors begin to reconnect to the adult world with a new sense of trust, understanding and calmness.

#### What type of Play and Creative Activities are there?

#### Art or "Silent Stories" (5 years to 18 years)

When youth are invited to make visual images, or "silent stories," they will normally use their body-based experiences and their natural, non-verbal, expressive abilities to take images from the "inside" and put them on the "outside". By building and changing their visual images, and then sharing these visual images with their peers and trusted adults, youth who have been challenged by difficult circumstances gain a physical distance from and a control over the memories and emotions experienced during the difficult circumstances. This creative process allows traumatic imagery to be transformed into meaning making images that become concrete representations of successful problem solving and adaptive coping.

### Movement (5 years to 18 years)

Body movements are children's most familiar means of expression. Communication via movement allows expression of an experience for which there are no words. Exposure to difficult and threatening circumstances may often cause:

- Lowered self-esteem
- Greater sense of isolation
- A lost sense of safety in and control over their environment

Using consistent rhythmic movement during peer group activities may help youth to:

- Regain trust in the environment, their peers and the adults
- Decrease the sense of isolation
- ➢ Give youth tools for developing self-control and calmness.

Movement activities utilize simple, repetitive movements, which are done in harmony with peers and are easily mastered. These movement activities help children and youth to discharge anxiety and fear and allow them to build a sense of safety, control, self worth and peer community.

#### Music (5 years to 18 years)

Music can shape the group environment by soothing, empowering, grounding, and nurturing a sense of consistency, safety, and strength. The appropriate music may help the youth to feel more calm and focused.

Rhythm has the capacity to organize individuals and groups, to promote healing, and to powerfully change emotions. With music and movement used during play and creative activities, youth experience the crucial importance of practicing balance between freedom and discipline.

Group leaders should play music that is familiar to the youth in their respective cultures. If the music is taped, its rhythm should be easily distinguished, (played by solo instrument or voice) and the music should be light and soothing. The use of **"Song"** is very powerful in its ability to bring a joyful state of being to the group participants and leaders. So, we encourage you to sing familiar, age appropriate songs with your children and youth and to have them move their bodies very simply, very naturally to their songs. For example, they might clap, march, skip, jump, slide their feet, reach their arms, and roll their hands or heads, to their music. If possible, the children could, as a group, select familiar, favorite songs, sing them into the tape recorder and then use their recorded music during group activities.

### Storytelling (5 years to 10 years)

Storytelling can expose the youth to positive images and experiences that they may remember and recall in order to soothe themselves. Selecting stories whose characters are victorious because of their ability to share, trust, respect, and cooperate, may offer the child positive solutions to social conflict. Through these stories, we can help the child experience sacrifice and friendship, commitment and responsibility as actions which are to be valued. Stories which devalue vanity, prejudice, and cruelty and glorify bravery, kindness, belonging and true beauty give the children fruit for their developing imaginations and problem solving skills.

The repetition of the story can nourish positive imagination for each group participant. It will be helpful if the Group Leader is familiar with the story so that he or she is making eye contact with the group participants as the story is told, rather than reading it from a book.

#### Fabric Play-A Transition Toy or Versatile Game Object (5 years to 18 years)

Fabric (especially silk or light cotton) is easy to shape into almost any object, as it can be twisted, folded, compacted or tied together; it flows like a river, covers like a roof, floats like the wind, and can be worn like a skirt, cape, or wings. It is soft, without hard edges, and will not hurt the child or his playmates. Fabric pieces (1 square meter) of various colors can lend themselves well to improvisation: red may be fire or anger or an apple, green could be the hill upon which we rest, or hero's cape, blue becomes the sea, the summer, or a beautiful bird. These fabric pieces can become talking puppets or

protective coverings. Playing with fabric can warm the children's imaginative juices. In soft, flowing worlds, magic and harmony prevail.

Consider bringing in many different white and colored pieces of fabric and draping them around the spaces where you will do these play groups and creative activities. Use these fabric pieces to create simple rituals that can be used to start and end your group time.

## **Cooperative Games (8 years to 18 years)**

Bound by a consistent structure and membership that promotes familiarity and security, each group pursues high energy cooperative games that are designed to bring joy and energy to the group, enhance communication among members, and create an environment within the group of trust and empathy.

These cooperative games aim to capture children's attention and draw them into the group. Each activity offers a variety of ways to participate, and each child's level of participation is determined by his or her own level of comfort. Group Leaders should respect these choices, provided they do not threaten individual or group safety.

Cooperative games have three criteria. First, all activities are Win/Win. Nobody can lose. Simply participating and having fun ensures success. This should be made clear to each participant before each game thus freeing them from the pressures of having to perform and achieve.

Second, the success of one child hinges on the success of all other children. Activities are designed so that success is achieved through group effort, requiring mutual support and cooperation. Participants become aware of the needs of others and gain practical experience in responding to those needs in order to achieve a shared goal. In turn, they feel less isolated and develop a positive sense of themselves and their peers. As a result, feelings of control, ability to master the environment, and enhanced self-esteem emerge.

Third, physical successes are easily obtainable by all participants. By experiencing these successes, participating young people develop a sense of competency, mastery, and improved body image. They increasingly view themselves as sturdy, secure, and capable.

# Drama Game Activities (12 years to 18 years)

Drama games are drama exercises aimed at practicing the elements necessary for recovery from trauma, such as countering the pervasive sense of powerlessness, emotional fear or numbing, isolation and disconnection. Drama games can be very useful in helping the natural recovery processes and supporting playful activities after difficult circumstances.

One of the common effects of extremely threatening circumstances, for youth and adults, is the resulting sense that one has lost control of their live, meaning that one feels powerless in their life, as if they have no personal control over the events taking place. So

it appears to them that events simply happen to them and they have no ability to shape the events, their relationships, or their future. Therefore there may be no point in trying to plan for the future or to imagine an outcome that they could control.

The drama games focus on relocating control away from the outside world to and back into our personal world. We encourage youth to become the directors of their fate, to use their imagination to create and practice an outcome that they have personal control over. This will usually allow them to begin developing their own personal rules to help them recognize, make sense of, and control their emotional responses to external events. Drama games allow youth to experience their feelings without being overwhelmed by those feelings, to make sense of those feelings, and to continue to act with a sense of power and control even when they have very strong feelings.

Importantly, the drama games are a group activity. They require a great deal of cooperation and interaction among group members. We are using the language of relationships to share experiences with one another and to counter the sense of isolation and disconnection that exposure to trauma often elicits. The drama games constantly focus children's attention on how they are related to other children and adults around them, on how they are connected to the world and how those connections may be influenced by their individual choices. The connections among group members are often physical as well as emotional and each exercise is followed by a group processing time when group members can share with others what the experience going through the exercise felt like. The drama games may be very effective after traumatic exposure because they are fun to participate in, they utilize non-verbal expression, and they create a shared experience, drawing the group members closer together while offering individuals the ability to control those connections.

Please understand that it is critically important that the Group Leader provide time and supervision after each drama game exercise for all the participants to verbally share their impressions and thoughts about their participation in the drama game. This must always be offered to each participant before moving on to the next activity.

# Section 3: How to Run the Most Successful Play Groups

# **Group Size**

Use natural groupings of children and youth, for instance, a group of youth who attend the same class in school, live next to each other in the same village, or have a shared experience of difficult circumstances.

Group formation should be considered carefully and designed based upon the following ideas:

Combine children within their "natural" groups that include:

- Same School and Classroom
- > Shared village or home/living environments
- Similar Age
- Shared verbal abilities
- Shared experience of difficult circumstances

# Adult/Child Ratio

A ratio of 1 adult to every 6-8 children would be the safest and most comfortable for youth participating in any group activity. Regardless of how many group members there are in the group however, there should be a minimum of the two consistent adults participating during the groups. One adult functions as the group leader, while the other adult functions as an active assistant to the leader. The group leader is responsible for directing and pacing the group through the activities. The assistant group leader supports the group leader, focuses on the youth who need individual attention, and hands out materials to the group members.

# **Space Arrangements**

Use an enclosed, private room, that would feel safe for youth, and that is consistently available for at least an hour for each group you conduct. It is best to use the same space for the same group, so that group members get a sense of their "own place", and sense of consistency, of something dependable. If an enclosed space cannot be located, try to create a visual boundary using furniture, fabric or other objects. Use various props to create a sense of location for the group (e.g. placing chairs or mats in a circle). Try also to have access to water and hand towels for cleaning up afterwards.

# **General Structure of Play Sessions**

The carefully organized structure of each Play or Creative Activity Group is important to plan so that youth feel that the Group Leader is full control and that the Group Leader will not allow the actions of group members to become too threatening. Planning a beginning, middle and end to the group and following your plan carefully will reduce the risk of children becoming disruptive or having fearful reactions to the Group activities. Consider planning a general format for each of your Groups that allows children to "warm up", engage in several play or creative activities of increasing complexity and then allows youth to "warm down" and verbally discuss their reactions to the experiences of the day. As the Group Leader, make sure you plan a format that allows you to be in control and maintain a sense of safety for your group participants. For instance you might want to consider the following type of format for a 1-hour group and make sure to follow this or a similar format of your design for each group you conduct:

# Part One:

# BEGINNING CIRCLE & WARM UP (5-10 Minutes)

Always allow the participants to sit in a welcome circle and say hello and perhaps give them each a moment to talk about how they are doing today or what they would like to do. It is usually a good idea to then have your kids participate in some sort of movement and music activity using the parachute (5 years to 11 years) or fabric squares (12 years to 18 years) to establish safety and calmness and warm up their bodies and get them ready to play.

# Part Two:

PLAY GAME OR CREATIVE ACTIVITY (30-40 minutes)

Depending on the age of your kids, what they say they want to do today, and what activities you have already completed in your other groups with them, select one to three activities to play with them from the **Games and Creative Activities Menu beginning on Page 19.** 

# **Part Three:**

# ENDING CIRCLE & WARM DOWN (10-15 Minutes)

A repeating format similar to the beginning circle, have your kids form a circle to do some kind of warm down activity using variations on beginning circle activities with either the parachute or the fabric squares. The ending circle or activity should calm and sooth group participants after the intensity of Part 2 and also allow the participants to say goodbye to each other and ask any final questions of the Group Leader.

# **Use of Themes**

Depending on the age of your kids, what they say they want to do today, what activities you have already completed in your other groups with them, and what you, as the Group Leader, think they need to focus on, you may want to select a theme for each group that you can use to focus your play and creative activities around. For instance themes about safety, protection, control, team work, keeping or telling secrets, cooperation and collaboration, self esteem, respecting and helping your friends, talking to your parents and Group Leaders, are important to explore and you can select one of these themes and briefly discuss it in the beginning circle and plan your activities based on your selected theme. It is probably best to focus on only one theme per group or every other group.

# Allowing for a Menu of Choices

Youth exposed to difficult and threatening circumstances usually experience a loss of control that can be confusing, frightening or angering. Your Play Groups should allow for a limited range of choices so that kids feel like they have some control over what is going

to happen to them during the group. Remember that too many choices or too little control during your groups may make your participants feel as if they are out of control or not safe. So you may want to give them a choice, to be decided upon as a Group, about which activity in Part 2 they want to do. Be watchful for the Group participants wishing to repeat a certain activity or game. Allow your participants to repeat activities from group to group, as well as introducing new activities. This usually means they want to practice the skills and re-experience the feelings that they encountered during the first time they tried the game or activity.

# Art Work: How to Use the Silent Story Telling Method

Emphasize the following when using any visual image making method:

- ▶ Introduce visual image making as a way of silent talking, or storytelling.
- Making visual images is an opportunity for expression and creativity; it is NOT a required activity and it is NOT to be referred to as "art" or "drawing"; it is "silent storytelling".
- > The visual images created must never be judged, critiqued, or graded in any way.
- Reassure the group members that there is no "right way" to make visual images; encourage curiosity, exploration; and suggest that they use perceived "mistakes" in creative ways.
- Allow for a full range of creative styles: Concrete-representational to abstractsymbolic.
- The artwork created will not be exhibited without the specific permission of the participant who created it; and the participant may withdraw the artwork at any time. The artwork, if created by an individual participant, belongs to that group member and may be destroyed by that group member if they so choose.
- The goal of making visual images is give group members an opportunity to "tell" their stories any way they like, NOT to make "pretty pictures."
- Use only the materials suggested (crayons and clay); loose mediums (e.g. paint) may trigger hard to handle sensory impressions and reactions. Use of the color red may evoke negative memories of body fluids and should be avoided.
- Participants should be allowed to exercise control over their own artwork as much as possible; do not dictate what they make, how they make it, and what they do with the final products. If participants wish to destroy there own work after they make it that is perfectly all right.

#### **Additional Art Materials**

The following supplies will give the group members additional creative and expressive options: child safe scissors; white glue; colored markers of various sizes; colored pencils; clay; simple clay modeling tools; masking tape; staplers; hole punches; yarn; colored tissue paper, paper bags (small and large); found materials (e.g. scraps of fabric, objects from nature; magazine pictures (cut out and categorized into content areas prior to the class).

## Taking Care of the Supplies and Artwork

For children, taking care of the supplies and the artwork are concrete examples of an important message to the group members. Taking care of these objects becomes a metaphor for how others can take care of them, how they can take care of themselves, and how they can take care of each other. The qualities or respect, protection, and gentleness are practiced in the act of taking care of the materials and artwork.

#### **Storage of the Artwork**

Because storing artwork can be cumbersome, pick an arrangement that is practical for your Group. If possible, it is preferable that the participants leave their folder of artwork somewhere in the Group room until the end of the Group sessions. By keeping the artwork in your Group room for the duration of your Play Groups, the participants will be able to review what they did and learned in previous Groups. At the end of the Groups, they can take their artwork home. If it is not possible to keep these art folders in your Group room then try to have parents agree to provide a special place at home for the art folders to be kept.

# **Ownership of Artwork**

The artwork belongs to the group member. If the group member wants to keep the artwork, he or she can store it in a folder made of cardboard. However, it is also fine if the group member wants to throw the artwork away, because the act of throwing it away may have useful psychological value in the child's healing process. If the group member wishes to throw away their work you may offer to keep it for them and promise not to show it to anyone and if they want it back at the after several Play Group sessions then they can come and get it from you. Leave the decision up to each participant.

# **Guidelines for Journal Entry and Storage of Journals**

Each child could be given a journal book/diary into which they will be encouraged to write or draw about a particular group exercise during the course of the Group sessions. Journal keeping is recommended, and should be recommended in each Group, but is not mandatory. It may help the child who is developing a sense of resiliency and reestablishing their self-esteem to express feelings in written form and to have a tangible document of personal group experience. Current research indicates that traumatized survivors may have greater success at processing traumatic material via the written word, as opposed to the spoken word. As this is a personal document, no child should be forced to share their journal with anyone else, and under no circumstances should a Group Leader or parent look at with a child's journal unless the child has given permission. Each child should keep their journal with them, bringing it to each group.

#### **Cooperative Games and the Use of Fantasy**

The rules and required pieces of equipment for cooperative games provide a critical skeletal structure to each activity. When fantasy is added to this structure, games can be transformed into fabulous adventures capable of expanding the minds and experiences of all participants. For fantasy to be effective, we must insure that the fantasies we use are developmentally appropriate, relevant to the group's goals, stimulating and safe.

Most games consist of players trying to achieve an objective while observing various rules. For example, in the game "Squirrels and Nuts", the participants must simply collect objects and bring them back to their base without being tagged by the instructor. If a participant is tagged, they must wait for a team member to tag them and they can proceed with the game. By adding fantasy to this collection of basic rules, we can give this game a new "personality" to which each child can assign meaning. Going back to our example, we can imagine that the children are "squirrels" and that the objects they are trying to obtain are "nuts". We imagine that the instructor is a "fox" and that the base is in an underground squirrel home. These added fantasies allow the children to play physically in the present while allowing their minds to indulge in an adventure outside their "real" or "normal" world. This allows youth to practice mastery in a world under their personal control.

If this fantasy were too frightening, we can change the fantasy to one that is less threatening to the group. By changing the fantasy and keeping the rules and objectives the same, this game can be safe and stimulating to a wide range of developmental levels.

#### **Ground Rules for Drama Game Activities**

Strong feelings, especially feelings in response to life threatening experiences can be overwhelming. Sometimes feelings can be so overwhelming that children may "freeze", unable to act. The underlying message of the drama games should be that experiencing your feelings in a safe and structured way, no matter how strong they are is normal and healthy. It may be frightening, difficult and sometimes overwhelming, but your feelings will not destroy you and your feelings will let you know that you are alive. Feelings exist whether they make sense or not. Feelings are neither right nor wrong. **The drama games give children an opportunity to work with their feelings in a structured, direct, and reflective way allowing them to practice action, to "unfreeze" themselves.** This process of unfreezing and feeling safe enough to act again is part of the normal recovery process after traumatic exposure. None of the actions expressed during the drama games are to be judged: either the design of a sculpture or the acting ability of a participant. It is imperative to establish the following objectives and rules when conducting the drama games:

- > Help the children feel comfortable enough to create and express themselves
- > There is no right or wrong way to do the drama games
- Children may actively or passively participate
- > All participants must be respectful of those who are doing the drama game
- > There will be no judging of work content or acting "ability"
- At the end of each drama game the Group Leader gathers all participants into a circle to process what has happened during the drama game.
- The Group Leader should begin each process time by saying this is a time to share what the drama game experience was like for you, not to ask questions of those who participated or to comment or judge someone else's performance;

- Each group member may talk about what the experience was like for them, what it reminded them of, or what it made them think about; they should refrain from talking about other participant's experiences.
- Children may choose to share or not, and they can be reminded that if they don't want to share, they may still record their feelings in their journal at the end of the Group.

# Section 4: Helpful Suggestions for Play Group Leaders

# **Group Circle Work**

The circle is physically and symbolically essential in playgroup work of any kind. When sitting in a circle everyone is equal and recognized. Everyone can be seen; everyone can see. In a circle everyone is connected, no one is left out. Everyone is essential to the development of the circle; if someone leaves the circle, there is a hole in it.

A circle (here the parachute) defines the boundaries of inside and outside. As children strive to be included, the use of a physical map (parachute) that includes all youth is very important. If activities done on the parachute are consistent and cooperative, children begin to associate inclusion with positive, dependable experiences. The Parachute is a useful tool for encouraging the experience of bonding and connection without exaggerated intimacy. For example, children may move together to an established rhythm holding onto the circumference of the parachute. They are experiencing the joy of moving harmoniously together without touching each other. Children feel safe when adults construct boundaries for them; physical boundaries help children to contain their emotions, to feel under control, and to begin to explore and to understand their emotions. The physical and conceptual circle is perhaps our most valuable tool for working with children and youth.

# Consistency

What is consistent is dependable. Therefore it is important to make what you do, or at least the structure of what you do with the children, consistent. For example, you might begin every group with a parachute play activity, where all the children are recognized and encouraged to join; this might be followed by a story and a game or art activity. The group might end with the children holding hands together and singing a familiar song. The play activities will vary from group to group, but if you establish a consistent structure, the children will feel more comfortable with the process of being together. The games, art activities, movement exercise, and drama exercises are simple, which allow the children to master them. This mastery contributes to a growing sense of self-esteem, which is so important for these children.

#### **Use of Rituals**

Establishing rituals (repeated routines) brings magic to the events that occur in our lives on a regular basis; they help us to feel affiliation with those who share the event and the ritual. They transform what may be experienced as "boring" to "sacred". As we share a movement activity, like a prayer, repeated in stillness, we call upon remembered harmony within ourselves and within the group. The rituals help us to find the transformational components of our spirit.

#### Smooth Transitions

Transitions represent the movement from what is familiar and secure (the present moment) to what is unknown (the future). Fear may escalate during transitions for all

children. This unpredictability represents a threat to safety and stability. Therefore it is imperative that we ritualize the transitions, creating a lyrical smoothness and consistency; we may use a familiar children's song ("we're rolling up the parachute") combined with the transition movement (putting parachute away). This empowers the child to participate in the change, rather than having the familiar simply taken away. A transition as basic as moving from a sitting to standing may cause a child unusual distress. If a child continues to exhibit transitional issues, there may be some unresolved conflict in their life outside this program.

#### **Limit Setting**

Children will naturally test limits with new adults. They will try all that they have seen, or have experienced as successful, in getting attention. Our theory is that if we attend to positive behavior, and give little attention to negative behavior, the healthy child will choose the positive over the negative. Not only do they achieve their goal, but also it is much more fun! Children would rather join than to isolate themselves. The group activity represents that which continues (like the rising and setting of the sun); therefore it is imperative that the leader does not stop the flow of the group activity, to follow an acting out child. The child must be asked to sit quietly and watch until they can calm down. Children must be asked to leave if they are hurting themselves or other children.

### Listening

A loud authoritative voice is not what we can expect the child to listen to. The voice of human authority is not the voice that binds all living things; rather it is the voice of nature: rhythm, music. So we must train the child to listen to the true overriding voice, to the music. If the Group Leader sings to the music, the children will hear the music; the Group Leader must truly be in time with the music. Encourage children to hear the changes in mood and tempo by pointing them out between phrases. Sing always what the body or the heart is enacting. A voice moving with the music is a voice that need not be loud and domineering to be heard.

# Grounding

The key word here is low. Literally, one claims and transmits the grounded sense of physical closeness to the earth by metaphorically putting posture to the senses: low voice, low lights, and low body position. When children are experiencing chaos or lack of control within themselves or within the environment, any attempt to bring order and calmness to the group or to the child must never be communicated as competitive. Becoming "bigger" or "brighter" or "louder" to overwhelm chaos or disorder will only cause the child to attempt the same. Children who are running, screaming, or in any way avoiding becoming attentive to calm music will respond to the Group Leader who joins the music. This may be accomplished visually, kinesthetically, or auditorally. The Group Leader may sit quietly in a prominent position and move gracefully to the music; the Group Leader may dim the lights in the room or may whisper the lyrics to the music, softly, quietly. In this way, the Group Leader partners with the soothing rhythm of the music, enticing the children to join. Children who have lost control will appreciate and respond to these visual and auditory aids. Each action will produce the desired result of calming and giving back to the child their sense of self-control.

## **Rhythm Training**

To learn to hear and subsequently teach children to hear and become part of a given rhythm, it works best to begin clapping to the beat. You must listen for what note gets the beat and how many of these notes compose a rhythm phrase. As you listen, clap, and sing to the phrase. It should feel right for each movement to be contained in each phrase. Encouraging the children to hear and to move or sing to an established rhythm will give them the experience of the order that exists. The rhythm is consistent and each phrase recurrent, which translates to children as dependable and accessible.

### **Repetition: Establishing Safety and Stability**

The primary goal for the Parachute Activities is to provide a safe and consistent environment; this is accomplished visually, as the Parachute defines the "safe area", where consistent and safe activities occur. Movement sequences should be simple and repetitive, and occur in "4's", as in 1-2-3 and 4.

#### **Teaching in the Present**

Living in the present moment, for that moment, gives the child the experience of being part of a greater reality, and of being connected with the continuum of life (the circle composed of past, present, and future, of that which is infinite, yet knowable). Here, in this moment, there is no longing for the past, or anxiety about the future; here is where all matter is transformed; this moment is precious, it will never be repeated. It should therefore be experienced fully, without longing or anxiety. The use of the "PRESENT TENSE" instructional words encourage the children to be in the moment, with the music. For example, when the Group Leader instructs, "Now we will sit on the floor", she tells the children what they will do in the future. To speak as you are doing helps children to have a more complete experience of the moment, to hear and enact what they are doing, simultaneously. To facilitate this type of experience, the Group Leader might replace the above mentioned instruction with "Sitting on the floor". If this phrase is spoken rhythmically or sung to the music, the experience of "Present" is augmented.

# Inclusive Choosing

Group members should never be made to feel excluded, to feel unworthy of being chosen. There are several ways to avoid this when dividing children into small groups or into partners. The Group Leader may use **random selection**. An example of this would be to have the children count off 1-2-1-2- etc. Then all the "1"s are in one group, and the "2"s in the other group. For partners, the Group Leader may do color affiliations: "Go hold the hand of the child who is wearing the same color scarf as you are". (It is a good idea to have enough Fabric Squares for the entire group, two of each color). In the case of uneven group numbers, a trio might accompany the other duets.

# Confidentiality

The group leader and assistant group leader review the group rules about confidentiality at the beginning of the group. The group is told that whatever is said or done in the group stays in the group. However, the group is also told that there are two exceptions: 1) if a group member shares that he or she wants to hurt himself in some way; or 2) if the group member shares that he or she wants to hurt others in some way. In these two exceptions, one of the adults will need to speak with the group member after the group, and possibly speak with someone else as well, in order to insure the group member's or others' safety.

# Section 5: Games and Creative Activities

# Parachute Activities

(Establishing Boundaries and Safety through Rhythm)

# LYING DOWN:

Place parachute on ground in the center of activity space. To a very simple rhythm (drumming, humming, solo instrument, quiet singing, or tape of music provided), children and Group Leaders lie on their stomachs on the parachute, facing into the center of the circle, engaging in various interactive, focusing gesture activities such as: reaching to each other, reaching up, tapping the ground softly and loudly, and making eye contact with all group members. It is important that the Group Leader establish a consistent rhythm that she and the children will follow for the beginning circle.

The following is an example of lyrics, which may be sung/spoken in conjunction with the actions:

"Sliding down on the ground, rest your head without a sound...bellies down Sun up, eyes open, look around to see everyone." "Reach up tickle the sky, rain comes down Gently tickle and make a big sound". (4x)

# SITTING:

When contact and harmony are achieved at the lying down level, the Group Leader guides the children with her voice and her movement to a sitting position. While sitting children continue to interact and focus on each other as a group, rhythmically such as: stretch toes to each other, rock side to side, tapping feet, clapping to beat, rhythm choir with their voices.

The following suggests lyrics which might accompany the movements:

"Tall as a tree stretch your feet out,

Wiggle toes, fingers join them, circle up like the sun, Flying down gently, and make a big sound. Hands up ready to rock and rock and rock and stop Close hands and roll round and round and Open

Fly to the ground, make a big sound, etc"

# **CLAP DANCE:**

The Group Leader instructs children to "turn their color (which they are sitting upon on the parachute) into a drum and play together to the beat" (which the Group Leader establishes).

The Group Leader will establish a rhythm by clapping and counting with the music: 1-2-3-4- several times encouraging the children to join her.

Chanting as the Group Leader moves his/her hands across the parachute:

"Smooth, smooth, smooth, smooth"

When all the children are moving their hands with the Group Leader he/she begins these lyrics, repeating each line four times:

"Down and down on the ground"

"Down and down, clap and clap"

"Round and round round and round" (slowly)

**"Round and round and round and round and round and round and round"** (quickly, double time). Repeat all phrases and movement 2x each until music ends

## NAME BALL:

In this game, Children sit in a circle and pass around a ball. When each child receives the ball, they say their name in any way that expresses how they feel. They can say their name silly, loud, quiet, etc. After they say their name, everyone else in the circle repeats their name just as they said it. Game ends when everyone has had a turn. For variations you can rename the ball the "News Ball" and ask children when they get the ball to share some news about themselves. If you need a more specific topic, ask the group to share their favorite game, movie, food, etc. This game helps children acquire social skills. Children move side to side to the music or a to rhythm

**ROCKING:** Individually or holding hands as a group Rocking with the Group Leader

# **BIRDS and FLOWERS:**

Children sit together in a close circle holding feathers in their hand. They may practice "gentle hands", by tickling themselves and their friends with the feathers. They may pretend to hold, move, and protect baby birds who have fallen from their nests. They might also image the feathers (or other small, fragile objects such as buttons, stones, twigs, leaves) as flowers which are beautiful treasures which they hold carefully in their hands, touching their faces with them, or offering them to a friend to hold, view, or smell.

#### STANDING:

The Group Leader encourages the children to stand and hold a handle of the parachute. A capella (without taped music), the Group Leader encourages the children to join in "saying what we do" (again, speaking simple words in the present tense). The group begins shaking the parachute together, first slowly then quickly:

"Shake shake, shake shake, shake shake, stop" is chanted four times.

The children are then encourage to march around together singing

"Round and round and round and round" (4 times).

The direction is then reversed. Holding the parachute the Group Leader chants, "Into the middle and back away" (4x)

**"Down-UP, Down-Up, Down-Up-Under"** as the children join the Group Leader in moving the parachute, then they all run under the parachute. They are encouraged, once under, to "reach up and tickle the sky".

The children are instructed to "safely come out form under the parachute and help to roll it up".

"We're rolling up the parachute, the parachute, the parachute, We're rolling up the parachute and putting it away"

# **Additional Standing Parachute Activities**

(These are more complex combinations, which might be introduced to older children, aged 7-15)

# "In to the Middle and Back Away":

After moving around the circle together, marching, tip toeing, or running, children are encouraged to, holding the parachute and singing, move: "In to the middle and back away" four times. This should not be presented until safety and stability are established, and self-control is exhibited by most of the group members. As the children move toward one another, this movement may be experienced as confrontational or oppositional if the children are not moving as a group, to the rhythm established.

# Lifts:

Each child is invited to have an individual ride in which he lies in the middle of the parachute, on his back, with his arms crossed over his chest. The rest of the group members slowly and carefully lift the parachute and the child from the floor into the air, lowering it as carefully.

# Jellyfish:

Holding the parachute, the group members will cooperatively move the "Jellyfish": "Down" (pull parachute to floor), "Up" (Pull parachute up over heads looking up), "Under" (all run under together still holding the parachute) and "Back away" (Still holding on, the children quickly run backwards to their starting spot). This is repeated several times. This sequence must be done rhythmically so the children will experience the joy of moving the parachute to resemble the pulsing jellyfish. The Group Leader should chant in a strong voice, so the children may follow the beat "Down-up-under-Back away". Encouraging the children to keep the beat with their voices as well will encourage coordination. Running backwards encourages the development of physical balance.

# Art Activities

# Wish Stick:

The children create a "Wish Stick" together. This may be a paper roll, an actual outdoors stick, or a stick made of metal, stone, or clay. The children decorate this stick together, painting, gluing paper on it, carving it, tying feathers on it (what ever is available or appropriate to the age group. This stick may be used each week as a ritual for stating, individually, a "wish" or an "appreciation" for the day.

# Fabric Squares - "Safe Covers":

When children are betrayed by their world through violence or sudden loss or abuse, a primary goal for caretakers/Group Leaders is to help them to trust in themselves and to draw upon what is strong and good within themselves. It may be useful to create with the children, transitional objects which they may keep with them at all times, bringing the

object back to each Play Group, as a reminder of what is good and dependable, within themselves and within the new support group which is developing within the Play Group. Transitional objects that are soft, small and easily transportable work best. One such object, called "Safe Covers", is a silk square (sized at 24 inches x 24 inches) that may be dyed (colored) in the first group meeting as an introductory exercise.

Materials: silk of different colors or patterns, scissors; if available: also needles and thread; fabric paint or fabric dye; small containers for water

Directions: "Let's make a special covering out of this silk that will be your safe cover that you can use during the group and at home if you want."

Cut out 2 foot squares, one square for each student in the group. If possible, finish the edges by sewing the edges with needle and thread. If there is time and the materials are available, each student can also decorate their square.

For young children: Sewing the edges of the squares will need to be done by the adults.

Caution: Students who are behaving in self-hurtful or aggressive ways should not use the scissors or needles and thread. If the group leaders are worried at all about safety, the "safe covers" can be cut and sewn by the group leaders or other adults.

Also write out, display, and discuss with the students what the basic **safety rules** are for the group: The group leaders can also ask the students to help generate these and additional rules. Keep the rules short, direct, and relatively few in number.

- > Use rubber gloves so your hands wont become stained
- Respect others in the group
- > Share
- ➢ Help others when you can
- ➤ Use the sharp tools carefully (& only for the purpose they are intended)

If fabric paint or dye is used: This can spill easily, so have one of the adults in charge of the main supply, and disperse it to the students. You may also need some additional time for setting up and cleaning up for this project.

Questions for group discussion: "Do you want to add anything else to your safe cover? What qualities does your safe cover have? What can you do with your safe cover to help you feel safe: while in the classroom, while at home?

Each child is given a choice of colors (pastels, earth and nature colors, not red); children may color his "safe covers" with one color, dip it in a few colors, or hand paint the colors on his silk. This "safe cover" may be used in many ways: most importantly it is something, which the child has made by and for himself, in the presence of people who care about him. It may serve as a sitting mat that may be, with the mats of other children, arranged in a circle for the beginning group ritual. It may be pulled out when the child feels sad, and needs a reminder of good feelings; it may be worn as a scarf or a cape

(symbolic of a protective shield); it may be tied together with other children's "safe covers" to form a circle to dance around or sit within. These safe covers are transformational and may be used with children of all ages (including teenagers).

## Social Atom Drawing

Age: 10-18 years

A social atom drawing is a drawing of those people most important or most influential in the life of the person drawing. The person drawing places him/her at the center of the drawing.

Each child is asked to draw a social atom as a way of looking at the supportive relationships in their lives that help to keep them safe.

Each child is the nucleus of his/her social atom, and the important people in the child's life are drawn as the electrons orbiting the nucleus. The most important and closest people can be drawn larger and are closest to the center. The more distant relationships are orbiting further away. Children can be encouraged to use colors to describe and differentiate the people in their atoms. Since this may be a difficult concept for younger children to grasp initially, it is helpful for the Group Leader to draw an example of their social atom to show the children.

# My Safe Place

Age: 6-18 years

Materials: 20"x 22" stiff white cardboard, folded in half; oil pastels; crayons Directions: "Make a place where you feel totally safe and happy. Show what it looks like, who you're with, and what you are doing. It can be a real place or make-believe, or both."

Caution: Children who are suffering from more severe posttraumatic stress reactions may be unable to create a safe place. If so, focus on what things, actions, or people could make their place safer.

Questions for group discussion: Where is your safe place? How do you get there? What does it look like? Are you alone or with others? What do you like to do there? What makes it safe(r)?

# Self-Portraiture: 2D Images

Age: 6-18 years Have the children individually draw or paint:

How do you see yourself?

How does someone close to you see you?

How would you like to be seen?

# Self-Portraiture: 3D Images

Age: 8-18 years

Use collage (pasted paper images) or drawn images to represent how you feel inside and outside yourself by using inside and outside of a box, bag, or other container (what you present to the world versus what you hold private).

Using clay, if available, close your eyes; visualize a round ball changing into a realistic or abstract image of yourself. Then create the image with clay on your hands. Open your eyes to finish it.

# **Clay Hands:**

Age: 6-18 years

Roll some clay into a ball and press it down with one hand to make a handprint. Scratch a symbol or place found objects into palm and fingers of this print that in some way is representative of you.

# I Am:

Age: 6-18 years Each child traces his hand then writes or draws in each "finger" something about himself which he likes (Example: good in school, pretty hair, kind friend, etc)

# **Pass Around Drawing:**

Age: 10-18 years

As a group, children create a picture, poem, story, or song by taking individual turns and "passing the work around" until the group decides that the work is complete. The creation is then titled and shared. (Start with one person who adds something)

# Scribble Drawing:

Age: 10-18 years In pairs, the first partner scribbles on a piece of paper. The second partner is then challenged to find, in the scribbles, images and pictures. That partner draws over those images with a darker colored crayon. The partners then reverse roles.

# **Body Outline and What I Feel Now**

# Age: 7-19 years

Materials: roll of large white drawing paper cut into 2'x 4' pieces; oil pastels, crayons

Directions: Have each group member make a full body outline drawing of themselves by lying down on their backs on the paper and having a friend or Group Leader trace the outline of their body. The group members can help each other draw the outlines if they are able. If a group member is uncomfortable about lying on the ground while he or she is being traced, the paper can be taped to a wall so that the tracing can happen with the group member standing up. If the child is uncomfortable being touched, the group member can make a whole body outline on the paper themselves without being traced.

Once the outline is completed say, "Make a picture inside your body outline about what you are feeling and sensing right now."

Questions for group discussion: How does your body feel right now? What dreams do you have now? What are your favorite feelings? What would you like to feel right now?

# Planning for the Future: Lets Make a Village

## Age: 5-18 years

Materials: large white paper, 4'x 10', oil pastels, colored crayons

Directions: "Let's make a village together on this paper." The paper can be taped on the wall or laid on the ground. Have one of the children draw a horizontal ground line on the paper, so the other children will quickly know what is the ground versus the sky. If the mural paper cannot accommodate all the group members drawing at once, the group leaders can organize the children taking turns drawing; or a few smaller murals can be worked on at the same time by smaller groups of group members.

Questions for group discussion, or to get the group started: What should the village include? What do we need? Where will the animals and trees and flowers be located? Will there be rivers, oceans or ponds? Where should people live? What kinds of buildings should the village have? What work do people have in the village?

# **Cooperative Games**

In all games each child's success is dependent upon the success of the other children; The success of the game is dependent upon the group working together to achieve the goal, rather than individuals competing against one another.

# Bodyguard

#### Age: 6-18 years

All members of the group hold hands to form a circle. Once the circle is stretched out as far as possible without any members breaking hands, group members can let go of hands. Two group members are asked to step inside the circle. The circle shifts a bit to fill in the gaps that result from losing two members.

One of the two members inside the circle becomes the "Protected Child", the other becomes his/her "Bodyguard".

A soft foam ball is given to one of the group members forming the circle. The goal is for the group forming the circle to hit the "Protected Child" with the ball without stepping into the circle. The Group can pass the ball around the circle in order to get a clear shot. The "Protected Child" trust to stay buoying the "Bodyguard" as they rotate together to keep from being hit. The Bodyguard can get hit in order to protect his/her friend. Play each round for 15 - 30 seconds.

Have roles switched and allow group members to take turns being the "Bodyguard" and Protected Child".

This game reinforces the group's commitment to keep each other safe. The two group members in the middle must work together cooperatively to keep the protected child safe, while the other group members that form the circle must work cooperatively to score a hit.

# Willow in the Wind

#### Age: 12-18 years

Divide the class into groups of between eight to ten children. Have one child stand in the middle as the other children form a tight circle around him/her.

The children forming the circle must keep the circle small by standing shoulder to shoulder.

The child in the middle is asked to stand up straight with their hands folded across their chest (their right hand should touch their left shoulder and their left hand should touch their right shoulder). The child is then asked to close their eyes.

The children forming the circle are asked to put their hands out (palms away from their body) in front of their chest to be used as "bumpers". The child in the middle is then asked to lean back, trusting that the group will not allow them to fall. As the child in the middle leans, he/she if very gently passed to another member of the group who in turn gently passes them off to another. The child in the middle is gently passed amongst the group for as long as they feel comfortable.

This game builds trust amongst peers and also helps children begin to give up some control by allowing friends to take responsibility for their safety. The game also provides participants an opportunity to experience the unique feeling sensation of having one's body move smoothly through space without expelling any energy. The gentle cradling and passing from peer to peer can be a most nurturing and validating experience.

#### **Barnyard Reunion**

Age: 6-18 years The group is divided in half in a large open space.

All of the members in both groups are either blindfolded or asked to close their eyes. They are also asked to "put up their bumpers" which means to put their hands, palms away from their body, up to protect them from bumping into something.

The Group Leader whispers the name of an animal in each child's ear.

Each animal should be assigned to one child from both teams (so that there are two dogs, two cows, two sheep etc.). The assignments must be given out so that each team has one of each animal: Team One has one dog and Team Two has one dog, ect.

Slowly shuffle the children around by having them spin or move front, back and side to side.

Children are then asked to slowly walk and find their animal partner without talking. (Dog from team one has to find dog from team two)

The only sound that they are allowed to make, is the sound of their assigned animal. Once they find their mate, children are asked to open their eyes, stand quietly next to their partner (they can hold hands if they choose), and watch as the rest of the group reunites.

This game is an interesting metaphor for finding one's community despite decreased resources. Children are asked to rely on their different senses to reunite with their partner.

# **Blob Tag**

Age: 6-11 years

A large open area with boundaries is defined. One child, or the group leader, is deemed "it". The person who has volunteered to be "it" tries to tag others in the group.

When a person is tagged, they also become "it" and must join hands with the person who tagged them, forming a "blob".

All members of "The Blob" must move together with hands joined trying to tag all the remaining players. The children win when the entire group is part of the blob.

This is a fun, energetic way to help children work and move cooperatively. This game requires teamwork, communication and community and establishes a sense of safety "in numbers".

# The Human Knot (Better for older children and when there is limited space) *Age: 12-18*

Groups of 3 to 8 children are asked to stand in a circle. The more children you have, the more difficult the activity.

Each child is asked to grasp the hands of two different children so that once each child is holding the hands of two different children their arms are in a "knot".

The object of the game is for the children to untangle their "Knot" of arms so that no arms are crossed, **without** letting go of hands.

Children do not have to be facing the same direction as when they started for the group to win.

This game is a fun way to introduce the group to concepts of appraisal, togetherness, unity, and problem solving. It symbolizes the groups commitment to working together in a patient and safe manner.

### Unity Tag

#### Age: 5-11

Four children (as few as three children and up to ten children will work fine) hold hands and form a circle.

One of these children is assigned to be the "Protected Child" the other children are assigned the role of "Protectors".

An additional child is asked to stand outside the circle. He or She represents "Harm".

When the game begins, Harm tries to tag the Protected Child. The Protectors try to keep the Protected Child safe by rotating around and forming a barrier between the Protected Child and Harm. The circle can never be broken or else Harm wins. Each game last approximately 30 seconds.

This game is a fun way to introduce the group to concepts of togetherness and unity. It symbolizes the group's commitment to keeping each other safe from both physical and emotional harm.

#### **Team Ten Count**

Age: 8-18 years Ask the group to stand in a random cluster (children will be facing several different directions and there will not be any definable order to their placement).

The object of the game is for the children, as a group, to count to ten (or higher if they can) without any two people speaking at the same time.

Children are not allowed to discuss a plan or communicate verbally. If two people speak at the same time, the group must start again at "one".

This is a great way for children to problem solve as a group by relying on their instincts, maintaining a sense of humor, keeping patient, and being persistent. For some groups, it may be best not to set a goal (for example, trying to get to ten). Instead, try it a few times to see how far the group gets to help create a realistic yet challenging goal. As they improve, you can increase the goal.

#### Secret Safe Zone Tag

Age: 5-18 Years Old:

This game works best if played in small groups of 5 to 7 children. If the group is larger, you can play several rounds with each smaller group representing a fraction of the whole team.

In an open space, spread out six or seven Hula-Hoops. Tell the group that the hoops represent "Safe Zones" but only one hoop is the real safe zone. It is up to the group to figure out which one is the real safe zone and get all members safely inside (each child is only required to have one foot inside the safe zone).

The group leader can tag any child who is not in the real safe zone. Children can get tagged while they are running between zones or standing in the wrong zone.

When children get tagged, they must sit down right where they got tagged until they are tagged by one of their teammates.

The group wins when they are all together in the correct safe zone.

This game is an excellent way for children to use both their physical ability as well as intellectual ability to solve a group puzzle. The group needs to communicate with each other to determine the correct zone and rescue each other in order to accomplish this mission.

#### **Circle of Joy:**

Age: 5-18 Years Old:

Ask the children to stand in a circle and think of one movement (i.e. jumping up and down, shaking their head, taking a deep breath) that makes them feel calm and/or happy. The first child demonstrates their movement.

The next child must demonstrate the previous child's movement as well as introduce his/her movement. The following children must remember and demonstrate each previous child's movement as well as introduce their own.

The further you move through the circle, the more difficult it gets to remember all of the movements. If a child forgets a particular movement, they can ask the group for help.

This is a fun way to explore movement and plays impact on relaxation and happiness. It explores different ways that we can calm our bodies and minds.

#### Two Truths and a Lie

Age: 5-18 Years Old Ask the children to sit in a circle and think of three things that they would like to say about themselves. Two of these things must be true and the third must be a lie.

Take turns going around the circle and asking one group member at a time to share his/her three things. The rest of the group members must work together and decide which two things are true and which is a lie. The group must negotiate together to decide on one group answer only. The group scores points based on the number of correct answers.

This game is an excellent way for group members to get to know each other as well as help them explore assumptions they make about each other on a daily basis. It helps increase group trust and intimacy as well as help group members with group problem solving, communication, compromise, and negotiation skills.

#### **Steal the Jewel:**

#### Age: 5-18 Years old

This game works best if played in small groups of 3 to 5 children. If the group is larger, you can play several rounds with each smaller group representing a fraction of the whole team.

Place a small object in the center of a large, open, playing space. This represents the "Jewel".

The Group Leader represents the "Dragon" and must guard the "Jewel" by standing next to it (stand a couple of feet away from it to make the game fair).

The group members must try to get the "Jewel" and bring it back to a designated area (set-up at a far end to the playing space). This safe zone represents "The Castle"

If a child is tagged (lightly between the shoulders and waist with hands) by the "Dragon", he/she must run to the "Castle", sit down, and wait for a Teammate to rescue him/her by gently tagging them on the shoulders. Once this "exchange of energy occurs" both team members are free to enter back into the game.

The game ends when the children bring the "Jewel" back to the "Castle". If a child grabs the "Jewel", advances it, and is then tagged by the "Dragon", The "Jewel" remains at its new location and the child waits to be rescued in the "Castle".

This is a great game to work on team strategies and community. Group members must rely on each other to rescue them in order to achieve group success against a common antagonist. Have each group of 3-5 take a moment to plan a strategy before beginning each game. Time limits can be imposed to add to the challenge. For instance if the group does not get the Jewel back to the Castle in 3 minutes, the Jewel turns into a giant Onion!.

# (NOTE: If you have a large group (15+), divide it into two smaller groups and have one group observe the other group and then switch.)

#### Squirrels & Nuts:

Age: 5-18 Years Old

In a large open space, the children are asked to mark and define a safe zone. The children are asked to imagine that this zone is any place where they feel safe. Allow all children to answer what they want this safe zone to represent. The entire group must be able to fit in the safe zone.

Spread the cones away from the safe zone. Tell the children that these cones can represent anything that they want. Allow all children to tell the group what they want the cones to represent. Each aspect of the game can represent different things to each child. The group does not have to come up with only one answer.

The object of the game is for the children to gather all of the cones and bring them back to the safe zone. However, the group leader tries to stop the children by tagging them. If a child gets tagged, he/she must sit down and wait for a teammate to tag them. Once they

are tagged by a teammate, they are rescued and free to continue playing. Ask the children what they want the group leader to represent. What is stopping them from getting all of the things that they want? Allow all the children to answer.

The game is over when all of the cones and children are gathered together in the safe zone.

This is a great team building game that allows the children to playfully express their fears and fantasies.

#### **Clean Harbors:**

Age: 5-18 Years Old If possible, this game is best played with shoes off; Shoes and belts may be used as objects or to assist in retrieving lost objects

Spread the parachute out on the floor and place several of the safe covers, Frisbee's, balls, and other small, unbreakable objects on top of it. The parachute represents the harbor and each of the objects on top of the parachute represents something that has been lost.

The group members stand outside of the parachute and try to retrieve as many objects as possible without allowing any part of their body to touch the parachute.

They are allowed to touch and/or stand on any of the objects that are in the harbor to help them accomplish their goal, but they may NOT touch the parachute (Harbor)

All retrieved objects are stored in a specified area. Retrieved objects can be re-used by group members in order to help them retrieve additional objects.

If a player touches the harbor, a previously retrieved object is placed back into the middle of the harbor.

The Group Leader will be the monitor and will rule on whether a player has touched the parachute. The game is "won" when all objects have been successfully retrieved

This game works best with small groups of between two and ten children. For larger groups, or to increase the challenge, the harbor can be made larger by not using the parachute and in its place, marking off a larger harbor area.

#### Moonball:

Age: 5-18 Years Old In a large, open space, a group of children attempt to keep a beach ball suspended in the air. Each time a player taps the ball towards the sky, the team scores a point. The Group Leader will be the score keeper

No one player is allowed to hit the ball twice until every player has hit the ball once.

If the ball hits the ground or a child hits the ball out of turn, the group must start again at the score of one.

A bonus can be given if the team is able to keep the ball up long enough for every player to score a tap.

If all members are able to tap the ball once, you can see if they can complete a second round utilizing the same rules.

This game is so simple in it's structure that it is a perfect way for children to have fun while also working to insure that all members of the group are involved.

#### Moving the Mountain:

Age: 5-18 Years Old Create a safe zone where all children can fit.

Spread many light objects (balls, frisbees, etc.) away from the safe zone. In this activity, these objects represent something heavy (Use your imagination; this example we use a Mountain).

As in "Squirrels and Nuts", the object of the game is for the children to gather all of the objects and bring them back to the safe zone without being tagged by the group leader.

However, in this game, the objects are so heavy that to move one object, two children must be carrying it at the same time. If two children are both carrying the same object, they are safe and can bring it back to the safe zone freely.

If only one child is holding the object, they can not move it and they are not safe.

If a child gets tagged, he/she must sit down and wait for a teammate to tag them. Once they are tagged by a teammate, they are rescued and free to continue playing.

The game is over when all of the cones and children are gathered together in the safe zone.

Use your imagination and the imagination of the group to create fun fantasies.

This game is an excellent way to stimulate cooperation, interaction, and group problem solving. To increase the interaction, you can modify the rules so that three people are required to move an object.

#### **Rising Sun**

Age: 12-18 Years Old

One member of the group (X) lies down on the floor with his/ her arms folded across their chest. The rest of the group stands surrounding this individual. All of the surrounding children gently place their hands under X's body and wait for the group leader to count three. On three, the group rises together and lifts X as high as X feels comfortable. The group holds X for a few seconds and then gentle and slowly brings him/her down to the floor.

Make sure that the strongest group members are assigned to X's mid section as it is the heaviest section of the body. Also, remind X to keep his/her body as straight as a pencil. The straighter the individual is able to lie, the more evenly his/her weight is distributed.

Like "Willow in the Wind", If there is trust amongst group members, this can be a calming and nurturing experience. If little trust exists, this activity can help create it. This activity can symbolize the power of the group and their ability to lift each individual to great heights.

### **Drama Games Activities**

Drama games are drama exercises aimed at practicing the elements necessary for recovery from trauma, such as countering the pervasive sense of powerlessness, emotional fear or numbing, isolation and disconnection. Drama games can be very useful in helping the natural recovery processes and supporting playful activities after difficult circumstances.

One of the common effects of extremely threatening circumstances, for youth and adults, is the resulting sense that one has lost control of their live, meaning that one feels powerless in their life, as if they have no personal control over the events taking place. So it appears to them that events simply happen to them and they have no ability to shape the events, their relationships, or their future. Therefore there may be no point in trying to plan for the future or to imagine an outcome that they could control.

The drama games focus on relocating control away from the outside world to and back into our personal world. We encourage youth to become the directors of their fate, to use their imagination to create and practice an outcome that they have personal control over. This will usually allow them to begin developing their own personal rules to help them recognize, make sense of, and control their emotional responses to external events. Drama games allow youth to experience their feelings without being overwhelmed by those feelings, to make sense of those feelings, and to continue to act with a sense of power and control even when they have very strong feelings.

Importantly, the drama games are a group activity. They require a great deal of cooperation and interaction among group members. We are using the language of relationships to share experiences with one another and to counter the sense of isolation and disconnection that exposure to trauma often elicits. The drama games constantly

focus children's attention on how they are related to other children and adults around them, on how they are connected to the world and how those connections may be influenced by their individual choices. The connections among group members are often physical as well as emotional and each exercise is followed by a group processing time when group members can share with others what the experience going through the exercise felt like. The drama games may be very effective after traumatic exposure because they are fun to participate in, they utilize non-verbal expression, and they create a shared experience, drawing the group members closer together while offering individuals the ability to control those connections.

Please understand that it is critically important that the Group Leader provide time and supervision after each drama game exercise for all the participants to verbally share their impressions and thoughts about their participation in the drama game. This must always be offered to each participant before moving on to the next activity.

#### **Perfect World:**

Age: 8-18 years

The group of children is asked to collectively describe a perfect fantasy world in which they could all live. "Where, how big, how many people, animals, vegetation, buildings, homes, families, Media, schools, religion, etc?

After discussion and group decision-making, the children are asked to interact, to spend some time together in this "world". Furniture and props may be used to "build the set".

Group sharing about "how it was" to be in that world can follow. Discussion should include: "How the fantasy and present world differ". And "What we can do to make them more similar/ what stands in the way?"

#### **Favorite Animal:**

Age: 6-11 years

Children are asked to tell the group what their favorite animal is and why it is their favorite. The group is then encouraged to interact in the role of their animal. This may be assisted by music or rhythm (drumming, clapping): The children would interact while the music was played, and stop (freeze) when the music halted. They could pretend to "sleep" during the quiet time.

#### **Question Ball:**

Age: 6-18 years

Sitting in a circle, each child is encouraged to pass the ball to a person in the circle that he/she has a question for. Every one that wants a turn should be given one.

#### **Building a Machine:**

Age: 8-18 years

The children should be divided into smaller groups of six to eight.

One child at a time becomes the builder. The builder chooses other children one at a time to be parts of the machine.

The builder moves the building block (another child) into place and sculpts the body into position. The builder then gives the building block a simple repetitive motion (e.g. one arm swinging back and forth) and a sound to repeat.

When that part of the machine is in place, the builder chooses another child for a building block and adds that part to the machine. Each successive part should be close enough to touch the other parts.

When the builder is satisfied with the design, the next builder starts anew. (All children do not have to be used in each machine.)

This exercise develops cooperation, physical interaction, and concretizes the sense of each individual child being a part of the whole machine.

#### **Brave Statues:**

Age: 10-18 years

This game can be done with the whole group initially, until the children have the idea of how it's done, and then they can be divided into smaller groups in order for each child to have a turn.

The Group Leader can begin by discussing bravery with the children. What is bravery? The essential element here is to get across the concept that in order to have bravery, there must be fear, because bravery involves overcoming fear in order to act.

When the children understand this, they are ready to begin. One child starts by modeling for the group with his/her body what strong looks like.

He/she may use a word or phrase to go with the sculpture.

He/she then asks another child to role reverse and take on the role of "strong". The first child then models with his/her body what fear looks like, again using a word or phrase to go with the sculpture.

He/she then asks another child to role reverse and take on the role of "fear". The Group Leader asks the sculptor what he/she can do to take care of the "fear" part. (e.g. move the strong part in front of the fear, closer to the fear, give the strong part more words, have the strong part put a hand on fear's back, etc.)

It is important that the children know that fear must remain, but it can be helped. The sculpture is a way of physicalizing the concept of acknowledging contrasting feelings, living with them and working at managing their expression.

**Turn Up the Volume** 12-18 Years Old This game will involve working with four children at a time, and may be done with two groups of four groups.

It is important, however, to have part of the group as audience.

Three participants of the group of four will be asked to model looking "mad", "sad" or "glad" (one for each emotion).

The fourth student can move among the three and turn the volume switch located in the back of each model either up or down, changing the modulation (or volume) of the feeling.

For example, the "mad" child goes from being a bit annoyed all the way up to enraged and back down again.

The "sad" child goes from slightly disappointed to bereft and back again.

During this game the teacher should periodically call out "Role reverse!", and the child at the volume controls must role reverse with the "mad", "sad", or "glad" child he/she is currently nearest.

Using the role reverse command allows the teacher to help out a child that may be having difficulty modulating his/her feelings.

Changing roles often also allows children to go from "sad" to "glad" and try out a range of feeling.

Children from the audience may be asked to come in and role reverse with the participants to keep the process going while allowing more children to actively join in.

The purpose of this game is to help children recognize and express the range of feelings they may hold. It is an opportunity for them to practice new ways of expressing feeling and modulating that expression.

**Five Parts of Yourself (Strength, Fear, Anger, Sadness, and Joy or Relief)** Age: 12-18 Years Old With a large group, the first time the exercise is done it should be done in front of the whole group.

After the first time the group can then be split into subgroups of 8 to 10.

One child begins as the sculptor modeling the first of the five parts of him/herself: **Strength** 

The sculptor then asks a group member to role reverse when the pose and word or phrase for **Strength** is set.

The chosen group member assumes the pose of **Strength** 

The sculptor then models the next part: Fear

The sculptor then asks another group member to role reverse when the pose and word or phrase for **Fear** is set.

The chosen group member assumes the pose of Fear

This process is repeated for Anger, Sadness and Relief (Joy) selecting a different group member to role reverse with the Sculptor and hold the pose and phrase for each part

When the sculpture is completed there should be five group members standing up in the center of the room holding the five different poses/phrases of the sculptor

When the sculpture is completed with all five parts, the sculptor role reverses with strength and the group member who was playing strength sits down.

The teacher asks the sculptor: "As strength, what can you say to each part when you hear their word or phrase? Can you tell them why you need them?"

# This exercise is designed to help children begin an internal dialogue to tolerate, accept and value their feelings and practice self-soothing.

**Standing Ovations:** 

This is an exercise to celebrate the participants for being themselves. It should be done in front of the whole group, and each child should have a turn.

7 to 10 year olds:

The Group Leader can begin by selecting one of the group members and saying, "Today we are giving Ali an award. What should we give him an award for?"

The children make suggestions and the Group Leader chooses one suggestion and asks the child to present that award to Ali.

Ali stands up before the group and receives an invisible-pretend award.

The rest of the group begins to applaud while seated and then stands to give Ali a standing ovation.

This process is repeated for each child.

Examples of awards might be: Best smile, Hero, Helper, Best shoes, Dancer, Warmest Friend, Courage, Changed the Most, Sunshine, etc.

11 to 18 year olds: The group divides up into pairs.

Each member of the pair interviews the other asking, "What do you like to do? What are you good at? What are your strong points? What do people like about you?" This should last about five minutes.

The group comes back together then and one member of the pair introduces the other to the group and announces what their partner is good at or what their partner likes to do,etc.

The introduction is followed by a standing ovation.

Each child gets an introduction and ovation.

#### **Building a Home:**

Age: 10-18 years

This is an exercise to concretize the concept of interdependence. It is the banding together of friends, supporting each other that provides the safety and structure for resilience.

This game should be done with groups of 15 to 18 children

The Group Leader explains to the children that they are going to build a home using themselves as building blocks.

The Group Leader then asks for 6 builders (approximately 1/3 of the group)

The remaining children will be the building blocks. The builders begin to sculpt the home using the building blocks

The builders must cooperate with each other in deciding on a design as they mold the building blocks and create a structure - The HOME - built with their friends as the building blocks

The Home is complete when all the building blocks have been used and the builders are inside the building.

This can be repeated several times with different builders.

#### Journal Entry and Empty Chair Introduction:

Age: 12-18 Years Old

The purpose of this exercise is to help the children recognize what they have learned through adversity.

The teacher can ask the children to think about the following questions and **to answer them by** writing in their journals:

When you look back at yourself, surviving the earthquake and the times right after it is there anything new or different that you learned about yourself?

In what way were you surprised by what you did?

What do you know now that can help you in the future?

After five to ten minutes of writing in the journal, it is time to share with the group. This can be done in one of several ways. Choose ONE of the following three sharing methods. The children can be invited to sit in a circle and read to each other what they have written. The teacher can read journal passages aloud and the author can either claim it as his or hers or not, as he or she chooses.

The teacher places an empty chair in front of the group. Each child has a turn introducing him or herself as the person in the empty chair, pointing to the empty chair and saying, "This is \_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. He learned so much about himself going through the earthquake. He learned \_\_\_\_\_\_. I'm proud of him because\_\_\_\_\_. "

(Example: "This is Tuncay. He learned so much about himself going through the earthquake. He learned that he could survive, he knew where to go for help, and I'm proud of him because he took care of his little brother."

Each introduction should be followed by a standing ovation.