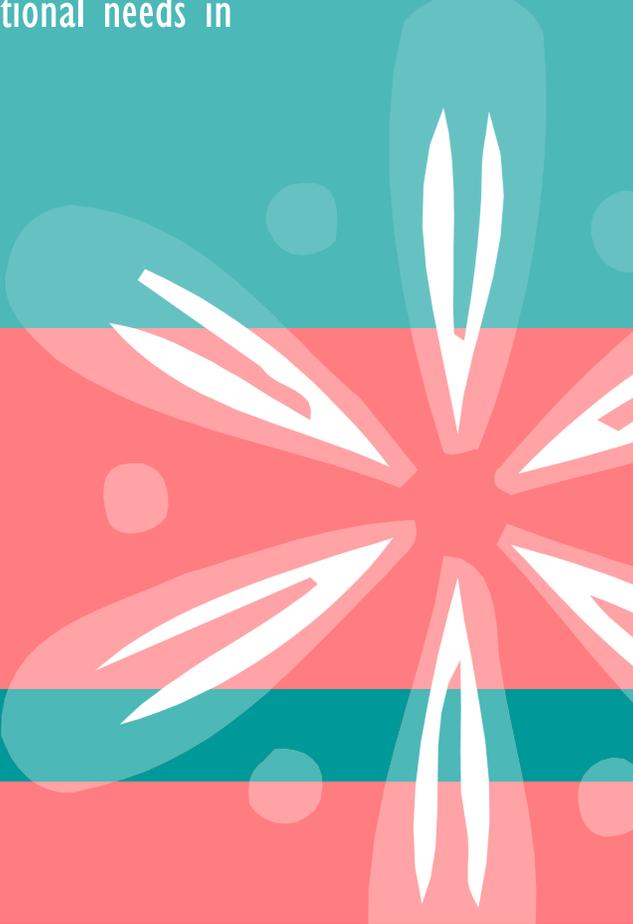


# GROUP COUNSELING GUIDE



Designed for the caretakers of the Rita Zniber  
Foundation to address emotional needs in  
abandoned children



Molly Rockwood  
Calvin Figuereo-Supraner  
Daniella Morico  
Elizabeth Thompson

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# INTRODUCTION

# ABOUT THE BOOK

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This book contains a collection of therapeutic activities adapted to the needs of the caretakers of the Rita Zniber Foundation to help facilitate group counseling sessions.

The goal of these activities is to facilitate healthy conversations that address common emotional problems stemming from abandonment between the caretakers and the children.

These activities are in no way a substitute for professional psychological help. If the caretakers suspect that a child has a serious mental problem, we encourage them to seek the help of a professional.

# PLAY THERAPY

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*“Play is the highest development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child’s soul...children’s play is not mere sport. It is full of meaning and import” (Landreth, 2002).*

In the early 1900s, therapists realized that the counseling techniques used with adults were not beneficial to children. Many children are unable and uninterested in exploring their feelings verbally as adults do. Because of this, play therapy was created as a therapeutic technique to address children’s problems. Play therapy is built based on the communicative and learning processes of children. It helps children to learn about themselves and their relationships with others (Landreth, 2002).

# GROUP COUNSELING

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*“Hearing from other people about how you come across can be very powerful. You get a wider range of perspectives on your situation, and that can help you deal with your problems better.” - Ben Johnson (Orenstein, 2014).*

Although talking about personal problems in front of other people can be a daunting task, group counseling sessions can be incredibly rewarding. A group of people processing similar experiences can make for a strong support system. It is also often helpful to hear how others have responded in comparable situations when deciding on appropriate responses. Talking in a group can also lessen feelings of isolation and allow an opportunity to converse. Lastly, hearing the problems of others can help keep one's outlook in check (Johnson).

The page features a teal horizontal band across the top. The background is primarily yellow, with a red horizontal band at the bottom. Stylized floral graphics in teal and yellow are scattered across the page. The text is centered in the teal band.

FACILITATING  
MEANINGFUL  
CONVERSATION

# ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

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A facilitator's role is to help guide healthy group conversations. You can do this by helping to create a safe, inclusive environment in which the children feel comfortable talking. It is important to keep the communication positive so that you can be sure the conversation is constructive and helpful to everyone involved. You should also keep in mind that it may be difficult for people to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Be sure to encourage all children in the group to participate (Prendville,P).

Talking about issues as a group can help people come to healthy solutions. It is important to have a plan of what you, as the facilitator, would like the outcome of the conversation to be. This way you will know how to steer the conversation back towards the goals if the participants become distracted. You can come up with a plan for the conversation by accomplishing the following:

1. **Examining the Issues:** Know what problem you are trying to address. Tell the group about it and make sure they are looking to address the same problem.
2. **Acknowledging Opinions and Feelings:** It is important to acknowledge when someone has an emotional stake in an issue. By addressing these emotional needs you can better keep the conversation from escalating.
3. **Decide How to Move Forward:** Once everyone has the chance to voice their opinion on the problem, they can begin to voice their opinions on what they think the solution is (Prendville,P).

It is recommended that you read the educational guide before attempting to complete these activities. This book will familiarize you with the common problems that various age groups and abandoned children face. With this knowledge you can better understand the children's point of views, which will help lead to a better conversation (Prendville,P).

# CREATING A SAFE SPACE

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It is very important to create a safe and trusting environment during counseling sessions. Designing a space where a child feels safe will help them to open up and feel more comfortable talking about his or her problems. There are many ways to accomplish this and it is important to note that every child will be different. Some are comforted by touch while others require more space to feel comfortable. The following are tips to create a safe space in a group counseling environment (A. McCauley)

## 1. Consistency

Create a set schedule for when the group counseling sessions will occur. Pick a day of the week and time that the group will meet and maintain it. Make sure the children do not miss a meeting. This will help the children feel mentally and emotionally prepared. When they have the opportunity to prepare themselves they will feel more comfortable talking because they will not be surprised and they will know what the expectations are (A. McCauley).

## 2. Confidentiality

Make it clear to the children that what is said in the group counseling session should stay in the group. Conversations should not be discussed with the other children. Be honest about what information will stay between you and the group and what information will be shared with other caretakers. It is important that once these boundaries are established, they are respected (A. McCauley).

## 3. Trust

Trust needs to be built in the group. It does not happen immediately, and children will take different amounts of time to establish a sense of trust. Begin the counseling group by talking about less personal subjects, then build your way up to the more intense conversations (A. McCauley).

# HOW TO FACILITATE GROUP COUNSELING

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A group counseling session should be divided up into three segments: activity, conversation, and conclusion. Each segment has a specific purpose. The activity segment is used to introduce the topic of discussion for the day. Activities are a fun way to introduce the topic and prepare the children for discussion. The conversation segment should be more direct. In this segment you can ask open-ended questions about the topic of discussion and find out the children's thoughts and feelings. The conclusion segment is a time devoted to highlighting the main points of discussion. This time should also be used to end the counseling session on a positive note (A. McCauley).

Different age groups should spend different amounts of time in each segment. Each age group has specific needs based on their attention spans and their capacity to discuss and understand complex emotions. The following is a suggestion for how much time should be spent for each segment with each age group (A. McCauley):

## Ages 2-6: Very Structured

30 minutes: Activity

## Ages 6-10: Mildly Structured

30 minutes: Activity

10 minutes: Conclusion

## Ages 10-13: Mildly Unstructured

15 minutes: Activity

20 minutes: Talking

10 minutes: Conclusion

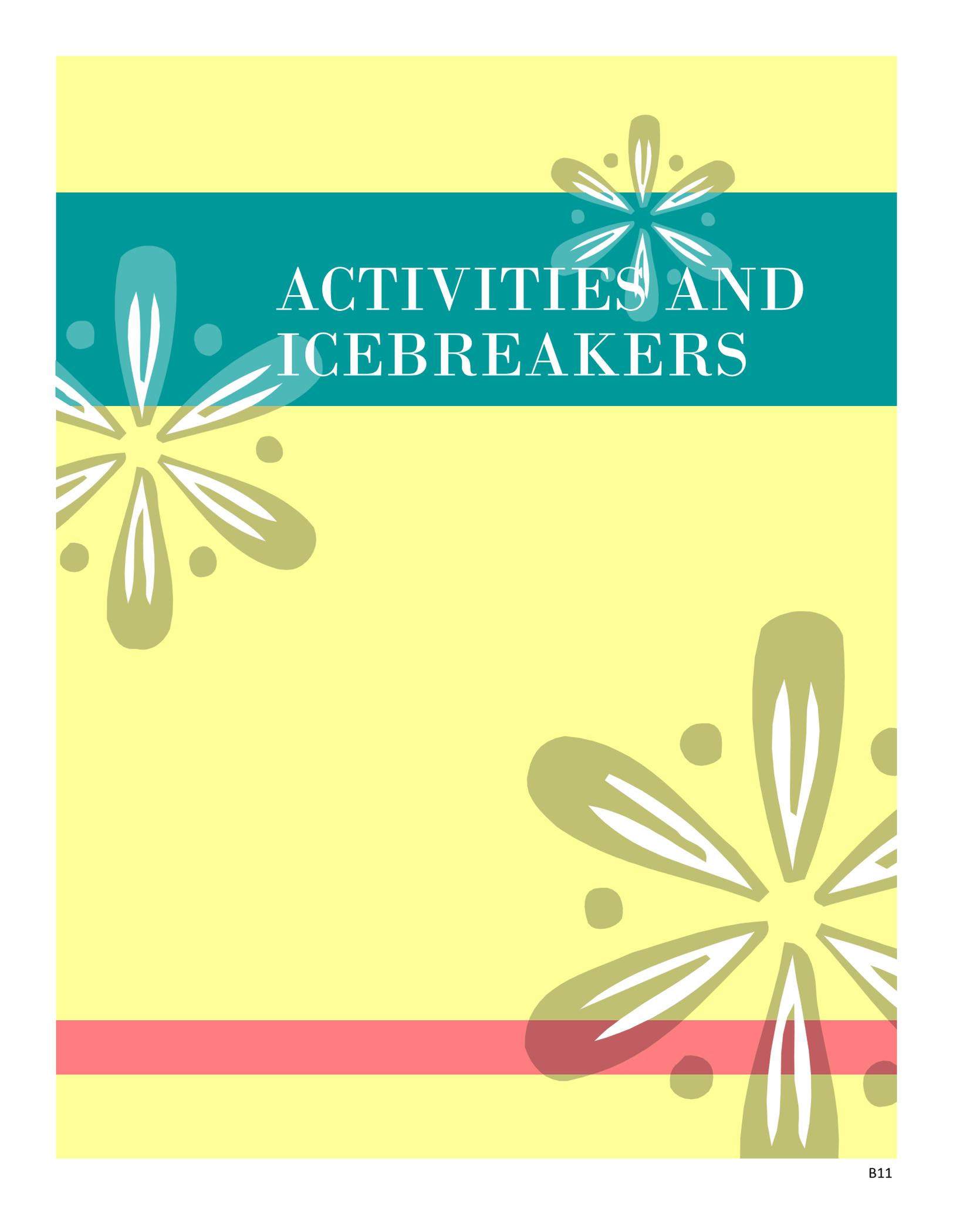
## Ages 13-18: Unstructured

15 minutes: Activate

30 minutes: Talking

15 minutes: Conclusion

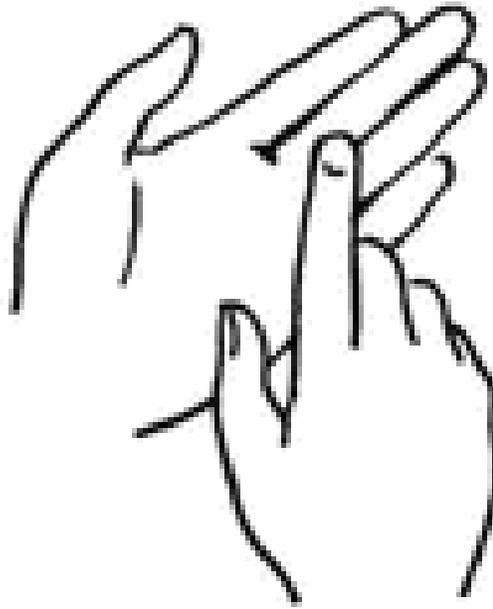
As the children get older, they do not need as much structure for the group counseling session. The older children are able to talk about their problems, and can have more complex discussions that may require freer conversation (A. McCauley).



# ACTIVITIES AND ICEBREAKERS

# MY HANDS CAN SAY...

---



## Goals

To encourage children to express how they are feeling using their hands and words

## Age

2-5

## Directions

Talk to the child about times when he or she has felt hot, cold, angry, scared or happy. Ask the child to show with hands hello, come here, go away, I'm hot, scared, stop, angry, cold, goodbye, etc. Encourage the child to describe movements for each emotion: "I wave my hand to say goodbye", "I wrap my arms around me when I'm cold"

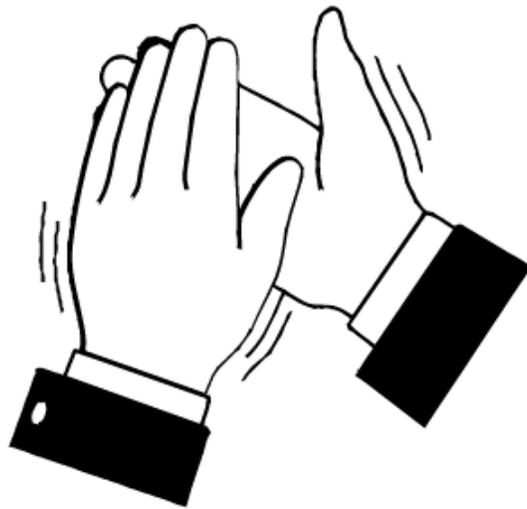
## Why it works

This activity teaches children to discuss negative emotions like anger and fear. Eventually, it may become easier for kids to resolve conflicts and guide their behaviors in appropriate ways.

(Adapted from My Hands Can Say...)

# CLAP A NAME

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## Goals

- To help children feel special
- To help children learn the names of their friends
- To develop basic speaking skills by learning syllables

## Age

2-4

## Directions

Explain that a syllable is a small speech sound and that words are made up of syllables. Then, show how to clap for each syllable in their name as their name is read aloud.

## Why it works

This activity helps teach how syllables work, which is an important skill in phonological awareness.

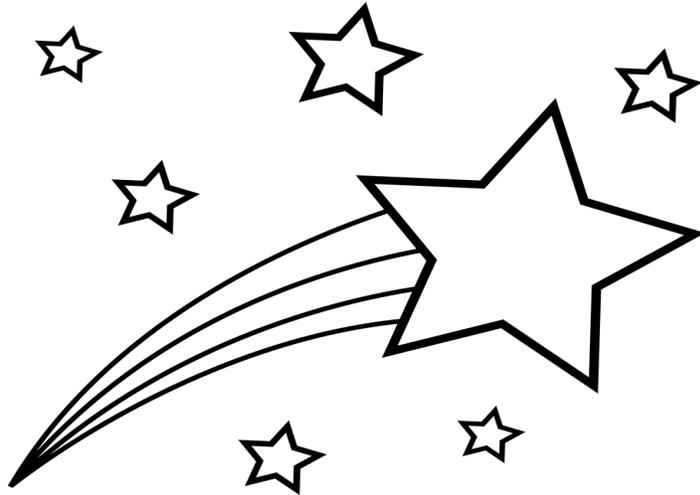
## Tips

Sing a song with the child's name and clap the syllables

(Adapted from Clap a name)

# STAR OF THE DAY

---



## Goals

To help build confidence

To allow kids to express their feelings

## Age

5-6

## Materials

Marker

Paper (in the shape of stars)

Bag/basket

## Directions

Write children's names on stars. Have all the children sit on the floor. Shake the bag and pull out a star. Then, read the name and have the child stand up. Introduce the child and compliment him or her. Ask the other children to share something nice about him or her.

## Why it works

Young children feel great pride in even the smallest accomplishments.

It is important for all adults in a child's life to foster these feelings of pride and self-confidence.

(Adapted from Star of the Day)

# I CAN HELP

---



## Goals

To help children recognize emotions

## Age

5-6

## Materials

Markers

Paper

## Directions

Draw a happy face on the paper. Ask the child what it represents. Then, ask him or her to list things that make him or her happy. Ask the child what he or she can do to feel happy. Draw an unhappy face and repeat the process. Ask child what he can do if he sees a friend who is unhappy. Draw an angry face and repeat the process again.

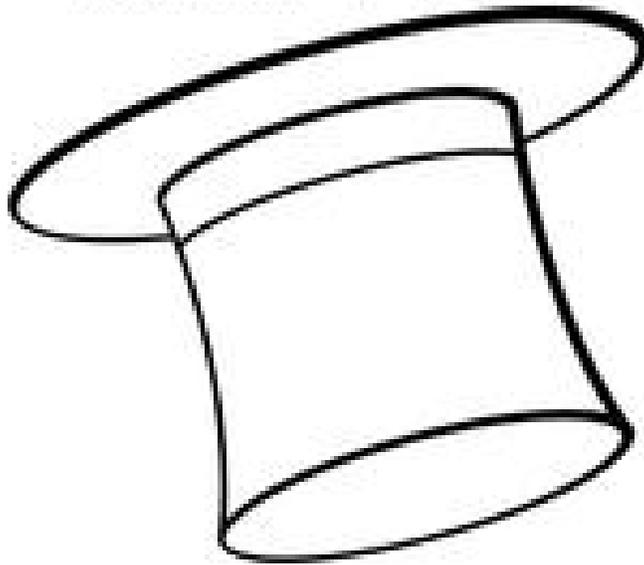
## Why it works

This helps children talk about recognizing emotions and how to change their feelings towards them.

(Adapted from I Can Help)

# PASS THE HAT

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## Goals

To help children learn to recognize and express emotions.

## Age

3-5

## Materials

Pictures depicting different emotions

Hat/Basket/Envelope

## Directions

Have the kids sit down in a circle. Place all of the pictures in a hat. Pass the hat and play music. Stop the music after 15-20 seconds. The child who is holding the hat picks a picture out. Ask the child to identify the emotion and to express how he or she looks when he or she feels that way. Then, have the child describe a time when he or she felt that way. Continue passing hat until all the children have had a chance to play.

## Why it works

This activity provides children with the chance to practice different feelings in a safe environment.

(Adapted from Pass the Hat)



AGGRESSIVE



AGONIZED



ANXIOUS



APOLOGETIC



ARROGANT



BASHFUL



BLISSFUL



BORED



CAUTIOUS



COLD



CONCENTRATING



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



DENSE



DETERMINED



DISAPPOINTED



DISAPPROVING



DISBELIEVING



DISGUSTED



DISTASTEFUL



EAVESDROPPING



ECSTATIC



ENRAGED



ENVOUS



EXASPERATED



EXHAUSTED



FRIGHTENED



FRUSTRATED



GRIEVING



GUILTY



HAPPY



HORRIFIED



HOT



HUMCOVER



HURT



HYSTERICAL



IDOTIC



INDIFFERENT



INNOCENT



INTERESTED



JEALOUS



LOADED



LONELY



LOVESTRUCK



MEDITATIVE



MISCHIEVOUS



MISERABLE



NEGATIVE



OBSTINATE



OPTIMISTIC



PAINED



PARANOID



PERPLEXED



PRUDISH



FUZZLED



REGRETFUL



RELIEVED



SAD



SATISFIED



SHEEPIH



SHOCKED



SMUG



SURLY



SURPRISED



SUSPICIOUS



SYMPATHETIC



THOUGHTFUL



TURNE-D-ON



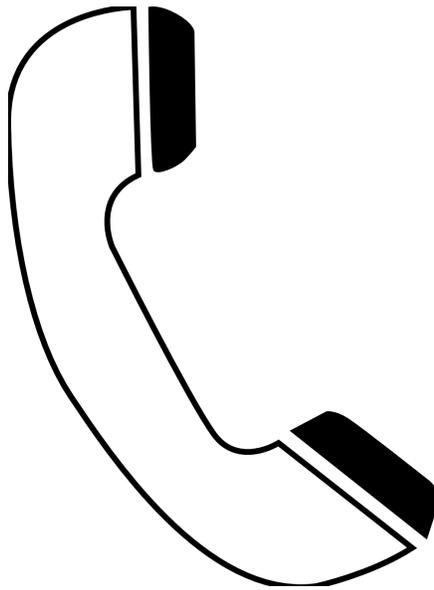
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WITHDRAWN

# TELEPHONE

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## Goals

To help children understand the importance of communication.

## Age

4-6

## Directions

Sit the children in a line or in a circle. Think of any sentence like, “Cookies are sweeter than biscuits” or “I have never seen a green giraffe”. Whisper the sentence into the ear of the first child. That child whispers what he or she heard into the ear of the second child and so on until all the children have gone. The sentence cannot be repeated. The last child says the sentence aloud to compare it to the original sentence. Afterwards, you can talk about the importance of clearly communicating your feelings and needs.

## Why it works

This game helps children understand the importance of listening well and communicating clearly.

(Adapted from The Telephone Game)

# SHOW ME WHEN...



## Goals

To develop vocabulary for talking about emotions

To develop self-awareness

## Age

3-6

## Directions

Say an emotion aloud. Allow all the kids to try and express the emotion silently using only hand gestures and facial expressions. Talk about what makes someone feel this emotion. Ask them what they would do when they feel this emotion. Then, ask what do they do when they see someone else with this emotion. Repeat with more emotions.

## Why it works

This activity gets kids talking about emotions while they learn ways to recognize them and express themselves.

(Adapted from Bryson, T)

# THE LISTENING GAME

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## Goals

To practice good listening skills

## Age

3-5

## Materials

Various objects

## Directions

Have the kids sit down on the floor. Find several items (a comb, a glass, a spoon, etc.) and show them to the children. Have the children close their eyes and listen while you pick up one of the items and make a sound with it (running your finger along the comb, tapping the glass, hitting the spoon against the floor). Put the item down and have the child open their eyes and guess which item made the sound.

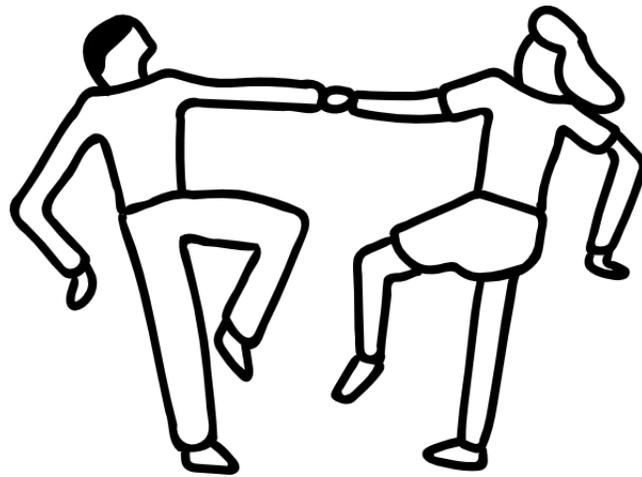
## Why it works

The children must listen carefully to determine which item made the sound.

(Adapted from Overland, H)

# MY FRIEND IN THE MIDDLE

---



## Goals

To raise self-esteem

To teach children to follow directions

## Age

4-6

## Materials

Tambourine/maraca (optional)

## Directions

Sit the children in a circle and choose one child to be in the middle. Encourage the child to dance out the moves as you sing using their name. For example, "Susan's in the middle! Susan's in the middle! Dance Susan, dance! Get up, down, turn around!" Allow the child to choose a friend to be in the circle. Repeat until all children have been in the middle.

## Why it works

This game helps teach children to listen and follow directions, as well as teach them to share being the center of attention and involve themselves with other children.

(Adapted from Edwards, T.)

# MANAGING EMOTIONS

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## Goals

To help children manage emotions they do not understand how to control yet.

## Age

6-10

## Materials

Paper

Paint

Writing utensils

## Directions

Provide each child with a piece of paper. Have them paint their hands and place them in the center of the paper. After the children wash their hands, brainstorm techniques they use to help them calm down when they are upset about something. Choose the best five from your list with the help of the children. Assign each technique to a finger. Explain to the children that when they feel like they are too upset to control their feelings, they can count their fingers and use the techniques they learned about to help calm down.

## Why it works

It is personalized to the child's needs and preferences.

By brainstorming techniques and letting the children decide what works best for them, the techniques are more effective.

## Tips

There is an example poster you can show the children to help facilitate the activity.

# 5 Steps to Managing Big Emotions



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# COWS, DUCKS, CHICKENS

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## Goals

To find commonalities between other children in the group  
To establish trust in the group

## Age

6-10

## Materials

Slips of Paper with "Cow, Duck, and Chicken" written on them

## Directions

Give each child a slip with an animal's name on it. Instruct them to keep their animals a secret. Have children get into groups of their animals without using words. They can use sounds, hand gestures, or movement to explain what animal they are.

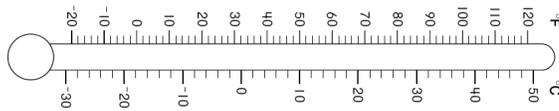
## Why it works

It helps children feel safe knowing they have things in common with others in the group.

(Adapted from Cows, Ducks, and Chickens)

COW	COW
COW	COW
COW	CHICKEN
CHICKEN	CHICKEN
CHICKEN	CHICKEN
DUCK	DUCK
DUCK	DUCK
DUCK	DUCK

# EMOTIONAL THERMOMETER



## Goals

To know how a child is feeling

To know when a child needs to talk

## Age

6-10, 10-13

## Materials

Emotional Thermometer Poster

Clothespins with the childrens' names

## Directions

Set up the thermometer somewhere that is easily accessible by your group of children (i.e. the bedroom) and out of sight from other children for privacy. Explain to the children that they should put the clothespin on the color that corresponds to their feelings. They can use this to tell you how they are feeling. Encourage them to use it whether they are having a good or a bad day. If you notice a child has used his or her thermometer, be sure to follow up with them and talk about what made them feel a certain way.

## Why it works

Talking with children about negative emotions will help them work through their problems while talking about their good emotions will provide positive reinforcement.

It opens discussion about their problems.

It creates a physical representation of a non-physical feeling, this helps the child realize what it making them feel a certain way.

## Tips

Let the kids decorate their own clothespins.

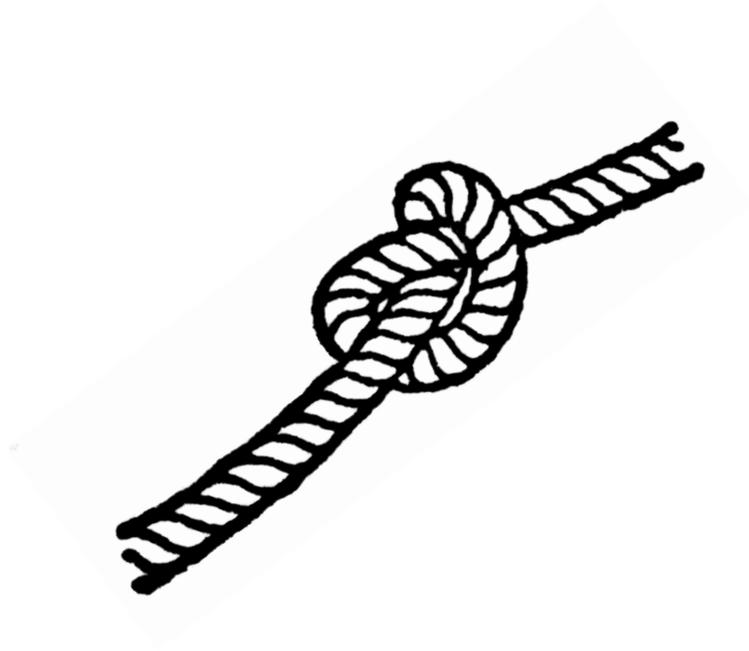
(Adapted from Emotion Thermometer)



(Adapted from Emotion Thermometer)

# HUMAN KNOT

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## Goals

To help children communicate better with the children in their group

## Age

6-10,10-13,13-18

## Directions

Have the children stand in a circle. Instruct the children to hold hands with anyone in the circle except the person standing directly next to them. Explain that they must untangle themselves without letting go of each other's arms.

## Why it works

Children must communicate using only their words to solve the problem (getting untangled), which is a great icebreaker for opening up communication to talk about more sensitive problems.

It also allows children to step up and be the leader, which can help them feel important within the group.

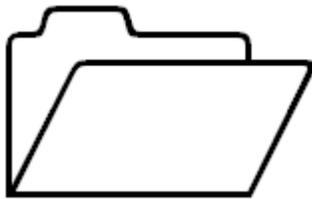
## Tips

Let the children solve their problem without interruption, keep a healthy distance (about ten feet) to let them work together.

(Adapted from Neill, J.)

# FEEL GOOD FOLDER

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## Goals

To help create a positive self-esteem by expressing positive qualities

To help the child realize that there are people who love and care about them

## Age

6-10, 10-13, 13-18

## Materials

Folder

Paper

Writing utensils

Craft supplies

## Directions

Have each of the children write a letter to themselves or make a list of positive qualities they possess. This will help create a positive self-image. They can look at this paper when they feel down about themselves. Next, have each of the children in your group draw a picture, write a letter, or make a list of positive qualities about each other. The child can look at this when they feel their peers do not like or care about them. Repeat this step yourself. Give it to the child to look at when they feel caretakers or other adults do not care about them. Tell them to keep these papers in their folder and to add other things that make them happy (this can be a picture of their favorite animal, a place they would like to travel, quotes, anything!).

## Why it works

It helps children to focus on their strengths and create a positive self image

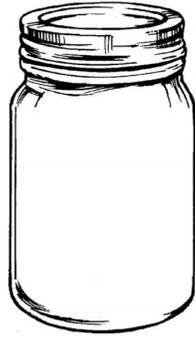
## Tips

Have a day where your group of kids goes to the art room to decorate their folders.

(Adapted from Lowstein, L.)

# WORRY JAR

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## Goals

To help children acknowledge their problems

## Age

6-10, 10-13

## Materials

Jar (a box, bucket, or any other container will work)

Slips of paper

Writing utensils

## Directions

Have children write down their worries or problems on a piece of paper. Explain to the children that containing their negative feelings does not help solve problems. Tell them that their worry is a symbol for the way they feel. By putting that worry in a jar, they are helping to move past it. Ask if anyone would like to talk about their worry before putting it in the jar.

## Why it works

It helps the child to come to terms with their problem by acknowledging it.

It opens discussion about their problems.

It creates a physical representation of a non-physical feeling, which helps the child realize what is making them feel a certain way.

## Tips

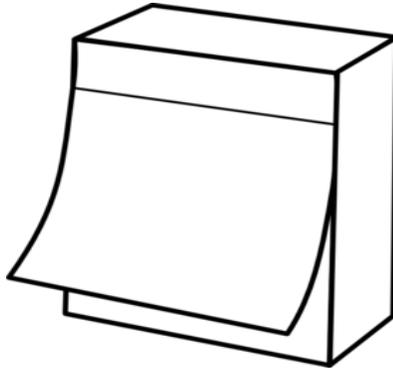
Have children to work together to design their groups worry jar.

The children can also write about things that make them sad, angry, or any other negative emotions they need to discuss.

(Adapted from Hall, T.M.)

# POSITIVE POSTINGS

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## Goals

To help create a positive self-esteem by expressing positive qualities  
To promote positive interactions with peers and caretakers

## Ages

10-13

## Materials

Construction paper  
Markers or crayons  
Sticky notes

## Directions

Have everyone draw a picture of themselves. Give each child a sticky note and ask them to write three positive qualities about themselves on the note. Have the children put those notes on their paper bodies. Then, give the child a sticky note that you have written for them. Invite the other children to repeat this process with each other.

## Why it works

It helps children to focus on their strengths and create a positive self-image

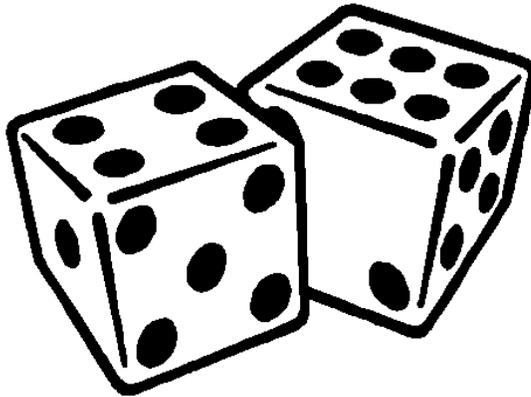
## Tips

Have the children hang this somewhere they see it every day (like above their beds).  
Continuously update their papers by adding sticky notes when you see a child do something nice or accomplish something important.

(Adapted from Lowstein, L.)

# THE DICE GAME

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## Goals

To have children openly talk about their thoughts and feelings.

To have children become comfortable talking about their feelings in a group setting.

## Age

10-13

## Materials

Dice

Tokens

Prizes (Candy bars, small toys, extra T.V. or computer privileges, etc.)

Question Cards

## Directions

Have each of the children roll a die. If they roll an even number, they pick a card and answer the question. If they roll an odd number, they receive a token. The tokens can be exchanged at the end of the game for prizes.

## Why it works

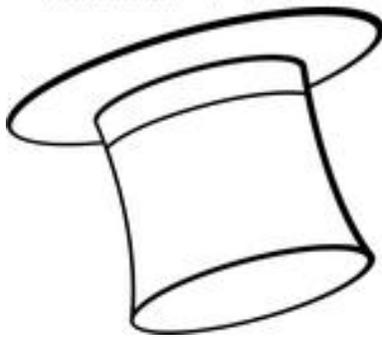
Children are more engaged in conversation when a game is involved.

Prizes are positive reinforcements.

(Adapted from Lowstein, L(n.d.))

What makes you happy?	What is important?
What is a good friend?	What is your favorite book?
What is love to you?	What is peer pressure? Have you experienced it?
What do you want to be when you grow up?	What is trust? Who do you trust?
What are you most proud of?	What is your favorite part about school?
What is your favorite quality about yourself?	If you could have a superpower what would it be?
How to you handle stress?	If you had one million dollars, what would you spend it on?
If a genie gave you three wishes, what would you wish for?	If you could travel anywhere where would you go?

# FEAR IN A HAT



## Goals

To help children empathize with the problems other children in the group face  
To create a trusting environment

## Age

10-13, 13-18

## Materials

Pieces of paper  
Writing utensils  
Hat (Can use plastic bag, bucket, etc.)

## Directions

Have children write down their biggest fear on a piece of paper. Collect the folded papers and put them in a hat. Mix the papers in the hat so nobody knows which paper belongs to which child. Have the children sit in the circle and pick a piece of paper out one at a time. Have the child read the fear to the group and then explain how they think the child with this fear might feel. Pass the hat until the papers run out.

## Why it works

It helps children to understand the feelings of others in the group, which can help with open conversations about feelings.

## Tips

Keep the comments positive; if a child mocks someone's fear, redirect that child back to the purpose of the conversation.

Make sure only the paper holder is discussing how the child feels.

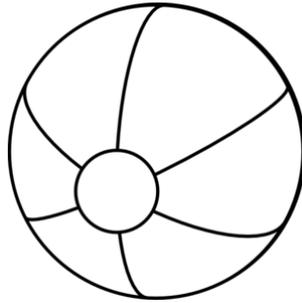
Put your own fear in the hat and participate with the children.

Instead of asking children what their biggest fear is, ask them what their biggest fear about group counseling is (have them complete the sentence "The worst thing to happen to me in this group is..."), wishes they have, worries, or favorite moments.

(Adapted from Fear in a Hat)

# TALKING BALL

---



## Goals

To create an open, trusting environment

## Age

13-18

## Materials

Beach ball

Sharpie marker

## Directions

Write open ended questions on the beach ball. Have the children sit in a circle and begin tossing the beach ball. When a child catches the ball, they must answer the question their right thumb is on.

## Why it works

Children are more engaged in talking when a game is involved.

This activity helps kids get comfortable with talking in a group environment by asking casual questions.

## Tips

Tailor the questions to what you think would be helpful to the children. Avoid using “why” questions because these tend to make people feel as though their answer will be judged. Examples are:

What is your favorite joke?

What would you be famous for?

What is something you can't live without?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What is something you are afraid of?

What is your happiest memory?

Do you have any secret talents?

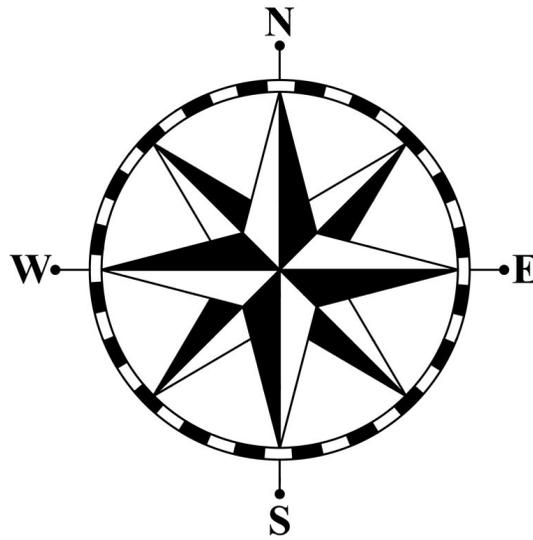
If you were on a deserted island, what would you bring?

What is your favorite book?

(Adapted from Beach Ball Question & Answer)

# COMPASS POINTS

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## Goals

To help children understand other points of view in the group

## Age

13-18

## Materials

Compass handout

Question sheet handout

Writing utensils

## Directions

Have each child choose which direction on the compass best describes them. Have them break into groups based on which direction they chose. Then, have each direction group fill out the question sheet. After about ten minutes, group everyone together again to discuss the answers to their question sheets.

## Why it works

It helps children to understand the feelings of others in the group which can help with better open conversations about feelings.

## Tips

Keep comments positive and make sure nobody in the group says that one direction is better than another.

(Adapted from North, South, East, and West: Compass Points)

	<p><b>North</b>  <i>Acting – “Let’s do it;”          Likes to act, try things,          plunge in.</i></p>	
<p><b>West</b>  <i>Paying attention to detail          —likes to know the who,          what, when, where and why          before acting.</i></p>		<p><b>East</b>  <i>Speculating – likes to look          at the big picture and the          possibilities before acting.</i></p>
	<p><b>South</b>  <i>Caring – likes to know          that everyone’s feelings          have been taken into          consideration and that their          voices have been heard          before acting.</i></p>	

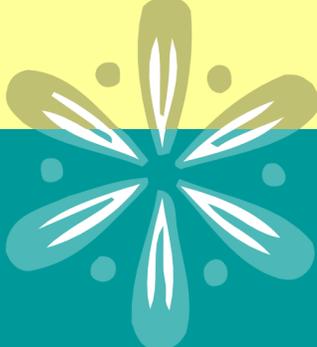
1. What are the strengths of your style? (4 adjectives)

2. What are the limitations of your style? (4 adjectives)

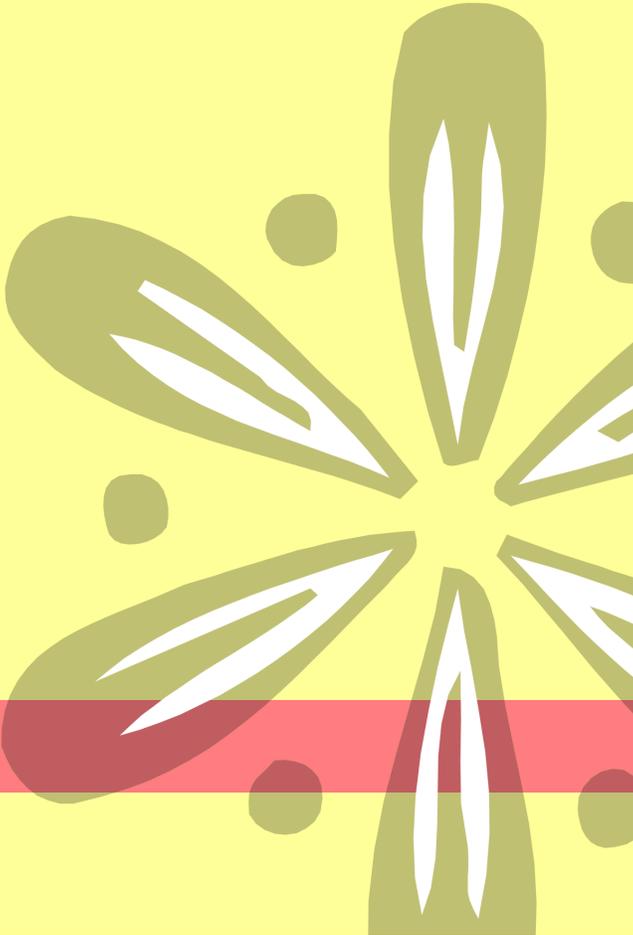
3. What style do you find most difficult to work with and why?

4. What do people from the other “directions” or styles need to know about you so you can work together effectively?

5. What do you value about the other three styles?



CONVERSATION



# TALKING

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The conversation section is arguably the most important segment you will facilitate. This is the segment where the children will work through their feelings and emotions through group discussion. As the facilitator, you should help the children make connections with each others opinions, keep the conversation positive and constructive, and keep the children on topic with discussion. You should encourage the children to support and empathize with each other. The best way to have a productive and meaningful talking segment is to ask open ended questions about the topic you want to discuss. Here is a list of questions to help you better facilitate conversation in junction with activities (A. McCauley).

What do you think the purpose of this activity was?

How did you feel when we did \_\_\_\_\_ in the activity?

How do you think others in the group felt?

When do you feel this way outside of these group sessions?

How can we recreate these positive feelings outside of the group sessions?

It is also important to let the conversation be guided by the children. Addressing certain feelings may bring up other situations or feelings that they feel they need to address. Here is a list of questions to help you better facilitate more spontaneous conversations (A. McCauley).

How did it feel when \_\_\_\_\_ happened?

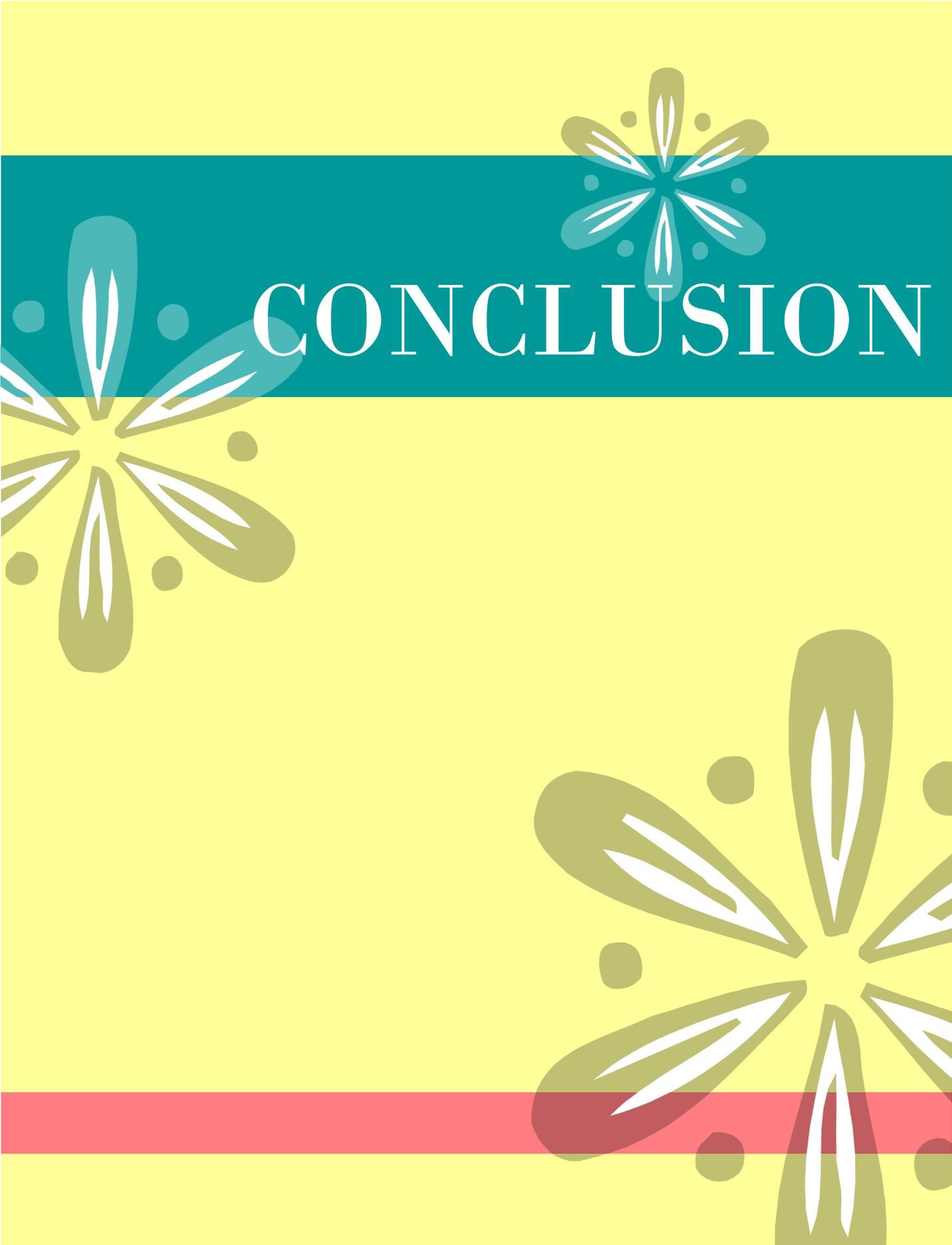
Do you think their was a better wat you could have reacted to that situation?

What can I do to help? What can we as a group do to help?

How will acting a certain way help you achieve your goals?

Who are you? What defines who you are?

Keep in mind that these questions are only suggestions. You do not need to ask these in every session as they will not always need to be discussed. Tailor your questions to the context of the conversation topic and the group dynamic (A. McCauley).

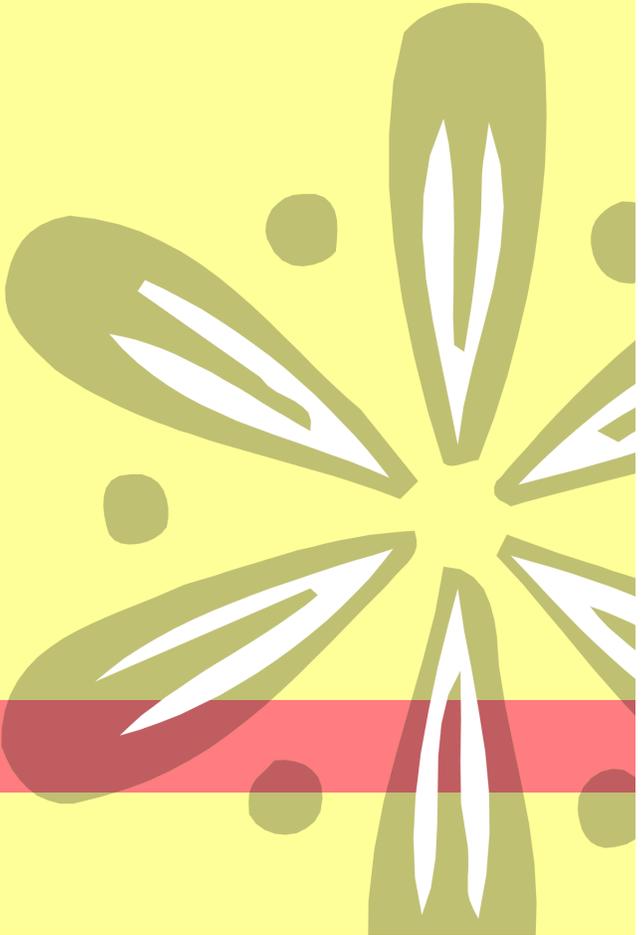
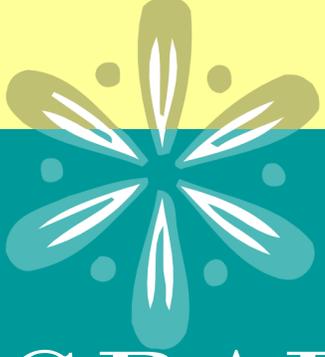


# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

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The conclusion section should be used to highlight the main points you want the children to take away from the counseling session. The facilitator should bring up important points that were made as well as the way the children felt when these points were brought up. This time should be used to resolve any issues that may have come up during the talking portion in order to end the counseling session on a positive note. It is important that you ask the children what they think the important points are and what they learned from the counseling session (A. McCauley).



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