

## **TOP Trauma Reduction scheme**

Our ultimate goal is to offer care to children, many of whom will have lost one or both parents often (but not always) as a result of an AIDS related illness. Losing one or both parents is traumatic for anyone at any time of life. Losing them at a young age can have a damaging long term emotional effect.

This document lists activities and games that we will use to help the children deal with the trauma they will have experienced. We acknowledge the fact that we are not trained child psychologists and are looking to recruit the services of such a person on a voluntary basis (for a 6 or 12 month period). This person will offer guidance on how we can measure our progress and refine our approach to helping children deal with trauma. We also believe that this person will have a major positive effect on individual children.

Notwithstanding this, we have outlined the framework and principles for reducing trauma in children. We have then listed specific activities that we intend to use with the children in our care. This document is, and always will be, work in progress. We will follow guidance from relevant organisations in Botswana that have experience in this field. We will continually adapt activities to the individual and collective needs of children.

### **Introduction**

To help children deal with trauma, TOP Banana will:

#### ***Provide a safe, nurturing environment***

Children need tenderness, care and understanding, but at the same time they need direction, especially when their lives may seem to be falling apart. We will create a stable routine to help children feel safe and reassured.

By including the children in the running of the centre (e.g. caring for a vegetable garden), they will gain some of the much-needed feeling of control over their lives. It can help them feel less helpless and boost their self-esteem. Structure and normality are very important for a child's well being especially after an upsetting event. The structure and rhythm of normal day-to-day life gives a child feeling of security.

In addition to this, we want to encourage children to try new experiences in the safe knowledge that they can make and learn from any mistakes. Linked to this, we want the children to know that we will support them as they deal with inevitable negative thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

#### ***Adopt a child-centred approach***

The interests of each child are our main focus. A child-centred approach looks at the child's personality as well as the child's needs and skills. We will assist the children in discovering that they have the ability to understand, gain control and give meaning to the events that take place in their lives so that they can appreciate their strengths and weaknesses.

Understanding a child's favourite activities and knowing their talents (sport, singing, painting etc) means that we can encourage the children to spend time developing their skills. At an appropriate point, we can give them an opportunity to demonstrate these skills and help them feel good about themselves.

In face of crisis, children often feel powerless. In the absence of a parent or guardian, children invariably have no choice but to be seen to be coping. This can lead to extreme frustration and fear along with feelings of dependency, shame and helplessness. The experience of total helplessness is a central one for children going through trauma and loss. It often leads to a loss of faith in their own ability and a mistrust of their own skills and abilities. Cycles of failure and feelings of self-defeat must be interrupted by new positive experiences if the children are to feel successful and positive.

We want to encourage and build self esteem and will praise positive efforts. Moreover, we will manage a child's expectations and (with them) set achievable goals during their development.

### ***Spend time with the children***

We want the children to feel comfortable enough to talk to us, so that we can listen to them (instead of talking and deciding on their behalf). We want to have an interest in what they do, think and feel. By answering children's questions and showing them new and interesting things, we encourage them to discover their own initiative, creativity and interests.

We believe that every experience is a positive experience even if it is a negative experience. Seeing the negatives can result in unwanted stress and we aim to change negative thinking by encouraging positive thoughts and behaviour in children. In order to achieve this, listening to children will enable us to;

- Be aware of the child's negative thinking and look for opportunities to make it positive.
- Find out why the child sees the negative in something.
- Let the child know that seeing the negative instead of the positive is a choice.
- Help the child to focus on the future and stop dwelling on the past.

### ***Play with the children***

Play is an important part of children's development. When children are orphaned they often have to accept new responsibilities (such as survival and often, caring for younger siblings) and have little or no time to play. Children express their thoughts and feelings through play and personal expression - talking, drawing pictures, re-enacting what happened or by writing in a diary.

By showing children how to express feelings and ideas and how to solve problems and conflicts, we encourage them to become increasingly responsible for what they do and say. We also help them to understand other people's feelings and to respect the needs of others.

Children of a similar age see life differently from how adults see life. Children often feel that they relate better to their peers than they relate to adults. Many children prefer to share their problems with a friend rather than with an adult. Peer groups provide a sense of belonging and identity.

***Use experiential learning methods***

We will teach the children knowledge and skills at the same time as encouraging them to explore questions that are relevant and meaningful to them. Each child will have their own questions. Encouraging them to discover answers for themselves will make the children feel more competent. Solving their own problems will teach them initiative and creativity.

***Trust and respect the children***

We must never forget the strength, ability to cope and resilience of children.

We will regard them as survivors, rather than as victims, acknowledging their strengths, their skills and their expertise, so that we can establish from them how we can assist. This will then build on their coping skills, their creativity and their needs.

We believe that the opposite (feeling pity, compassion etc) would have a long term detrimental effect and increase dependency on us rather than promoting confidence, independence and encouraging them to cope better.

Finally, and most importantly, we will not "bombard" children with questions about how they're feeling (for fear of raising their anxiety levels) and will encourage them to talk when they feel sufficiently comfortable and confident.

## **The techniques**

In order to achieve the above, we will use the following techniques;

- Play Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Drama Therapy
- Counselling
- Talks and discussion groups

### ***Play therapy***

Play Therapy is a way of helping children express their feelings and deal with their emotional problems, using play as the main communication tool. It is to children what counselling is to adults.

Play therapy is not the same thing as playing but uses the child's natural tendency to "play out" their reactions to life situations. This can help traumatised children gain a sense of control or understanding of difficult situations.

As a general rule, children do not develop the ability to use cognitive reasoning until they are 12 years of age (although there are many exceptions). Instead, they tend to process information and develop their physical, mental, and social skills through their use of imagination and play. Although child can talk and "reason" to some extent, their primary way of understanding the world is through their playful interactions with it. Research shows that children learn best during hands-on, activity-based, and playful situations. Play counselling capitalises on these mechanisms.

When confronted with problems children can become resistant, withdrawn, ashamed, oppositional, helpless, defensive, etc. Play counselling provides an excellent way to avoid or overcome these emotional obstacles. Play therapy can be very effective with traumatised children as playing gives them some "distance" from which to explore and deal with their feelings.

Group play therapy is similar to individual play therapy in many ways the main difference is that usually between 2 and 4 children spend their play therapy time together. Group play therapy provides children with the opportunity to learn and practice social skills in situations that are very similar to real life social situations.

### ***Music Therapy***

Music therapy offers a safe space for the release of feelings. It uses variety of music and musical interventions to restore, maintain, and improve emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Examples can include singing, listening, playing instruments, moving to music.

Music has nonverbal, creative and emotional qualities. These are used to help children's interaction, self-awareness, self-expression, communication and personal development as well as boosting their self-esteem.

- ***Singing*** in a group setting, as part of a choir, can improve social skills, and foster a greater awareness of others.
- ***Playing*** instruments can develop increased well-being and self-esteem in those who are learning to play an instrument for the first time.
- ***Rhythmic*** based activities can be used to facilitate and improve an individual's range of motion, strength, balance, coordination and relaxation.
- ***Improvising*** offers a creative, nonverbal means of expressing thoughts and feelings. It is non-judgemental, easily approached, and requires no previous musical training. Where words fail or emotions are too hard to express, music can fill the void.
- ***Listening*** to music has many therapeutic applications. It helps to develop cognitive skills such as attention and memory.

### ***Art Therapy***

Uses any form of visual art, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, photography or computer art, for creative self-expression of thoughts and feelings. Art Therapy can be an individual activity but can be successfully used in group situations. It is a safe way to express strong and sometimes sensitive feelings.

Art therapy is based on the belief that the creative process involved in the making of art is healing and life enhancing – the creative part of the process improves emotional well-being. Through creating art and talking about art and the process of art making the children can increase awareness of self, cope with symptoms of stress and traumatic experiences as well as enjoy the pleasures of artistic creativity.

Art therapy is used to encourage individuals to explore ideas, feelings and issues including:

- Releasing of / expression of thoughts and hopes for the future
- Providing a point of interest for a conversation and getting closer the child
- Providing an opportunity for the child to make decisions for themselves through choice of materials
- Providing a non-verbal way to express feelings or experiences that the children may find too difficult to talk about

Benefits of Art therapy include:

- Positive changes in mood
- Release of emotions and anxieties
- Experiencing the feeling of being in control
- Increase of self-esteem

### ***Drama Therapy***

This is a playful, active, and powerful approach that helps children to explore and achieve personal growth. Drama therapy uses role-play, theatre games, mime, puppetry, and other improvisational techniques to help the children tell their story in order to solve a problem, strengthen the ability to observe personal roles and increase the understanding of other people's point of view and reactions during the same situation. It is also a mode of active learning.

Drama therapy can help children to understand various experiences (either personal or those of other people), allowing them to enter into the reality of imaginary situations and characters - to explore emotions, attitudes, opinions and relationships. Drama makes constant demands on a person's imagination; it can help to develop children's to invent, clarify, analyse and judge.

The benefits of Drama therapy include:

- Developing communications skills, verbal and non-verbal
- Expressing and exploring feelings
- Developing social interaction skills, such as turn-taking, leading, listening and observing
- Developing artistic and creative skills
- Improving self-image and confidence
- Working with the imagination
- Having fun

### ***Counselling***

We are conscious that some children will not respond to Play Therapy and will prefer to discuss their thoughts and emotions. All of the management team have undergone training as counsellors and will share their knowledge with Motswana carers over time. The counselling we offer will help children;

- Deal with grief
- Deal with anger
- Finding positive ways of expressing emotions

More information on effective counselling is available in Appendix 1 on page xx

### ***Talks and discussion groups***

We understand that older children (and members of the local community) will be able to express themselves better than younger children and will hold talks and discussion groups to help share emotions and feelings and to demonstrate that other people are experiencing the same emotions

These will cover various topics (see below) and will provide great opportunity to address common issues in a less personal way and without singling out individuals.

They will also be used as an educational tool and cover variety of topics, often picked by the children.

- How to deal with bullying and where to find help
- The right to say no and how to do it (assertiveness skills)
- Self-responsibility & worth
- Dangers of drugs & alcohol
- Differences in social & cultural background – importance of tolerance
- What is love? and age appropriate sex education
- What is sexual abuse, how to try an prevent it and where to find help
- Expressing feelings – dealing with anger, frustration, sadness...
- Importance and benefits of conserving the environment
- Planning of TOP activities – involving the children into deciding what they would like to do during the free-play time / in clubs run by the centre

## The specific activities

We have divided this into the following sections;

- Non-therapeutic games and activities
- Getting to know each other and belonging to the group
- Anger management
- Dealing with grief (and other emotions)
- Stress relief
- Building self esteem

The options are plentiful; all that's needed is a bit of creativity and playful attitude from the staff.

It is important to note that times required for the activity are approximate.

For any game to be useful and fun, participation has to be optional!

### Non-therapeutic games and activities

#### 1. *Wallpaper full of handprints*

**Aim:** to have fun, get to know each other and create a piece of art for the centre

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity:** Should involve everyone in the centre

**Materials needed:** Big sheet of card paper, paint and pens

**Duration:** 30minutes – 1hour

All children and staff make an imprint of their hand on a big sheet of paper and write their name next to it. Once the paint dries the paper can be used to decorate the dining area or somewhere else, well visible. The children can decide what should be included on it. New children will be encouraged to make an imprint of their hand to the paper. Other information such as dates of birth, nickname could be included.

#### 2. *Lion, Person, Springbok.*

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity:** For any number of children dividable by 3

**Duration:** As long as the children want to play.

There are three positions. Each position can have an accompanying sound. It's more fun if people make up both the position and the sound. The Lion position, for example, might be hands extended out like claws, with accompanying roar. The Springbok position requires a high leap, just like when it's ready to run away. Let the children decide what will be used as each position and sound.

The game is played in similar way as “Rock / Scissors / Paper”, each one beats the other - the Lion beats the Person, the Person beats the Springbok and the Springbok beats the lion. Ask the children to create three equally sized teams. Each team, as a whole, decides what position it wants to take. When ready, all three teams line up in a triangle and display their choice. The team that wins takes a person from each team that it beats. There are two ways that the game can be drawn - when all choose the same or when all choose something different. The vast implications of this are quite potentially significant. We recommend that you play until there are only two teams left. If you want the game to go on for another hour or so, continue until everyone is on one team.

**Variation:** Let the children come up with other animals (their positions and sounds) that could be used for the game.

### 3. *Group Juggling*

**Age:** Doesn't matter  
**Group activity** Groups of no more than 10 people.  
**Materials needed:** 1 soft ball per player (made out of old socks / fabric)  
**Duration:** 15minutes +

Ask the children to get a circle. Introduce one ball. Ask the group to toss the ball around the circle, being sure not to toss it to someone too close or too far away. This should continue until everyone gets the ball once. (The best way is to ask the children to hold up one hand until they get the ball). They need to remember the pattern. Then they should repeat the movement of the ball in exactly the same pattern. After several rounds, introduce a second ball. The task of the group is to see how many balls they can keep going without dropping any.

**Variation:** To complicate this activity (after the children had chance to practise) ask them to try to expand or contract the circle, walk around. Change directions, reverse the pattern on a sign and add music or a handclapping rhythm. The main idea is to keep the game interesting and increase complex to make it and how to properly assess and engage the increasing skills of the group.

### 4. *Pru* (pronounced “*proo-eee*”)

**Age:** Doesn't matter  
**Group activity**  
**Duration:** 10 minutes (depending on the number of the participants)

Get all the participating children together in an open space and explain what the game is about. Whisper “yes” or “no” into every child's ear. Don't say yes to too many children, pick only few – depending on the size of the group – less Prui will mean longer game. Then announce that all those who you told yes to, are appointed Prui but they shouldn't tell anyone yet. The players should try to keep as quiet as possible and are only allowed to say the word “prui”. Appointed Prui say nothing at all.

When everyone is ready, they close their eyes and start slowly walking around, anywhere they want. When the children bump into each other, they shake hands and say “prui”. If the person they encounter is not one of the appointed Prui, they each go off to find someone else. When someone bumps into the pre-appointed Prui, shakes hands and says “prui”, the Prui shakes hands, doesn't say anything, and doesn't let go. Now both people are Prui and remain Prui until the end of the game. If either of them is bumped into by anyone else, more people are added to the Prui. The game continues until more or less everyone has become Prui. Then they can open their eyes.

## 5. *Catching fleas*

**Age:** Doesn't matter  
**Group activity:** 5 or more players  
**Materials needed:** Scarf for blindfolding, (watch for the variation)  
**Duration:** 15minutes (depending on the number of participants)

One child plays the flea catcher and all the others are fleas. The children decide who will be the flea catcher (they can take turns). The fleas squat on the ground and make chirping sounds. Each flea is allowed to jump ten times. The flea catcher is blindfolded and tries to catch the fleas. The fleas are allowed to jump away, but if a flea uses up all of its ten jumps, the flea may not jump any more. When the flea hunter catches a flea or touches a flea by accident, the flea is caught and has to go and wait until the next game. The game finishes when there are no more fleas left.

**Variation:** Each child becomes a flea catcher for 3 - 5 minutes and tries to catch as many fleas as possible. All children have a go as the flea catcher. Whoever caught the most fleas is the winner.

Note: someone should observe the game to make sure that the blindfolded flea catcher doesn't hurt him/herself or leave the premises.

## 6. *Posting messages*

**Age:** doesn't matter  
**Group activity** Minimum 4 players (although more is better)  
**Duration:** 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

The children stand in a long line. No one may talk. The children should concentrate on their bodies. This helps to prevent the message from being revealed before reaching its goal. Everyone has just one go to feel the message. The last child in the line can draw a shape, number or word with their index finger on the back of the child in front.

The child in front must concentrate and try to memorise what s/he felt and then draw the same image on the back of the child standing in front. The game goes on until it reaches the front of the line. The first child then says the message aloud. How much information was lost along the way?

When the game is over the first child goes to the back of the line and thinks of the next message. Game's over when everyone had a go to be first / last in the line (or if the kids lose their interest)

**Variation:** Make 2 or more teams, with the same number of players per team. Give the last children in each team the same message. On a signal, each group starts to send the message. When the message reaches the first child in the line, they should put their hand up. The winner is not only the fastest team but also the one with the closest (exact) answer.

## 7. *Get rapping!*

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Pen and paper

**Duration:** 20minutes

A style of music traditionally used to express ideas is Rap. Though people often think of Rap as a North American invention it is based deeply in West African culture - particularly those of French speaking countries such as Mali, Togo and Burkina Faso.

Divide children into groups and give them time to think about their own rap lyrics, expressing their ideas about their chosen topic.

## 8. *Dream Balloons*

**Aim:** to get to know other people's aspirations and create a positive atmosphere

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Pen, small strips of paper and different coloured balloons

**Duration:** 20minutes

Ask children to write the biggest dream of their life on the piece of paper. Ask them to fold the paper up and put the message in the balloon. Blow the balloon up but do not tie a knot on it. Ask the children to wait for everyone to be ready. Everyone should release the balloon at the same time and the balloons will fly over the room. Then everyone picks up balloon of different colour to the one they sent flying and take out the message. The paper can sometimes be a bit soggy so needs to be pulled out carefully! Read the messages on the balloons aloud. (Make sure that children wash their hands afterwards.)

## 9. *Singing and Dancing*

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity****Materials needed:** CD player (tape deck)**Duration:** 5 minutes

Moving to music allows an acceptable release of energy as well as fun. Dancing can be way to show emotions without the use of words as well as strengthen cultural identity (when music from the child's culture is included). It can encourage children to feel happy – singing and dancing is fun. Singing is something people do together – when everyone knows words of the same song they feel part of the group. Let kids sing the same song over and over if they want to.

**10. Storytelling****Age:** Doesn't matter**Group activity****Duration:** 10minutes+

Create a "fill-in-the-blank" story. Start with "once upon a time there was a..." and let the children add the next bit, then pick it up from there, say a bit, then let them add the next part again and again. You can pre-create the frame or just improvise.

Let the children sit in a circle and decide how many times the story goes around their circle. The length of the story will dictate this. One of the children starts the story. Each child then adds another sentence to it, going (anti) clockwise. If you write the story down the children can carry on with it another time.

**11. Object "hide and seek"****Age:** Doesn't matter**Group activity:** Any number of players**Materials needed:** An object to hide**Duration:** 15 minutes

The kids (and us with them) can play ordinary hide and seek or, for variety, hide and seek with an object. Hide an object (e.g. a ball) and let the children look for it while you help by saying, "Look far away, even further," or "You're close, very close!" Make sure that the children know exactly what they are looking for; also don't forget to set up boundaries in which the object is hidden so the children know where to look.

**12. Treasure hunt****Age:** Doesn't matter**Group activity****Materials needed:** Paper, pen and Cellotape, (prize – if applicable)**Duration:** As long as you create it

Think of a route and hiding spots for the hints / activities the children will have to complete to obtain the clues leading towards the 'treasure'.

Examples of activities include:

- Throwing ball on target,
- Solving puzzles,
- Knowledge tests,
- Singing a song

When the route is ready and the clues are hidden, get all the children together and divide themselves into teams with the same number of participants and approx. similar age, competing against each other

### **13. Memory games**

**Aim:** to have fun and improve memory of the children

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Various everyday use objects, piece of fabric (big enough to cover them), pen & paper, stopwatch

**Duration:** 15minutes

Put some objects that the children know (like a spoon, a stone, a piece of wool, a paper-clip) in front of them. Make sure that everyone can see properly. Ask them to look at all the things for a minute or two (depending on the number of objects) and to memorise them. Cover the things with a cloth. Ask the children to write down as many names of the objects hidden under the cloth as they can remember. After few minutes, everyone should stop and count how many objects they written down correctly. Then remove the cloth and look at all the objects again.

**Variation:** Put the objects under the cloth, ask the children to get ready. Take the cloth off and let everyone see the objects for a minute or two. When the time is up, ask the children to close and cover their eyes, remove one object and put it behind your back. Tell them to open their eyes, remove the cloth and ask everyone which object is missing. The winner gets a point. The game can go on until certain number of points achieved by one person (team) is reached.

### **14. 'Funlympic' games**

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Tape measure, paper, pens and stopwatch + the equipment for the disciplines (depending on the chosen ones), diplomas for the winners, participant cards to write results on

**Duration:** 3hours depending on the number of participants. It can be spread into shorter sessions held on every afternoon of a week.

Devise at least 5 “ridiculous” disciplines as possible;

- “Straw” javelin throw;
- Long jump in a sack;
- 50metres backwards sprint;
- Ball on a spoon slalom relay;
- Throw a shoe into wheelbarrow (distance aiming)

Gather all the equipment needed for the disciplines. Then create the posts that will be the event venues and label them with the name of the discipline. When all the preparations are ready, give each child a “participant number” and a result card, divide them into the age groups and then take each group to a different discipline venue. Before the competition starts, explain (or show) the kids what the discipline is. Write down their result into the result card and separate overall result sheet.

### ***15. Illustrate a book***

**Age:** Doesn’t matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Paper & painting/drawing materials

**Duration:** 30minutes

Ask the children to choose a book they know to think of how it could be illustrated. Let them decide if they split the work between themselves or each one of them will create few illustrations. Leave entirely up to their imaginations how the characters will look or which sections they want to illustrate.

### ***16. Alternate storytelling***

**Age:** doesn’t matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Aesop fables or other traditional story books

**Duration:** depending on the length of the story

Staff tell the children one story (e.g. from Aesop fables), when finished discuss the meaning of the fable. Ask the children if they know or heard some similar story (e.g. from their grandparents). If not, ask someone to tell any story they know.

**Variation:** talk about the lessons we can learn from stories.

### ***17. Sculptures***

**Age:** doesn't matter

**Group activity for pairs**

**Materials needed:** Digital camera to take picture of the finished 'sculpture'

**Duration:** 15minutes

Children form pairs. One child is the sculptor, the other the sculpture (they should swap the roles). The 'sculpture' child squats and tries to be as limp as possible. The sculptor decides what position the sculpture will be in and shapes the sculpture by moving and bending the limbs, standing or seating the sculpture into the pre-designed position. The sculpture child has to be as co-operative as possible, trying not to move and let the sculptor decide and create the final result. When the body is in the right position it's time to sculpt the face – the sculptor asks the sculpture to create the facial expression (e.g. open your mouth, lift your eye-brows, smile). When the statue is ready and the sculptor is happy with the final result, s/he should think of a name for their sculpture. Finally take a picture of the statue so the statue can see as well. When this is ready, the Sculpture can finally move and swap the role.

### ***18. Freeze game***

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity:** 4 and more players

**Duration:** 10minutes

One child is the "Freezer". Start and Finish line are set. All the other children gather on the start line. Their aim is to get to the finish line as fast as possible, but when they hear the command 'freeze' they have to freeze in the exact position they heard the command (including their face). The "Freezer" can keep everyone frozen as long as they like to (reasonably). After commanding 'unfreeze' everyone can start to move towards the finish line. Whoever reaches the finish line first becomes the next "Freezer" and the game starts all over again.

**Variation:** Children have to jump on one leg to the finish line, walk backwards, go through an obstacle course...

### ***19. Word football***

Sit in circle; start with a word, next person says another word starting with the last letter (or two)

### ***20. Sticky catch***

This is like normal catch but when "it" manages to catch someone, they have to keep their hand on the spot where they touched the person. They both become the "it" and have to try catching someone else. The game end when everyone is 'stacked' together. To make it more fun, the children can set rules about where one has to catch them (e.g. top of head, ankle...)

### ***21. Stuck in the mud***

One person is “it” and they have to run after the other people and try and catch them. The “caught” person has to stand still at the spot s/he was caught, with arms stretched wide and spread legs (star shaped). “it” tries to catch all of the other players. All players who are not ‘caught’ can release the stuck person by crawling between their legs. Game ends when everyone is stuck. If many players play appoint more than one “it”

### ***22. Ball chase***

**Group activity:** 3 or more players

**Materials needed:** Ball

One person is the thrower. The thrower throws the ball into the large open space. All of the others have to try and get the ball and throw it back to the thrower without anyone else intercepting the throw. Each successful throw counts for a point. The person who intercepted the ball also receives 1 point. Game ends with someone reaching 5 points.

### ***23. Clapping game***

**Group activity:** 6 or more players

**Materials needed:** A small ball

All the children sit in a circle. One child has the ball, throws it to the person sitting next to them and has to run quickly around the outside of the circle to return to their original space. Meanwhile, the ball is quickly being passed around the circle but before you the next person can receive the ball, everyone has to clap. The ball has to get back to the same place as the running child before they do.

### ***24. Frog races***

**Group activity:** At least 4 players (in pairs)

Create a start and finish line. On a start signal one person bends over, put their hands on their knees or legs and tuck their head in towards their chest. The other child then has to run and leap over the frog, placing their hands on the frog’s back to help them over. When they land – they should bend over and the second person jumps over their back. The players take turns until they reach the finish line.

### ***25. Netball***

### ***26. Skipping rope / Group skipping rope***

### ***27. Hide and seek***

***28. Large scale Jenga***

***29. Football***

***30. Dodge the ball***

***31. Chinese whispers***

***32. Tug of war***

More games will be added ...

## Getting to know each other and belonging to the group

### 1. *My World*

**Aim:** To provide an opportunity to children to talk about themselves in a non-threatening way, obtain information about the children and help the children to feel positive about themselves.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity / one-to-one**

**Materials needed:** Paper, pen & crayons

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Explain to the children, that this exercise is there to get to know them better. If you want to, participate too.

Ask children to write the heading 'My World by ...' and add their name. Ask them if they know how to draw a world (Earth) – if not draw something like it first. Then ask them to draw a large circle on the paper, describing it as a world. Let them draw some stars, sun & moon around it if they want to. Talk to the children about how they have their own world – people they like to be with, things they like to do, food they like to eat, their best friend, what they like to do (keep the questions positive).

After each question let the children to write their answer on the paper and draw a line like "island" around it. When you have finished with the questions, let the children colour in the picture - the sea and draw some details on the islands (e.g. trees, animals). When they are finished, talk about the drawing with them, explaining that all the separate things (islands) make up the whole of them (their world). Just as the world is unique, so are the children.

In one-to-one session you might do only few islands, but build on the information you get by asking additional questions.

### 2. *I Am*

**Aim:** obtain information about the children, help the children to feel positive about themselves and build self-esteem

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity / one-to-one**

**Materials needed:** paper, pen & crayons

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Explain to the children, that this exercise is there to get to know them better. If you want to, participate too.

Ask children to draw themselves in the middle of a page, with their name on the top. Ask them similar questions as in My World – keep them positive and

let them write the answers around the drawing of themselves. If they want to they can also make a little illustration of the answer.

### 3. *A Person like me*

**Aim:** to assess the children's way of thinking about specific issues. Can be used to assist disclosure by encouraging the children to talk about the issue.

**Age:** 4 & older

**Group activity (can be used for one-to-one sessions too)**

**Materials needed:** big sheet of paper, colour pens

**Duration:** 15 minutes

Together with the children write a story in which fictional character goes through a similar experience to the children (e.g. being orphan). You start a sentence, write it on the paper and let the children finish it. You (or them) write the finish of the sentence in a different colour. Start with describing sentences (e.g. The character is feeling happy when ..., lives in ... , is ... years old). End the story on a positive note.

### 4. *Safety hand – getting to know the staff*

**Aim:** To give children an easy way of remembering whom they should contact if they ever feel unsafe.

**Age:** All age groups

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Paper, crayons and pen (marker)

**Duration:** 10 minutes

Draw a picture of 2 big hands (like drawing around your own hand) on a piece of paper. Into each finger write a name (and a function) of a staff member they can go to talk to if a problem arises, they need to talk, they want to find something out, ask for help. When it's done, let the kids decorate the card and together with them find a place to hang it, so they can always look if they are not sure who they can turn to.

### 5. *The falling game*

**Aim:** to enhance trust and group cohesiveness and to encourage children to take responsibility for one another.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity for 7-9 players (more groups at the same time possible)**

**Duration:** 30 minutes

The children create a group and should agree on who will be 'the group leader' (they can take turns if they find it difficult to agree). Talk to them

about the game and how important it is to make sure no one falls. Make sure they understand how to play and demonstrate the game if needed.

All children except one stand close together in a circle, holding their hands in front of them so that the palms of their hands face towards the middle of the circle. The remaining child stands in the middle of the circle and makes him or herself as stiff as a rod. When everyone is ready, the group leader gives a signal and the child in the middle lets themselves fall in any direction. The other children in the circle must catch the child and push him or her gently in a different direction so that someone else in the circle catches him or her. Let the game go on for a few minutes.

It is important that the children trust one another. While the children in the circle learn to take responsibility for the one in the middle, the child in the middle experiences what it means to be dependent on others but also looked after and protected. The child in the middle experiences how much trust it requires to rely on others. Be prepared – some children might find it difficult to let themselves fall towards the circle.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

How did you (the child in the middle) feel when you had to let yourself fall?

How did it feel when someone fell towards you and you caught that person and gently pushed him or her in a new direction?

What must we remember to make the game to work properly? What risks are involved? What would happen if someone in the circle were not paying attention?

## 6. *The human cradle*

**Aim:** To enhance trust and group cohesiveness, and to encourage children to take responsibility for one another.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity for 7-11 players (more groups at the same time possible)**

**Duration:** 30 minutes + (depending on the children taking turns)

The children create a group and should agree on who will be ‘the group leader’ (they can take turns if they find it difficult to agree). Talk to them about the game and how important it is to make sure no one falls. Make sure they understand how to play and demonstrate the game if needed.

All children, except one divide into two groups. Children in each group stand shoulder-to-shoulder in two lines, with the two lines facing one another, close enough so that with arms outstretched, they can touch the hands of the children in the opposite group. One child lies on the floor between the two groups. When the group leader gives the signal, the children in the two opposite lines link hands beneath the child lying on the floor. When all the children are ready, one child gives the command to stand up carefully and to

raise the child in the middle on their linked hands. Once everyone is standing, the children start to rock the child slowly to and fro. When the exercise is finished, the children supporting the feet and legs of the child being carried slowly lower their arms so that the child can jump off.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

- How did you (the child being lifted) feel when you were lifted off the ground? Were you scared? Anxious?
- Nervous? Why did you feel like this?
- How did it feel to be rocked to and fro?
- How did it feel to support someone on your hands?
- What must you be aware of for the game to work? What risks are involved? What would happen if someone didn't pay attention? What would happen if the groups didn't work together?
- Would you be able to lift a child on your own like this?
- When is it especially important to work as a group or a team? (As group leader, you want the children to name various things that cannot be done alone but need teamwork to achieve them.)

## 7. *The ambulance game*

**Aim:** to enhance trust and group cohesiveness, to encourage children to take responsibility for one another.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity (5 in each group)**

**Duration:** 30 minutes (depending on number of kids)

One child pretends to be a sick person who must be taken to hospital urgently. Three or four children form an "ambulance" by kneeling closely together on their knees and hands. Decide in advance where the "hospital" is (it shouldn't be very far). First, the ambulance fetches the sick person from his or her house. The sick person lies across the backs of the children (who are on their hands and knees) and holds on. The ambulance starts to move slowly, but the children must make sure that the sick person is neither shaken up too much nor falls off. The game ends when the ambulance reaches the hospital. The more often the game is played, the better the ambulance children learn to co-ordinate their movements, to find a common rhythm and to reach their goal quickly. Children should take turns at being the patient.

**Variation:** Once the children have become used to this exercise, it can be played as a competition with more ambulances and patients. The group that reaches the hospital first wins the competition.

**Variation for bigger, stronger children**

**Materials needed:** Cones, (stopwatch), pen & paper

Arrange the children into pairs of approx. same height children and a smaller one to be a patient. Let the ambulance join their hands as a seat and the sick person sit on them, balancing themselves by holding hand around their shoulders. Create a path the ambulance has to go through to get to the hospital. Time each group (if organised as a race) or create few paths and let the children compete in a knockout (tournament spider) scheme.

### 8. *Walking blindfolded*

**Aim:** to enhance trust, to encourage children to take responsibility for one another and to activate the senses.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity for any even number of players**

**Materials needed:** Blindfolds (e.g. scarves)

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Get the children into pairs. One child in each pair is blindfolded and his or her partner is the guide. Ideally, the blindfolded child places one hand on the shoulder of the child who will lead. Together, they explore the environment by walking in different directions, up and down steps, over gravel, across sand, etc. The guide must make sure that the child who is blindfolded doesn't trip over things or bump into things. The blindfolded child can explore objects in the environment using senses other than the sense of sight, i.e. by touching, smelling and listening. Bear in mind that it may be frightening for some children to allow themselves to be led around by someone else. After playing the game once, the children should swap roles: the guide wears the blindfold and the other child leads him or her around.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children

- How did it feel to be blindfolded and guided by someone else?
- What did the blindfolded child hear? And smell? And feel? Does walking around feel different from when you are able to see? Other than not being able to see, what else felt different?
- How did the guide feel? What was the most impressive experience for you?
- What was the most difficult part of being blindfolded/leading someone around?

### 9. *The blind dogs*

**Aim:** To enhance trust, to encourage children to take responsibility for one another and to activate the senses.

**Age:** 4 & older

**Group activity for any even number of players**

**Materials needed:** Blindfolds (e.g. scarves)

Explain the game to the children and let them divide into pairs. Two pairs of children stand 10-20 metres apart from each other. Each pair chooses (or gets assigned) another pair in the opposite line, preferably one that isn't standing directly opposite. In each pair, one child pretends to be the dog and kneels on his or her hands and knees. The dogs get blindfolded. The goal of this game is for 2 dogs to meet in the middle of the gap. A person leading the game gives a signal; the dogs start to run/walk towards each other with the other child running/walking alongside. The second child is the guide, and must help his or her dog by tapping on the left or right shoulder to indicate to the dog when s/he needs to move to the left or the right. A gentle tap on the head indicates that the dog must stop. It is important to use nonverbal signs because many younger children are not yet familiar with the concepts of left and right. After the dogs have found one another, swap over - each child should have a turn at playing both dog and guide.

**Variation:** The dogs must approach each other without the guide running alongside. Instead, the dogs should bark and listen to each other to identify where the sound comes from to find each other.

### ***10. Blind walk with obstacles***

**Aim:** To enhance trust and self-confidence, to encourage children to take responsibility for one another and to activate the senses.

**Age:** 9 & older

**Group activity for an even number of players**

**Materials needed:** Blindfolds (e.g. scarves), cones, stick to draw with into sand and stopwatch (if timing)

**Duration:** 45 minutes

Before starting the game, build an obstacle course with various obstacles. If playing outside, you can even draw some into the sand (e.g. lines to step over, boxes to stop in). Agree on the start and the finish. Blindfold one child in each pair. The children gather at the start. It's easier to start with one child mastering the obstacle course at a time. The blindfolded child has to cross the obstacle course from the start to the finish. His or her partner calls directions to guide the blindfolded child over or around obstacles so that he or she can reach the finish as quickly as possible. Once the children have got used to the game, several children can start at the same time. This makes the game more difficult because each blindfolded child has to focus on the voice of his or her own guide. It is also more difficult for the guides because they have to be very observant in order to prevent the blindfolded children from bumping into each other. Allow each child to take a turn at being blindfolded.

**Important note:** When setting up the obstacle course, make sure that the obstacles are manageable for the children. You don't want them getting hurt! Avoid making the children jump: not being able to see has an influence on a person's balance and jumps that can be performed easily with open eyes are more difficult when wearing a blindfold.

**Variation:** To make it more difficult, the obstacle course can be set up after the children have been blindfolded so that it isn't familiar to them when they set off. You can time each child passing through the course to make it more competitive.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

- Were your partner's instructions helpful? When were they the most helpful?
- Would you have managed the obstacle course without help?
- Was it more difficult crossing an obstacle course that you had not seen?
- In real life, other kinds of obstacles make a person feel weak, helpless and frightened – can you name any?
- In real life, how does it feel when you manage something you thought you would never be able to cope with?
- In real life, do you have someone who helps you to overcome obstacles, like a guide? Who?

### ***11. Blind snake***

**Aim:** to enhance trust and to encourage children to take responsibility for one another.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity for any number of players, minimum of 3**

**Duration:** 15 minutes (depending on how many children)

The children stand one behind another to form a long line (like a snake) and place their hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them. The child at the front of the line is the snake's head and keeps his or her eyes open. All the other children close their eyes. The snake starts to move forward slowly. The snake's head decides where the snake will go and the others must follow without losing contact with the child immediately in front of him or her. The head must set the pace so that everyone feels safe and is able to follow. The head must be responsible for all the other children in the snake and must move carefully. The other children need courage to be led about with their eyes closed and their hands in a fixed position. Depending on how much time is available for this game, children could take turns at being the head of the snake.

### ***12. The messenger***

**Aim:** To encourage co-operation, observation, concentration and flexibility.

**Age:** 9 & older

**Group activity for 7 or more players**

**Duration:** 15 minutes

All the children stand in a circle. One child is the main messenger and stretches both arms above the head. The children on either side of the main

messenger are helper messengers. These children lift the hand that is closest to the main messenger. The main messenger sends a message to another child in the circle by nodding head towards them. This child now becomes the main messenger and must lift both arms. The children standing on either side of the current main messenger become helper messengers and must lift the arm closest to the new main messenger. The first messenger and both helper drop their arms to their sides again. And so the game continues. Anyone who raises the wrong arm must leave the circle. The game becomes more difficult as fewer children remain in the circle. The last three children to remain in the circle are the winners.

### **13. The penguin game**

**Aim:** To encourage group co-operation, recognising one another's needs, sharing, survivor skills and problem solving.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity:** 5 and more players

**Materials needed:** Old newspapers (double page for each child)

**Duration:** 15minutes + (depending on the number of children)

In this game, one child is the sun and the other children are penguins. Each penguin is given a sheet of newspaper. The paper is spread on the floor and each penguin stands on his or her sheet of newspaper. Tell the children that the newspaper is the penguin's ice brick. The children should decide how to spread the papers. Penguins can swim, but they don't have much endurance. A penguin must always be in touch with an ice brick or else it falls into the sea. The sun now walks around and starts tearing small pieces of newspaper from the ice bricks on which the penguins are standing. Eventually penguins will have to stand on one leg or even share ice bricks with neighbours. The game ends when all the penguins fall into the sea.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

- How did it feel when the ice bricks became smaller and smaller?
- What did the penguins have to do in order for everyone to survive?  
(Answers will include share a brick, move closer together and hold tightly to each other.)
- Can the children think of situations in their lives when there is not enough of something for everybody? What is scarce? (Answers might include food, space, bed space, clothing, money to pay for school, or attention.)
- How do they overcome these obstacles? What helps them to survive? Who helps them to survive?

### **14. Siamese twins**

**Aim:** To help children to respect other people, to work with other people and to co-operate in a group while retaining their unique individuality.

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity for pairs****Duration:** 20minutes

The children work in pairs. They hold one hand, or place an arm around the waist or shoulder of their partners so that they each have one free hand to use. Together, they must complete various tasks: carry a bucket, open a bottle, tie a shoelace, put on a pair of socks – the possibilities are endless. Try to adapt the difficulty of the tasks to fit the age of the children. Add interest by having the children hold one another's ears or feet instead of holding hands.

**15. Newspaper run****Aim:** To foster group cohesiveness, team spirit, conflict resolution skills, decision-making skills and self-esteem.**Age:** 7 & older**Group activity:** Minimum 6 players (but any number of groups of 3)**Materials needed:** Old newspapers**Duration:** 15minutes + (depending on the number of children)

This is a competitive game. The children work together in teams of three. Agree on a distance that the groups have to cover. Each team receives two big sheets of newspaper. One sheet is placed on the ground and the whole team stands on it, in a row, holding hands. The second sheet of newspaper is placed in front of each team. On a agreed sign, the children must cover the distance to the finish line by stepping from one sheet of newspaper to the next, then bending backwards, picking up the sheet of newspaper that they have just stepped off, placing it in front of them and stepping onto it. To make it more difficult, the children cannot let go of each other's hands and they have to collect the remaining piece of paper with their free hands. The team reaching the finish first wins the game.

**Variation:** You can organize a tournament with a spider system of qualification rounds for the finals.**16. Towel catch & Towel tennis****Aim:** to encourage group co-operation and co-ordination.**Age:** 8 & older**Group activity:** minimum 4 but any even number is possible**Materials needed:** 1 towel and 1 little ball for each pair (tennis or sponge)**Duration:** 20minutes +

Working in pairs, children hold opposite ends of a towel and put the ball into it. The children then try to throw the ball up by lowering the towel and pulling it quickly to make the ball fly into the air. (This may need some practice at first). Once the children get better at this, they may start counting how many times they can toss the ball without it falling on the ground and compete against the other pairs.

**Variation:** If you have a large group of children four children can hold each towel. Bear in mind that if more children take part it becomes more difficult to catch and toss the ball. Much more co-ordination and communication is needed. It's up to the children how they organize themselves.

**Another variation:** As soon as the ball is thrown in the air, another pair of children can try to catch the ball on their towel. Then throw it back in the air for the other pair of children to catch. Whoever drops the ball first loses a point. This game can be played until one of the pairs reaches certain amount of points, agreed before the start of the game.

### ***17. Chase the tail***

**Aim:** To encourage group co-ordination and group cohesiveness.

**Age:** 6 & older  
**Group activity:** 6 or more players (more the better)  
**Materials needed:** piece of fabric to represent the tail  
**Duration:** 15minutes

The children stand in a row; one after another, holding on to each other's shoulders. The child at the front of the row is the head of the snake and the last child is the tail. A piece of cloth is stuck into the belt or the trousers of the child at the end of the row. The head of the snake should try to grab the piece of cloth at the end of the tail. While the head of the snake chases the tail, all the other children hold on tightly to the child in front of him or her. This means that the head can only run as fast as the whole snake allows. The head and the tail must pay attention to the rest of the group while running and chasing each other. If the head manages to grab the cloth, the head becomes the tail and the next child in the row takes over as the head.

**Note:** If this game gets too wild, the children will let go of one another and they may stumble or fall. You should interrupt the game – the purpose of the game is to stay connected to one another and let the children calm down a bit, then carry on if they want to.

### ***18. Co-operation***

**Aim:** To help children to respect other people, to work with other people and to co-operate in a group while retaining their unique individuality.

**Age:** 10 & older  
**Group activity for pairs**  
**Materials needed:** Piece of fabric to tie children's hands together, paper, crayons and Cellotape

Use the Cellotape to stick sheet of paper to the wall or the floor. Have two children stand beside one another and then tie their adjacent hands together. Their other hands should be held behind their backs. Now ask them to use the

joined hands to draw a picture of something. Suggest something straightforward to start with, like a house or a car. Both children should hold the same pen.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

- Make sure that both children express their opinions. Encourage them to discuss the questions below.
- How does it feel when someone else influences what you plan to do?
- Were you able to discuss what you planned to do?
- Who took the lead and who followed? Why did someone take the lead? Did you change roles?
- Can you think of a situation in real life where you have to discuss and plan what to do with another person?
- Is it ever possible for a person to do just what he or she feels like?
- What does one have to consider when working as part of a team?

### **19. The human camera**

**Aim:** To foster trust and to encourage observation skills, accurate perception and visual focusing.

**Age:** 9 & older

**Group activity for any even number of children (pairs)**

**Duration:** 20 minutes

The children agree who will be the camera and who will be the photographer. The camera closes his or her eyes and the photographer leads the “blind” camera around until he or she finds an interesting subject. The photographer adjusts the camera and, by gently pulling on the ear of the camera, opens its eyes. Without moving his or her head, the camera looks closely at the subject, trying to observe as much as possible. After a few moments, the shutter closes (the camera’s eyes close) and the camera is led to a new subject. The same process is repeated. The child pretending to be the camera must try to produce inner pictures of what he or she sees. After taking pictures of three subjects, the camera and the photographer sit down and the child who played the camera describes, with the help of the inner pictures, what he or she saw. Then the two children swap roles and the game is repeated.

### **20. Wandering hoops**

**Aim:** to encourage co-operation, team spirit, group-cohesion and self-esteem through overcoming obstacles.

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity:** 5 or more players

**Materials needed:** Hula-hoop (2 if 2 groups compete against each other)

**Duration:** 20 minutes

All of the children stand in line holding hands. The most important rule is that no one can let go of the other children's hands. The children must make the hula-hoop move from one side of the line to the other by climbing through it and you they can help each other in any way that doesn't disconnect their hands.

Once the children are ready in the line, someone puts a hula-hoop over the hands of the last two children in the row in such way that the hula-hoop hangs over their clasped hands. The hula-hoop should dangle loosely. One child must start by climbing feet-first through the hula-hoop and then squeezing his or her whole body through the ring so that the hula-hoop moves over his or her head and across the other arm. The child's neighbour must repeat the process. The trick is to step through the hula-hoop feet-first and then with the help of one's neighbours, jiggle the hula-hoop up until the head can be squeezed through. In the beginning this will take some practice. The children will soon realise that they must assist one another by allowing their hands to be pulled in various directions as each child wriggles through. The hula-hoops will only move if the children observe and respond to the needs of their neighbours and work together as a team.

**Variation:** Let the children form a circle instead of the line and once they know the system of getting through the hula-hoops introduce second hoop. In that way everyone is involved. Alternatively you can have 2 lines compete against each other.

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children

- In the beginning, how did you feel when you got stuck and didn't know how to get through the hula-hoop?
- What helped you to get through the hula-hoop?
- Can you think of situations in real life in which you have to adjust to other people's needs so that everyone can reach a goal?
- How does it feel when you have to respond to the needs of different people at the same time?

## **21. Keeping balance**

**Aim:** to encourage observation, concentration, awareness of and respect for one another.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity for pairs**

**Materials needed:** Two straight wooden sticks per pair, at least 50cm long

**Duration:** 15 minutes

Each pair will need two straight sticks of equal length. The children stand facing each other at about the same distance as the length of the stick. Ask them to put their hands up (to the level of their shoulders), with palms facing away from their bodies. Place one end of the stick against the tip of the left index finger and the other against the tip of the right index finger of the child

standing opposite. Then repeat the same on their other hands with the second stick.

To keep the sticks balanced and up, both children have to apply a little pressure. Now they can try to hold the sticks up and balanced – they can move their hands if they get tired but will have to co-operate, observe closely and react quickly to one another. Both children have to learn to adjust to each other's movements. This is not as easy as it sounds.

**Variation:** The game becomes more difficult if more children participate. Depending on the number of children, the game can be played with children standing in a triangle, in two lines or in circles. It can also be turned into a competition – everyone starts at the same time and the pair that manages to keep the sticks up for the longest time wins.

## 22. *Electric rope*

**Aim:** to foster group cohesiveness and team spirit, to reinforce conflict resolution and decision-making skills, and to encourage self-esteem.

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity for 5 or more players**

**Materials needed:** Few metres long rope (or piece of thick string)

**Duration:** 20minutes+ (depending on the number of participants)

Explain to the children how to play this game first. It's important that they understand that in this game they are a team. Then agree who will hold the rope.

The children must climb over the rope as a group, but they must imagine that the rope has an electric current and no one should touch it. They can help each other to get over the rope (never under) but cannot use anything else to help them e.g. chairs to stand on). They should be inventive and think of a strategy that will get everyone over the rope. The children will (normally during the game) realise that it is only possible to get the whole team over the rope if they discuss the problem and develop a strategy. They will also realise that the stronger children need to assist the less agile children.

**Round 1:** Two children take opposite ends of a rope and pull it straight about 30 cm from the ground. All other children stand on one side of the rope. The children must get over the rope as a group holding hands. This is quite easy and children usually manage without much difficulty.

**Round 2:** Now the game becomes more complicated. Ask the two children holding the rope to lift it so that it is approximately hip height. Now the group must get over (not under) the rope without touching it. Some children will still not find this particularly difficult. But they only win the game if everyone gets over the rope – including the less agile children. Usually, children climb over the rope by lifting each other over it or climbing onto each other's backs. If some children do not manage at all, make it a little easier for them by

lowering the rope. The rope should be high enough that the children can just manage without any accidents.

**Note:** It is crucial to discuss the game with the children after they have finished.

- Why did the whole group manage to get over the rope?
- What was helpful?
- Who took the decisions?
- Is strength all that is needed to jump over the rope, or does it need other skills like thinking, communicating and decision-making as well?
- If you are “strong”, does it mean that you are generally strong or do you have weaker points as well?
- If you belonged to the group that needed help, do you have other skills and strengths that are valuable?

### **23. Imaginary T-shirt (icebreaker)**

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Paper, crayons

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Ask the children to think about a design of their own (imaginary) T-shirt, with their personal motto (explain what a motto is) on the front and a picture of themselves under it (how they see themselves), their likes on the left sleeve & dislikes on the other sleeve and their dreams and achievements written on the back (they can draw them if preferred over writing them down). Let the children do the drawing.

When everyone is finished, ask each child to present its T-shirt. Set the rule that no one is allowed to laugh at what someone else is saying (our differences are what makes us individuals).

### **24. Animal that represents me (icebreaker)**

**Age:** doesn't matter

**Group activity, staff members participate too**

**Duration:** depending on the number of participants

Ask everyone to choose an animal they think that represents them. Give them few moments to think about it. When everyone is ready – they should present to the group what animal they've picked and explain why. Set the rule that no one is allowed to laugh – our differences are what makes us special and individuals!

### **25. Animal that I would like to be**

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity, staff members participate too**

**Duration:** Depending on the number of participants

Ask everyone to think of an animal they would like to be. Give them few moments to think about it. When everyone is ready – they should present to the group what animal they've picked and explain why.

**For variation:** Ask the children to act as the animal and the rest of the group guess which animal they represent.

**26. 3 things I would pack into my bag (icebreaker)**

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Duration:** Depends on the number of participants

Ask everyone to think about 3 things they would pack into their bag if they had to leave Planet Earth (or went somewhere else – use your imagination). It can be absolutely anything but must fit into a bag (the bag can be a big one). When everyone is ready, ask the children to present it to the group and explain why they've chosen those things. You can start first Set the rule that no one is allowed to laugh at what someone else is saying (our differences are what makes us individuals).

## Anger Management

### 1. *Happy, sad, angry*

**Aim:** To introduce talking about feelings, such as anger and sadness and give the children 'permission' to have such feelings

**Age:** 5 - 14

One-to-one session (may be adjusted for a group activity)

**Materials needed:** Paper, colour pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Ask the children to draw 3 faces, evenly spaced on the top of a page, labelled 'Happy', 'Sad', and 'Angry'. Then ask what makes them feel this way or when they feel this way. Start with happy and let them write few examples (try to help them if they cannot think of anything). Talk about the examples given.

**Variation:** change the feelings for different, such as 'Worried', 'Embarrassed', 'Scared'

### 2. *Building the house of cards*

**Aim:** To examine how children deal with frustration and help them to handle it

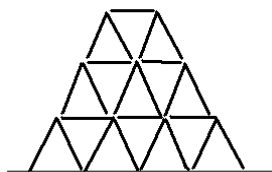
**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** pack of cards

**Duration:** 10 minutes

Let the children work together in groups of three to five. If you only have one pack of playing cards, have one group of children demonstrate the game to the rest of the group. You may want to make notes about how the children react. Ask the group to build a three-storey house by leaning the cards towards each other and building one layer on top of another as illustrated in the diagram. Give the children ten minutes to try. Watch the children for signs of frustration. How do the children express frustration? Do conflicts arise among group members? Are all the children in the group involved? If the children get very frustrated, end the exercise and discuss with the group how to deal with frustration (e.g. count to ten and start again, go for a little walk to 'cool down'). After the 10 minutes is up ask the whole group for ideas about what they can do when they get frustrated.



### 3. Get rid of it!

**Aim:** to let off steam

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity for 4 or more players**

**Materials needed:** Old newspaper squashed into a ball and whistle

**Duration:** 5 - 10minutes

Divide the children into two teams and allocate each team to one half of a field with a line down the middle. Each player is given one sheet of newspaper, which must be squashed into a paper ball. On a signal (e.g. whistle) all children throw their paper balls into the opposite half of the field.

The aim is for both teams to have as few balls as possible on their side of the field at the end of the game. Each team immediately tosses the balls that land on their side of the field back to the other side. The winning team – when time's up – is the team with the fewest balls on their side of the field.

Don't forget to ask the children to collect the paper balls and throw them away after you have finished playing.

### 4. *Lion and Hunter*

**Aim:** To let off steam.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity for 7 and more players**

**Materials needed:** Piece of cloth and ball (soft)

**Duration:** 20 minutes

First mark the boundaries of a field within which the players must stay. Let the children choose who is going to be Lion and who will be Hunter. The lion is given the piece of cloth, and Hunter the ball. The rest of the children are Impala. The Impala try to hide in the field. The Hunter and the Lion both chase the Impala, either trying to hit them with the piece of cloth (the lion) or "shoot" them with the ball (the hunter).

The hunter has the advantage of the ball being faster, but the ball leaves the field more often and he or she has to fetch it. The lion has the advantage that the cloth stays where it falls, but the lion has to get closer to the impala to catch them.

Each impala that is hit by the Hunter's ball leaves the field and sits on the Hunter's side. They sit on the Lion's side if they are hit with its cloth. The game ends when all the Impala have been caught. The winner is the one with the most impala.

**Variation:** The Hunter and the Lion are trying to hit each other. In this case the side with the most Impala already caught is the winning team.

### 5. *Hit me if you can!*

**Aim:** To let off steam and encourage concentration.

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity for 7 players of more (more the better)**

**Materials needed:** Old newspaper

**Duration:** 15minutes (depending on the number of participants)

All the playing children sit in a circle. Explain to everyone that the only rule in this game is not to hit very hard! One child stands in the middle of the circle holding a rolled-up newspaper. To start the game, someone calls out the name of one of the children sitting in the circle. Immediately, the child holding the newspaper tries to hit the knees of the child whose name was called out. The child whose name was called out may only "rescue" him or herself by quickly calling out the name of another child in the circle. The child holding the newspaper immediately tries to hit the second child on the knees. The game continues until one child doesn't react quickly enough and is hit on the knees. This child then stands in the circle with the newspaper and the other child joins the children in the circle. The faster the children react, the faster and more fun the game becomes.

**Note:** In an environment where hitting or beating children is common (although not allowed) it may be necessary to discuss the game with the children, explaining that their game is the only time that they may hit one another.

**It may be valuable to use this game as a starting game for a group discussion about aggression, anger and how to express negative emotions.**

- How do you feel when someone hits you?
- Do you think it's right to hit someone or to be hit by someone?
- Why do some children hit others? What feelings make them hit a person? (Helplessness, rage, anger, etc.) What could we do instead of beating or hitting?
- Why do adults hit children? You think it's OK for adults to beat children? What legal rights do children have?

### 6. *Mock fighting with remote control*

**Aim:** To deal with conflict in a group. It helps aggressive children deal with their aggressive behaviour and teaches them about problem solving

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity – everyone should be present**

**Duration:** 30minutes +

If there has been a fight in the group, the children who were fighting will be very tense. The rest of the group may also be upset and may have taken sides. The atmosphere could be very unpleasant and it would be useless trying to do something else. Ask each of the “opponents” to describe briefly what happened. Make sure that neither child is interrupted by anybody. Don’t take sides. Tell them to come to the front and play the fight in the classroom. Establish some rules first. No one may disobey the rules.

No one is allowed to touch the other person. Each movement has to stop a few centimetres short of the other child. There is no talking. Everything has to be said by gestures and actions. Tell the children that you are in charge of an imaginary remote control. Make sure that the children understand what a remote control is. Test it on the whole class: ask them to move their arms around, press your imaginary button and call, “Slow!” Everyone should slow down. Press your imaginary button and call, “Fast!” Everyone should speed up. Press your imaginary button and call, “Stop!” Everyone should freeze.

This imagined control allows you to control what is happening. The whole scene will first be played in slow motion (like an action replay on television, moving very, very slowly). Let the opponents re-act the fight from the start. Press your imaginary button and call, “Start.” Stay in total control of the scene. It might still be full of anger and rage. Don’t allow any real fighting to start.

When you see the players speeding up, slow them down with your remote control - the movements can be extremely slow. You can even stop the scene, leaving the two opponents standing there “frozen”. When the two opponents reach the end of the scene, “freeze” them and ask them how they feel in that situation. Ask if they can think of another way to solve their conflict and avoid a fight. Ask the class for ideas (keep the players frozen). Ask the players if they would like to try another scene in which they try out other ways to solve the conflict. Tell them that you will have to rewind the scene (like you rewind a tape). When you press the rewind button they will have to walk backwards and do all the movements backwards. This will have to happen very quickly because tapes rewind very quickly! This usually looks very funny and makes everyone laugh.

When they are back in their starting position, press “play” and start the two players off again. Start them in slow motion, but allow the scene to unfold at normal speed. When they reach the end of the scene, ask them how they feel. If there are still negative feelings, talk about what can be done to solve the problem. What should happen in the scene to make these feelings disappear? You may need to rewind the scene and play it all over again until everyone is happy. After you have finished, let the ex-opponents sit down. Discuss the non-violent problem solving.

**Note:** This technique is time-consuming but don’t see it as wasted time!

## 7. *The screaming game*

**Aim:** to let off steam and relieve tension

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity (everyone should participate)**

**Duration:** 10 minutes

Divide the children into two groups. Each group stands in a line, about 15 metres apart. One child from each group stands behind the opposite group. Each group creates a five-word sentence. One person from each group tells you the sentence that the group has chosen. You will stand between the two lines, right in the middle.

When you give a sign, both groups start shouting their sentence to the child from their group who is standing behind the opposite group. They all have to shout at the same time and both groups are shouting at the same time, so it will be difficult for the children behind the lines to understand their sentences. As soon as one of the two children thinks they have understood the sentence, the child must run to you to report the sentence. If the child understood the sentence correctly, his or her group gets a point. If the child misunderstood the sentence, the other group gets a point. The two listeners join their groups again and two other children are chosen to stand behind the lines and listen.

## 8. *Anger diary*

**Aim:** to help children to control their anger and find safe ways of releasing it

**Age:** 8 & older

**One-to-one sessions / child on their own**

**Materials needed:** Pen and small exercise book or printout Appendix 5







Keeping an anger diary is one of the most useful methods of analysing anger and finding coping strategies. The diary should be used to record all times of anger. Ask the child to write down date & time, who or what made him/her angry, how angry they were (scale 1-5), what they did, own thoughts and how his/her body felt.

When there are a few entries in the diary it will be possible to see if there is a pattern. Help the child to analyse the entries by asking following questions:

- Does your anger always happen at the same time of day?
- Do the same people/things make you angry?
- Do you always do the same things?
- Do your thoughts make a difference to how angry you become?

Discovering whether or not there is a pattern to the child's anger will help when developing strategies to manage it. Give the child some tips on how to manage the anger in a 'safe' way and monitor their progress from time to time. They should still carry on with writing the anger diary to see the progress.

**ANGER DIARY** should keep a copy of:

					
<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Who/what made you angry?</b>	<b>How angry were you?</b>	<b>What you did</b>	<b>Your thoughts</b>	<b>How your body felt</b>

## Dealing with grief (and other emotions)

### 1. *Face*

**Aim:** Help the children to talk about feelings and realise that people sometimes cover up their feelings

**Age:** 5 & older

**One-to-one session (may be adjusted for a group activity)**

**Materials needed:** paper, colour pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Draw a face, which is happy on way up, but sad (or scared) the other way. Starting under the happy face write a suitable legend around the face, such as “Sometimes, when I smile I’m really feeling sad inside”. Try to put the words smile and sad immediately under the appropriate face. Discuss with the children how and why people sometimes over their feelings and try to find some examples from their own life when someone else pretended to be happy when they were really sad.

### 2. *Feel-wheel*

**Aim:** To draw out feelings related to individual situations or circumstances, to help the children recognize these feelings and lead to the discussion about how the feelings can affect their actions.

**Age:** 7 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Thin card paper, colouring pens and scissors

**Duration:** 15 minutes

Together with the children draw circle on a sheet of card paper, divide it into sections and into each write a name of different emotion (e.g. excited, scared, happy, angry, confused), choose a colour for each one of these emotions. When the wheel is ready, discuss situations (you may involve a fictional character) and ask the children to choose how the person would feel and react. Then let the children to choose the situations make sure that all the emotions were discussed.

**Variation:** Children can role-play the situations where the feelings arise. To have more fun, ask children to act out something as if they were feeling somehow (e.g. wash your face as if you are happy)

### 3. *A child called ...*

**Aim:** To promote coping skills of a child, offer understanding of child’s behaviours and worries

**Age:** 5 – 12

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper – up to 10 pages, colouring pens (needle & string to keep the pages together)  
**Duration:** 1 hour + (few sessions)

Together with a child write and illustrate a book, which deals with their problem subject (e.g. feeling lonely). Talk to the child about what worries them and how they would like to overcome this and their plans for the future (not too distant). This book should be about 10 pages long and contain many drawings (especially for younger children) created by the child. The book doesn't have to be created in one session. It may be better not use the child's name but create a character facing similar problems. Start with the current situation and go into the future, make sure it ends on a positive but realistic note. Once the book is finished, give it to the child to keep safe and look & read it when feeling down or worried. It can help the child to review their progress in dealing with their difficult situation and keep positive outlook on it.

#### 4. *The pit*

**Aim:** To help young people see that there are people who will help them when they feel helpless, but that they must act too.

**Age:** 11 & older  
**Group activity / one-to-one session**  
**Materials needed:** paper, crayons and pen  
**Duration:** 30 minutes

Ask the children to draw a simple line that has a large U-shape in it. Then ask the child to tell you where they feel they are = top of the pit is feeling fine; bottom of the pit is feeling as dreadful as anyone can. Let them draw a matchstick figure to the place they feel they are. Then draw on top of the pit all the people that are there to help them (that is pulling them out of the pit) and a rope between these people, dangling into the pit just out of reach of the figure. Talk to the child about their need to reach out and take hold of the rope and then translate the analogy into how they can help themselves to make the best out of the help offered. Make sure you don't leave the drawing until the figure in the pit is firmly grasping the rope.

#### 5. *Clear thinking*

**Aim:** To help children to practise positive thinking (recognize helpful & hindering thoughts), build self-esteem

**Age:** 7-14  
**Group activity / one-to-one session**  
**Materials needed:** Paper, crayons  
**Duration:** 30 minutes

Together with the children identify worrying thoughts or those that contribute to low self-esteem (suggest some if they can't think of any at the beginning).

Once you've collected a few of these, draw some jagged shapes with legs, arms and eyes (if the children want make them look menacing) on the left side of the paper. These are the 'Unhelpfuls'. Using the children's own experiences draw speech bubble containing the unhelpful thought (e.g. No one ever plays with me).

Alongside the 'Unhelpfuls' put the 'Helpfuls'. Draw them as more cloudlike creatures with friendly features. Each unhelpful thought needs at least one, preferably two helpful ones to match it. (e.g. Zoe played with me yesterday & They always play with me if I ask them). The children might need help generating positive thoughts. Talk about how the better thoughts need to start floating into the child's mind whenever unhelpful thoughts or worries arise.

## 6. *Way of life*

**Aim:** To show children how they changed and will continue to change and to help them see that their lives are improving

**Age:** 8 & older

**One-to-one session / Group activity**

**Materials needed:** paper, pen and crayons

**Duration:** 45 minutes

Let the children draw a winding path (representing their life until now) leading into a meadow (representing future) on a piece of paper. Then they should fill the pathway with short descriptions of how things were and perhaps draw piles of stones for obstacles, flowers or special marks for surprises and happy moments (the creativity is up to the individual child). They should write 'Now' to the end of the path and fill the meadow with their future plans, and write their hopes and wishes under a little rainbow somewhere on the picture.

Children are usually very encouraged by doing this activity and particularly enjoy filling in the meadow – give them more paper if they run out of space but still have more ideas about their future.

## 7. *Future profile*

**Aim:** To help children think of how things might be different in the future, and to realize that the change is inevitable but can be partly under one's own control. It can also help them realize that to make change happen involves certain steps along the way, which can be broken down to small achievable goals.

**Age:** 10 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, ruler and colour pens

**Duration:** 45 minutes +

Together with the child draw a timeline in one direction on a sheet of paper and a number of relevant areas of development down the other axis (e.g. My

friends; My education; Where I will be living; Special relationships; Having fun; My responsibilities; Major achievements; Things that will have changed; What will make me happy?; What will make me angry or sad?). Along the time line write approximate time zones (e.g. 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, 5 years).

Different time zones and different topics of development will be appropriate for each child. Ask the child to fill in the progress they feel will occur over the time span.

If the child tends to leap ahead with life, not planning the steps along the way, start with the furthest time away and fill in the other areas later. If the child has not ventured to think about the change, start with the nearest time zone and move forward, encouraging to think of how old they will be at each time point. Once written up, review it with the child. Encourage them to tell you how they feel about the things, what they think might be the most difficult and which they most look forward to. This is an opportunity to 'pep' talk the child on working towards the goal.

**Variation:** Ask the whole group of children to think what they think they will do in 5/10 years time (make sure you choose time in which there is possibility of change, but not 20 years or so!) and write it down. Then let them turn the page and write down what they would LIKE to do (dream to do) in 5/10 years time. It's a good start up for a group discussion.

## 8. *First steps forward*

**Note:** This is a good follow up to activity 7) Future profile

**Aim:** To help children see that they can work towards goals for the future by taking small steps towards them now.

**Age:** 10 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, pen, crayons and ruler

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

After discussing what the child wants in future, ask them to head the paper 'First steps forward' and divide the sheet into 4 columns – head the first column 'Future goals' and the next three 'Step 1', 'Step 2' and 'Step 3'. Choose a few long-term goals where something that the child does now will make a difference. Write these in the first column and then discuss what they can do now (the steps).

For example, the child may want to work as a nurse. The first 3 steps may be, 'catch up at school', 'complete the school biology project' and 'learn first aid'. These first steps set the goals to achieve before the next session, when more steps can be discussed and should be thought up by the child.

## 9. *Positive self-talk*

**Aim:** To promote positive thoughts in particular problem areas by helping the child to understand their thought patterns and rehearse positive statements.

**Age:** 9 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, crayons, strips of card (approx. 6x2cm)

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Together with the child identify areas in which s/he thinks in a negative way. Ask the child to track their thoughts about the problems. Write the thoughts on one side of the paper, spaced well apart. Opposite them write positive self-talk that the child can use, create the sentences together with the child.

Examples of positive self-talk: I can love myself as much as I love ... ; I am not perfect and we all make mistakes; I can accept myself when I make a mistake; I can learn from my mistakes; I can forgive others when they make a mistake; I can learn to trust people; I am a survivor; I am loved and lovable; I can do it; Count to 10 and think again; I am able to try new things and take the risk of a failure; All bad runs are followed by a good one.

Write the chosen positive self-talk/s on a small piece of card (able to fit into a pocket) and suggest they keep them somewhere close (get them to decide where) so that they can read them for inspiration when the going gets tough. In future sessions, more self-talks may emerge and the cards kept close may need to be changed.

**Variation:** If the children keep a diary, they may be encouraged to come up with a positive self-talk each day, which fits the happenings of that day. (Later on in the project we might want to with the help of the kids come up with one for the day or week)

## 10. *My life so far*

**Aim:** To record losses as well as achievements. It's particularly useful for children who have to deal with difficult life circumstances.

**Age:** 8 & older

**One-to-one session (may be adjusted for a group activity = e.g. Life of TOP Banana)**

**Materials needed:** Folder, loose papers, pen, crayons, (photos if available)

**Duration:** 30 minutes sessions, at least 5

During this activity the child is making a record of significant events in their life and their feelings connected with them. It also helps them to focus on who they are now. It takes a form of a folder going through the child's life from their birth (e.g. include family tree, house moves, schools attended, hobbies...). Let the child illustrate it and use photographs of people and places when possible. Do not rush it. Encourage the child to bring out the

feelings associated with events at the time. **It is important that at the end of each session the child is left with a positive feeling about who they are now.** For example you may wish to conclude with how the child handles difficult situations, emotions or their self-esteem now.

Do not feel bound to do the work for the folder in a chronological order. It can be a less emotional load for the child if you move from difficult times to good times. If you put each little bit on a separate page, the pages can then be placed in chronological order afterwards. This system also has the advantage that if the child remembers piece of information later, they can add it into the file. Many children like to update 'My life so far', so remember to give them permission to add a record of important events or achievements which happen after the conclusion of the session/s with you.

### ***11. Talking Faces***

**Aim:** To get to know one's own feelings and to be able to express them.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Scissors, pen and paper

**Duration:** 15minutes + (depending on the number of children)

Write names of different feelings on little cards. Let each child choose a card and read the feeling silently to him/herself. (If the child can't read, you should whisper the name of the feeling to them). Each child should demonstrate the feeling to the rest of the group using only facial expressions or body language. The other children try to guess what the feeling is.

### ***12. Best Memory Picture***

**Aim:** To assist the children to come to terms with loss (dead parents) and assist their progression of grief through drawing / artwork.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity / one-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, pencils, crayons, paint, pictures (to use for collage), glue and scissors

**Duration:** 30minutes +

Ask the children to think of their best memory of the person who has died. Let them think how they could best recreate this memory as a picture / collage. Help the kids that don't know how to start it. Then let the child do their 'design'. During the task or afterwards, discuss the picture with the child, using questions such as the following: Why is it the best memory? What else does it make you think about? What will you do with this picture? What would the person think of this picture? What will other people think of this picture (does it matter)?

Include in the discussion any other topics that may arise from the picture, such as what happens when someone dies. Reinforce that although the person has died, the memories have not gone.

### ***13. Pictures and bubbles***

**Aim:** To get to know one's feelings and how feelings can be expressed.

**Age:** 9 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Pictures of people in different situations expressing various emotions (enough for the whole group), paper, pens and glue

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Let each child from the group choose a picture (or give them one). Ask them to think about what they see and how they think that the person on the picture feels, thinks and what they would say/do. Then let the children draw a feeling bubble (square shaped), a thinking bubble (cloud-shaped) and a speaking/acting bubble (round).

The child should write the comments in the appropriate bubbles and paste them onto the picture. If a child describes a story that contains negative feelings (or expressions of helplessness, anger, sadness, aggression, hate, revenge, betrayal, guilt, shame or disgust) you could introduce a new symbol: a "help" bubble or a "rescue" star. The child could use the rescue star to identify a possible solution to the situation in the picture. (E.g. the child in the picture could be described as very anxious because she is afraid that other children in school will tease her because she has very old shoes that are falling apart. The rescue star will say that she could try to talk to the teacher about her problem. The teacher then could discuss teasing in class and establish a class rule against it).

When everyone is ready, they can present their work to the whole group.

### ***14. Memory Candle***

**Aim:** To have a specific time when the child remembers the person who has died and has the opportunity to talk about them and grieve.

**Age:** 7 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Lighter (matches) and candle (on which you make marks that indicate approx. 15 minutes time periods. When the candle burns to the mark it will be blown out)

**Duration:** 15 – 20 minutes

You can introduce the task by talking about how people sometimes light candles in churches to remember someone who died. Explain that when you light the candle the child will be able to watch it burn and it will be a special

time to remember the person for whom the child is grieving (wants to remember). Light the candle and encourage the child to talk. They may avoid eye contact with you by concentrating on the candle. Have some questions handy to help the child if they become anxious but don't be afraid of the silence if the child seems to be able cope with this. Ask the questions in a quiet, calm manner to aid the child's confidence and concentration. Suitable questions may be: What was the colour of their hair/eyes? Can you remember anywhere you went together? What is your best memory? Did they ever tell you something funny?

If the child starts to cry, tell them that it's all right to be upset. See if, even when crying they can remember good things. If a child becomes very anxious or uncomfortable, ask if they would like the candle to be blown out and if they say yes, do it immediately. However, explain to the child that lots of people feel sad or worried when they think about people who have died, but it's all right to think of them. Also tell the child how some people, even children, feel guilty when people die, even though it was not their fault and there was nothing they could have done.

As you end the activity (by extinguishing the flame when it burns to the mark), bring the child back to their everyday life and encourage them to tell you about something they are looking forward to. However, they may need a cuddle (give them the chance but don't force it) before they are ready to leave the subject.

### ***15. Forever part of me***

**Aim:** To help children realize that the person who has died has left behind influences which have changed the child's life and which will remain.

**Age:** 8 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, pen and crayons

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Let the child write down the name of a person who has died in the top left corner of the sheet of paper. Then let them surround the name (but leave a blank space in the right hand corner) with things that describe the person – their favourite things, what they were good at, what other people liked about them, their personality, what was their favourite food (choose positive things).

Then ask the child which aspects of the person (from those written down) the child has enjoyed or has in common with the person and let them circle or colour those bits. Discuss each as you go along. Then ask the child to draw themselves in the right lower corner. When they have done this, draw lines or arrows from the chosen aspects to the drawing of the child. If appropriate make each circle and line look like a bunch of balloons held by the child. Alternatively they can be described as strings, which go to the heart of the child (be led by the child). Talk about how the person has influenced lots of

people, and that these are the things that have influenced the child. These influences will last for the child's life, and thus are forever part of them.

This task leads on naturally to a discussion of other aspects of a child's life, which may be very different from those that the person who died. This makes it easy to leave the session on a positive note, looking forward to the future.

### ***16. Moments of remembrance***

**Aim:** to assist smoother and more effective move through the grief stages

**Age:** 6 & older

**One-to-one sessions**

**Materials needed:** Pen, paper and Cellotape

**Duration:** 15 minutes +

Ask the child to think and talk about positive memories and stories about the deceased parent/friend. If the child doesn't want to talk to you about those things provide them with the opportunity to write a letter to the deceased parent/friend. In this way children can express their feelings, tell the untold and finish the unfinished. If they want to let you read it afterwards, do so. If the child wants to, s/he can take the letter to the grave of the deceased parent/friend, alternatively tell them to 'post' the message – rip it into very small pieces and release it to the wind.

### ***17. My face in the mirror***

**Aim:** to identify feelings and see how they are expressed on our own face

**Age:** 8 & older

**One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Mirror

**Duration:** 20 minutes

Ask the child to look into the mirror and describe what s/he sees. The conversation may go like this: "It's me!"

"Yes, it's you. Have a close look and describe what you see...Yes, ears, nose, mouth, hair, eyebrows, teeth, the collar of your shirt." Try to get the child to give you as detailed a description as possible. After the description, ask the child whether the reflection in the mirror looks happy, sad, angry, content, etc. Then you can ask the child to change the reflection – let the child experiment with making funny faces. Ask the child to step aside so they cannot see their face in the mirror and then ask the child to make a sad (happy/angry/jealous) face = say that this is easier to do when thinking of a sad (happy / angry / jealous) situation. As soon as the face expression changes, ask the child to look in the mirror again. Let the child describe what happens to their face when their emotions change.

## 18. Mood faces

**Aim:** To assess the children's perception of self in a variety of potential problem areas. It can provide us with easy and accessible means of assessment, which can be used at various points throughout therapy to monitor the progress (well being of the children)

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity**

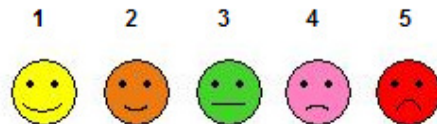
**Materials needed:** Paper with photocopied text (attached) and pens

**Duration:** 15 minutes

Prepare the worksheet. At the left of the sheet write the themes of the feelings / situation / moods, to be assessed. Do not have more than 10 themes at one time to keep the children interested and concentrating.

Examples of the themes: Happy, Friendly, Worried, Full of energy, Frightened, Upset, Lazy, Feel different from others, Confident. Above the "smilies" write the measure they represent – No.1 = Very much so; No.2 = sometimes; No.3 = only for a short time; No.4= almost never; No.5 = not for moment (Be careful what themes you choose so the captions above the "smilies" are not confusing the children!)

Ask the children to write their name at the top of the page and circle on each line the smiley, which reflect the extent to which they felt during the assessed period (e.g. week). Make sure they understand how to use the scale. Collect the papers and assess how the children are doing – if the need is seen go through the responses and elaborate on them with the individuals (why they feel this way, what changes it, how long they felt this way...)



**Variation:** do this exercise as anonymous survey to find out how the children are feeling in the centre and if they are happy with the activities, programme etc.

## 19. Magic carpet

**Aim:** To deal with (hidden) emotions and make the children feel a bit happier

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** paper cards with trigger words printed, carpet (groundsheet or something similar, easy to pick & shake)

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Prepare cards with words on them, that can trigger a response - memory or a story about something/someone the children might not usually feel confident talking about e.g.: Mother, Father, Uncle, Auntie, Brother, Sister, Love, Hate, Marriage, Death, Tears. Tell the children that on the carpet they can say anything they want or feel they cannot talk about anywhere else.

All children sit on the carpet and use it as a safe space for expression where they can talk about anything they want. It's always the best if you have a first go. After all the cards have been used and everyone in the group had a go, you all stand up and SHAKE the carpet up and really shake out all the bad things that are said and they are then gone and out and the Magic carpet will keep them away.

## **20. Journalist's report**

**Aim:** To make children reflect on their situation and express themselves.

**Age:** 12 & older

**Group activity (manageable group)**

**Materials needed:** Newspaper headlines and stories, paper ad pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Older children may resent focusing on conflict situations that have to do with their own lives. Often they are reluctant to talk about their own feelings and try to keep emotionally distressing memories at a distance. To make them reflect on their situation and express themselves, it helps find ways to engage in the topic without the discussion becoming too personal.

Collect headlines from newspapers referring to difficult situations, like "School fees for AIDS Orphans". Have several headlines prepared and spread them out so that everyone can see them. Ask the children to imagine that they are newspaper reporters and that they have to compile a report on one of the headlines. In order to make it more interesting for the reader, they should invent a story about a child facing a situation that relates to the headline. Invite the children to choose one of the headlines that interest them most and ask them to compile the story. The stories can be shared later on with the whole group and can be used as a basis for a group discussion. The next step is to distribute the original article that was attached to the headline. Ask them to compare their story with the original article. What are the differences between the two stories? Is one more personal? Or less realistic? Are there fewer characters involved?

**Optional activity to follow-up:** discuss these questions with the children;

- How do you think the newspapers should report on children affected by HIV/AIDS?
- What are the important points that have to be made public?
- Which would be the best way to accurately represent children in the article?

- Why is it important for all articles on HIV/AIDS related issues to be published?

## 21. *Make a mask*

**Aim:** To help express children's hidden emotions

**Age:** doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** papier-mâché (old newspapers strips, and powdered starch diluted in water), balloons and piece of string, scissors, paper, pens, crayons, paint and paintbrushes.

**Duration:** 2 sessions, about 1 hour each

**Session 1:** Let the children think of a mask and what emotion it's going to represent. If they want to, they can make a drawing of it first. When everyone is ready, let each child inflate a balloon to the approximate size of its head. Dip strips of old newspaper into the starch mixture and stick the Papier-mâché strips onto half of the balloon (one side only) and make sure you leave holes for eyes. Leave the mask to dry properly.

**Session 2:** Deflate the balloon and pull it of (if possible). Straighten the edges of the mask and smooth them off. Punch holes at either side for string or ribbon to fasten it. When finished the preparation let the children decorate the mask – in the way they think is appropriate for the emotion/feeling the mask represents. Leave the paint to dry properly. Once the paint is dry attach the string that will hold the mask in place.

**Follow up activity:** The children can create a play, where each mask will play a role and represent the emotion it portrays.

## 22. *Communication book*

**Aim:** To help children express and structure their memories and feelings. It also encourages self-knowledge and problem solving skills

**Age:** 10 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Exercise book and pen for each participant, crayons

**Duration:** A few minutes every day

To introduce this activity gather all the children. Talk to them about the importance of thinking about what is happening in their lives and taking few moments to think about it everyday. Also have a group discussion about confidentiality. Tell them that these books are their personal property and that no one, except them, may read the book. There is only one exception to this rule: if a child feels like sharing the story with us, we can read the story the child has written and will write a comment in the book. What we both write is absolutely confidential – we won't tell anybody. This book then becomes part

of a dialogue. We won't force the children to let us read their thoughts. It is up to the children to decide whether or not to agree to this.

When you finish the introduction give each child an exercise book and a pen that may only be used for the communication book (Important). The child may want to decorate the exercise book to make it special. The books will be stored in a special place and accessible for everyday writing.

Encourage the children to write about events that have taken place in their life. Older children/teenagers are usually hesitant to share their feelings with adults (as an authority figure) in the beginning. Once the first child is brave enough to risk it and the response is warm and encouraging, other children will usually come forward as well. Spelling mistakes and bad handwriting don't matter either!

**Variation:** Communication books can be developed into diaries, especially for the adolescents who head households or have many responsibilities and little time to socialise with their friends. Diary is an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. Most children like to take a few minutes once a day to think about themselves and to write their thoughts down on paper.

### **23. Guided drawing**

**Aim:** To give the children an opportunity to step back and reflect on the events that have happened in their lives

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Paper & crayons, envelopes

**Duration:** 11 sessions lasting between 30-60 minutes each

Create a file (or a large envelope) for each child to keep the pictures in.

Give the group a specific topic and asks the children to draw a picture related to this topic. Guided drawing can be done as a regular group activity. It is important not to start immediately with "problem topics". In a group with several orphans the topics could start like this:

- **Session 1:** Draw a picture of yourself doing something that made you feel very happy.
- **Session 2:** Draw a picture of yourself after you achieved something you feel very good about.
- **Session 3:** Draw a picture of yourself doing something that you enjoyed very much.
- **Session 4:** Draw a picture of a day something good happened.
- **Session 5:** Draw a picture of a day something bad happened. (Pictures of funerals or death may appear.)
- **Session 6:** Draw anything you like. (Observe what the children draw.)
- **Session 7:** Draw a time when you felt very strong.
- **Session 8:** Draw someone you love very much.

- **Session 9:** Draw a day when you were very sad.
- **Session 10:** Draw anything you like. (Observe what the children draw.)
- **Session 11:** Be flexible. If you observe that death featured prominently in the pictures drawn in session 9 & 10, we should allow the children to draw whatever they like. If not, give a new topic like “a great day at school” or, “a day you were terribly scared” or, “something that makes you very angry.”

Be creative in the topics you give to the group. After a few sessions the children may start to volunteer topics – make use of their proposals because they reveal what the children are concerned about. After each drawing session, take a few minutes to look at all the pictures with the children. Put the chairs in a circle and spread the pictures on the floor in the middle of the circle. Ask if anyone would like to talk about his or her picture but DO NOT force any of the children to discuss their picture.

**Note:** Before the pictures are shown to the group, suggest the rule that no one may laugh at a picture or tease another child about what s/he has drawn.

#### **24. Dramatic role-play**

**Aim:** To relief emotional tension, promote problem solving, self-confidence and verbal fluency

**Age:** 10 & older

**Group activity for 3-5 children (more groups possible – show time afterwards)**

**Materials needed:** Props (e.g. clothes, table, chairs) – depends on the individuals participating and the theme

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Explain to the children that in dramatic play all things are possible – child can punish aggressor they are afraid of in the real life, wishes can come true, they can have super-powers. But they need to know that it is important to sort out the fantasy and reality – everyone present should know it’s a drama time, so they feel safe to explore the possibilities of the role. The children should agree that there would be no violence involved.

Let the children think about what theme will their dramatic play have, 9 children used to role-playing can be given themes to work with) what roles they want to play, help them to think about the characters of the roles (e.g. drunk old man, shy little girl, superman) and decide what props and dressing clothes they may need. When the children act, do not edit and interfere only in case of hurtful play or when things get out of hand. You can take on a role but not a dominant one. It’s good to help children to think about the play.

**Note:** “Debriefing” is important: Take the children out of their roles by saying something like, “Susan, who was the bad girl, is the real Susan again!”

## Stress Relief

### 1. *Personal Worry Box*

**Aim:** To reduce fear and anxieties by helping the children to set them aside.

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Card paper (to make a small box out of), rest of the paper cut into small cards that will fit into the box, ruler, scissors, pen and crayons

**Duration:** About an hour (incl. preparation of the box)

Together with the children make the small box. (Instead of each child drawing the box you can have the template photocopied and ready to cut out). Talk to the children about how we all have worries and that putting them away can help to get rid of them so that we can get on with our lives. Explain that that is what you preparing the box for. Then let the children decorate the box in whatever manner they see fit for it, even write their name on it if they want to. Let the children decide where their worry box can live – it needs to be some distance away from the child to illustrate the point that they do not have to carry their worries with them (e.g. they can put it deep in the cupboard or in another room that the on they live in) or alternatively create a space for all the worry boxes of all the children in the group and agree with them they will be kept safe there – but will be accessible to the child who needs to add some more into theirs.

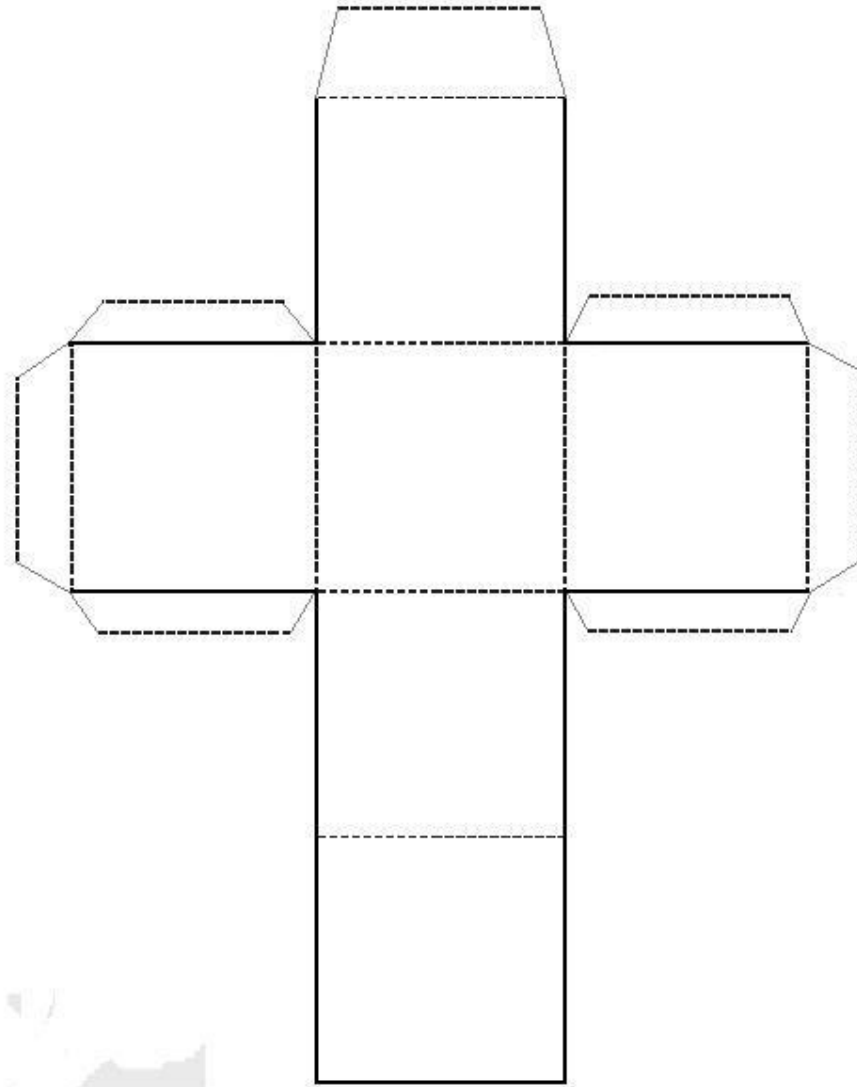
If the child is worrying about matters that adults should be concerned about (e.g. someone in the centre is bullying them) it is appropriate to give the box to the carer or post it into to the Worry box of the centre. This will illustrate to the children that it is the adults who should be carrying the responsibility.

Next take the small cards and ask the children to write on them those worries they would like to put away. When they are done ask them to put the cards ritually into the box and close the lid above them. The children might want to seal the box with some tape or a piece of string. Finally, all can go and put their boxes away together in the place already discussed.

As a follow up children can add more worries in when they have the need to do so.

**Variation:** If the worries are not valid anymore, give the children the possibility to ‘bury’ them forever.

**Note:** The template of the worry box to photocopy (draw) attached. The disrupted lines should be bent and glued, so the box holds together. If photocopying, try to make the box fit on maximum of the page.



## 2. *Worry post*

**Aim:** To get to know what worries the children, get their input into the programme of the centre, especially those too shy to come and speak to the staff in person

**Age:** All age groups

**Materials needed:** Wooden box, lock & lock brackets

**Duration:** Entire existence of the project

Together with the kids make a wooden box, add lock brackets and decorate it... Let the children choose its location and talk with the entire group about its use – to post their worries, comments (e.g. about someone bullying them; someone eating their food; their need to talk to the counsellor about something) on a small piece of paper. They can sign it if they want to. It

should be stressed that the box should be used only to look for help, not for any personal 'revenge' purposes (e.g. accusing someone of doing something they haven't done in order to put them into troubles)

### 3. *'Rag Doll' Relaxation*

**Aim:** to help the children to relax and teach them the difference between tense and relaxed

**Age:** 6 & older

**Materials needed:** self-made and very floppy rag doll

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes

Let the children sit down on a chair and show them the rag doll – talk about how floppy, loose, limp and relaxed it is. Then ask the kids to do the same things as you – shake around loosely one of the doll's arms, then one of your arms and let the kids do the same. Repeat the process with the other arm, then legs until you eventually shake the whole body.

**Variation:** Don't use the doll but before relaxing and shaking the limbs loosely, ask the children to tense all the muscles in the limb, then relax them again, tense them once more and then lightly shake them around. Make sure they don't tense the muscles so tight that they are uncomfortable. Encourage them to keep the muscles tense for a bit, think about how it feels and then slowly let the tension go. (Thinking about it is important so that they can, in the future, recognize when they are tense and use some exercise to relax again.)

### 4. *Guided Relaxation*

**Aim:** To help the children relax

**Age:** 10 & older

**Group activity**

**Duration:** About 15 minutes

Let the children sit down / lie down so that they are comfortable. Then ask them to close their eyes (if they don't do that the whole exercise will end up as a laughing and giggling session, which is fine, but useful another time). Then ask the children to do what you will be saying:

- First, wrinkle up your face; keep it like that then...gently let it go
- Now shrug your shoulders up to your ears; keep them like that then, gently let them go
- Make your arms like a strong man act (show off those muscles); keep them like that, then gently let them go
- Take a deep breath to tighten up your chest; keep it like that, then gently let it go
- Pull your tummy in to make it feel really tight; keep it like that, then gently let it go

- Stretch out your legs till they feel really tight; keep them like that, then gently let it go

To make this exercise last longer, add steps into it – do each arm separately, then both together, the same can be done with legs...

### 5. *Through the rainforest (or anywhere else nice)*

**Aim:** To help children become more relaxed through using visual imaginary relaxation.

**Age:** 10 & older

**Group activity / One-to-one session**

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes

Give the children some suggestions of calming, happy places and let them choose the one most appealing to them (the whole group should be using the same place). In one-to-one session talk to the child about their favourite place – steer them towards remembering places where they felt happy and calm. Ask the children to close their eyes, sit or lie down comfortably and with a calm voice talk something along these lines:

“We are going for a walk through the rainforest. Are you ready? It’s time to put on your special T-shirt. Imagine how you are putting it on now – one hand up, stretch it over you head, other arm up and now pull it all the way down. Now feel how cosy and comfy this T-shirt is and gently shake your arms as you settle into it. This is a very special T-shirt which helps to protect you and make you feel very cosy and safe, but no too hot.”

[Read the following text more slowly]

Let’s walk gradually down the hill until we reach the trees. Listen carefully and you can hear the birds singing high in the branches above you... It is very peaceful in this place. The flowers look beautiful... and the sun is just coming through the trees and shining on them... You feel happy and content... You come out into a clearing where there is some grass and you see a little rabbits sitting around. You sit down on the grass to watch them... they stop and look at you and when you stretch out your hand one of them comes to you and you stroke him. The rabbit has a lovely soft and smooth fur and enjoys you to stroke him... After a while you stop stroking him so he can go away to look for some food. You get up and walk slowly along... The sun is shining and you can hear sound of small waves in the distance... Before long you find you are walking on golden sand and there are beautiful palm trees growing around a lake... You lie down on the warm sand and listen to the gentle sound of the waves tumbling to the sand. You feel very rested and relaxed... It feels as if you are floating on a cloud as you listen to the gentle sound of the waves on the lakeshore. It is beautiful and peaceful and you feel really happy here... You float on the cloud across the land, over the green grass where you saw the rabbits. You land gently by the rainforest... and find yourself walking easily back through it. A monkey wings lazily from branch to branch above you...

What else do you see? ...[Pause]... What else do you hear in this special place? ...[Pause]... Stop a while and listen and watch the beautiful creatures of the rainforest.

[Resume more normal reading speed]

“When you are ready come out of the forest back to where we began. Take off the special jumper, stretching up one arm, then the other as you pull it over your head. Take a few deep, slow breaths and carry on feeling relaxed as you come out of this relaxation exercise.”

## 6. *Blowing bubbles*

**Aim:** To relieve tension

**Age:** doesn't matter

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** Bubble mixture ((mixture 8 tablespoons of washing-up liquid to 1 litre of water)), piece of coated wire to make the round shapes to dip into the mixture and blow bubbles from

**Duration:** As long as the mixture lasts or how long the children want to play

Deep breathing required to blow out the bubbles helps relieve tension. Bubble blowing usually puts kids in good mood = bubbles are beautiful.

## 7. *Breathing Exercises*

**Aim:** To help when children get too agitated, have problems concentrating or demonstrate aggressive behaviour. Breathing exercises can help people to calm down and collect themselves. They are especially helpful when done on regular basis

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:**

**Duration:** 5 - 10minutes

Ask the children to stand in a circle and hold hands. Tell them to breathe in slowly through their mouths while everybody raises their hands until they are above their heads. Everyone holds their breath and then slowly lowers their hands while breathing out through the mouth and bending their knees until their hands nearly touch the ground. Pause, and then breathe in again. As everyone breathes out, they can make a sound like “pneuww” so that they can hear the sound of their breathing. It is a good idea for you to join the circle while the children are doing this breathing exercise because you can direct the speed with which the arms are raised. Gradually slow down the breathing speed. Let the group breathe like this for 3-5 minutes.

Each child will need a heavy book. Ask the children to lie down. Ask them to place the books on their stomachs. The children must breathe so deeply that the books move up and down. (The book will only move when the child uses his or her abdominal muscles correctly). Let them repeat this exercise for five minutes. This exercise relaxes the children and enhances their breathing skills.

You can say: “Sit up straight with both feet touching the ground. Rest your hands on your legs. Your back is straight. Imagine that there is a fine thread tied to the top of your head. There is a little man sitting on the ceiling and he is pulling the thread. Try to sit very straight so that the thread doesn’t snap. (The story of the little man is important because it makes the children straighten their backs so that the head rests on the spine and the shoulders are pulled back). Now when I give you a sign, we will all start to breathe in as if we are sucking air in through a small straw. We are going to let the air flow deep down into our bodies. Imagine the air filling our bodies. When the air has filled our bodies, we hold our breaths for a second or two. Then we blow the air out slowly through the straw. When you stop breathing out, pause for a second or two before breathing in again. And repeat. (You need to direct the children like you would conduct a choir, praising and encouraging them from time to time. After breathing in and out a few times, slow down the speed of the breathing as the children breathe out).”

#### 8. *Discover your inner resources*

**Aim:** To help children who feel insecure and inadequate to recognise their inner resources again. It builds coping skills and self-esteem

**Age:** 9 & older

**Group activity / one-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** wax crayons, thick paper, black paint, paintbrushes and a pin (or anything that can be used to scratch with).

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Start off with an imagination exercise. Ask the children to sit straight, feet on the ground and eyes closed. Ask them to imagine a situation where they are in charge, feel self-confident, successful and are managing difficult situations. Then ask the children to look around the scene that they are imagining.

Do they see the scene they are imagining in black and white, or colour? Is it indoors or outside? Does it feel warm or cold? Is it light or dark? Who else is there? What are they doing? Can they hear anything? Is the sound loud or soft? Can they feel anything? Can they smell anything?

**Note:** Children do not need to answer the questions. The questions are there to help get in deeper contact with the feelings.

Ask the children how it feels when they are strong, successful and in control. When they can really feel that feeling, ask them to open their eyes, choose some wax crayons in the colours that symbolise this feeling and start colouring

the piece of paper. They should cover the whole sheet of paper with those colours.

Then ask the children to remember times when they felt helpless. Remind them about the way they felt at the moment: angry, inadequate or exposed.

**Note:** Don't do an imagination exercise for the negative feelings!

Ask them to colour with the black paint (colour of negative feelings) over the first layer of colours. They must cover them all up!

Ask the children if they can remember the strengths and successes that are hidden beneath the negative feelings. Ask them if they think they will come to the surface again. If they say yes, ask them when they will let them come up again. If the answer is no, ask them what prevents them from coming up again. Ask them what needs to change to allow the good qualities to come to the surface again.

Ask the children to list the things they are able to do. Prompt them to say, "I can..." Ask the children to list the things they like about themselves. Prompt them to say, "I am..." Ask them to list the external resources that can help them. Prompt them to say, "I have..."

When finished, give the children a pin (or a sharp stick) and scratch these positive words onto the surface of the paper so that the positive colours beneath shine through. After you finished, look at the picture together and talk about the hidden qualities and resources. Explore what it means to have hidden resources. Sometimes we can't see them because our problems seem to overshadow (or cover) everything.

## 9. *Guided visual imagery – 'To the safe place'*

**Aim:** to relief stress

**Age:** doesn't matter

**Group activity / one-to-one session**

**Duration:** 15 minutes +

Good way to start is to ask the children to think of their favourite place, somewhere where they feel happy. When they are ready ask them to sit down comfortably and close their eyes. Ask the children to imagine that they are approaching their favourite place and to imagine the road that leads there. To help them imagine the place better ask them to think of and describe (in group session they don't need to say it loud) the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and the feelings they are experiencing there. Then ask if they could imagine finding a safe spot where they can come from time to time and to solve their problems. Let them think of what special strengths they can have in this place (e.g. know how to solve every problem, forget all their worries). After a moment ask the children to prepare to leave the place for now, slowly walk away and when they are ready they can open their eyes. Tell the children that

now they have this special and safe place, they can go there anytime they feel like they need to. They can imagine the place on their own, whenever they need 'their special strength' and be somewhere nice – they can close their eyes for a moment and imagine being there again.

### ***10. My favourite toy***

**Aim:** To relax and evoke pleasant memories and feelings

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity (up to 6 children) / one-to-one session**

**Duration:** 30 minutes

Ask the child to relax (closing their eyes is encouraged, but optional) and then ask them to think about their favourite toy (object) from the childhood (a current one with young kids). Slowly take them through what it looks like, where it comes from, how large/small it is, what it smells like, how they use it/play with it, how they feel when they play with it, what happened to it, etc. This almost always evokes quite pleasant memories and feelings.

This activity is good to use in the group as everyone can take turns in talking about their favourite toy while others listen. It can help everyone to understand each other (and themselves) better and sometimes can help to relate the stories to the current day reactions and feelings. It can bring the group more together and help them to share their lives. Some sad or angry feelings can be evoked during personal storytelling – time needs to be given to discuss and work through these feelings. A subsequent "show and tell" session can be fun as well.

## Self-esteem building

### 1. *Good things about me*

**Aim:** To promote self-esteem and emphasize the positive aspects of the child.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity / One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** coloured paper, crayons and pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Let the child write their name at the top of the page. Then help them divide the rest of the page into six boxes. In each of the boxes write, or ask the child to write, aspects of the child's life (e.g. at home, in school, my friends, my hobbies, what I like to do, what I'm good at). Each box should have enough space to write at least one sentence – which will be filled in by the child by at least one good thing about each aspect of their life. Help them to phrase each one in a way, which emphasizes their positive attributes. When you have completed the written work, discuss with them how they are unique in their achievements and abilities. If the children want to, let them illustrate each box.

### 2. *I am a winner*

**Aim:** To promote self-esteem and emphasise the positive aspects of the child.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity / One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Paper, pen

**Duration:** 20 minutes

Ask the children to write their name somewhere on the paper (but not too large). Then ask the child about the things they can do, the things they like, what they are good at, anything they like about their appearance, and so on. They should fill the page with all the things that are good about them. At the end talk about what a lot of good things there are about them and how unique they are.

**Note:** If the child struggles to find anything positive, help them – there is always something to find!

### 3. *Passing on positives*

**Aim:** To promote self-esteem and emphasize the positive aspects of the child. This activity should be done once kids know each other a bit

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity, max 10 to make it manageable.**

**Materials needed:** Paper and pens

**Duration:** Depending on the size of group, 30 minutes

Write a name of each child in the group on a sheet of paper. Each child should write one good thing about each of the other children and pass them on to them, so that each child gets given a set of positive things about them – a great ego booster for all.

#### 4. *Ball in the circle*

**Aim:** to enhance self-esteem and group co-operation.

**Age:** 6 & older

**Group activity for 5-8 players (or more for the variation)**

**Materials needed:** Balls (depending on the number of groups)

**Duration:** 15 minutes + (depending on the number of children)

Divide the children into equal groups of five to eight (or more) children. Each group will need a ball. The groups play against each other. Each group stands in a circle and the circles must stay the same size. Each child in the circle gets a number (for example, the numbers one to eight if there are eight children in the group). Child number one in each group stands in the middle of the circle. On your command, all the number ones throw the ball to each child in the group, who immediately throws it back to number one in the middle. When number one has thrown the ball to each of the group members, number two runs to the middle of the circle and starts throwing the ball to each group member in turn. The game goes on until each child has had a turn in the middle of the circle. The first group to finish is the winner.

**Variation:** All the kids form a big circle and play similar game without the competitive underline.

#### 5. *Importance jars*

**Aim:** To build positive self-esteem and promote sharing of the child's values and perception of what is important in life.

**Age:** 8 & older

**Group activity / One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** Pen, paper, scissors, glue and a photocopy of the worksheet list of items (attached)

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Let each child draw picture of 3 equal big jars on a sheet of paper (they should take up most of the page). Put a heading over each one – 'Very Important', 'Important', 'Not Important'.

Cut out the items from the worksheet (adding or omitting items as appropriate) and ask the children to paste them into the jar that describes how they feel about each one (give them a bit of time to think about it). Make sure that they understand that it's their opinion you are seeking, and that there is no right or wrong answer. It doesn't matter if one jar is full and another empty, just as

long as they have put the items into the jar they think is right for them. When they have finished pasting, ask the children if they have any more items they think should go into the jars. If so, let them write them into the appropriate jars. Some things may need to go in sideways to fit in. Once done, discuss the reasons for their choices and emphasize how their responses are important and unique to them.

The worksheet contents:

Enjoying yourself	Love
Being helpful	Enjoying yourself
Being honest	Being happy
Your family	Being beautiful
Having good manners	Trusting people
Doing as you're told	Being in control
Making choices for yourself	Growing up
Eating well	Working hard
Having money	Feeling comfortable
Being clever	Going to school
Feeling peaceful	Having friends
Being healthy	Excitement

## 6. *Permissions*

**Aim:** To reduce self-criticism and increase courage.

**Age:** 12 & older

**Group activity / One-to-one session**

**Materials needed:** paper, pen (and strips of card for variation)

**Duration:** 30 minutes +

Talk to the children about self-criticism, how no one is perfect and about having the courage to change. Talk about how giving ourselves permission to be the person we want to be and how loving ourselves can help us. Discuss with the children which areas they feel they need to work on and together design a sense of permissions, alternatively create the same permissions for the whole group. Some examples: It is OK to give my opinion in the class. It's OK to make mistakes. There is nothing wrong with being the top of my class. It's OK to eat sweet things in moderation. It's OK to cry because I miss my parents.

Let the children to write them down on a piece of paper and talk through each one so that the children understand the rational reasoning behind them and hopefully start to believe that they have the right to follow them. Let the child to take the list of permissions home to read whenever they need to remind themselves.

**Variation:** Permissions can be written on strips of card and carried around (in the pocket) to provide the strength when needed. The children may need reminders to look at them

## 7. *Twin soccer*

**Aim:** To enhance self-esteem and group co-operation.

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity:** Any even number of players, at least 12

**Materials needed:** Ball, cones for goal posts, strips of fabric to tie the pairs (depending on the number of pairs participating)

**Duration:** Anything starting by 15 minutes, decide together with the children

Twin soccer is played like normal soccer except the players are tied together in pairs. (The rules can be simplified if the children are young). Divide the group into two teams. Ask the children to stand in pairs and to tie the left leg of one child to the right leg of his or her pair. Twin soccer should be played on soft ground because many pairs will take a tumble!

Twin soccer is a competitive game with a strong emphasis on teamwork. The pairs really have to work together to be able to run and kick the ball.

**Variation:** Organise a twin soccer tournament

## 8. *My five best points*

**Aim:** To enhance self-esteem and self-confidence, to encourage participants to take responsibility for one another, to encourage self-evaluation and public speaking, and to foster tolerance.

**Age:** 10 & older

**Group activity**

**Materials needed:** paper and pens

**Duration:** 30 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

To start with, discuss the fact that each of us has things we can do well (like running, climbing or reading), good attitudes (like being gentle or honest) and good feelings (like feeling brave, or feeling caring) as well as things that we can't do so well. For this exercise we are going to focus on our strong points. Each child must think about his or her five best points – what s/he is good at. When each child has identified five strong points, each child must think of times when they demonstrated these strong points. The children should write all this down. (E.g. I am brave = I was very brave when I had to take the taxi to town on my own for the first time. I am helpful = I was helpful when I prepared and collected more firewood than we needed. I am good at reading = The teacher wrote this in my school report). When everyone is ready, the group leader asks children to read what they have written. Before they start, agree with the group that no one should talk while a child is reading and we do not make any comments about what each child says about him or herself.

When the children start to work, move around the group and make sure that all children write down five points. Children with a very low self-esteem may find this difficult. You could help by giving little hints like, “I have seen in the centre that you seem to be a very good listener. Can you remember a time when you listened very well?” After a while, the children will become less hesitant and will start to enjoy thinking positively about themselves. Boosting self-esteem and showing that there is more to life than school performance is particularly valuable, especially for those children who don’t do well at school

**Optional activity to follow-up:** Discuss these questions with the children

- Do we need to be shy about our good points?

### **9. Athletics / Cross-country competition**

**Aim:** To build a child's self-esteem, provide an opportunity to experience success, learn how to cope with failures, and build the confidence needed to face life's many challenges.

**Age:** Doesn't matter

**Group activity; divide the children into age groups**

**Materials needed:** Stopwatch, cones to mark the cross-country track, stripe of fabric for the finish line

**Duration:** Depending on the number of participants and the race lengths

Create a track for the racing – 60metres for sprint, longer for the cross-country race. Mark the start / finish line and let the whole group gather on the start line. On signal let all the children run the track. 2 people should hold the stripe on the finish line loosely for the winner to pass through.

## **Appendix 1 – Tips for Counselling / Play therapy room**

- Use washable paint on the playroom walls, particularly around the painting easel.
- Paint one wall as a blackboard to use for chalks creation outbursts
- Have a mirror in the playroom; they are great fun when dressing up and good for pulling faces too!
- Having a small sand tray in the corner can provide heaps of creative opportunities and ways to express for the kids
- When preparing the paint cups for the play therapy room, add a couple drops of dishwashing liquid to the tempera paint. This allows the paints to be more easily washed off surfaces and removed from hands and clothing.
- Don't hold a play therapy session if you have to bringing a child in “kicking and screaming”. It doesn't allow the child to choose and sets a negative tone for the session.
- Providing a comfortable sitting place can make the children feel more comfortable and open. This can be achieved by having a small couch or beanbag, rather than a traditional chair. Also the desk should be positioned so that it welcomes conversation and feels non-threatening (e.g. it should place counsellor on the same level as the child). Ideally the adult should sit on another beanbag to be at the same level as the child.
- The desk should be “lost” in the background and used only when the session is over or with consent of the child. It's not very welcoming to make notes during the session so try to do it when counselling is over
- We can have children design a picture or mural for the counselling room. This is not only form of expression for the children, but a way to make them feel as if they are a part of the counselling experience.
- It is important to pay attention to smaller details like lighting, plants, and background music (CD player/computer essential) to soothe and relax the children during counselling/play therapy session.
- There is a need for a clock on the wall across from where the counsellor is sitting – to be able to keep an eye on the time spent in session.

## **Appendix 2 – Preparing Play therapy**

When play therapy is done in a designated, well-stocked play therapy room, the room is used as an important element in defining and structuring the play therapy experience. The child enters a space that was designed and supplied with therapeutic materials specific to certain goals.

Thoughtful selection of play therapy materials is extremely important factor in the play therapy. When there is no well-stocked play therapy room the child might not be able to express properly. Play materials should follow some general guidelines. When selecting play materials, and when anticipating play materials that the child may include in the play therapy setting, it can be helpful to classify how each of them can be used - materials should be selected to represent the range of play therapy themes that may be useful to the child:

### ***‘Family’ (nurturing) materials***

Provide ways that the child builds a relationship with the therapist and explores relationship in family and other settings. These materials would include such items as finger puppets, dollhouse, doll families, animal families, and baby doll items.

### ***‘Scary’ materials***

Plastic animals (lion, dinosaurs) or animal puppets provide children with the opportunity to deal with fears.

### ***‘Aggressive’ materials***

Provide the child with materials to symbolically deal with anger, control, and protection. These materials may include such items as toy soldiers and other figures for acting out aggressive themes.

### ***‘Expressive’ materials***

Simple art materials can be used to express feelings, problem solving, or gaining mastery (paint, chalks & blackboard, collage materials)

### ***‘Pretend & fantasy themes’ materials***

These materials help children express feelings; act out scenes from their lives, and problem solving. These materials may include masks, costumes, a toy telephone and building bricks.

### ***Basic list of materials for box in the playroom include:***

- Crayons (8 colours), old magazines, scissors, paper, easel, paint, brushes, transparent tape, glue stick, cotton rope
- Plastic nursing bottle, doll, doll house furniture (at least bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom), a small cardboard box with rooms marked on the bottom (cut door in one side and window in another; doubles as storage container for toys)

- Clay or play dough
- 2 play dishes and cups (plastic or tin), spoons
- Small airplane, small car
- Mask, costume jewellery, costumes
- Sponge ball, Dart gun & dartboard (with sucking disks) sticks
- Model of a telephone
- Aggressive hand puppet (crocodile, dinosaur or lion)
- Stress relieving toys – squeezable balls or colouring books
- Other items that may also be included would be balloons, kaleidoscope, yo-yo, marbles and ball. For older children include playing cards, Lego, and smaller travel versions of simple games, colour blocks, beads and simple puzzles, a basketball hoop, a foam dartboard and play dough

At the beginning of the play therapy session, there is need to establish the relationship and focus. There is need for a transition ritual, which is a routine established to help define the therapeutic time and assist the child with the shift into the play therapy experience.

- Having the materials hidden allows introductions to be made. Many children will respond with curiosity and anticipation, which will help in establishing the therapeutic relationship. Occasionally, a child may respond anxiously to the hidden materials and another approach will need to be used.
- The opening and closing of the box with materials could be the beginning and ending of the play therapy session.
- Sometimes a mat on the floor can be used to define the therapeutic space. Rolling the mat out and in can be the signals for defining the session time.
- Returning the materials to the bag or box can be the signal that the session has ended.

When you try to design a play therapy intervention for a child or specific problem, the following guide can help your thinking process. First of all determine the goal(s) to be achieved with the child. Then think about what the best materials for this session will be:

- Puppets or dolls?
- Imaginary games?
- Board games (Existing or made up)?
- Artwork or other craft creations?
- Anger or stress releasing play?
- Sand tray methods?
- Storytelling approach?
- Dramatic play counselling (form of behavioural rehearsal, which helps children learn to behave more assertively, or pro-socially, as needed.)

### **Appendix 3 – Considerations when counselling children**

- Obtain parental / custodian consent before counselling children
- Take special care to make sure that the child understands what you are saying
- Use the child's language, but never 'talk down' to the child = assume a position that is eye level with the child, speak clearly in a quiet, unhurried and confident voice, be specific and use simple words and short sentences
- Be honest and allow the children to express their concerns and fears
- When counselling young children keep in mind the child's understanding of death & dying
- Clarify the counselling process and your role. Explain the reason, aim and method of counselling
- Provide a considerate counselling context and use few age-appropriate props rather than an overwhelming 'toyshop' atmosphere
- Allow children to feel comfortable and develop the relationship in a patient, caring manner. Avoid sudden and rapid advances, broad smiles, extended eye contact or other gestures that may be perceived as threatening
- If the child is too shy, communicate through a puppet or stuffed animal before questioning the child directly.
- Be patient and revisit topics if necessary. Reflect the child's feelings and confirm your understanding with the child.
- Do not be discouraged by apparent inattentiveness when you talk about sensitive issues. This is often a child's way of coping with stressful issues.
- Do not blame or discredit any of the adults in the child's world. Although these relationships may be painful to the child, adults are and remain significant people in the child's life
- Do not enter into alliances with other people in the counselling process. Remain neutral!
- Be sensitive to the potentially 'abusive' aspects of counselling children. You are an adult in a position of authority, and the child has limited say in what happens
- Focus on presenting the problem and work – avoid extended therapy. Children should not remain in counselling any longer than is necessary.
- Be aware that children often feel that being in counselling means that there is something wrong with them
- Be sensitive to cultural issues in counselling children. Be prepared to learn from children in other cultures.

## Appendix 4 – Creative ways to communicate with children

The following ideas are oriented mainly at the children in counselling but can be very useful in the everyday running of the centre.

- ***Storytelling***

Ask children to tell you a story about an event (e.g. being in hospital). Show them a picture and ask them to tell a story. Cut out comic strips, remove the words and ask children to add words to the pictures

- ***Mutual storytelling***

Ask the child to tell a story. Then tell your own story. Base it on the child's story but change the negative events of the child's story to positive outcomes in your story.

- ***Bibliotherapy***

Give the child a book to read (or read it to the child) and explore the meaning of the book with the child. Ask the child to retell the story, to draw a picture based on the story, to talk about the characters, or to summarise the moral or meaning of the story.

- ***Dreams***

Ask the child to talk about a dream or nightmare, and explore the meaning that the dream might have with the child. Dreams often reveal unconscious and repressed thoughts and feelings.

- ***'What if' questions***

Encourage the child to explore potential situations and to consider different problem-solving options by asking 'what if...' questions. Children's responses indicate what they already know, what they don't know, what they are curious about. That gives them the opportunity to practise coping skills.

- ***Three wishes***

Ask the child: 'If you could have any three things in the world, what would they be?'

- ***Rating game***

Use some type of rating scale (sad and happy faces, or numbers) to rate the child's feelings about an event

- ***Word association game***

Recite certain key words, and ask children to say the first word that comes into their minds when they hear these key words.

- ***Sentence completion***

Present a partial statement and ask the child to finish it. For example: “The thing in the world I love best is...”

- ***Pros and cons***

Select a topic and ask the child to list five good things and five bad things about it. It is a good technique to use when focusing on relationships because it enables people to list things they like and dislike about each other






- ***Non-verbal techniques***

You may suggest to older children (and adults) that they keep a journal or diary. Ask them to write letters that are never posted, to draw or to play.





## Appendix 5 – Dealing with anger





Expressing anger can be one of the ways that children use to deal with their difficult situation. Anger can be a tricky feeling, and one that can affect and disrupt activities in the centre in a variety of negative ways. Not being able to control anger can create significant problems in the relationships between children. Bouts of anger if not recognized or dealt with, can have serious implications. Aggression often stems from insecurity, frustration and a lack of self-worth, and it is important to encourage children’s self-confidence.

- We will help children to deal with their anger by allowing them to express it in more acceptable ways as well as helping them to realise when they need “TIME OUT”. This is a very effective way of allowing the child to take control.

<b>“TIME OUT” = Learn to control your body</b>				
				
Keep your voice quiet and slow.	Breathe slowly, practice relaxation techniques.	Count to ten or more, slowly.	Think before you react.	Is the anger really justified?

- We will create **“it’s OK to be angry area”** – all children will know its purpose and have access to it when they feel that they need it. Variety of materials will be available in this area, to work off the energy that has been generated by their anger. Drumming, dancing or punching & squeezing beanbags can relieve the physical energy. Painting as well as playing a musical instrument, singing out loud or simply screaming, can relieve excessive emotional energy. For some children simply listening to soothing music can have a calming affect. We should therefore provide a small area (aside) with all materials mentioned above and leave it accessible to use whenever needed by someone. It doesn’t have to be supervised as long as the rules for its use will be created together with all the children (e.g. non-destructive, safe way)

<b>Release your anger in a safe way</b>			
			
Hit a pillow or cushion. Squeeze or punch a bean bag	Throw safe items (ball) into a container.	Go to the “It’s OK to be angry” area	Jump up & down to release the energy

			
Write/draw your feelings, tear them up and throw away.	Tear up old newspapers.	Shout in a safe place.	Pretend to talk to the person who makes you angry.

- When dealing with aggressive children it is especially important that we (staff) do not become aggressive ourselves. This is sometimes difficult as their behaviour might be disrupting planned activities. When dealing with aggressive children it is important to have confidence in our own skills and our ability to deal effectively with such children. We need be self-assured and know that we are in control. Authority, honesty, calmness and self-confidence are critical.
- Often children find it difficult to identify emotions and they lack words to describe their feelings. A child first learns about feelings, and expressing feelings, in the context of a family by relating to the parents and siblings and by observing the interaction between parents and other children. Emotions and feelings need to be discussed in the group situations to support children in their learning process. Being able to identify feelings is important for all children. Orphaned children need this skill even more because there is often no adult to provide emotional security and protection.
- Children who have troubles to control their temper can be encouraged to keep an “Anger diary” and assisted to deal with it in more positive way.