

**Supporting Children and Youth Resilience after a natural disaster in
post-secondary Evacuation Sites: A Volunteer Support Guide for
working Children and Youth**

Play and Programming Ideas for Infancy to Adolescence



Developed for the Centre for Child Well Being Policy Case Study

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Supporting Children and Youth Resilience after a natural disaster in post-secondary Evacuation Sites: A Volunteer Support Guide for working Children and Youth; Infancy to Adolescence. May, 2018.

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Supporting Children and Youth Resilience after a natural disaster in post-secondary Evacuation Sites

During times of natural disasters, children, youth, and families may potentially face displacement, trauma, fears, stress, and anxiety. It is important to note that when natural disasters happen, a plan must be set in place to assist these children, youth, and families from enduring any more trauma than they have already experienced. Mount Royal University (MRU) has been listed as an evacuee site for displaced children, youth, and families and the space was utilized during the Fort McMurray Fire of 2015. Although the basic needs of shelter, food, and other necessities were met, it was noted that children did not have a safe space to play in, parents did not have a space away from children to talk, and volunteers were not given enough tools, or a plan, to assist the vulnerable children, youth, and families being housed at MRU.

This document provides a sample of play experiences that may be utilized by volunteers working with children, youth, and families during displacement due to a natural disaster. All activities were thoughtfully chosen to support children, youth, and families and help prevent or alleviate onset symptoms brought on by the natural disaster displacement such as anxiety, stress and depression. These activities focus on attachment, play, expression, and mindfulness. When working with the children, youth, and families, we want to ensure their mental health needs are being addressed

and looked after during the time of crisis, along with their other basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety.

How To Use This Manual

This manual was developed with children's emotional and mental health in mind. So many times, children, youth, and families in disaster are given their basic needs and their emotional health is left to deal with at a later date. We believe that mental health should be at the forefront of basic needs with opportunities to have normality in the individual's life when normal is a distance away in the future.

Use this manual as a guide and involve yourself in the play and activities with the children, youth, and families you encounter during your time of volunteering.

Enhance or adjust the activities to the needs of the children and youth, and most importantly, engage them in the activities in a calm, responsive, and supportive manner.

Background Information

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness (PTSD)

According to the American Psychiatric Association, PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in individuals that have witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, serious accident, or other violent acts (Parekh, 2017). PTSD signs and symptoms vary in each individual, but some common signs for adults, youth, and children to look for are: exposure to trauma, re-experiencing the trauma through

nightmares, flashbacks, unwanted memories, physical or emotional reactivity after exposure to traumatic reminders, avoidance, negative thoughts or feelings, or alterations in arousal and reactivity such as irritability, destructive behaviour, easily startled, or difficulty concentrating (Parekh, 2017).

Psychological First Aid

During times of crisis and displacement due to a natural disaster, it is important to remember that children, youth, and families have experienced his or her own trauma. Volunteers and other emergency protocol members to recognize signs and symptoms (or triggers) of mental health concerns, such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and stress. PTSD is one of the few onset mental health symptoms that can occur in children, youth, and families post-natural disaster.

It is not always easy to recognize or know exactly what to look for with mental health concerns when working with children, youth, and families who have experienced a traumatic event, but there are resources volunteers can access to help traumatized individuals, such as Psychological First Aid Training (PFA). This training is a;

set of helping actions aimed at reducing initial post-trauma distress
supporting short- and long-term adaptive functioning. Designed as an

initial

component of a comprehensive disaster/trauma response, PFA is constructed
around eight core actions: contact and engagement, safety and comfort,

stabilization, information gathering, practical assistance, connection

with

social supports, information on coping support, and linkage with collaborative services (Ruzek et al, 2007).

It is important to note that PFA does mean the person utilizing PFA with an individual can in any way professionally counsel or diagnose the individual. PFA is a tool that can be used to help, not harm, and individual. According to the World Health Organization, PFA is beneficial to boys, girls, women, and men who have recently experienced a crisis and have become distressed and it should be provided right after the crisis has occurred (WHO, 2016).

For further information about PFA:

http://www.who.int/mental_health/world-mental-health-day/ppt.pdf

http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/pfa/english/1-psyfirstaid_final_complete_manual.pdf



Parents and Infants to 2.5 Years Old

The ages between infancy and toddler are some of the most amazing years a parent will experience with his or her child. This is time where a parent will see the first smile, hear the first words, watch the first crawl and steps, and learn about who their child is. These years are also crucial to build a healthy and secure attachment, or bond, between parent and child.

Attachment is the emotional bond that is built between the parent and child, and requires a “serve and return” relationship in order to thrive. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) describes serve and return as the interactions between parent and child which includes babbling, facial expressions, and gestures young children naturally reach out for to parents. This helps secure a healthy attachment between parent and child and helps brain architecture, or development.

The following activities were chosen to support the bond between parent and child or to help create a healthy attachment between the parent and child during a time of crisis. Relationship connections can be a welcome focus (and possible distraction) for the parent and child during the displacement due to the natural disaster. These activities may be enhanced with music or adjusted to the needs of the participants. Included at the end of this section is a list of suggestions parents may implement individually with their child.



Baby and Toddler Massage

Overview:

During infancy, progressing to the toddler years, attachment is a key element in developing a healthy bond between the parent(s) and child. Attachment theory is an “influential theory about how early interactions with caregivers can shape working models of the self and others” (Özen, & Uz, 2016). Massage is a great way to create the bond between parent and child, along with the benefits to the mind and body to the child. Massaging can help with baby’s sleep, weight gain, and if he or she is suffers from colic, it can help alleviate some of the discomfort (Lorenz, Moyse, & Surguy, 2005). This massage based activity is easy and beneficial to both parents and children.

Objectives:

To enhance attachment through massage and create a safe and relaxed atmosphere.

Activity Description:

Lay baby or toddler on a soft blanket. Start massaging tummy, arms, legs, and face gently. Parents can help turn over baby or toddler for tummy time and continue to gently massage back, legs, arms, back of head, feet and hands. Enhance the massage with quiet music in the background or singing gently to baby or toddler. Lotion or baby friendly massage oil can be used for massage as well. Massage for at least 10-15 minutes.

Materials:

- ❖ Soft blanket
- ❖ music player
- ❖ lotion or baby friendly massage oil

Sources:

Lorenz, L., Moyse, K., & Surguy, H. (2005). The benefits of baby massage. *Paediatric Nursing*, 17(2), 15-18.

Özen, A. and Uz, I. 2016. Attachment Theory. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Family Studies*. 1–4.

Baby and Toddler Soccer

Overview:

Attachment and bonding are important during the ages of infancy to 2.5. There are many activities a parent can do with their child to enhance the bond between the child and parent, but activities that get the child moving around and laughing are the most fun for the child and the parent both. Psychologically, laughter can help reduce stress and anxiety, improve moods and coping skills; it is the “antidote to stress”

(MacDonald, 2004). Baby/Toddler soccer is an activity to enhance the bond between parent and child through laughter.

Objectives:

To enhance attachment through physical activity and laughter.

Activity Description:

Parents and children will gather in a circle with a colourful beach ball. Parents will hold child under armpit. Have a parent start off “soccer” by gently swinging child to kick beach ball to another parent and child in group. When the ball reaches another parent and child, they will kick ball to another parent and child and continue on until parents and children choose to end activity. Enhance activity with music and dancing. Watch for smiling children and laughter with this activity. Great for eye tracking and social enhancement among children and parents.

Depending on the individual baby, some parents may choose sit out and hold their baby who is under 6 months old to track beach ball with eyes. They are more than welcome to participate in dancing.

Materials:

- ❖ Beach ball
- ❖ Music player

Sources:

Previous activity facilitated for parents and children

MacDonald, C. (2004). A Chuckle a Day Keeps the Doctor Away: Therapeutic Humor & Laughter. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*.20 (3):18-25. <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20040301-05>

Reflections in the Mirror

Overview:

Mirrors are an excellent tool for parents to use with their baby or toddler. From emoting facial expressions and eye tracking to creating and supporting the bond

between parent and child. Mirrors can be used for many activities at any developmental appropriate level that engage the child in exploring, discovering, and being creative. “Body awareness can help infants develop a more accurate perception of what is and what isn’t their bodies” (Hart & Rollins, 2011).

Age Range: Infants to 2.5 years old

Objectives:

To enhance attachment through facial expression, emotions, and role modeling.

Activity Description:

With alert infants and babies: Hold mirror or sit in front of mirror with baby facing the mirror. Have parent talk to baby how baby’s features with positive words. Parent can talk about how beautiful baby’s eyes are, or how small baby’s nose is and forth. This kind of positive interaction between parent and child is a deeply personalized message to baby and helps enhance bond between parent and child. To enhance activity, play peek-a-boo with a light material, such as a scarf.

For toddlers, sit in front of mirror or hold up mirror to face. Parent will then role model a facial expression to toddler, such as smiling for happy, or frowning for mad, or even a silly face. Toddler should try and create the same face mom or dad is making. Parent can also model faces toddler makes in the mirror. Have parent label each facial expression with matching emotion. This will help toddler become familiar with emotions, facial expressions, and social cues.

Materials:

- ❖ Mirror
- ❖ Scarves or tissues

Source:

Hart, R., & Rollins, J., (2011) *Therapeutic Activities for Children ad Teens Coping with Health Issues*. Hoboken, NJ: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Baby and Toddler Nursery Rhymes and Story Time

Overview:

Reading and singing are a simple and informal way for parents to enhance the attachment with a child, as well as having beneficial outcomes for the baby or toddler. The benefits of singing to a baby or toddler helps the learning of daily routines, builds gross motor through songs with movement, eases separation troubles, and builds trust (Honing, 1985).

Age Range: Infants to 2.5 years old

Objectives:

To enhance attachment through story time and singing songs; to help language development.

Activity Description:

For reading based activity, parents and child can find a quiet space to sit in with book of choice. Parents can sit and read quietly to the child. To further enhance activity, parent can describe pictures found in book to child (describe colours, objects, emotions, and so on). Parents and child can spend as much time as they want reading books together.

For nursery rhymes activity, parents can do this altogether as a group or they can do this individually with immediate family. Sing nursery songs to baby or toddler to

enhance bond and attachment, and add movement to song for gross motor and touch. Some examples of nursery songs are: The Wheels On The Bus, I'm A Little Teapot, and, If You're Happy And You Know It.

Materials:

- ❖ Baby and toddler appropriate books
- ❖ Nursery rhymes for babies and toddlers

Sources:

Activity previously facilitated for children and parents

Honing, A. (1985). Singing with Infants and Toddlers. ED352184

Additional Ideas

There are so many activities a parent can do with their baby or toddler to help create or enhance the attachment between parent and child. During times of displacement due to a natural disaster, parents can be overwhelmed with the stress of an uncertain future, which can have an affect the baby or toddler in various ways. By implementing these activities and giving parents the space and time to spend with their baby or toddler, a secure attachment can be enhanced during times of crisis and potentially build resilience in the future.

Here are a few more activities parents can do with their baby or toddler that are as equally effective and fun as the noted activities above:

- Blowing Bubbles
- Peek-A-Boo
- Dancing and singing to music
- Brushing baby or toddler's hair
- Taking baby or toddler for a walk and describing surroundings
- Laying on floor with baby and playing with toddler: getting down to his or her level



Pre-School Age Children (2.5 years -5 years)

Good health, happiness and a positive state of mind is the pursuit of all living creatures on this planet. This is known as well-being and it is important for people to achieve this state in order to grow and thrive. Between the ages of two and a half to five years of age, children are learning about their unique feelings, emotions, and

thoughts; it is an exciting developmental stage for preschoolers. Preschoolers embark on more independent social interactions, create friendships, express their ideas, and begin to learn in a school setting. It is essential for adults to teach preschoolers about the importance of their emotional, physical, and overall well-being, but what happens when a preschooler is confronted with a natural disaster and all that follows in the aftermath of a natural disaster? The child may feel as though their world has turned upside down, and without the support and guidance of a parent, caretaker or adult, their overall well-being may be jeopardized.

Research has shown that children's overall well-being is substantially affected by a effects of a natural disaster. Physically, children may suffer from lack of proper nutrition due to the destruction of food and crops, live in unhygienic conditions, and not have adequate treatment to illnesses or injuries due to the destruction of health infrastructures (Kousky, 2016).

Mentally, children may develop stress, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder and the emotional grief a child may feel because the loss of loved one may become too overwhelming for a child to cope with. Parents or caregivers mental state can also have an affect on a child's mental well-being as well. "Children may become upset when their caregivers' ability to protect them declines or when they see caregivers experience fear and stress" (Kousky, 2016).

Children who have experienced a natural disaster may feel unsafe, unsecured, and have an onset of mental, physical, and emotional stressors. The following activities were chosen to help alleviate some of these symptoms by creating a safe, secure, and expressive environment. The activities focus on self-esteem, positive body awareness,

expression, and promoting a healthy and happy state of well-being during the time of displacement.

Crown Me

Overview:

Preschooler's thrive on imagination and play. Some pre-schooler's like o pretend to be a construction worker, or a doctor. Others like to pretend they are a king or queen living in a grand castle. Pretending to be other people or characters may help a preschooler to figure out who they are, which contributes to self-esteem. This activity's goal is to help preschooler's foster self-esteem after a natural disaster by wearing crowns to symbolize their importance and worth.

Objectives:

To foster self-esteem through creative play that symbolizes worth and importance

Activity Description:

Using the template provided, trace crown on poster paper and cut out. Children who wish to cut crown may do so. Give crown to children along with materials to decorate crown with such as markers, jewels, crayons, etc. After children have finished decorating crown, write name on back of crown and wrap crown around child's head to determine size needed to secure with tape. Encourage children to wear the crown to remind them that they are important to those that love and care for them. (Hart & Rollins, 2011, pg 56).

Enhance activity with link of song provided:

Sesame Street: Will. I. Am Sings "What I Am"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyVzjoj96vs>

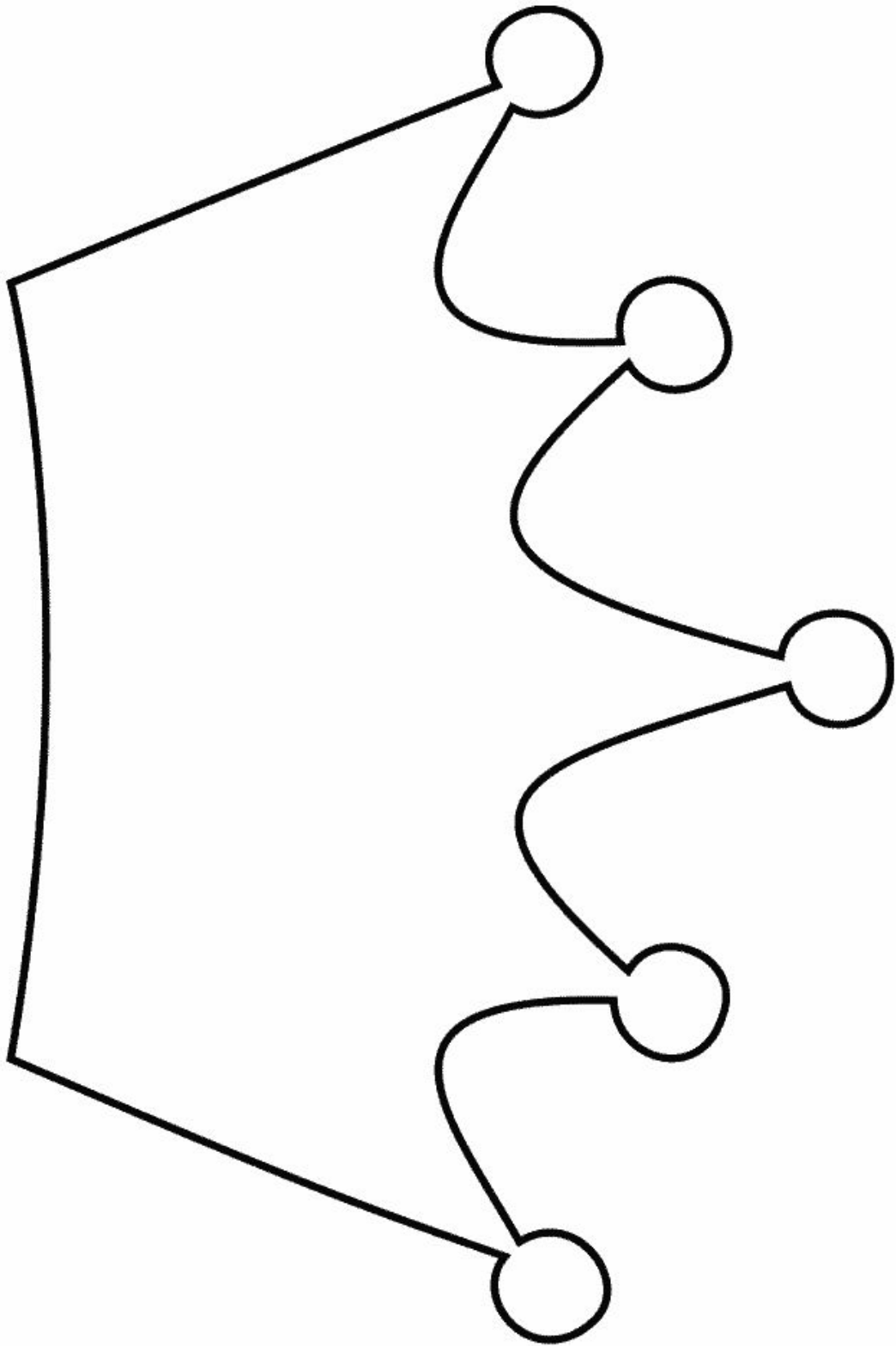
Materials:

- ❖ Crown template
- ❖ Poster paper
- ❖ Scissors

- ❖ Glue
- ❖ Markers and crayons
- ❖ Glitter, craft jewels, or shapes
- ❖ Tape

Source:

Hart, R., & Rollins, J., (2011) *Therapeutic Activities for Children ad Teens Coping with Health Issues*. Hoboken, NJ: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc.





Playing With Clay

Overview:

Clay is a great art medium for anyone to work with, but the benefits preschoolers attain from playing with clay makes it an excellent resource for their overall well being. Preschoolers who are given clay can develop fine motor skills, benefit from sensory stimulation, and have an outlet for self expression. Preschoolers can create what they see in their imagination, as well as being able to express what they are processing post natural disaster. This activity was purposely chosen to give preschoolers who have been displaced due to a natural disaster an art medium that is simple, yet effective, in aiding positive well-being and expressionism.

Objectives:

To give preschoolers an art medium (clay) that allows them to express feelings and emotions post-disaster that also benefits sensory needs and fine motor skills.

Activity Description:

Give preschoolers their own piece of clay. A handful is usually a good amount. Set out tools preschoolers can use to shape their clay such as rolling pins, craft sticks,

playdoh scissors, different shaped molds, etc. Encourage preschoolers to squish and smash their clay, create animals, plants, and so forth. This is a good activity to participate in with the preschoolers.

Enhancements:

Inform children that if they wish to paint their clay creation, they need to set it aside to dry for 24 hours.

Play music during time of activity.

Add glitter, sparkles, or googly eyes to clay if preschoolers desire.

Add a little bit of water to add to texture of clay.

Materials:

- ❖ Clay
- ❖ Playdoh tools such as rolling pins, molds, craft sticks, and playdoh scissors
- ❖ Glitter, sparkles, googly eyes

Source:

Previously facilitated activity for preschoolers



Shadow Dancing

Overview:

Body image is a part of a child’s self-esteem and well-being and refers to “a person’s inner picture of his or her outward appearance” (Hart & Rollins, 2011). During a natural disaster, it is possible that children may be impacted by physical injuries sustained from a natural disaster, which may lead to poor body image perceptions, poor self-esteem and over all, poor emotional and physical well-being. This activity was chosen to give toddlers a healthy and fun outlet that promotes positive body image in safe and nurturing environment. This activity is excellent with music and shadow puppet shows as well.

Objectives:

To enhance well-being through positive body awareness in a fun and simple activity.

Activity Description:

Use plain wall, screen, or tape a sheet of large white paper to room wall. Dim rooms lights and shine lamp or flashlight toward blank wall or screen. Demonstrate how to shadow-dance to children, making different movements or shadow puppets for children to try. You can enhance this activity by playing music for children to dance to. Cut out different kinds of shapes or animals for children to make shadows with. (Hart & Rollins, 2011, pg 87-88)

Materials:

- ❖ Flashlight or lamp

- ❖ Screen or blank wall
- ❖ Music player

Source:

Hart, R., & Rollins, J., (2011) *Therapeutic Activities for Children ad Teens Coping with Health Issues*. Hoboken, NJ: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Yoga for Preschoolers

Overview:

Yoga is an ancient form of exercise to help heal and soothe the body, mind, and soul. It has become popular in western culture in the last 20 years, promoting health and well-being and is available to anyone at any age.

Preschoolers who have experienced the trauma of a natural disaster may be under undetected stress, anxiety and depression and may not have a healthy outlet to express it physically. This activity was chosen to promote a healthy physical outlet for preschoolers to express underlying emotions caused by a natural disaster. Yoga in children “ indicates improved benefits in concentration, stress alleviation, self-awareness, consciousness, self-regulation, behavioral and emotional maturity, and self-confidence in everyday life” (Hagan & Nayar, 2014). Explore the following yoga poses with preschoolers adjusting to their needs through out the process.

Objectives:

To promote well-being through the practice of yoga

Activity Description:

Yoga mats are not a necessity. Towels (folded to child’s needs) work just as well. If yoga mats are not available, do yoga on carpeted area or non-slip surface with socks off.

Find a quiet space to facilitate yoga “class” in. Facilitators may wish to chose a room where it is possible to dim lights or possibly, a gym. Follow the following yoga poses as best possible, adjusting to the needs of the child. Invite children to rest when needed. Facilitators may join in if desired.

Enhance activity with calming music.

If the facilitator is looking for extra yoga poses for children, go to <http://www.cosmickids.com> for yoga poses and fun yoga videos specifically made for kids.

Materials:

- ❖ Quiet space to do yoga
- ❖ Towels or available yoga mats

Source:

Hagen, I., & Nayar, U. S. (2014). Yoga for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-Being: Research Review and Reflections on the Mental Health Potentials of Yoga. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 5. doi:10.3389/fpsy.2014.00035

YOGA

POSES FOR BEGINNERS

NerdlyMama.com



VAJRASANA



DHANURASANA



MAYURASANA



BHADRASANA



CHAKRASANA



HALASANA



UTKATASANA



SARVANGASANA



PAVANAMUKTASANA



BHJANGASANA



ARDHA-MATSYENDRASANA



PASHCHIMOTTANASANA



EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA



MATSYASANA



USHTRASANA



UTTANASANA



TRIKONASANA



BALASANA



SHAVASANA



School Age (6 years -10 years old)

Between the ages of 6 -10 years, children are becoming more independent, energetic, and have the ability to identify and label emotions they are feeling. Children who have experienced traumatic events due to a natural disaster, such as the of a loss of home, displacement, chaos or potential loss of a loved one, may begin to have onset symptoms of mental health concerns. Depression, anxiety, anger, grief, post-traumatic stress disorder or behavioural disorders could be a child's reality post-disaster and it is important for children to be able to express feelings and emotions they are experiencing in a safe and supportive capacity. How can professionals and volunteers help children who have been affected by a natural disaster cope with their feelings and emotions in a healthy and sustainable way?

After the on-going distress Hurricane Katrina child and adolescent victims were

displaying, psychologists and other mental health workers created a holistic school based mental health intervention manual called the Journey of Hope (JoH). The Journey of Hope is “geared towards preventing distress through building protective factors, enhancing social and emotional skills, and increasing positive coping among children affected by a disaster” and was accessed by children and adolescents affected by the devastating EF-4 tornado that hit Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 2011 (Powell & Holleran-Steiker, 2017). The results for the children and adolescents who participated in the JoH were positive. Facilitators and others who worked with the children noticed they felt better through learning coping mechanisms, were able to process grief, and were able to express emotions in a healthier way (Powell & Holleran-Steiker, 2017).

The activities chosen in this document for school age children are aligned with the same beliefs and ideas the Journey of Hope had for the affected children and adolescents post-disaster; to give children coping skills and express emotions in a healthy, proactive way post-disaster. The activities center around expressing feelings and emotions using art, music, and drama and are easy and fun to facilitate.



Bead Meaning Bracelets

Overview:

At times, children may not know how to identify the emotions they are feeling. Colours are a subtle, but powerful way to help children identify feelings or emotions. This activity was chosen to help children label emotions using colours and give them a tangible object to hold onto.

Objectives:

To provide a visual reminder of strength based words or meanings to help school age children develop coping skills.

Activity Description:

Prior to activity, write down some meanings for colours on index cards or paper. Examples below description

Set out materials at an accessible spot for all children. Allow children to gather their materials and let them create their own bead meaning bracelet (or necklace if they wish). Explain that these bracelets are to help them with whatever they need, such as anger control, calming down, or spelling out a word that means something to them. Such examples of bead meaning bracelets are:

Anger Control Bracelet:

- ❖ Red-stop and think
- ❖ Blue-remain calm
- ❖ Yellow-proceed with caution
- ❖ Green-go and talk with a trusted friend or grown up

Believe in Me Bracelet:

- ❖ Blue-I can do it
- ❖ Green-keep going
- ❖ Red-don't let anger stop me
- ❖ Yellow-smile

Word Bracelets:

Spell out words such as calm, peace, happy, silly, or hope. Children can also choose their own words to spell. Children can choose any beads to fill in. (Joiner, 2012, pg.82)

Materials:

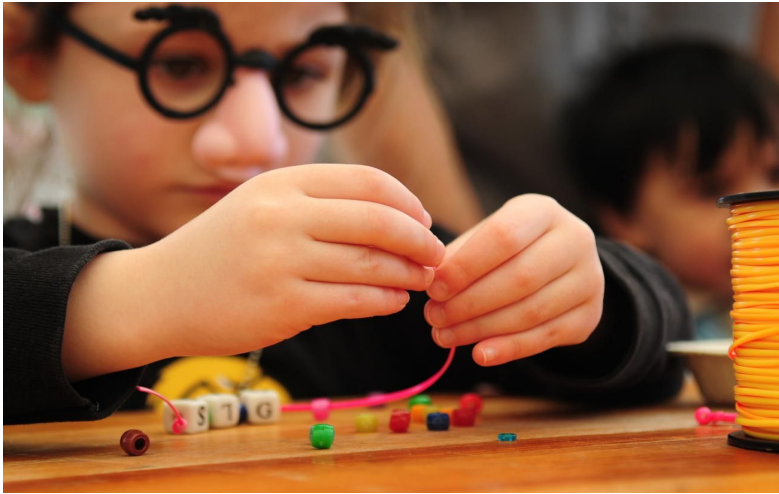
- ❖ Round plastic beads (assorted colours and alphabet words)
- ❖ String
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Index cards with explanation of meanings (written prior to activity or children can make up their own meanings and write them down)

Source:

Joiner, L. (2012) *The Big Book of Therapeutic Activity Ideas for Children and Teens:*

Inspiring Arts-Based Activities and Character Education Curricula. London,

UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers



Resilience Dolls

Overview:

During times of crisis, trauma, or displacement, children may feel worried, anxious, or stressed and it may be challenging for children to feel at ease. This could be due to children feeling homesick. Homesickness is the “distress and functional impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment objects” (CITE). Small comfort items, such as a worry doll, may help a child feel less anxious and more comfortable in an unknown environment.

This chosen activity was founded many generations ago by Indigenous people from the Highlands of Guatemala. According to the Mayan legend, when worries or anxieties bubble up to the surface, the child expresses his or her worries to the doll as necessary.

This activity may help alleviate some of the homesickness, worries, anxieties, or stresses the child has been experiencing by being to express emotions to a tangible object.

Objectives:

To give a tangible, hand crafted object children can express their worries, anxieties, or other emotions to without judgement.

Activity Description:

Place materials in accessible area of room. Have children draw a face on the craft stick, leaving enough room to wrap craft stick with yarn or add hair. Using yarn, ribbon, or other fabric material, wrap around craft stick to create clothing. Use yarn or other material to create hair, shoes, or any other item children may want to create for worry doll. Help children tie or glue materials if needed.

To enhance activity, read following story to children prior to activity.

Materials:

- ❖ Yarn
- ❖ Craft sticks
- ❖ Glue
- ❖ Markers
- ❖ Ribbon
- ❖ Fabric material from craft store
- ❖ Gems, googly eyes, glitter (if desired)

Source:

Activity found at <https://www.kiddiematters.com/quick-and-easy-worry-doll-craft/>



The Doll Story

In the hills outside a small city, lived an old man with his daughter, Flora, and her two children, Maria and Diego. Like most Guatemalan people they had no electricity and no running water. They lived together in a small, one room thatched hut of mud and wood. The home was heated with a large fire in the middle of the room. Grandfather had taught them all to be excellent farmers just like their Mayan ancestors. This year was very bad, as a drought had prevented most of the crops from growing. Even though the ancient Mayans had developed methods of building giant underground storage tanks to hold water just in case of drought, this farm had none. Despite being very poor, the family was usually happy. They all worked very hard and they were thankful for the colorful clothes

that Flora was able to make them. The children enjoyed and learned much from their grandfather's stories. They all worked together to survive.

They would all wake up with the Sun and tend to the fields, just in case it rained. Then they would spend time gathering lots of firewood. Maria and Diego would then go to school for the day. It was hard for them because the teacher taught in Spanish which was not what they spoke at home. Some of their friends were there, but several of them didn't go to school because they needed to stay home and help their parents.

Because of the drought, it was very hard to gather enough food for the day. For dinner, the children would grind some maize and Mom would use it to make tortillas for the family. It wasn't much, and it didn't prevent them from getting hungry the next day. After dinner, when the chores were done, Mother would go back to weaving and the children would kiss the hands of Grandfather and bow to him as they asked him to tell one of his stories. As grandfather told his story they would lay back in their hammocks and listen.

Grandfather's stories were the best because they were true. His stories had been handed down word by word from his grandfather and his grandfather's grandfather. Diego had already heard the stories enough to repeat them, but he would have to wait until he had children who wanted to hear them. They listened proudly to their heritage as grandfather described how the ancients had mapped the stars long before anyone else in the world. They were captivated by hearing that their ancestors had developed mathematics long before anyone else in the world. The Mayans developed the concept of zero being a number. The Mayans had a system based on 20 as opposed to the modern system of 10. Maria liked the way grandfather would count to twenty by wiggling her ten fingers then her ten toes.

Best of all was when grandfather would describe the silly things. They giggled out loud as he would describe people tying boards to youngster's foreheads because they believed a flat forehead to be a sign of beauty. Diego almost fell out of his hammock as he laughed at his grandfather acting out how the ancients used to hang a bead of wax in front of their baby's eyes in order to make the child cross eyed. They thought it was another sign of beauty.

As sleep was almost near for his grandchildren, grandfather would describe how the ancient Mayans would perform sacrifices or bloodletting as an offering to any one of their 166 gods. At this point in the story, Maria would always reach up and shake Diego's hammock to try and scare him. It always worked. The scream was also a signal to mom that it was time to put the weaving away and go to sleep. Flora put all her wonderful cloth into a basket underneath her son's hammock and went to bed.

While sleeping, Maria dreamed of flying with a Quetzal, a long tailed bird which is the national bird of Guatemala. In ancient times the bird was thought to be a spiritual protector of the chiefs and it was a capital offense, punishable by

death to kill one. Diego heard Maria making bird noises in her sleep and looked over the edge of his hammock to make fun of her. He was immediately startled by the outline of a thief grabbing his mother's cloth and running out of the house. "A — A ROBBER!" Diego screamed. His mother and grandfather woke up startled. "Where?" Maria asked. "He just ran out with all mother's cloth!" Sure enough, the cloth was gone. Flora began to cry, "That was two season's worth of work! Now I'll have nothing to sell at the market!" Flora sobbed the rest of the night.

When the children were leaving for school the next day, Mother was still laying in her hammock and was coming down with a fever. Grandfather would stay with her. When the children returned from school in the afternoon, mother's fever was worse and they were nearly out of food. Maria said, "Diego we need to help! I have an idea."

Maria looked in the basket mother kept her cloth in. She was looking for anything that might be left. All that remained in the basket were several scraps of cloth in odd colors and odd shapes. Maria took the basket outside and dragged her brother along. "Go collect small twigs and bring them here," she asked him. Diego whined and said "Wwwhhhy?" "We have to help mother." Maria replied. He scampered off to go find twigs without another word. Maria began organizing scraps of cloth, sorting them by color and size. When Diego returned with the twigs, they both started working. When mother or grandfather asked what they were doing, they said it was a secret. Mother was still running a fever and grandfather was trying to make her feel better. The kids kept working.

Late in the night, they ran out of cloth scraps. When they looked at what they had made, they saw dozens of little tiny dolls in little tiny clothes. They had also made little pouches for the dolls to sleep in. As they packaged the dolls up, six in a pouch, Maria remembered one of grandfather's stories about a magical doll who would grant its owner several wishes. The thought that these dolls were magical was funny to Maria, but for some reason she actually felt it was true. She hoped for her family's sake that they were magical.

Maria selected her favorite colored pouch and pulled each of the dolls from it. She lined them up in the palm of her hand and began speaking to them. "Good night my tiny friends, my family is in trouble and we need your help. Our fields are dried up, my mother is sick, we have no food or money, and my mother's cloth was stolen. We need your help little ones." Maria placed the dolls back in the pouch then placed them under her pillow. She was able to sleep very soundly that night, and when she awoke, the dolls were out of the pouch and all laid out in a circle on the table.

"I was certain I put them in the pouch under my pillow last night," she said to herself.

Wiping the sleep from her eyes, she convinced herself she must have imagined putting them under her pillow. That morning, Maria and Diego prepared to go to the market. They put all the doll pouches into a large wrap that can be

used as a bag or a head covering and began walking to market. Mother managed to get out of her hammock and said, “Where are you going?”

They replied, “To market.”

While Mother puzzled over what they would do there, Grandfather wished them good luck.

As Maria and Diego made the long walk to market they encountered many people. They made sure to say “Hi how are you?” It would be considered rude to not say hello. The people would reply, “Fine thank you.” The two of them walked along barefoot, without complaining. Secretly they both wished they had the sandals that many other people used for long walks, but they knew they could not afford that luxury.

Maria’s thoughts turned to bargaining. She had seen her mother and grandfather do it, but she had never had to do it herself. It was expected at the market that people would barter for a fair price. She worried that she would not have the skills needed to barter. Even if she could, what was a fair price for little dolls? She had never seen anyone sell them before. She decided to make up a price as she was bartering. For now, she focused on getting a good spot at the market. A good location would make all the difference she thought to herself. She did find a good spot, it was at the end of an aisle right next to a shoe seller.

As they laid out their dolls on the sidewalk, the shoe seller recognized them and asked them where their mother was with her beautiful cloth. They told him of what had happened. Then Maria informed him that all they had to sell today were these dolls. The shoe seller examined the tiny dolls and puzzled over why someone would want such small dolls. Maria piped up and said there was magic in the dolls. The shoe seller laughed and said there was magic in his shoes too but that wouldn’t help them sell.

“We shall see” said Maria, “we shall see.”

As the day dragged on, sales were not going well, the market was almost closing for the day and they hadn’t sold any dolls. They were both getting worried. As Maria began putting away her dolls, a man dressed in fine clothes and a large

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hat in a very soft slow vice that is typical of Guatemalans asked “What are you selling?”

“Just these little dolls,” Diego said.

“Magic Dolls!” chimed Maria.

The man adjusted his hat and with a smirk said “Magic huh? I could use a little magic. I’ll take them all!”

They hurriedly wrapped up the dolls and he handed them a wad of money.

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“Thank you.” said Maria.

The stranger said, “You’re welcome,” and was gone before Maria could turn around and start bartering for how much change he would get back. She counted the money in disbelief. 6,600quetzals! (~\$940) That’s enough for us to live on for a year she exclaimed! She was not exaggerating.

Diego started jumping up and down at the thought of being able to eat tonight. He and Maria bought some food and then headed for home. As they walked, they chewed on chicle which is a natural gum that comes from tree sap (and that’s where Chiclets gum came from).

“Yes we did, we sold dolls!” Diego screamed.

“Magic Dolls,” Maria added.

They explained everything to mother and grandfather.

Mother said, “It doesn’t sound like magic, it sounds like my children worked very hard.”

“But how do you explain that you are feeling better?” asked grandfather.

“That’s just the way trouble is,” exclaimed Flora, “sometimes it just comes and goes.”

“How do you explain the rain?” yelled Diego. “What rain?” they all asked.

“THAT rain,” he pointed. Sure enough, the fields were getting rained on as they were talking. The drought was over.

When Maria was getting ready for bed she noticed something in her pocket, when she pulled it out, it was the same pouch of dolls she had spoken to the night before. How had they gotten there? She was sure she sold them to the man.

In the pouch she found a tiny little note that said, “Tell these dolls your secret wishes. Tell them your problems. Tell them your dreams. And when you awake, you may find the magic within you to make your dreams come true.”

There was no name on the note, just a little drawing of a man in a big hat. The mysterious stranger.

Pick An Action

Overview:

Drama is a great way to express oneself and allows children to express their feelings, thoughts, and provides insight into their view of the world (Burn, 2013). This activity was chosen to allow children to express themselves through creative drama and movement, as well as to have fun. While this activity is not to be labeled as therapy based, it does have components to being aligned with the therapeutic benefits through expressing feelings, thoughts, and emotions using drama. Drama therapy itself “is a method of therapy which uses the dramatic process to help people during times of stress, emotional upheaval or disability” (Langley, 2008). This activity may help children post-natural disaster process stress, emotions, and feelings in a healthy, drama centered way.

Objectives:

Expressing emotions, thoughts, and feelings through a drama focused activity.

Activity Description:

Prior to activity, write out a series of actions such as starting a car, moving a couch, painting the house, walking a dog and so on. Make the actions fun and creative. Put each action on a piece of paper and into a bowl. Ask each child participating to come up one at a time and pick an action. Instruct child to play out the action (assist child if they cannot read the action on piece of paper). Children have 30 seconds to guess what the child is acting out. If children wish to do activity again, select one child to write out actions and be the facilitator for the round. Children can take turns creating actions. (Burns, 2013, pg 358)

Materials:

- ❖ Large space or room

Sources:

Burns, M. (2013) *Time In: An Introduction to Therapeutic Activity Programming and Facilitation*. Kingston, ON: Child Care Press

Langley, D. M. (2006;2008;). *An introduction to dramatherapy* (1st ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Home of Hope

Overview:

Home is where the heart is and many children who have been displaced due to a natural disaster may not ever see their home again because of external circumstances. Children who have lost their home due to a natural disaster may experience emotions such as loss, grief, anger, sadness, and depression. This activity was chosen to allow children to have hope by creating their ideal home post-disaster. As this is an expressive arts based activity, children may benefit from being able to express their wants, needs, and desires in a home they envision in their future.

Objectives:

This activity encourages children to express their ideal home after being displaced due to a natural disaster. It promotes positive self-thought and seeing potential possibilities.

Activity Description:

With materials listed below, have children design a home they envision in their mind. They can use pictures of doors or windows from magazines to create a door to their house. This project is only limited by the child's imagination. To enhance activity, children may collaborate together to make a town using their individual houses and add elements such as playgrounds, schools, grocery stores, etc.

(Joiner, 2012, pg 67-68)

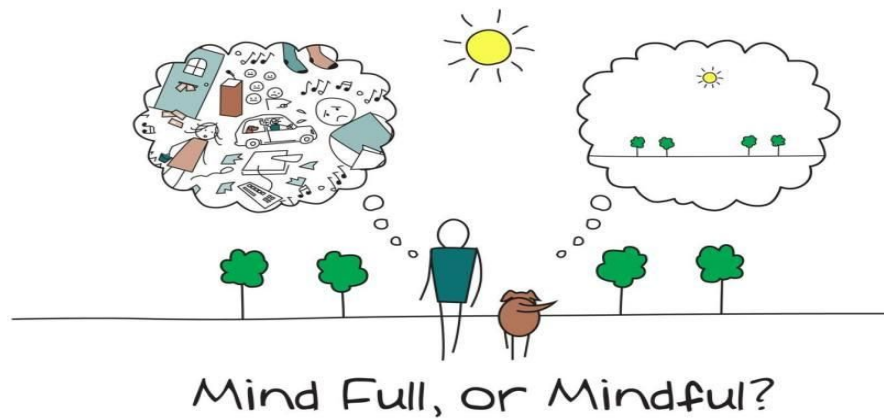
Materials:

- ❖ Large piece of foam board
- ❖ Cardboard pieces
- ❖ Construction paper
- ❖ Green tissue paper or foam
- ❖ Fabric glue or regular glue (fabric glue will adhere better; glue guns can also be used)
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Other art materials such as glitter, pipe cleaners, paint, craft sticks, markers, etc.
- ❖ Magazines

Source:

Joiner, L. (2012) *The Big Book of Therapeutic Activity Ideas for Children and Teens: Inspiring Arts-Based Activities and Character Education Curricula*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Adolescence (11 years -14 years old)



Mindfulness: What is it? Christopher Germer (2004) defines mindfulness as the opposite of being on auto-pilot; it is paying attention to the present moment and not dwelling in the past, but remembering and experiencing all around you in an open-hearted manner. Mindfulness can help relax a person in a state of being rather than being in a state of stress, panic, anxiety, or any other negative emotion that may bubble to the surface. A person can become mindful by way of practice, using meditation or other awareness-based activities and can bring a person into level of moments that are “non-judgement, present-centered, non-conceptual, liberating, and exploratory” (Germer, 2004).

Adolescents who have witnessed and/or experienced a natural disaster are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and PTSD. In 2008, China experienced an earthquake that measured 8.0 on the Richter scale. Among the people that were affected by this natural disaster were young adolescents. Researchers wanted to understand the state of mental health these adolescents were in post-disaster and found that out of 2,250 participants of the study, 2,081 (92.5%) adolescents between grades 7-10 were suffering from depression, anxiety, and PTSD due to the natural disaster (Fan, Zhang, Yang, Mo, & Liu, 2011).

Knowing how a natural disaster affects an adolescents mental health and well-being is the a fundamental asset to assisting these young people in their journey of healing. One can only imagine what events and circumstances a young person at this age must think and feel. The activities below were made with the young adolescents in mind and can offer these adolescents tools he or she can use during the housing period, relocation period, and later in the future. Mindfulness for adolescents can “strengthen foundational skills in self-regulation, support cognitive skills needed for learning, and expand the capacity for distress tolerance” (Broderick & Frank, 2014). With that in mind, the activities developed for the adolescents center around mindfulness post-disaster and hopefully give them a safe space to breathe, relax, and re-focus on their mental health and well-being.



Breathing Exercises

Overview: Breathing exercises are an excellent way to help regulate busy minds and induce relaxation in the body and mind. “Relaxation is that state of rest or slowing down of the physiological self” (Burns, 2013). Adolescents can benefit from these exercises by regulating their busy thoughts or anxieties simply by slowing down the breath, focusing on the present moment (mindfulness), and can be done in less than 5 minutes at any time of the day! Listed below are 3 kinds of breathing activities to engage adolescents in.

Objectives:

To create a relaxing and stress free atmosphere through breathing techniques; to create a mindful experience.

Activity Description:

Zen Breath Counting: Have adolescents find a comfortable position, either sitting or laying down in a quiet space. When they are ready, ask them to close eyes (or keep open if they are not comfortable) and have them take a few deep breaths. After the few deep breaths, guide them to return to their normal breathing. Guide adolescents to take a deep breath in through his or her nose. Have them count silently to themselves (up to 4-5 seconds), and exhale with the mouth and again, count up to 4-5 seconds upon exhalation. Repeat up to 3-5 minutes.

Whoosh: Guide adolescents to exhale all air from their lungs through the mouth, making a whoosh sound. Close mouth and inhale quietly through nose with a silent

count of up to 4. Hold breath till the count of 7 and exhale again, making whoosh sound for a count of up to 7-8 seconds. Repeat 3-4 times.

Tai Chi Breath: This exercise engages the lungs and body by making 3 separate inhalations through the nose without exhaling. A fun challenge for adolescents to participate in. Let adolescents know they should inhale slowly in order to avoid becoming breathless or lightheaded. On first inhale, lift arms from the sides, straight out in front at shoulder height. On second inhale, open arms out straight in front to the sides, and keep at shoulder length. On last inhale, lift arms straight over head. Exhale slowly through mouth while slowly lowering arms down to the sides. Repeat this 3-4 times.

(Burns, 2013, pg 268-269)

Materials:

- ❖ Quiet space or room

Source:

Burns, M. (2013) *Time In: An Introduction to Therapeutic Activity Programming and Facilitation*. Kingston, ON: Child Care Press

What I See With My Ears

Overview:

Music. This expressive form of art can help heal a person in many different ways. Music is a powerful tool that has been used as part of therapeutic practices by licensed therapists, counsels, and psychologists alike. Adolescents can benefit from music in many different ways; from bonding with peers, relaxation and mindfulness, and having a healthy outlet for stress, anxiety, and depression due to a natural disaster. Music, when utilized, has a way of adding a “special element to the group experience that can promote cohesion and a sense of belonging” and can also “add a sense of personal autonomy and self-esteem” (Burns, 2013). The chosen activity will help support relaxation, mindfulness, and creativity with music.

Objectives:

To create a mindful experience through art and music.

Activity Description:

Select music that is well known to the group of adolescents, such as a popular song or a specific genre, like classical. Hand out art materials (paper, markers, colour pencils, pencils) to group. Make sure there is extra paper on hand for group members. Inform group members that a piece of music will be played. When music is being played, encourage group members to draw the images that the music produces in their imagination. Let them know that drawing lines or random shapes is a good way to start and they can use several sheets of paper if they wish. (Burns, 2013, pg 351)

Materials:

- ❖ Music player, iPod or computer
- ❖ Paper
- ❖ Drawing utensils like markers, colour pencils, or pencils

Source:

Burns, M. (2013) *Time In: An Introduction to Therapeutic Activity Programming and Facilitation*. Kingston, ON: Child Care Press

Inspirartion Boards

Overview:

Adolescents who have been displaced due to a natural disaster may feel uncertain of their future. This activity was chosen to encourage adolescents to revisit or create new goals/dreams/aspirations they had before displacement. This activity may help to decrease stress and “develop belief in self and ability to achieve” (Joiner, 2012) even after a crisis has occurred.

Objectives:

Revisiting or creating new goals/dreams/aspirations after a displacement has occurred and fostering a relaxed and mindful self through art.

Activity Description:

Place materials in an accessible part of the room. Group members will be given 30-45 minutes to create their own vision/dream board using pictures, words, or symbol they find in magazines. Invite group members to draw or write their own images. This activity may be expanded by inviting group members to listen to their own choice of music. Volunteers may also participate in activity with group members.

(Joiner, 2012, pg. 75)

Materials:

- ❖ Foam or poster board
- ❖ Old magazines
- ❖ Glue
- ❖ Scissors
- ❖ Markers

Source:

Joiner, L. (2012) *The Big Book of Therapeutic Activity Ideas for Children and Teens:*

Inspiring Arts-Based Activities and Character Education Curricula. London,

UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers



Sample Board

Origami Paper Cranes

Overview:

In Japan, cranes are a symbol for good health, long life, and prosperity and are used in traditional art, ceremonies, and rituals (Hart & Rollins, 2011). This activity was chosen to create a symbol of health for adolescents who may feel they need something tangible in their life that represents well-being after a natural disaster or crisis. Adolescents may also gain a sense of relaxation and mindfulness when creating a paper crane.

Age Range: 11-14

Objectives:

Fine-motor activities such as origami may assist adolescents focus on mindfulness and relax; symbolism of good health, long life, and prosperity

Activity Description:

Image of instructions and legend of 1000 paper cranes following activity description. Activity may be enhanced with music. Invite group members to create as many as they like. Hand out tape and string to hang paper cranes on ceiling.

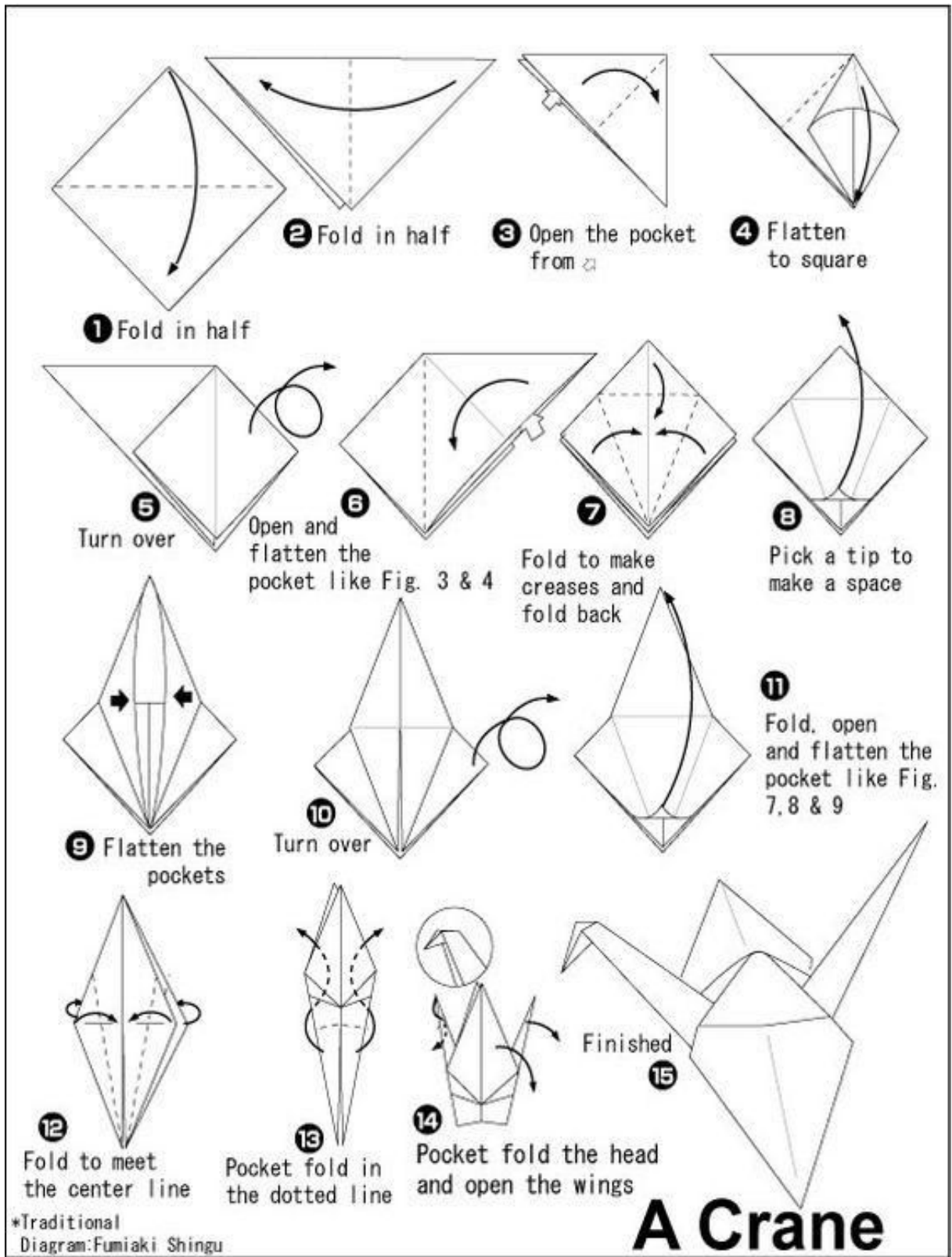
(Hart & Rollins, 2011, pg. 211)

Materials:

- ❖ Origami paper
- ❖ String
- ❖ Tape

Source:

Hart, R., & Rollins, J., (2011) *Therapeutic Activities for Children ad Teens Coping with Health Issues*. Hoboken, NJ: Jon Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Retrieved at <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/142285669451831129/>

APPENDIX ONE

List of acceptable donations: All items must be brand new, never used prior to donating. We will not be accepting gently used or used toys or items

NEW Items that can be donated:

- colouring utensils such as markers, crayons, colour pencils and pencils
- colouring books and construction paper
- paint and paintbrushes along with painting paper
- scissors, glue sticks, glue, rulers, and stickers
- decks of regular playing cards and other playing cards, such as Uno
- pens and journals
- Toy cars, washable dolls (all must have tags still attached or in box)
- Backpacks for school

For Babies and Toddlers:

- Musical Mobile (needs to be washable without cloth pieces)
- Board books
- Shape sorters
- Rattles
- Teethers
- Diapers/wipes (in packages that have not been opened)
- Soothers (new)
- Bottles (new)
- Formula
- Sippy cups (new)

For Preschool age:

- Crayola crayons and coloring books
- Washable baby dolls (no cloth)
- Pop-up books or preschool age books
- Light up/musical toys
- Play-Doh
- Play-Doh kits
- Bubbles (non-toxic)
- Cars
- Stickers

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For School age:

- Games such as Headbands, Operation, Connect Four, Sorry, Trouble, Life, Guess Who, Jenga
- Card games such as Uno, Skip-Bo, Phase Ten, playing cards
- School age books
- Craft kits such as painting kits, beading kits, hemp jewelry kits, ink stamp kits, wooden item kits
- Matchbox cars/trucks
- Toy dinosaurs, insects, or animals
- Non-violent action figures
- Dolls and doll clothes
- 60-100 piece puzzles

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For Teenagers:

- Games such as Checkers, Adult headbands, Scattergories, trivia games.
- Sketch pads, drawing pencils, colored pencils
- Craft kits such as bead/string kits, fabric painting, wooden items
- Model kits (cars, planes, boats, etc.)
- Journals (no spiral)
- Teen reading books
- Gift cards (Amazon, Mall card, iTunes, Walmart, etc.)
- Word search, mad libs, crossword puzzles and Sudoku books
- Backpacks or purses
- Wallets
- Headphones for music players

For Families:

- Gift cards (Safeway, iTunes, Walmart, Mall card, etc.) ebooks
- Socks, gloves, hats, underwear (in packages)
- Backpacks, purses, handbags

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