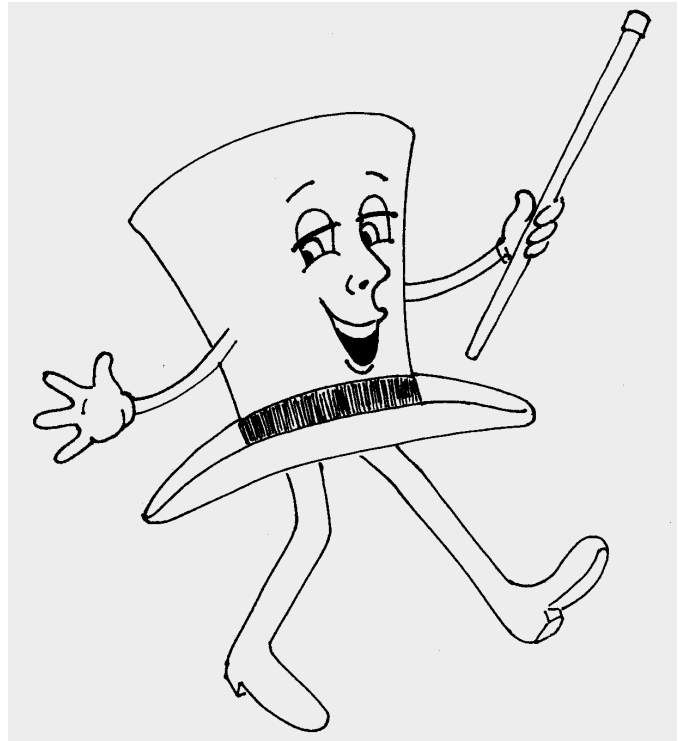


**HEALING**

**AFTER**

**TRAUMA**

**SKILLS**



*A Manual for Professionals, Teachers, and  
Families Working with Children After  
Trauma/Disaster*

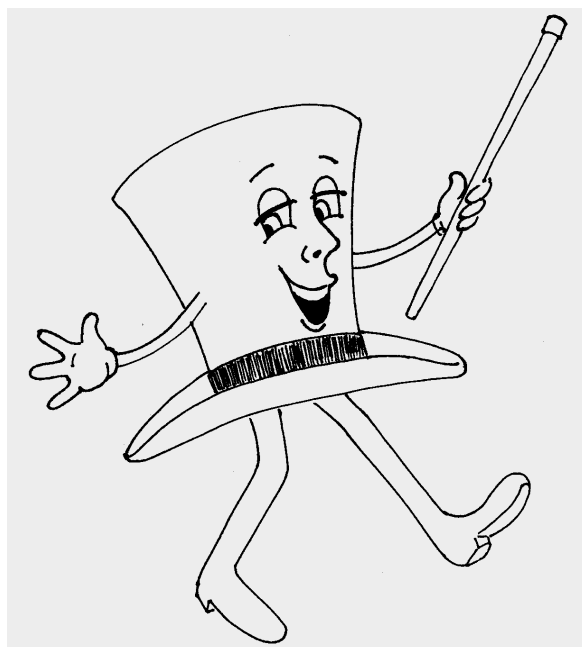
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*Illustrated by Phyllis Seitter*

***Funding for this project provided by the Children's Medical Research Institute of  
the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and the Robert R.  
McCormick Tribune Foundation***

# **HEALING AFTER TRAUMA SKILLS (H.A.T.S.)**

*A Manual for Professionals, Teachers, and Families Working  
with Children After Trauma/Disaster*



*Robin H. Gurwitch, Ph.D. & Anne K. Messenbaugh, M.Ed., L.P.C.  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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*Most importantly, we would like to extend our thanks to the many families and children impacted by the bombing in Oklahoma City who shared their experiences and thoughts with us. Without them, the spirit of the manual would have been significantly diminished.*

*Finally, we would like to thank our families for their continued love, support, and understanding throughout the completion of this manual.*

*-RHG & AKM*

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## CHILDREN AND TRAUMA/DISASTER

As much as we would like to protect our children, they all too often experience traumas and disasters. These may be the result of natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes or the result of man-made tragedies such as the terrorist actions, or shootings on school grounds. We are now learning more and more about how young children are impacted by traumas and disasters and what we can do to help the healing process.

Initially, the belief that children's responses to trauma and disaster were nonexistent, transient, or mild predominated the literature. Through the groundbreaking work of Pynoos, Terr, and others, we now recognize that children have reactions to trauma and disasters similar to those of adults.

### Common Responses to Trauma and Disaster

Reactions seen in children following trauma and disaster are discussed below.

#### A. Re-experiencing the Event

Re-experiencing the event may occur in several ways. These may include intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, and other distressing recollections of the trauma/disaster. These thoughts and images may surface with reminders of the event or may occur without any obvious reason. Children may experience intrusive thoughts and flashbacks even when they are trying hard "not to think about it."

In addition to children reporting these uncomfortable thoughts and images, re-experiencing the event can be seen in behavior. In young children this may be seen in posttraumatic play: repeatedly acting out what happened during the trauma or disaster. For example, children may build up and knock down block buildings if the disaster caused property damage, such as in a hurricane or tornado, or bombing. Young children may repeatedly pretend to be rescue workers or children may construct Lego people with missing parts or erect "destroyed" buildings.

Children may repeat stories about the trauma/disaster over and over. Similarly, questions may be common, again being asked repeatedly. At times, the repetitive stories and questions may contain gruesome images. These often can lead to uncomfortable feelings in the adults around them.

Bad dreams and nightmares may occur. The dreams may have a direct connection to the trauma/disaster or may have no connection. They may take the form of frightening dreams with no recognizable content. The disturbing dreams may be at night or, if the child is very young, during nap time. As a result of the sleep disturbances, many children will seek their parents' bed at bedtime.

Fears are another example of how children may re-experience the trauma/disaster. These fears may be directly related to the event such as fear of storms following a tornado, fear of loud noises following a shooting, explosion, or weather disaster, or fear of sirens if these were common immediately after the trauma/disaster. Fears may also be unrelated. Children may be more worried about bugs, dogs, or going to new places for no discernible reason. Children may also harbor fears that something they did or said caused the trauma/disaster. Children may worry about how their behaviors may impact others. They may try to be "perfect" at home as well as intensely vigilant with schoolwork. This concern about upsetting others may increase their levels of stress. Fears related to the future are not uncommon in school-aged children and teens.

**Children may be particularly worried about issues of safety, security, and trust.**

### **B. Avoidance**

Children may actively seek to avoid things and activities that remind them of the trauma/disaster. Children may avoid the place where a disaster occurred such as a school playground, tall buildings, or being near glass windows. Magical thinking and misperceptions or misunderstandings about the trauma/disaster may also occur. This may lead to avoidance of seemingly unrelated activities. For example, if they were playing a game at the time of the trauma, they may avoid playing the game again. Some children may even avoid wearing clothes that are similar to the ones worn at the time of the trauma/disaster. They may avoid television if they were exposed to extensive news coverage of the trauma/disaster.

### **C. Numbing**

Numbing can be a seeming lack of enjoyment in activities that previously brought pleasure to the child. Children may not want to play as much or may express a lack of interest in things that held their attention before the event. They may also demonstrate a numbing of emotions after a trauma/disaster. Children may not smile as much as before or seem as loving and responsive to parents. Similarly, they may not show anger or sadness after the event. In general, all emotions may seem blunted or restricted. Children may also express a desire to be "left alone." They may withdraw from friends or express decreased pleasure in friends or activities they had previously enjoyed.

### **D. Clingy behavior**

Following a trauma or disaster, young children may become more clingy toward their parents or caregivers. They may show an intense reluctance to return to school or to have their parents out of sight. Parents may soon learn that finding a moment of solitude is extremely difficult. At school, children may be more clingy toward teachers, wanting to talk or to be near them most of the day. This behavior can be seen as a type of separation anxiety. Children may be concerned that being out of parents' sight may lead to something happening to either the parents or to themselves.

### **E. Arousal**

Arousal may be evident as difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability, outbursts of anger, or difficulty concentrating. Children may also appear hypervigilant, appearing always on guard or look-out. Some children may develop an exaggerated startle response following a trauma or disaster. This means that they may seem more jumpy than before. Noises or other unpredictable sounds may trigger this response.

### **F. Mood Changes**

Irritability, anger, and temper tantrums may occur over extremely minor events. Other mood changes may include sullen and stubborn behaviors. Disagreements between friends may be frequent. Lower tolerance for frustration is often noted in children. They may show more defiant behaviors, act-out, or behave more recklessly. Children may test limits with schoolwork, homework, house rules, and daily chores. As teachers and parents may also be experiencing high levels of stress after a trauma or disaster, everyone's nerves may be on edge. The change and sudden mood swings in the children can add to this stress.

The problems in concentration may result in a decrease in school performance. Homework may be forgotten, incomplete, or below the previous standard. Attention to lessons may also be diminished. Hyperactivity and unfocused energy may also be noted. Testing results of children over classroom learning or with standardized instruments (e.g., IOWA tests) as well as homework performance may be below a child's usual standard. This may continue until the community begins to return to a more stable routine.

### **G. Anxiety**

Anxiety is frequently reported in children following a trauma or disaster. The most common form of anxiety is an increase in specific fears, especially in situations or with cues that resemble characteristics of the event itself (SEE FEARS). In children, anxiety related to being away from parents or caregivers may be heightened. Another aspect of anxiety may come from the child's inability to remember all of the event. They may be bothered that they can only remember portions of the trauma/disaster and worry about not remembering all of it. This is normal; memories may return or the child may not be able to recall all of the event.

### **H. Somatic Complaints**

Somatic complaints are more common in school-aged children. These are not typically noted in very young children. Somatic complaints may be headaches, stomachaches, or nausea, as well as diffuse feelings of sickness or vague aches and pains.

## **I. Regressive Behaviors**

Younger children may respond to trauma or disaster with a regression of behavior or loss of previously acquired skills. Examples of this include toileting problems such as day or night-time wetting, even if a child has been routinely dry. Very young children may seek to return to a bottle or pacifier. A regression in language skills may also be seen (e.g., a return to babytalk). Young children may look to parents and teachers for extra assistance with feeding, hand washing, and dressing and, in general, act younger than their age. With an understanding of these behaviors as normal, giving the little extra help and support in the short run will generally lead to a return to previous level of skills more quickly.

## **J. Hurtful Talk or Play**

Hurtful talk or play may be seen in children after a trauma/disaster. This may be particularly true if the trauma/disaster is man-made. Children may express strong wishes for revenge. They may express many intensely negative and hurtful ideas about individuals or groups of people. Play may incorporate these ideas with children becoming more aggressive or destructive in their play. Although these feelings and thoughts of revenge may be expressed, they may also produce discomfort in children.

### **REMEMBER:**

**The above reactions are commonly reported in children following a trauma or disaster.** Not every child will display all of these symptoms, but many will have a subset of the above responses. Some children may have mild reactions, while other children's responses may be more intense. **Again, these reactions are considered to be normal responses to a trauma or disaster and seen in many children in the initial period following the trauma or disaster.** In general, these will improve with time. Every child has his/her own timetable for healing. A child's timetable may be similar to those of other family members or classmates or be very different. The skills and exercises in this manual are provided to help children cope and heal after a trauma or disaster.

## **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

Many children may experience post traumatic stress symptoms after a trauma or disaster but not develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) involves the development of certain characteristic symptoms following exposure to a traumatic event. The symptoms are many of those listed above: re-experiencing the event, persistent avoidance and numbing, and increased arousal, including fears. These symptoms must be present for at least one month after the trauma/disaster. Again, it is not uncommon for children to display many of the symptoms for several months after the trauma/disaster, but may not have the intensity of the symptoms to warrant a diagnosis of PTSD. If the symptoms persist, an evaluation by a professional should be considered.



Parents, teachers, and counselors are important monitors of children's coping and healing. Children may not always readily share how they are coping with adults. By encouraging talking, keeping lines of communication open (being open, honest, supportive, and non-judgmental) and being keen observers of children's behaviors, recognizing children in greatest need for more intensive interventions is possible.

## **Identifying Factors to Predict Children At Greatest Risk**

There are several mediating factors that may influence the impact of trauma and disaster on young children. These factors, when present, may place a child at higher risk for long term difficulties.

### **A. Level of Exposure**

Level of exposure is the degree to which a child was involved in the trauma or disaster. The more intense the exposure, the greater degree of risk. Exposure may take the form of actual injury to the child or a threat to the child's well being. Death or injury (or perceived threat) to a parent is also considered a high level of exposure. Exposure can also take the form of property loss such as a destroyed home, loss of belongings, or damage/destruction to school. In the age of extensive media coverage of trauma and disaster, exposure to the event on television should be monitored. Excessive exposure may produce post-traumatic stress symptoms in children otherwise removed from the trauma/disaster. This may be particularly true if the images observed are not processed with an adult at a level the child can understand.

### **B. Premorbid Functioning of the Child and Family**

A child's response to trauma and disaster may be affected by prior life events or pre-existing problems that place the child at risk for more significant problems. If a child has experienced another loss or trauma prior to the current trauma/disaster, the memories of that loss coupled with the new event may overwhelm the child's ability to cope and function effectively. Other stressors such as marital problems, a recent divorce, parent's job loss, birth of new sibling, domestic violence, or change in schools may be risk factors for the child. Behavior problems in school may also be a sign to look for a more difficult time coping with a trauma or disaster. However, if a child was hyperactive or shy and withdrawn before the trauma/disaster and these behaviors continue without change, they should not be seen as necessarily due to the trauma/disaster.

### **C. Support Systems**

The support systems available to a child are important to the healing process. If parents are unavailable due to their own difficulties with the trauma/disaster or due to premorbid problems, the child is at higher risk for difficulties. Other systems include the school, extended family, and friends. The extent that a child may withdraw or spend most of his/her time alone, should be monitored. If the child does not have a support system to

share experiences and feelings with (by choice or by circumstance), the child may be at greater risk.

#### **D. Coping Skills**

How well a child has coped with problems in the past may be a good predictor of how well he/she may cope after a trauma/disaster. Experts have indicated that coping methods such as being passive (believing that doing nothing is ok, because nothing can help), or simply trying to deny events (wishing that bad things did not happen or that bad feelings did not exist) are not effective in handling problems. Children that withdraw from listening to or participating in exercises that may remind them of the trauma/disaster may also be at risk. By avoiding new ways to manage problems, they deny themselves an opportunity to learn effective problem solving and coping strategies.

#### **E. Other Significant Behaviors Signaling Risk**

Other significant behaviors which may indicate a higher risk for long term problems after a trauma or disaster include: risk-taking behaviors, extreme anger, hostility, or aggressive outbursts, single-minded preoccupation with the trauma/disaster, persistent decrease in school performance, or an avoidance to return to school for an extended period of time.

**As you guide the children through these exercises, monitor their healing. If problems persist or increase as time after the trauma/disaster passes, consider a referral to a mental health professional with expertise in trauma/disaster to provide more intensive intervention. Check your state or local psychological association, local psychologists, local mental health center or association, or state or local psychiatric associations for experts in PTSD in your area.**

Some information in this section was adapted from Gurwitch, R.H., Sullivan, M.A., & Long, P.J. (1998). The impact of trauma and disaster on young children. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 7, 19-32.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE HEALING AFTER TRAUMA SKILLS MANUAL**

The **Healing After Trauma Skills (HATS)** manual was developed following the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. It is based on information gathered from over 2,000 preschool and elementary school children and clinical work with many of the children impacted by the bombing. An extensive review of the scientific literature and manual resources on the topic of children and trauma/disaster as well as conversations with experts in the area were other important aspects essential to the manual development. It is hoped that what came from such loss and destruction will reinforce the belief in the fortitude and boundless positive possibilities which make up the human spirit.

## **USE OF THE HEALING AFTER TRAUMA SKILLS MANUAL**

The **Healing After Trauma Skills** manual was designed for use primarily with kindergarten through elementary school and early middle school children who have experienced a trauma/disaster. Some of the exercises may be amended to use with younger children or children above the early middle school grades. The drawing exercises and the discussion questions may be particularly useful for children through the high school grades as a way to begin the healing process. HATS was designed to be facilitated by teachers, psychologists, and other counselors working with children. Although developed for use in the classroom or with small groups of children, it can be amended for use with individual children. It can be useful for children who have experienced either natural or man-made trauma/disaster. The manual was designed to provide information about children impacted by trauma/disaster, to enhance sharing of experiences, ideas, and thoughts about the trauma/disaster, and to build a repertoire of coping skills. It is our belief that as children are empowered with skills to handle life's adversities, their self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced and strengthened.

HATS includes fun activities for the classroom or small group on a number of topics. They are presented in a suggested order of completion; however, many can stand alone. It is suggested that *Dealing with Feelings* be completed after children have begun to identify feelings through the *Naming Feelings* exercise. Similarly, the *Rounding It All Up* exercise is best at the end of the sessions. There are *Special Occasion* exercises that may be inserted at the appropriate times (e.g., Holidays, Thanksgiving, Anniversary). Each activity is accompanied by a series of discussion questions to further encourage healing through sharing. Furthermore, each section includes a family exercise to complete. Parents and other caregivers are some of the most important resources available to children in the healing process. The family exercises were designed to reinforce what is being covered in school or counseling as well as enhance parent-child interactions and discussions about difficult issues.

## General information about each activity

Each activity follows the same basic format:

- Title page coloring sheet
- Introduction about the topic
- Length of activity
- Objectives for the activity
- Materials needed
- Instructions
- Discussion questions
- Related family exercise

The title page of each activity can be also be used as coloring sheet. The hat or figure on this page is hoped to remind the children of the skill being covered in the activity (e.g., sleeping cap for the dreams and sleep activity). Children can color after completing the activity or take the sheet home to color.

The introduction provides brief information for the facilitator to have as the activity is discussed.

The length of time is the expected time it will take to complete the activity. With some of the discussions, the activity may at times run a bit longer.

Objectives that the children will hopefully learn by the end of the activity and discussion accompany each session. Some of the objectives are similar across activities as many of the activities may address different aspects of the same skill or serve to reinforce a particular skill.

Suggested materials for each activity are provided. It is strongly recommended that many of these be prepared in advance (e.g., cutting out patterns). As children may forget to bring some of the materials not generally available at school such as a picture of themselves or a baby food jar, requesting the items several days in advance may give children time to have it ready. Whenever possible, have a few extra materials on hand, just in case someone still forgets. Finally, whenever possible, make the activity item first. By seeing an example, children will have a much clearer idea about what to do (and may be more excited to try the activity).

Instructions are printed in bold type. Suggested instructions are provided, but it is hoped that each teacher, counselor, or parent will give it his or her individual touch.

Discussion questions to reinforce the topic of the activity are provided. These are believed to be an important part of the activity. A primary goal of this manual is to encourage sharing of ideas and feelings as an avenue to healing. Discussion as regular part of each activity reinforces this idea. For older children (older middle or high school

aged), a facilitated discussion of trauma/disaster issues and skills can be particularly useful helping in the healing process.

Tips for enhancing discussion:

Have example ideas ready prior to the discussion.

Some children may be reluctant to discuss their personal thoughts and feelings. However, when asked what “other children “ or “friends” may feel or think about, they may be much more open to talk. Therefore, by interspersing the use of “other children” with “you,” a richer exchange of ideas may be possible.

Discussions may also be furthered by modeling support and respect for each other’s views. Through encouragement and praise of their ideas, children are more likely to participate in future discussions.

Family exercises are included with each classroom or small group activity. This allows parents to know what is being addressed with their child as well as giving them an opportunity to share in the skills their child is learning. By completing the family exercises, the skills can be strengthened and communication and sharing can be enhanced in the parent-child relationship.

There are many art projects, coloring sheets, and worksheets connected with the HATS manual. It is recommended that children bring in a pocket folder prior to beginning the first activity. This will give the child something to hold his/her work in, creating a booklet that can be reviewed with parents or alone at any time.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

### 1. Respect others

The HATS exercises involve much interaction between children. Children will have various opinions, thoughts, and beliefs about trauma/disaster-related issues just as they do about any subject. It will be important to emphasize to the children to listen and respect their friends. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions being discussed. Everyone is expected to listen and support one another. There should be no inappropriate laughter, no teasing, and no denial of a child's ideas when sharing takes place.

### 2. Listen

During discussions, many children will want to talk. Help children to take turns and listen to what classmates have to share. If interruptions become problematic, consider the use of a designated item, such as a talking stick, "sharing hat" or other object. When held by the child, he/she has the floor. Sometimes children prefer to only listen to the discussions and not verbally participate. Be accepting of this behavior. No children should be forced to talk during the discussions. However, all children should be in the area where the discussion is taking place. In listening to the children, you may hear a child express misconceptions about the trauma/disaster. Reflect this is what he/she believes. Gently state the accurate information without telling the child that he/she is wrong. By hearing consistent information about the event, the child may begin to have a better understanding about the trauma/disaster.

### 3. Reflecting children's feelings and thoughts

When children share feelings and thoughts, they may have difficulty finding the right words. As a facilitator, you can help through reflection of the children's statements. You may add the emotion behind the statement. For example, "It sounds like you don't like to spend all your free time cleaning up. I wonder if that makes you feel angry sometimes." Or, "Everything is quiet at night. I wonder if that is a time you feel most scared or worried." Children may also make excessively negative or hateful remarks, particularly when a trauma/disaster is man-made. Reflect the anger, but help the children understand that all groups and friends with similar characteristics are not the same as the perpetrator. Discussion of how hate can lead to these events may also be useful.

### 4. Encourage and praise

Sharing verbally or with the art activities is important. This should be encouraged as it has been shown to aid in the healing process. Children should be offered encouragement when they talk about their beliefs and feelings with classmates and friends. Examples include, "what a great idea for ...", "That's a very good picture you drew. It really helps us to see what you are thinking about", "Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ is hard to talk about. We are very glad you shared your feelings about it with us." Through encouragement and praise, children are more likely to continue to contribute to discussions and share with others.

They will feel that what they have to contribute is worthwhile. Encouragement and praise coming from an adult important in the child's life can be one of the primary sources of healing.

### **5. Be aware of your own reactions and feelings**

Just as children are processing the trauma/disaster, adults will be healing and coping as well. Be conscious of your own opinions, feelings, and thoughts as you guide the children. It may be useful to spend some time reviewing the exercise and the feelings it evokes in you prior to presenting it to the children. Seek out your own support people to share your feelings with about the trauma/disaster. Children take cues from the important adults around them. Think about what you wish the children to take and hear from you.

As you remain encouraging of all views that children share and respect feelings expressed by others, the children will make efforts to do the same. With older (middle and high school) children, it is OK to acknowledge that you may be experiencing some of the same difficulties as they are, but express assurance that healing will occur. Younger children need to see the adults as in control and as a strong support during a difficult time. **REMEMBER:** Your role is primarily as a facilitator of the healing process as you guide children through these exercises.

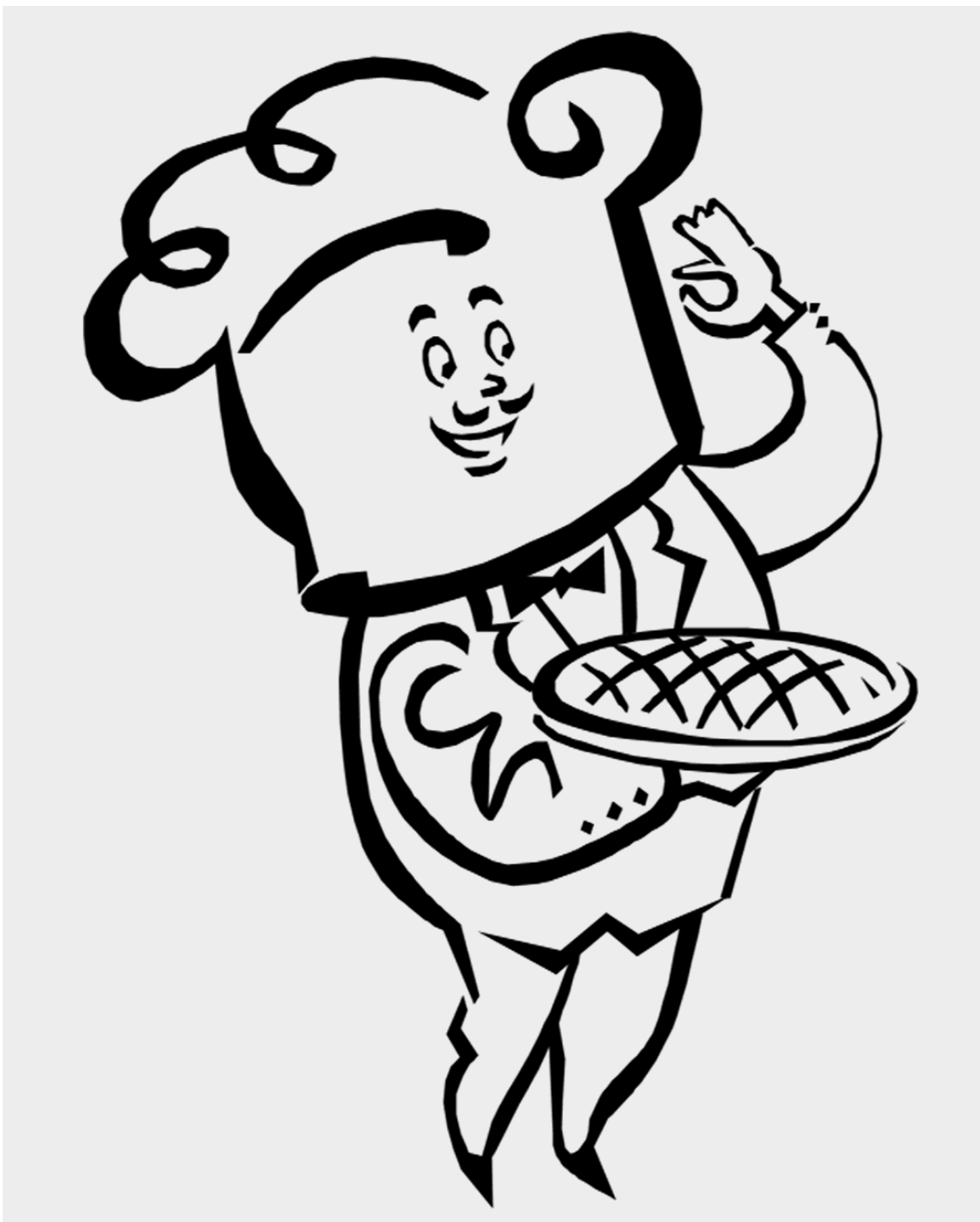
## **HEALING AFTER TRAUMA SKILLS (HATS)**

### **PARENT INFORMATION**

A trauma/disaster has touched your child's life and the life of your family. As much as we would like to protect our children from any sadness or terrible events, it is not always possible. We understand that children may have difficulty when something like the recent trauma/disaster happens. Many of the reactions are very normal and will improve with time. It is our hope that the exercises that we will cover in the HATS sessions will provide your child with effective ways to cope and begin the healing process. Each session will be accompanied by a family exercise. This will let you know what we are doing together and why. It will also be a wonderful way to reinforce the new skills your child is learning to help with the healing. By doing these exercises together, we hope you will see positive changes and growth in your child. Together, we trust we can create positive skills for your child to use now and in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.



## WHAT HAPPENED



## WHAT HAPPENED

Talking about what happened after a trauma/disaster is often the first step in healing. However, this may be difficult for children to put into words or words may be excessive with no continuity. Children can be gently guided in their re-telling by helping them structure the event. They can describe what happened as well as what they heard, felt, saw, smelled, and tasted. This is an opportunity to be sure that all of the facts of the trauma/disaster are correct. If children express misinformation, reflect what they believe then provide in simple, honest, and direct words what really happened. All "sense" statements (e.g., heard, felt, saw, smelled, tasted) should be validated, with children recognizing that they may have similar as well as different experiences, but all are OK. The idea of acceptance will be important to the exercises in this manual.

Length of Exercise: 60 minutes

Objectives:           Begin to process what happened in the trauma/disaster

                              Help children identify sensory experiences accompanying the trauma/disaster

                              Help children recognize that everyone will have a unique experience and that all are OK

Materials needed:    White poster board  
                               Five different colored markers  
                               White paper  
                               Crayons

Instructions:

Before this exercise divide a piece of poster board into five areas. You might think about the board as a pie and make slices. In a corner of each piece draw one of the senses (e.g., mouth for taste, eyes for sight, ears for sound, hands for feeling, and nose for smell).

**We all know about the (TRAUMA/DISASTER) that happened. Today we are going to talk about the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Everybody that wants to talk will get a turn to share. Like always, we are going to listen to each other and be respectful. We will all have things to say that are the same and things to share that are different. There are no rights or wrongs with what we share.**

**We are first going to talk about WHAT happened. Then we will share all about our senses. We will share what we saw with our eyes, what we felt inside, what we heard with our ears, what we smelled with our noses, and what we tasted in our mouths. As we share each of the senses, I will write down what you say. At the end, we will**

**have many different ways that our senses worked during the (TRAUMA/DISASTER).**

Begin by having children tell what they remember about the TRAUMA/DISASTER. Validate their experiences, but be sure to correct any misperceptions and misunderstandings. Next go through each of the senses. Do one at a time with all children who would like to share getting a turn. Write these in the pie piece. After the activity, post the pie in the room.

Discussion:

1. Why do you think it is important for us to share our memories and feelings about the (trauma/disaster)?
2. How do our senses help us to get a picture of what happened? (Help the children gain an understanding that by having the thoughts and senses together, we have a comprehensive view of the event as it impacted us. This will also help in future discussions of reminders of the event through different senses.)
3. What are some other times that we use our senses to help us remember something? (Be sure to find positive experiences for this exercise such as birthday parties, holiday events, trips to the zoo or on other outings.)
4. Encourage the children to draw a picture of what happened to share with their families.

## WHAT HAPPENED

### FAMILY EXERCISE

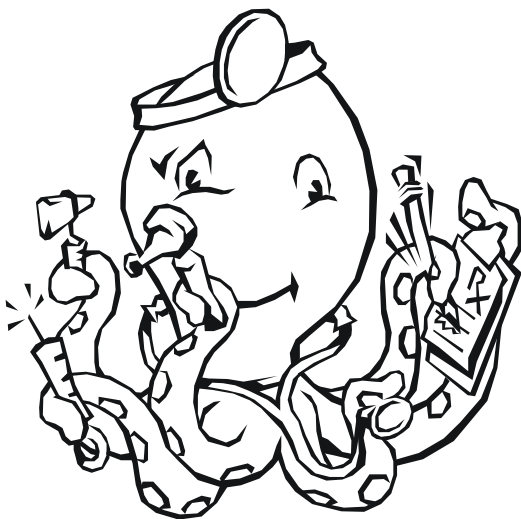
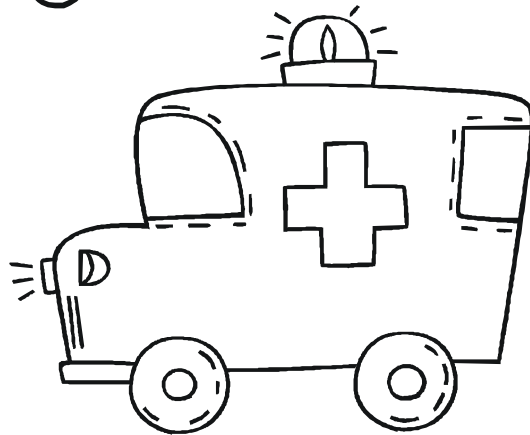
Talking about what happened after a trauma/disaster is often the first step in healing. However, this may be difficult for your child to put into words or words may be excessive with no continuity. Your child can be gently guided in his/her re-telling with your help to structure the event. Your child can describe what happened as well as what he/she heard, felt, saw, smelled, and tasted. This is an opportunity to be sure that all of the facts of the trauma/disaster are correct. If your child expresses misinformation, reflect what is believed, then provide in simple, honest, and direct words what really happened. All "sense" statements (e.g., heard, felt, saw, smelled, tasted) should be validated, with your child recognizing that each person will have some similar as well as some different experiences, but all are OK. The idea of acceptance will be important to the exercise. (Your child has completed a similar exercise in class today.)

You will need a piece of plain paper, scissors, and colors, markers, or pencils for this exercise.

Begin by everyone sitting together in a circle. Have everyone share what they know about what happened. (Your child may have drawn a picture of this; encourage sharing of the drawing.) Next take the piece of paper and divide it like a pie into five pieces, one "slice" for each of the senses. Draw a symbol for each sense on the pie piece (e.g., mouth for taste, eyes for sight, ears for sound, hands for feeling, and nose for smell). Place each piece in a bag or hat. As you pull a piece out, have everyone share one idea that would go along with that sense. The ideas can be the same or different, but reinforce that all are OK. When everyone has shared one idea for that sense, put it in the center of your family circle. Continue until all the pieces have been completed and the "pie" is whole. Talk about how all of our thoughts, feelings, and senses go together to help us get a clearer picture of what happened.

To end on a positive note, place the pieces back in the bag or hat. Think of a good experience that you have shared (examples: birthday party, holiday activity, trip to the zoo or another outing). After everyone shares the memory of what happened, make another pie of the senses that go with that event.

# SEARCHING FOR A SENSE OF SAFETY



## SEARCHING FOR A SENSE OF SAFETY

After a trauma/disaster, children's sense of safety and security is shaken. This may result in overwhelming uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety and fear. Children's sense of trust that they can be protected from bad things is also undermined. One step in restoring and rebuilding safety and security is to identify people in their world that serve as helpers, confidantes, and ones to offer comfort and protection. This aspect of healing may take a considerable length of time for some children. Patience, consistency, reliability, and compassion are needed as the healing gradually proceeds. Planning for disasters is another aspect of regaining a sense of safety. Through planning, we feel more in control of our lives. Granted, all traumas/disasters are not avoidable, but by thinking ahead, children can develop a greater sense of mastery and thus, safety.

Length of activity: Identifying helpers: 20 minutes

Designing a plan: 1 hour

Objectives: Begin to reestablish a sense of safety and security

Identify people in their family and community who can be counted on in an emergency

Prepare a plan in the face of future traumas/disasters or emergencies

Learning personal information important in an emergency

Materials needed: Helpers Word Search activity page

All about me activity page

Pencil

Crayons

School directory with each child's address & phone number

Instructions:

**Today we are going to be talking about people that can help us if we are in trouble or if there is an emergency. Lots of different people came to help when (TRAUMA/DISASTER) happened. On the activity page, you will see a list of people you can count on to help. Let's read these together. Which ones helped us recently?** (Have the children complete the sheet before the discussion.)

**Sometimes, we can be separated from our family, friends, and teachers if an emergency happens. To help the helpers like the police officers, neighbors, firefighters, and others bring your family back together, it is very important to know certain things about ourselves. These include our whole names, the names of**

**the people in our home like mothers, fathers, grandparent, or other relatives. We need to know our addresses and our phone numbers.**

**On your All About Me page, write your name, parents or relatives name (this is the people you live with), your address, and your phone number. Then draw a picture of yourself. Include a thinking cap to help you remember this information.**

Discussion:

1. How can children reach someone if there is an emergency? (Talk about what kinds of uncomfortable or dangerous situations that need helpers; discuss 911. Discuss how neighbors can be resources too).
2. Sometimes we may feel upset about things that happen to us. Who can we talk to if we feel sad, scared, nervous, or angry? Can we share the good feelings with the same people?
3. What can children do if friends share feelings with you? (Remember to stress the importance of respecting feelings of each other)
4. Discuss how personal information can be used and with whom to share this information.

### **Planning for Traumas/Disasters**

Although man-made disasters are generally unavoidable, certain planning is still possible. For example, if there is a house fire, children should know about fire safety, calling for help, and exit routes from the home. To reduce injury in accidents, wearing seat belts in cars or bicycle helmets are important. Understanding weather dangers, planning for hurricanes, tornadoes and flooding is important for most areas of the country. Having weather related plans will increase a sense of safety and security for children. If there was a shooting, would a child know who to look for afterward or what steps to take? Can they also be told to identify an adult to talk to if they have worries about a friend or classmate?

Generally, natural disasters are different in various parts of the country. For example, flooding is more common in the Southeast and west coast areas while hurricanes generally hit the South and Southeast regions of the country. Tornadoes are most likely in the Midwest. Earthquakes may be likely in California, volcanoes, in Hawaii, but not likely in the Northeast where snow storms are more common. Television stations in most communities usually offer a “weather school program.” These programs are specific for the region of the country. For example in Oklahoma, weather school may offer how to identify tornado risk and what to do if a tornado is sighted. In Alabama, weather programs may offer how to prepare for hurricanes, how to track them, and what to do if they come.

To plan for your classroom or small group, contact your local television station and request a weather school program. It is wise to plan ahead rather than waiting for bad-weather season.

If a weather disaster has impacted your community, it will be important to discuss the impact of the event with the children. (Several exercises in this manual will address loss and remaining “treasures.”). Having a weather-related program “after-the-fact” will still be helpful in that it can give children a stronger sense of control should the threat arise in the future.

It may be very helpful after your class has identified helpers to have a panel of helpers come to the classroom(s) or entire school or group. Firefighters can address fire safety issues, police officers can talk about general safety, stranger danger, and when/how to call for help. Some individuals you may also wish to invite for your panel include emergency workers, doctors, clergy, a Red Cross representative, and a parent. This is a wonderful way to help children feel more secure and safe. This activity may also allow children an opportunity to thank helpers that respond to trauma/disaster in their community.

Finally, children may be separated from adults they know and trust in a trauma/disaster. It is important for children to know their address, phone number, name (first and last) and parents’ names (first and last) to give to helpers in order to reunite the children with their families. Reinforce the All About Me activity that has been previously completed.



**ALL ABOUT ME**

**My full name is**

---

---

**The adults in my home are**

---

---

**My full address is**

---

---

---

**My phone number is** \_\_\_\_\_

**Draw and Color:**

**Me and my thinking cap:**

## HELPERS WORD SEARCH

POLICE OFFICER  
DOCTOR  
NURSE  
AMBULANCE  
GRANDPARENTS  
CHURCH

FIREFIGHTER  
RESCUE DOG  
FRIENDS  
MOTHER  
NEIGHBORS  
TEMPLE

TEACHER  
COUNSELOR  
FAMILY  
FATHER  
RED CROSS

G L F I R E F I G H T E R P  
A R E R B T E M P L E O N O  
M E A P F A M I L Y A M E L  
D S O N Y E E B X O C R I I  
E C S W D R N U R G H O G C  
F U T R O P I D F I E R H E  
Z E F T K S A J S M R K B O  
B D C I C H U R C H U V O F  
O O L F Y Z K B E N D O R F  
D G U A M B U L A N C E S I  
D M O T H E R Q P S T O L C  
S W K H W F A J I W Y S K E  
A Z S E G C O U N S E L O R  
V N U R S E R E D C R O S S

## SEARCHING FOR A SENSE OF SAFETY

### FAMILY EXERCISE

Your child has been discussing safety issues for both natural and man-made traumas/disasters. Your child can develop a stronger sense of safety and security in the face of these when a family plan of safety has been discussed, developed, and practiced. Your child has completed an All About Me worksheet. This gives information your child should know (name, address, phone number, parents' names). It will be important to review this information with your child. You may want to add where you work. If a child can relay a parent's place of work to adult helpers in the face of an emergency, contact with you may be quicker. It is also important for you to identify another adult your child could contact in case you are unavailable. For a family, identify a "buddy family" so that you can be sure another family will check on your safety after the event and visa versa.

Below are several examples of possible weather-related disasters/traumas that your child could experience. If you have had such a disaster/trauma, a review to plan for future ones is extremely important. Please discuss each appropriate example together with your entire family. If your family is at high risk for some of these disaster/traumas, such as living in "Tornado alley," you may wish to contact community resources such as weather stations for information to have in your home.

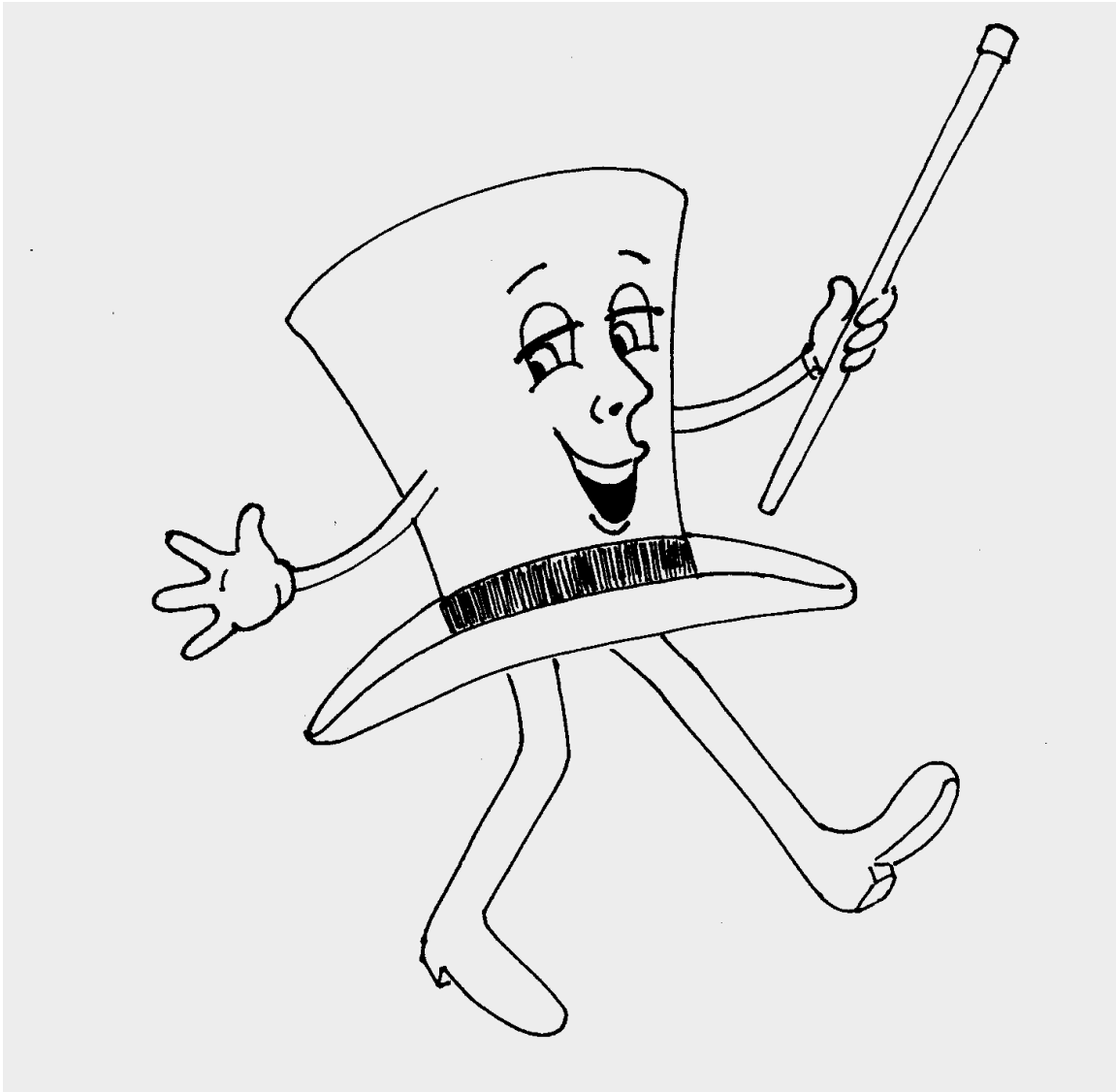
- A. Fire** (Every home should have a fire safety plan.)
- B. Hurricane**
- C. Tornado**
- D. Flood**
- E. Earthquake**

General discussion topics:

1. Talk about how to alert other family members.
2. Review family safety plans (you may even want to practice your fire safety plan together)
3. Talk about how to call for help (Discuss when to call 911 from the house and when to leave the house to make the call. Safety should come first)
4. Teach your children that possessions should not be gathered in the face of immediate danger. Leave things behind! Remember the safety of people is most important.
5. Pets are important members of many families. However, your child may be placed in greater danger if your child tries to find and to rescue the pet. Discuss how you will handle the issue of family pets.

6. Discuss how to get in touch with each other if the family is separated after a trauma/disaster.
7. Discuss the idea of a "buddy family" that can help if separation occurs.
8. Discuss and review people able to help in an emergency, trauma/disaster. Your child completed a "helper sheet." Encourage him/her to share this with you.
9. Finally, share thoughts and feelings about having plans in place should they be needed.

## GETTING BACK TO BASICS



## GETTING BACK TO BASICS

Following a trauma or disaster, children often feel a loss of security, safety, trust and normalcy. The basic order of their lives has been disrupted or perhaps changed in many ways. This may be due to personal injury and/or loss, property loss, destruction of school property, or injury/loss to friends or other family. Children need a sense of order for optimal development. After a trauma/disaster, it is important for adults in their lives to help them return, as much as possible, to a consistent environment. One of the best ways to begin to accomplish this goal is through a regular school (and home) routine. It is important to acknowledge feelings that accompany the changes in routine and living for many of the children while encouraging the ability to regain some of the "day-to-day" normalcy.

Length of Exercise: 30-60 minutes

Objectives: Re-establish a sense of routine in the classroom

Help children identify everyday school activities

Help children identify day-to-day activities at home, in their community

Materials needed: White poster board  
Old magazines  
Glue  
Scissors  
Construction paper

Instructions:

**Many things have happened since (TRAUMA/DISASTER). For our class these have included (GIVE EXAMPLES such as a change in classrooms, missed days, loss of special people, loss of property, etc.). Today we are going to begin to get our room as back to normal as we can. First, I want all of you to help me write our classroom schedule. Let's begin with what we normally do first thing in the morning.** (Continue with this until the school day is completed. You may want to write it on the board so that changes can be made. Then, transfer in class or overnight to a poster board. If you have students that are non-readers or early readers, it is helpful to have a picture to accompany the words. For example, if you say the pledge of allegiance, you may have a picture of a flag; reading time, a picture of a book, etc. After the poster is completed, display it in a prominent place in the classroom, referring to it over the next week.)

**Now, I want us to think about things we do in school, at home, and in our neighborhoods every day. We can cut pictures of these activities out of the**

**magazines. There may be lots of things you can think of like eating, sleeping, playing games, feeding your pets. Can you think of some more? (Give the class a few minutes to generate some more ideas.) OK, share the magazines and cut out pictures of things or activities that you do most days. Everyone may have some of the same ideas like cutting out foods you like to eat, and some of you may have different things like playing soccer, feeding a dog, or dancing. There are no right or wrong pictures. After you have cut out your pictures, begin to glue them on your paper to make a collage. A collage is a collection of pictures. They can touch each other or even be a little bit on top of each other. You get to decide what yours will look like.**

Variations:

1. Cut out pictures before hand for the students to choose from. This may be particularly important for preschool or kindergarten children.
2. Have the children cut out the pictures at home with their parents and bring them in for gluing. If this is done, you will need to send home the reason for the activity and how you would like the parents to help. It is also helpful to send home a ziploc bag for each child to put the cutouts in to return to school.

Discussion:

1. What are some of the easiest things to get back to doing after the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)? What are some of the hardest?
2. What are some things you would like your family to do again? What are some of the things you would like our classroom to do again?
3. Suppose a child is having a hard time getting class work finished. He has a hard time listening to the teacher unlike he did before the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). What do you think he should do? (Normalize the problems in concentration and attention as well as difficulty getting work done. Encourage children to recognize this and talk to the teacher or parents if this is a problem. Let them know that as they “get back to the basics” this will improve.
4. Send home activity information and exercise on Getting Back to Basics with the children.

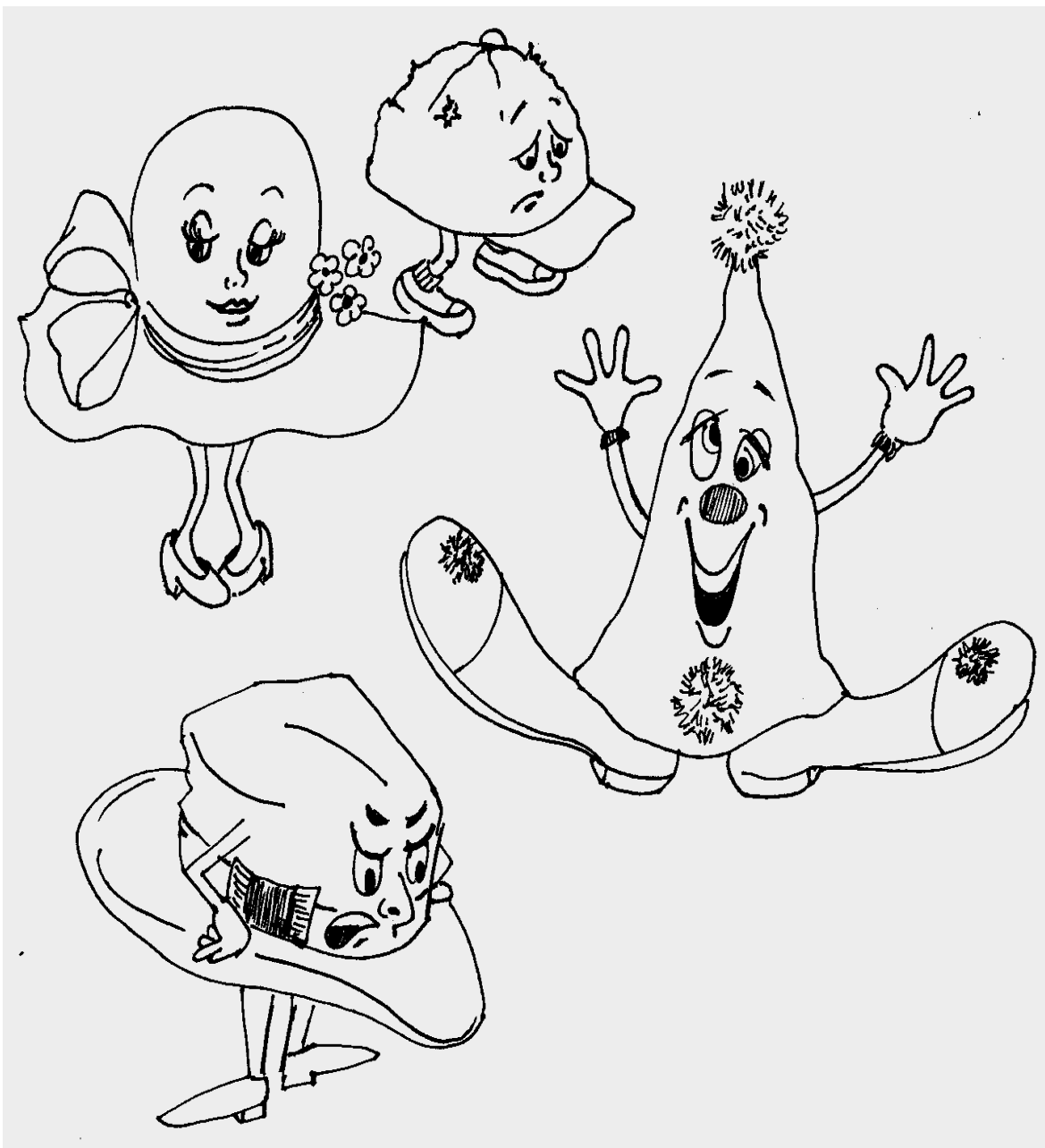
## **BACK TO BASICS**

### **FAMILY EXERCISE**

Your child has begun a series of exercises designed to help in the healing process after the TRAUMA/DISASTER. One of the most important ways to begin is to re-establish a sense of order and routine. Your child began this in the classroom. It is also important to do this at home. Your normal routine may have had to change significantly, particularly if you have suffered a personal loss or injury, been displaced, or had property destroyed. Despite these changes, finding some semblance of order is important to your child and your family. It helps to restore a sense of safety, security, and trust which may have been effected by the trauma/disaster. With your child, discuss what changes have taken place. Next, talk about what things are the same about day to day life. With your child, write down a basic routine that you can try to follow over the next few weeks. Remember, this may need to be revised over time. If your child wants to draw a picture of some part of the “new routine”, encourage this and perhaps even do it as a family drawing.



# NAMING FEELINGS



## NAMING FEELINGS

After any trauma/disaster, children may experience a range of emotions. Feelings may at times be overwhelming to children. They are also extremely variable and moods resulting from these feelings may, therefore, be labile. For many children, recognizing the feelings and emotions after trauma is difficult. Learning to label emotions can be a step in the healing process. This allows children to better communicate with important adults such as parents, teachers, and counselors. With a label, children may then be able to develop strategies to manage the uncomfortable feelings and emotions. Secondly, by recognizing emotions in themselves, they can also begin to recognize feelings in others who have also experienced a trauma/disaster. Young children are developing empathy and these feelings exercises may also help in the area of overall emotional development.

Length of exercise: 1 hour

Objectives:

- Identify personal feelings after trauma/disaster
- Recognize that others may have similar feelings
- Recognize that others may have different feelings
- Realize that there are no right or wrong feelings
- Learn to be respectful of others

Materials needed: Crayons  
White paper

Instructions:

**The exercise we are doing today will focus on feelings that everyone can have. Sometimes, feelings can make us feel good inside like happy, excited, and surprised. Sometimes, they can make us feel bad or upset inside like sad, mad, scared, or guilty. When something bad happens like (TRAUMA/DISASTER), we can have lots of different feelings happening at the same time. It is important to remember that all feelings are OK; there are no right or wrong feelings. It is also important to remember that friends and family may have some of the same feelings you have or they may have some different ones. Everybody's feelings are to be respected. That means we do not tell them they are wrong, bad, weird, or crazy for the feelings they have. We do not tease or make fun of our friends if their feelings are not exactly the same as ours. Again, everybody's feelings are OK. Feelings are no different than other things we all have that are same and different. For example, some of us in the class are the same because we are girls. Boys are the same as other boys, but they are different from the girls. Everybody has hair, so that is the same. But the color of hair may be the same for some, a little different from others, or even very**

**different from our friends. All hair colors are OK. We all love someone special. That makes us the same. Who we love is probably different. But, the love we feel is great, no matter what.**

**Today, we want to continue to share our ideas and feelings with each other. On the white paper, please draw a picture of a feeling you had or one that you think other children may have had after (TRAUMA/DISASTER). You can draw it any way you want. There are no rights or wrongs. Everybody's picture is important. Draw your ideas, not your neighbor's because we would like to share what you can draw.**

Discussion:

1. After the completion of the drawings, encourage each child (who wants to) to share his/her picture. Ask the child to describe the feeling in the picture. On the board write the feelings identified by each child. If a feeling is duplicated by another child, simply put a tally mark beside that feeling. After each child has finished, discuss the number of similar feelings as well as the different feelings. Remember to validate all feelings and to remind the children how important it is to respect each other's feelings. Praise and thank the children for sharing.
2. What feelings do you think children had right after the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)? What feelings may be still there? What are some new feelings that children may be having?
3. What feelings do you think are the same in your family? What feelings may be different? How can you tell or find out what they are feeling?
4. When you talk about your emotions, how does it make you feel?  
OR  
When children talk about their emotions, how might they feel?
5. Discuss the frequency of feelings. Most children will experience a variety of feelings regarding the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). These may wax and wane over time or remain relatively stable for the short-term.

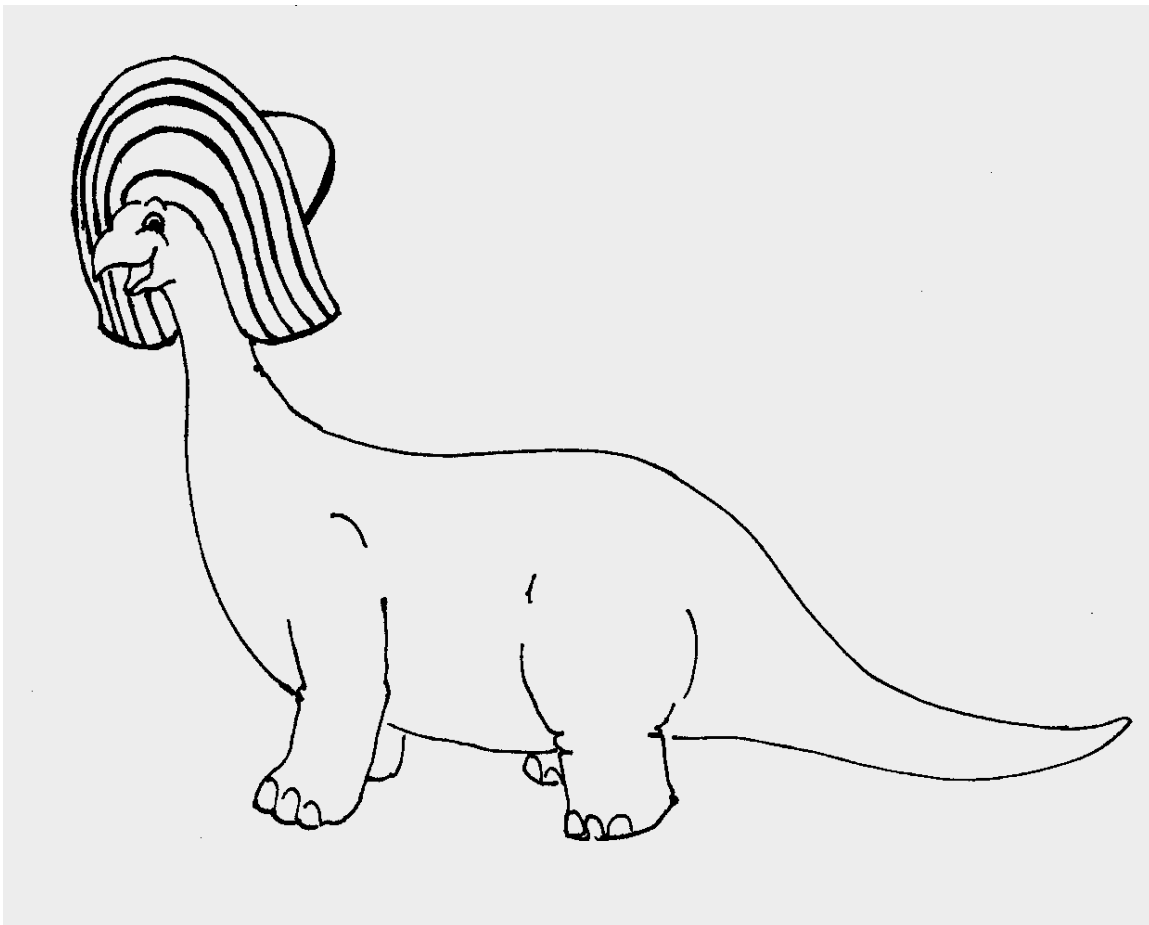
## NAMING FEELINGS FAMILY EXERCISE

### SAME AND DIFFERENT

Your child may be experiencing a number of emotions since the TRAUMA/DISASTER. These may be overwhelming to your child. Sometimes, as a result, children may be more irritable, touchy, and excitable or act-out over minor events. This is very normal. Not everyone has the same feelings at the same time or even at all. Talk with your child about different emotions that people can have. Recognize that all are OK and are to be respected. Then, complete the following exercise with your child.

Directions: Have the family sit together in a circle. Go around the circle and have each person name one thing that is the same for everyone in the family (examples may be hair color, last name, favorite restaurant). Go around again and have each person name something that is different for everyone in the family. (It's okay to be creative and silly as laughter truly can be a "best medicine".) Next, repeat the exercise by having each family member name a feeling they are having since the trauma/disaster occurred. Let everyone else say either "same" or "different" until they all have had a turn. Praise and encourage sharing and feeling with each other. Encourage continued sharing of feelings as this will be important to the healing process.

## **RELAXATION: FIGHTING BACK AGAINST NEGATIVE FEELINGS**



## **RELAXATION: FIGHTING BACK AGAINST NEGATIVE FEELINGS (Part I and Part II)**

Following a trauma/disaster, children may experience feelings of anxiety, nervousness, fearfulness. These feelings may occur when they think about the event or when they are reminded of the trauma/disaster. Apprehension may result from triggers that impact all their senses. For example, sounds such as loud noises, fireworks, sirens, backfires, thunder, wind may bring on these negative feelings. Smells such as smoke or burning or other acrid smells may trigger the anxiety, fear reaction. Sights are another powerful reminder. These may be of broken trees, destroyed buildings, rescue vehicles, blood (even from minor scrapes and falls). Sometimes the feelings may arise with no apparent reminders. Sometimes, children may even appear more anxious and fearful of unrelated objects and events. They may be more afraid of bugs, dogs, or new activities than before the trauma/disaster. The increase in anxiety and fearfulness is often accompanied by an increase in clinginess and concern about being separated from parents and other people important in their lives. This is a common reaction. When children become anxious or fearful, a physiologic reaction occurs. This often includes an increased heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating, stomachaches, headaches, nausea, etc. This response can be frightening or overwhelming to children. Learning to relax has been found to be very effective in the reduction of the physiologic reactions. When relaxed, the body sends out signals that are in direct opposition to the fight/flight emergency response. Relaxation is a skill which takes regular practice, but once mastered can be used in a myriad of situations (even those not trauma/disaster related).

Length of time:        30 minutes for dinosaur script  
                               30 minutes for initial color script exercise  
                               10 minutes for color script each day for one week (Thereafter, you may want to continue this once a week for several weeks.)

**Note: Dinosaur exercise should be separated from the Breathing with Color exercise by at least one session interval.**

Objectives:            Identify how children may feel and how their bodies may react when anxious, nervous, fearful, or stressed

                              Learn about relaxation as a skill to battle against these feelings

                              Learn relaxation skill to use prior to sleep or when they have large block of time

                              Learn mini-relaxation skill

                              Incorporate relaxation skills into daily routine

Materials needed:     Pillow  
                               Blank white paper  
                               Crayons

Instructions:

**When we get upset, nervous, anxious or fearful, our bodies can feel different. We might get stomachaches, headaches, or feel like we want to throw up. Our hearts beat very fast, and we may feel short of breath. Our hands may even sweat or feel cold and clammy. After (TRAUMA/DISASTER), it is very normal to have some of these feelings. You may not have them all the time, but they can come when you don't expect them. Sometimes they come if you see something that reminds you of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER), or if you smell a reminder, or even hear something that reminds you about it. Can you think of some things that may remind children about the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)?** (Have children briefly discuss triggers for these feelings and how their bodies react to these triggers.)

**Does anyone know what a knight is?** (Knight: In Medieval times, this was a warrior who usually fought for good) **What about a joust?** (A contest between two knights riding horseback and armed with lances.) **When you feel anxious, nervous, or fearful, it is like having a bad knight inside your body making you have lots of uncomfortable reactions. We need to find the good knight to joust with these feelings. When your body is completely relaxed, it creates all the feelings that are the opposite of the bad ones. For example, instead of breathing faster, you breathe slower. Relaxation, like learning to be a good jouster, takes lots of practice. We are going to learn two different ways to relax so that we can joust against the bad knight in our bodies.**

### **Relaxation: Part I**

**The first way to relax is to begin by each of us imagining that we are dinosaurs. We will do this today, and next time we will learn another way to relax.**

**Let's arrange the room so that we can have room for all of us to stretch out with our pillows. Lay on the floor with your pillow and close your eyes. As I talk, I want you to image you are the dinosaur in the story. Stay on the floor and do what the dinosaur does with his body.**

## **Dinosaur Relaxation Script**

**Imagine that you are living in the time of the dinosaurs. The air is hot and sticky, and you can hear the sounds of the pterodactyls squawking overhead. You are a huge dinosaur, as big as a house, and you have a very long neck to help you eat from the tops of the trees. You are lumbering through the forest, knocking down trees that get in your way. You have been walking for a long time and are very tired and hungry. You decide to rest for a minute before you go to look for food. You find a nice spot by a cool brook and lie down on the moss.**

### **Deep Breathing**

**As you close your eyes, you try to stretch out and relax, so you can store up all the energy you will need to go out to search for food. You can feel the warmth of the sun gently shining on your tough dinosaur skin, and you begin to let your big, huge dinosaur body get heavier and heavier. As you feel the weight of your arms and legs press against the soft, cool moss by the brook, you begin to take some deep breaths. Try to fill your gigantic lungs up with air, and slowly let the air out. With every deep breath, you can feel your dinosaur body getting heavier and heavier. It feels so good to relax and enjoy the warmth of the sun, and the cool breeze outside. As you continue to take gigantic dinosaur breaths, you begin to feel more and more relaxed and decide you are ready to go look for some food.**

### **Forehead muscles**

**You walk slowly toward the forest, continuing to breathe slowly and to make your dinosaur body as heavy and loose as you can. You begin to look for the tallest trees which have all the sweet leaves at the top. But, the sun is in your eyes. Since your arms and legs are so heavy, you can't raise them up to keep the sun out of your eyes. So, you squint as you look into the hot sun. You have to squint your eye muscles and your forehead very hard because the sun is so bright; you can barely see the trees up ahead. As you are squinting, you notice how tight the muscles are. Now, you can look away from the sun and relax. Make your forehead and eye muscles very smooth and loose. It feels so much better for you to relax your forehead and your eyes. Now you can continue to breathe deeply, taking big, huge dinosaur breaths and slowly breathing out.**

**As you begin to move slowly towards the trees with the sweet leaves on them, you think you also see some juicy berries. But, because you are walking into the sun, you have to squint hard to see the berries. As you are squinting, you notice how tight the muscles in your eyes and forehead are again. You press your forehead down as hard as you can until it seems like you can't squint any harder. You can feel the muscles in your forehead getting tighter and tighter. Finally, you are able to see that there are, indeed, some big, juicy berries at the tops of the trees off in the distance. So, you look away from the sun and let your forehead relax. You let your**



muscles smooth out and notice how much better it feels when your forehead is nice and relaxed. You start walking very slowly towards the trees with the big berries, continuing to take your big dinosaur breaths and letting them out slowly.

### Jaw muscles

You finally arrive at the tall trees which were off in the distance. The berries are big and red and look very good, but you find that even your huge dinosaur mouth isn't big enough to eat all the berries at once. You stretch your mouth open very wide, so you can get a huge mouth full of the leaves and berries. You're not sure you can get your mouth around all the berries; but the berries look so good, you just have to try. As you continue to open your mouth as wide as you can, wider and wider, you notice how tense and tight your mouth and cheeks feel. It would feel so good to just relax those muscles again. You get a good mouthful of the berries and swallow all the food. Now, you can relax your mouth. You close your mouth again and try to make your jaw as loose as possible. Notice if there is any tension in your jaw. If there is, try to let your mouth fall open just a little, so your jaw is nice and loose and relaxed. Just enjoy how much better it feels for you to feel relaxed, taking big dinosaur breaths, and slowly letting them out.

You are still hungry and decide to take another bite of the berries. You stretch your mouth open very wide, so you can get a huge mouth full of the leaves and berries. As you continue to open your mouth as wide as you can, wider and wider, you notice that your mouth and cheeks feel tense and tight again. It would feel so good to just relax those muscles, but you have to get as much food as you can into your big dinosaur mouth. You get a good mouthful of the berries and swallow all the food. Now, you can relax your mouth. You close your mouth again and try to make your jaw as loose as possible. Try to let your mouth fall open just a little, so your jaw is nice and loose and relaxed. Just enjoy how much better it feels for you to feel relaxed, taking big dinosaur breaths and slowly letting them out.

### Shoulders and neck

You begin to slowly walk out of the forest. You can hear the pterodactyls screeching and squawking overhead and can feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. It feels so good to be a big dinosaur who can look down on the tops of many of the trees in the forest. But, you find as you try to leave the forest, your long neck gets in the way. To get under some of the branches on the trees, you have to shrug your shoulders up as hard as you can, making your long neck shorter and shorter. You try to make your shoulders go up to your ears, as hard as you can, so you can duck beneath the branches. Now, you are past the first tree, so you can relax your shoulders and neck. It feels so good to relax your long neck and shoulders, and you concentrate on making your shoulders as loose and heavy as you can. You take another big breath and try to fill your lungs with air, letting it out very slowly.

There is another tree up ahead, and you will have to duck again. You shrug your shoulders up as hard as you can, making your long neck shorter and shorter. You try to make your shoulders go up to your ears, as hard as you can, so you can duck beneath the branches. You notice how much tighter your shoulder muscles feel; and you can't wait to get past the second tree, so you can relax. You walk past the second tree, so you can relax your shoulders and neck. It feels so good to relax your very long neck and shoulders, and you concentrate on making your shoulders as loose and heavy as you can. You take another big breath, and try to fill your lungs with air, letting it out very slowly. As you breathe, you pay attention to your forehead, your mouth, and your jaw, making sure that everything is nice and loose and relaxed.

### Arms

You have eaten a lot, and you decide to walk over to the water hole to get some water. When you get to the water hole, you see it is covered with rocks. You have to lift the rocks out of the way with your arms. Bend your big dinosaur arms up at the elbows and lift the rocks out of the swimming hole. Make a big muscle with your arms. Try to make your arm muscles very tight so you can hold the heavy rocks. Now, you toss the rocks out of the swimming hole and relax your arms. Just make your arms as loose and heavy as you can. As you take big dinosaur breaths, try to make your arms looser and looser, just like spaghetti.

There is one more rock in the way, so you have to tighten up your arm muscles again. You bend your elbows and lift up the huge rock, making a big muscle in your arms. You squeeze your arm muscles very tight and throw the rock out of the swimming hole. Now you can relax. As you take big dinosaur breaths, try to make your arm muscles as floppy and loose as you can. Make your arms very heavy and loose . . . heavier and heavier.

### Stomach

Your stomach is very full. But because you are such a big dinosaur, you need a lot of food. You try to press your stomach into a tight ball to squish your food and make more room for more leaves and berries. You make your stomach muscles very tight, until your stomach feels like a hard rock. Now, you will be able to eat more of those good leaves and berries, and you let your stomach muscles go. Your stomach feels much more relaxed now, and you notice how nice it feels to have such a loose, relaxed stomach. You take another long, deep breath and look around the tropical forest. You can hear the wind rustling through the trees as you continue to breathe deeply and to relax the muscles in your stomach, making them very loose.

You begin to get hungry again and decide to make a little more room in your stomach. You try to press your stomach into a tight ball, squishing your food even more to make more room for leaves and berries. You make your stomach muscles feel as hard as a rock, so that if any other dinosaur ran into you, you wouldn't feel a

thing. Now, you let your stomach muscles go, noticing how much better it feels to have nice, loose stomach muscles. Take a big, huge dinosaur breath, and focus on letting go of the tightness in your stomach, in your shoulders, in your neck, in your jaw, and in your forehead. Try to make your muscles as heavy and loose as you can.

### Back

You notice that you have a gigantic bug on your back, and you want to get it off. You stand up on your hind legs and arch your back as far as you can, trying to make the bug lose its balance and fall off. You arch your back very high, but the bug won't get off your back. You notice how stiff and hard your lower back feels from arching it so much, so you decide to take a rest for a minute. You get back on all four of your huge dinosaur legs and relax your back. You take a deep breath and really focus on letting your back muscles become heavier and heavier, looser and looser. It feels so much better to feel nice and relaxed.

Now you are ready to try to get that bug off your back again. You arch your back very high, and the bug begins to lose its balance. You arch your back even higher and notice how stiff and hard your lower back feels. You can't wait for the bug to fall off because your back feels so tight and hard. Finally, the bug falls off, and you can relax. You get back on all fours and let your back muscles go limp. You get back on all fours and let your back muscles go limp. You take a deep breath and really focus on letting your back muscles become heavier and heavier, looser and looser. It feels so good to have that bug off of your back and to feel comfortable and relaxed. You take some more deep dinosaur breaths and feel happy to be such a big, huge, wonderful dinosaur in the beautiful forest.

### Legs

You start to feel sleepy and decide to go back to your special place on the moss to rest some more. You climb to the top of a hill which is cool, and green, and grassy. You see the brook at the bottom and your mossy resting place nearby. It would be so much fun to slide down the hill onto your resting place in the shade. You sit down on the ground and stretch your legs out, sticking up your toes as far as you can, so your feet won't get caught on the hill. As you begin to slide down the hill, you feel how tight your leg and calf muscles are. You tighten them up as much as you can so you can go faster and faster down the hill. You can feel the wind in your face and the hard ground underneath your bottom. Halfway down the hill, you reach a flat place and decide to rest for a minute. You lie down on the cool, green grass and look at the soft, white, fluffy clouds. You continue to breathe in and out, very slowly, and focus on making your leg muscles loose, just like wet seaweed. It feels so much better to just lie back and relax.

Now you are ready to sleep for a while in your favorite resting spot. You sit back up and tighten the muscles in your upper legs and your calves, pointing your toes up towards the sky as hard as you can. You scoot down the hill as fast as you can,

feeling the tightness in your upper legs and calves. The tighter your leg muscles, the faster you go, and you can see your favorite spot getting closer and closer. Finally, you land on the soft grass by the brook, and you can relax again.

### General relaxation

You lie down and take a big dinosaur breath; and as you slowly let it out, you relax the muscles in your legs, making them as loose as wet seaweed. It feels so nice to relax, breathing very slowly and heavily. Your big dinosaur arms and legs feel very heavy and very relaxed. But you are tired and try to relax them even more. You continue to breathe very slowly, in and out, and make your body feel as heavy as you can. You try to relax your forehead, your jaw, your shoulders, your neck, your stomach, your back, and your legs. As you slowly drift off to sleep, you feel comfortable and warm and feel lucky to have such a wonderful life as a dinosaur.

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**You will need to practice being like the dinosaur at home. A good time to practice is before going to bed. Your parents may even enjoy doing this with you.**

Discussion:

1. How does your body feel after being like the dinosaur? Can any of the negative feelings get through your relaxed body easily?
2. What are some of the best times to use relaxation? (Examples: when thoughts of the trauma/disaster arise; before school on when you have a test, before a soccer or ball game, before a recital)

## MINI-RELAXATION EXERCISE

### (Part II)

#### BREATHING WITH COLOR

Sometimes when we feel nervous, scared, or upset, we do not have the time to become dinosaurs and relax every part of our bodies one at a time. There is a quick way to bring the same feeling of relaxation. It will work the same way. You will not be able to have uncomfortable feelings in your body and be relaxed at the same time. It takes some practice, so you will need to try this once a day for a whole week. Then you will be able to use it whenever uncomfortable feelings come.

You can do this kind of relaxation wherever you are: at your desk, sitting on the bench before it is your turn to play, standing at the ballet barre.

Think of your favorite color. This should be a color that you like because when you see it, it makes you feel nice. This may be yellow, the color of the warm sun. It may be blue, the color of a beautiful, clear sky. You pick your own color. This will be our color to hold good feelings and relaxed feelings. Black is a color that happens when you take all other colors away. It is also the color of the night when no twinkling stars or moon are seen. Black is the color we will use to hold all of our uncomfortable feelings.

Ask the children if they would like to share what colors they have chosen. Help them to remember that every color can be a special and good color.

We have our colors. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose. As the air comes in, imagine it as air that is your favorite color. Say to yourself, “In with the good, relaxing (Insert your color).” Hold it in for a few seconds. Then let it out of your mouth. It has had time to gather some of the uncomfortable feelings, turning the air black. Breathe out of your mouth, getting rid of the black air. Let it out very slowly, this way it has time to gather more bad feelings as it leaves your body.

In with the good, [COLOR] air; relax as it goes in. Out with the black air. Let it out slowly. Begin to feel your arms and legs start to get loose as the beautiful color air fills your body. In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...Now your stomach and shoulders are starting to feel loose and relaxed. In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...Now your head, face, and neck feel relaxed and filled with good air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air... In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air... Relax...think of yourself filled with good, relaxed air and good feeling... In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air... In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the

**black air...Relax...think of yourself filled with good, relaxed air and good feeling. Breathe...breathe....breathe....Open your eyes and keep the good feelings with you.**

**Let's draw how the colors help us. On your paper, draw a picture of the good colors helping to get rid of the black color and uncomfortable feelings.**

Discussion:

1. Have each child who is willing share their picture and tell about how the color is helping.
2. When can you use the color breathing relaxation exercise? (Be sure to suggest use in a variety of settings and not just with trauma/disaster-related feelings. For example, you can use this before a sporting event, before a spelling test, before a recital, etc.)

## **RELAXATION: FIGHTING BACK AGAINST NEGATIVE FEELINGS**

### **FAMILY EXERCISE**

Your child has been learning some ways to handle negative feelings and stress associated with the recent trauma/disaster. Your child has learned that stress, fearfulness, and anxiety are common feelings after what has happened in their lives. These feelings are often accompanied by bodily sensations like headaches, stomachaches, fast heart rates, and quick breathing. You may have noticed that your child has become more clingy and not wanting to be away from you. You may have noticed more physical complaints. You may also have noticed that your child is more fearful with unrelated things like bugs, dogs, new situations. These are again very normal reactions for children (and even adults). Although you may also be feeling overwhelmed and stressed, patience with your child is important to the healing process. One way your child is learning to battle these negative feelings is through relaxation. Your child has learned two different skills. One takes approximately 30 minutes to complete while the other can be completed in 10 minutes.

It is suggested that you and your child practice the longer exercise each night before going to bed. Read it to your child and perhaps do it with your child. You may be surprised at how relaxed you can feel with this exercise too! Have your child get comfortable with his/her head on a pillow before you begin. (You may wish to audiotape your reading of the longer relaxation exercise so that your child can listen to it at times when you are not there.)

It is suggested that you and your child practice the shorter color exercise at least once each day for one week and then once each week. Like learning any new skill, it gets easier and better with practice. Together, you can choose a good time (not right before the dinosaur exercise). You can practice while sitting together on the couch or on the floor.

Talk to your child about things that may make the negative reactions or feelings occur. Talk to your child about when the mini-relaxation exercises can be used (e.g., before a test, before a sporting event, recital, dance, giving a book report in class). This has been discussed in school. Invite your child to share ideas that were generated in the classroom.



## Family Relaxation Exercise

### Dinosaur Relaxation Script

Imagine that you are living in the time of the dinosaurs. The air is hot and sticky, and you can hear the sounds of the pterodactyls squawking overhead. You are a huge dinosaur, as big as a house, and you have a very long neck to help you eat from the tops of the trees. You are lumbering through the forest, knocking down trees that get in your way. You have been walking for a long time and are very tired and hungry. You decide to rest for a minute before you go to look for food. You find a nice spot by a cool brook and lie down on the moss.

#### Deep Breathing

As you close your eyes, you try to stretch out and relax, so you can store up all the energy you will need to go out to search for food. You can feel the warmth of the sun gently shining on your tough dinosaur skin, and you begin to let your big, huge dinosaur body get heavier and heavier. As you feel the weight of your arms and legs press against the soft, cool moss by the brook, you begin to take some deep breaths. Try to fill your gigantic lungs up with air, and slowly let the air out. With every deep breath, you can feel your dinosaur body getting heavier and heavier. It feels so good to relax and enjoy the warmth of the sun, and the cool breeze outside. As you continue to take gigantic dinosaur breaths, you begin to feel more and more relaxed and decide you are ready to go look for some food.

#### Forehead muscles

You walk slowly toward the forest, continuing to breathe slowly and to make your dinosaur body as heavy and loose as you can. You begin to look for the tallest trees which have all the sweet leaves at the top. But, the sun is in your eyes. Since your arms and legs are so heavy, you can't raise them up to keep the sun out of your eyes. So, you squint as you look into the hot sun. You have to squint your eye muscles and your forehead very hard because the sun is so bright; you can barely see the trees up ahead. As you are squinting, you notice how tight the muscles are. Now, you can look away from the sun and relax. Make your forehead and eye muscles very smooth and loose. It feels so much better for you to relax your forehead and your eyes. Now you can continue to breathe deeply, taking big, huge dinosaur breaths and slowly breathing out.

As you begin to move slowly towards the trees with the sweet leaves on them, you think you also see some juicy berries. But, because you are walking into the sun, you have to squint hard to see the berries. As you are squinting, you notice how tight the muscles in your eyes and forehead are again. You press your forehead down as hard as you can until it seems like you can't squint any harder. You can feel the muscles in your forehead getting tighter and tighter. Finally, you are able to

see that there are, indeed, some big, juicy berries at the tops of the trees off in the distance. So, you look away from the sun and let your forehead relax. You let your muscles smooth out and notice how much better it feels when your forehead is nice and relaxed. You start walking very slowly towards the trees with the big berries, continuing to take your big dinosaur breaths and letting them out slowly.

### Jaw muscles

You finally arrive at the tall trees that were off in the distance. The berries are big and red and look very good, but you find that even your huge dinosaur mouth isn't big enough to eat all the berries at once. You stretch your mouth open very wide, so you can get a huge mouth full of the leaves and berries. You're not sure you can get your mouth around all the berries; but the berries look so good, you just have to try. As you continue to open your mouth as wide as you can, wider and wider, you notice how tense and tight your mouth and cheeks feel. It would feel so good to just relax those muscles again. You get a good mouthful of the berries and swallow all the food. Now, you can relax your mouth. You close your mouth again and try to make your jaw as loose as possible. Notice if there is any tension in your jaw. If there is, try to let your mouth fall open just a little, so your jaw is nice and loose and relaxed. Just enjoy how much better it feels for you to feel relaxed, taking big dinosaur breaths, and slowly letting them out.

You are still hungry and decide to take another bite of the berries. You stretch your mouth open very wide, so you can get a huge mouth full of the leaves and berries. As you continue to open your mouth as wide as you can, wider and wider, you notice that your mouth and cheeks feel tense and tight again. It would feel so good to just relax those muscles, but you have to get as much food as you can into your big dinosaur mouth. You get a good mouthful of the berries and swallow all the food. Now, you can relax your mouth. You close your mouth again and try to make your jaw as loose as possible. Try to let your mouth fall open just a little, so your jaw is nice and loose and relaxed. Just enjoy how much better it feels for you to feel relaxed, taking big dinosaur breaths and slowly letting them out.

### Shoulders and neck

You begin to slowly walk out of the forest. You can hear the pterodactyls screeching and squawking overhead and can feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. It feels so good to be a big dinosaur who can look down on the tops of many of the trees in the forest. But, you find as you try to leave the forest, your long neck gets in the way. To get under some of the branches on the trees, you have to shrug your shoulders up as hard as you can, making your long neck shorter and shorter. You try to make your shoulders go up to your ears, as hard as you can, so you can duck beneath the branches. Now, you are past the first tree, so you can relax your shoulders and neck. It feels so good to relax your long neck and shoulders, and you concentrate on making your shoulders as loose and heavy as you can. You take another big breath and try to fill your lungs with air, letting it out very slowly.

There is another tree up ahead, and you will have to duck again. You shrug your shoulders up as hard as you can, making your long neck shorter and shorter. You try to make your shoulders go up to your ears, as hard as you can, so you can duck beneath the branches. You notice how much tighter your shoulder muscles feel and you can't wait to get past the second tree, so you can relax. You walk past the second tree, so you can relax your shoulders and neck. It feels so good to relax your very long neck and shoulders, and you concentrate on making your shoulders as loose and heavy as you can. You take another big breath, and try to fill your lungs with air, letting it out very slowly. As you breathe, you pay attention to your forehead, your mouth, and your jaw, making sure that everything is nice and loose and relaxed.

### Arms

You have eaten a lot, and you decide to walk over to the water hole to get some water. When you get to the water hole, you see it is covered with rocks. You have to lift the rocks out of the way with your arms. Bend your big dinosaur arms up at the elbows and lift the rocks out of the swimming hole. Make a big muscle with your arms. Try to make your arm muscles very tight so you can hold the heavy rocks. Now, you toss the rocks out of the swimming hole and relax your arms. Just make your arms as loose and heavy as you can. As you take big dinosaur breaths, try to make your arms looser and looser, just like spaghetti.

There is one more rock in the way, so you have to tighten up your arm muscles again. You bend your elbows and lift up the huge rock, making a big muscle in your arms. You squeeze your arm muscles very tight and throw the rock out of the swimming hole. Now you can relax. As you take big dinosaur breaths, try to make your arm muscles as floppy and loose as you can. Make your arms very heavy and loose . . . heavier and heavier.

### Stomach

Your stomach is very full. But because you are such a big dinosaur, you need a lot of food. You try to press your stomach into a tight ball to squish your food and make more room for more leaves and berries. You make your stomach muscles very tight, until your stomach feels like a hard rock. Now, you will be able to eat more of those good leaves and berries, and you let your stomach muscles go. Your stomach feels much more relaxed now, and you notice how nice it feels to have such a loose, relaxed stomach. You take another long, deep breath and look around the tropical forest. You can hear the wind rustling through the trees as you continue to breathe deeply and to relax the muscles in your stomach, making them very loose.

You begin to get hungry again and decide to make a little more room in your stomach. You try to press your stomach into a tight ball, squishing your food even more to make more room for leaves and berries. You make your stomach muscles

feel as hard as a rock, so that if any other dinosaur ran into you, you wouldn't feel a thing. Now, you let your stomach muscles go, noticing how much better it feels to have nice, loose stomach muscles. Take a big, huge dinosaur breath, and focus on letting go of the tightness in your stomach, in your shoulders, in your neck, in your jaw, and in your forehead. Try to make your muscles as heavy and loose as you can.

### Back

You notice that you have a gigantic bug on your back, and you want to get it off. You stand up on your hind legs and arch your back as far as you can, trying to make the bug lose its balance and fall off. You arch your back very high, but the bug won't get off your back. You notice how stiff and hard your lower back feels from arching it so much, so you decide to take a rest for a minute. You get back on all four of your huge dinosaur legs and relax your back. You take a deep breath and really focus on letting your back muscles become heavier and heavier, looser and looser. It feels so much better to feel nice and relaxed.

Now you are ready to try to get that bug off your back again. You arch your back very high, and the bug begins to lose its balance. You arch your back even higher and notice how stiff and hard your lower back feels. You can't wait for the bug to fall off because your back feels so tight and hard. Finally, the bug falls off, and you can relax. You get back on all fours and let your back muscles go limp. You get back on all fours and let your back muscles go limp. You take a deep breath and really focus on letting your back muscles become heavier and heavier, looser and looser. It feels so good to have that bug off of your back and to feel comfortable and relaxed. You take some more deep dinosaur breaths and feel happy to be such a big, huge, wonderful dinosaur in the beautiful forest.

### Legs

You start to feel sleepy and decide to go back to your special place on the moss to rest some more. You climb to the top of a hill that is cool, and green, and grassy. You see the brook at the bottom and your mossy resting place nearby. It would be so much fun to slide down the hill onto your resting place in the shade. You sit down on the ground and stretch your legs out, sticking up your toes as far as you can, so your feet won't get caught on the hill. As you begin to slide down the hill, you feel how tight your leg and calf muscles are. You tighten them up as much as you can so you can go faster and faster down the hill. You can feel the wind in your face and the hard ground underneath your bottom. Halfway down the hill, you reach a flat place and decide to rest for a minute. You lie down on the cool, green grass and look at the soft, white, fluffy clouds. You continue to breathe in and out, very slowly, and focus on making your leg muscles loose, just like wet seaweed. It feels so much better to just lie back and relax.

Now you are ready to sleep for a while in your favorite resting spot. You sit back up and tighten the muscles in your upper legs and your calves, pointing your toes up

towards the sky as hard as you can. You scoot down the hill as fast as you can, feeling the tightness in your upper legs and calves. The tighter your leg muscles, the faster you go, and you can see your favorite spot getting closer and closer. Finally, you land on the soft grass by the brook, and you can relax again.

### General relaxation

You lie down and take a big dinosaur breath; and as you slowly let it out, you relax the muscles in your legs, making them as loose as wet seaweed. It feels so nice to relax, breathing very slowly and heavily. Your big dinosaur arms and legs feel very heavy and very relaxed. But you are tired and try to relax them even more. You continue to breathe very slowly, in and out, and make your body feel as heavy as you can. You try to relax your forehead, your jaw, your shoulders, your neck, your stomach, your back, and your legs. As you slowly drift off to sleep, you feel comfortable and warm and feel lucky to have such a wonderful life as a dinosaur.

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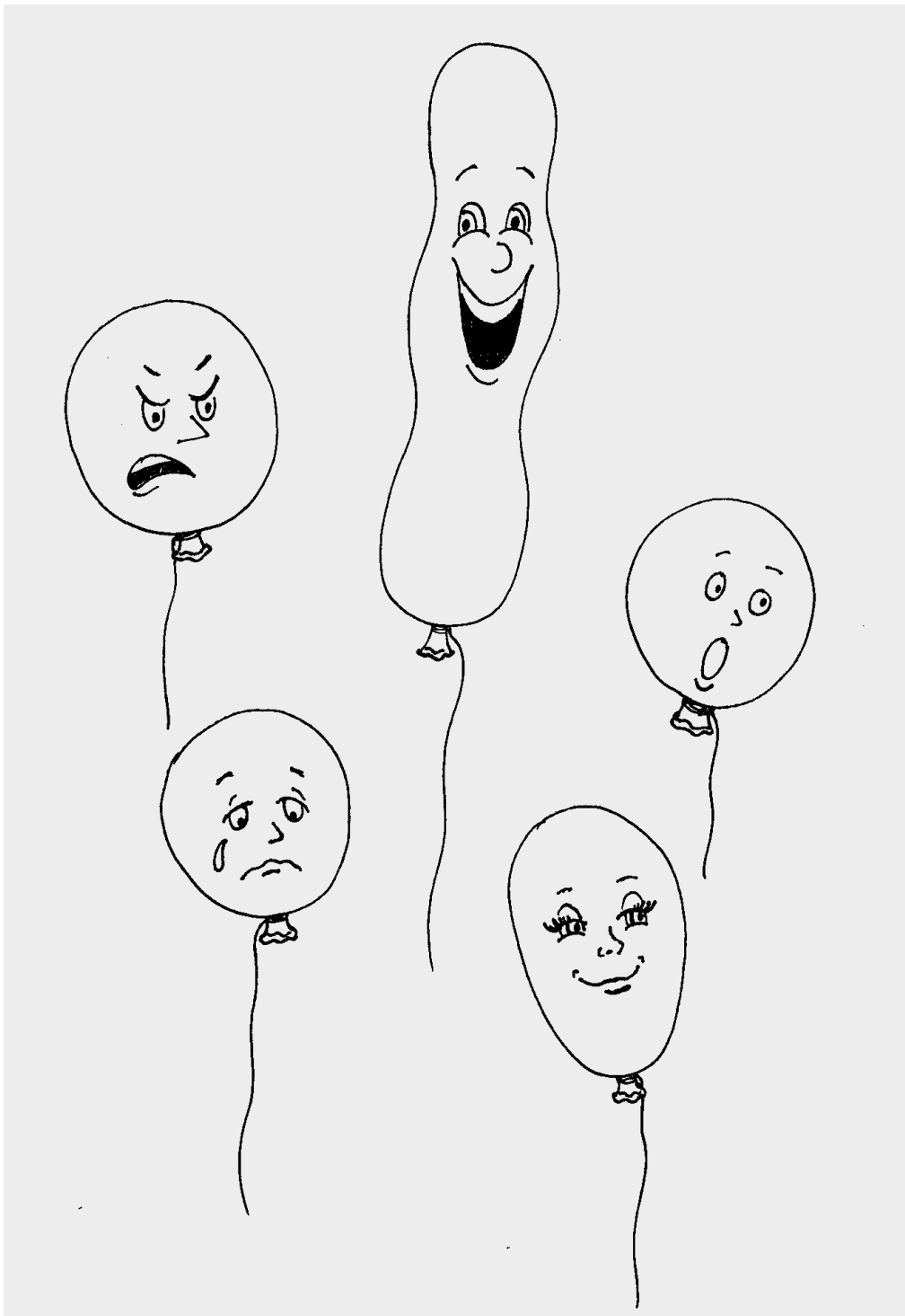
## RELAXATION FAMILY EXERCISE

### Breathing with Color Relaxation Exercise

Take a deep breath in through your nose. As the air comes in, imagine it as air that is your favorite color. (Ask your child what color he or she has chosen for this exercise.) Say to yourself, “In with the good, relaxing (Insert your child's color).” Hold it in for a few seconds. Then let it out of your mouth. It has had time to gather some of the uncomfortable feelings, turning the air black. Breathe out of your mouth, getting rid of the black air. Let it out very slowly, this way it has time to gather more bad feelings as it leaves your body.

In with the good, [COLOR] air...relax as it goes in. Out with the black air... Let it out slowly. Begin to feel your arms and legs start to get loose as the beautiful color air fills your body. In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...Now your stomach and shoulders are starting to feel loose and relaxed. In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...Now your head, face, and neck feel relaxed and filled with good air In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...Relax...think of yourself filled with good, relaxed air and good feeling. In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air... In with the [COLOR] air...out with the black air...In with the [COLOR] air...Breathe...breathe....breathe out with the black air...Relax...think of yourself filled with good, relaxed air and ....Open your eyes and keep the good feelings with you.

# DEALING WITH FEELINGS



## DEALING WITH FEELINGS

Once children have identified their feelings, both good and uncomfortable ones, it is important for them to have skills to manage these. Without a way to deal with their feelings, the emotions can become overwhelming and interfere with the healing process. Some of the best ways to handle the feelings is through talking with others, drawing their feelings, or writing them in a journal. Relaxation, doing something fun, or trying to think of a positive solution to the problem alone or with help from others are additional ways for children to deal with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. The idea is to get the feelings out and begin to let the negative feelings go. It is also important to recognize that some coping strategies may actually make the uncomfortable feelings worse. These may include angry or aggressive outbursts, trying to simply ignore the thoughts in hopes they will go away, withdrawing from others, blaming others for the negative things that happened, or acting impulsively or recklessly.

It is normal and expected that children will experience a range of uncomfortable emotions following a trauma/disaster, but it is equally important that they not dwell on these. Feelings may come and go; when the uncomfortable feelings return, it may be time to apply a positive skill and/or for the children to seek a “safe and trusting” adult with whom to share these feelings.

Length of Exercise: 45-60 minutes

Objectives:

- Identify uncomfortable feelings that children would like to release
- Understand that negative feelings are OK and are part of the healing process
- Learn that the bad feelings will not last forever
- Recognize that sometimes the uncomfortable feelings will return and to identify at least one adult with whom to share these
- Identify actions that may make children feel worse

Materials needed:

- One helium balloon for each child
- String tied to each balloon
- Small strips of white paper (cut from grid sheet)
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Tape



Instructions:

**We have talked about different kinds of feelings you have had after (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Some of these can make you feel good inside and others can make you feel uncomfortable or upset. Like we talked about before, all of these feelings are OK and very normal; it is important to share these feelings. Sharing is one of the most important ways we have to help us feel better. There are also things we do that might seem like a good idea, but may actually make us feel worse. Can anybody think of things that children may do that make them feel worse?** (Discuss ideas. Include anger and aggression toward self and others, blaming others for bad things, keeping feelings bottled up inside instead of sharing, and acting without thinking)

**Today, we want to take another positive step in helping to let go of the uncomfortable feelings. On the strips of paper, I want each of you to write down or draw some feelings you would like to get rid of because they do not make you feel very good. Put only one feeling on each piece. Not everyone will have the same number. Some may have only one or two. Others may have more. Remember, it is OK for everyone to not be the same. When you are finished writing on your strips, come and choose a balloon. Then, carefully, tape each strip to the string of your balloon.**

After all the balloons have been taped with the feelings strips, walk outside with them to an open area.

**We have all made balloons that have feelings we would like to let go of. Many of these feelings came after (TRAUMA/DISASTER). As you let go of your balloon, think about starting to let go of your uncomfortable feelings inside you, just like you are letting go of the ones you put on your balloon. Remember, these feelings may not go away right away, but they will begin to fade or get less, just like the balloons will get smaller and smaller in the sky.**

Let each child release their balloon and spend just a moment to watch them sail out of sight. Return to the classroom for discussion.

Discussion:

1. How did it feel when you let go of your balloon?
2. Sometimes balloons may come back to the ground just like your uncomfortable feelings might come back. What can you do when these come back? (Help children generate a list of possible solutions e.g., talk to parent, family, teacher, counselor, clergy; distract with game or other activity; relaxation exercises, etc.)

3. Encourage children to discuss the class activity with their parents. Together, they can come up with ways for the family to let go of uncomfortable feelings. They can complete the home exercise with their families and put the sheet up in their home.

## DEALING WITH FEELINGS

### FAMILY EXERCISE

Directions: Your child has been talking about feelings following a disaster or trauma and ways to deal with them. Your child has learned that all feelings should be respected and that there are no right or wrong ones. Sometimes, children may have difficulty sharing or admitting uncomfortable feelings, leaving parents to only guess what is going on inside of their children. With your child, list uncomfortable feelings all members of the family may have following the recent event in your lives. Remind them that family members can have same and different feelings. Next, together, come up with ideas of things the family members can do to feel better (examples may include: talking to adult family members, drawing pictures and sharing them, doing something to help in the relief effort, relaxation exercises, family outings or other activities with friends, watching a funny movie together). Your child also learned about ways that make the feelings worse such as angry or aggressive outbursts, blaming others for bad things happening, bottling up feelings and not sharing, and acting without thinking. Ask your child to share some of the things NOT to do when you want to feel better.

Together, fill in the chart below with at least three examples on each side. Put the chart up where you can all see it (e.g., on the refrigerator, on a bulletin board)

**DEALING WITH FEELINGS CHART**

**Uncomfortable feelings**

**What we can do to feel better**





# FINDING HIDDEN TREASURES



## FINDING HIDDEN TREASURES

Whenever there is a loss or a trauma/disaster in the life of a child and the family, it is often difficult to see any positive things that remain. For children, they may have a hard time talking to parents or teachers about what they lost as well as the things they are still glad to have. To heal, it is important to identify positive factors in the face of adversity. Positive factors may include real items that the children can touch (e.g., a special toy, a pet, a special blanket) and activities (e.g., taking a bike ride, going to a park, watching a favorite video, eating pancakes for breakfast). Important people in the children's lives are also considered essential and strong positive forces (e.g., parent, sibling, grandparent, teacher, friend, and neighbor). Finally, positive things can include feelings that the children have (e. g., happy, excited, hopeful).

Length of exercise: 1-2 hours (you may want to divide this activity into two sessions)

Objectives: Identify positive feelings following trauma/disaster

Identify positive memories

Identify activities present before and after the trauma/disaster

Identify people to share good things with

Materials needed: Shoe box with lid brought from home (have this at least 3 days before activity)--cover these with white paper.

Decorating materials you may have or that children can contribute (e.g., wrapping paper scraps, material scraps, buttons, ribbons, macaroni noodles, glitter, sequins, feathers, beads, yarn, felt, aluminum foil, colored cellophane paper, construction paper)

Glue

Scissors

Yellow construction paper cut in 2"-3" circles (15 per child)

Crayons or colored pencils

Instructions:

**I know the (TRAUMA/DISASTER) was a terrible thing, but I've been thinking about all the good things we still have. There's me and you and I think we are pretty good. I bet if we think hard, we can think of other things that are good and are still with us. These can be things you touch and play with like favorite toys, pets, games. These can be activities that you like to do such as playing with friends, watching a video, swinging on a swing set, going to school, and eating favorite foods like pizza, ice cream and pancakes. Certainly, people in our lives can be also be considered very good such as parents, brothers or sisters, grandparents, other relatives, friends, and teachers. I like to think about all the good things we have, all the good things we do, and all the good ways we feel as treasures or special coins. Today, we are going to make these treasure coins and treasure boxes to hold the good things in. Each of you have 10 golden coins. On these, I want you to write or draw a good thing, feeling, activity, or person you have in your life. If you run out of coins, remember, that money has two sides and the pictures on each side can be different.**

(Give the class about 30-45 minutes to make their coins). Have each student who wants to share, read or tell about what is on one of his/her coins with the rest of the class.

**Now, we need something to keep our treasure coins of good and positive things in. Each of you brought an ordinary shoebox from home. We are going to make these into treasure chests. You can decorate your box any way you'd like. I have many different materials that you can use to create a special chest. After you have finished, bring your box to me and I will make a place in the lid for you to put in your coins.**

After each child has completed his/her treasure chest and inserted the coins, place the chests somewhere in the room for display while they dry. Without touching, allow the children to look at all their friends' boxes.

Discussion:

1. How do you feel when you think about the positive things you have in your life even after (TRAUMA/DISASTER)?
2. Sometimes we may have uncomfortable feelings because of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). We can start to feel better when we remember some of the good things and people in our lives. When are some times to think about what you wrote/drew on your coins?
3. Remind the children that they can always add more coins to their boxes. What are some times that you may want to add new coins (e.g., when a house is repaired, when a toy is replaced, when electricity is back on, after a birthday party, etc.)



4. Send each child home with his/her box and 5 blank coins. Encourage each child to share the treasure box with parents. Together, the family can decorate the 5 coins and place them in the child's box.

## FINDING HIDDEN TREASURES

### FAMILY EXERCISE

Today, your child identified positive feelings, people, activities, and items that remain after the recent trauma/disaster. Your child wrote or drew each one on a special coin and placed it in the beautiful treasure chest made in class. Together, please complete the remaining coins to place in your child's box.

Coins can list any positive feeling, person, thing, or activity you can think about together. Talking about the positives is an important step in the healing process for your child and your family. Examples are listed below:

Feelings:      Happiness you still have each other  
                   Excited about doing things together  
                   Joy over having family photos  
                   Safe being our home

People:        Parents  
                   Siblings  
                   Relatives  
                   Teachers  
                   Clergy  
                   Counselors  
                   (Family pets)

Activities:    Taking a nice walk  
                   Watching favorite movies/shows  
                   Eating meals/favorite foods together  
                   Playing games  
                   Going to a park  
                   After-school activities

Items:         Favorite toys  
                   Special pictures  
                   Favorite books  
                   Special blankets  
                   Car  
                   Family momentos

Please keep your child's box in a special place. (Let your child choose the place with your help.) As positive things happen or are identified in the coming weeks and months, encourage your child (or the family) to make another coin for the treasure box. It will be a positive experience to look at the coins from time to time, especially when things may get overwhelming and difficult.

# GOOD DREAMS AND BAD DREAMS



## GOOD DREAMS AND BAD DREAMS

Dreams and sleep are often effected after a trauma/disaster. Children may have difficulty falling asleep and/or problems staying asleep. Children and adults commonly report bad dreams. The dreams may be directly associated with the trauma/disaster, or may seem to have little or nothing to do the event. It is not unusual for young children to seek their parents' bed after a traumatic event. Because children may have sleep disturbances, they may be less rested during the school day. This could result in decreased attention, concentration, and more irritability. Note: these symptoms may also occur independent of sleep problems. It is important to normalize sleep problems as something many children and adults can experience after (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Bad dreams may occur following reminders of the event. Encourage children to share their dreams with parents as one method of coping.

Length of exercise: 1 ½ hour

Objectives: Learn that bad dreams and sleep problems are normal reactions to a trauma/disaster

Identify times that bad dreams may occur

Develop skill for managing bad dreams

Materials needed: Rings cut 6" in diameter made from cardboard (these should be pre-cut and have one for each child; you may want a few extra in case of problems)

Colored yarns (3 feet for each child)

7" piece of yarn for each child

Four 6" pieces of yarn for each child

One 12" piece of yarn for each child

Aluminum foil

Feathers (4 for each child)

Beads that yarn can fit through (8 per child)

Tape

Glue

Scissors

Instructions:

**Since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER) happened, lots of children and adults may Be having bad dreams or nightmares. These may be about what happened to you or people you know during the (TRAUMA/DISASTER) or they may be bad dreams about something else. Today we are going to try to find some ways to make it easier to have good dreams. How many of you have heard of a dream catcher (Show the one you made)? Let me tell you a story about the dream catcher.**

The dream catcher story comes from Native American legends. A long time ago, a tribe called the Anishnabe were all being visited by bad dreams. The people tried many things to get rid of the nightmares but nothing seemed to work. The people asked the elder council for help. They, too, could not come up with a solution. Then one night, an elder was visited by a dream about the Spider Woman. She wove a beautiful web. In it were feathers and beads. The feathers and the beads would catch bad things while the beautiful web would let the good pass through. When the morning light hit the bad things caught in the web, they would disappear or be destroyed. When the elder awoke, he shared his dream about the Spider Woman with his people. All the families made something like he saw in his dream. These were hung on the beds. The dream catchers would allow only good dreams to pass to the sleeper and trap all the bad ones inside. When the morning light touched the dream catcher, the bad dreams and nightmares would perish or disappear. If a bad thought did get through, the elders believed this was a sign that the people should share the thought with someone important and together they could come up with a solution for the problem. It worked and the people had good sleep. To this day, many tribes make dream catchers to hang on the cradle boards of new babies and their beds and the beds of their children.

Today we are going to make our own dream catchers. Take your foil and wrap it carefully around your cardboard ring. If it breaks, just wrap foil on top of foil. Cover the whole ring. (To save time, you may want to cover each of the rings in foil for the children.) Next, tape the yarn to the side you want for the back. Then make loops around the ring. Go across or down, loop around and then come back to the next place you want to start a loop. Do this until you start to have a web inside of your ring. You each have 8 beads. You can use 4 of these in your web. To do this, string the yarn through a bead as you make your loop. Continue to wrap. Place another bead and wrap. After your web is finished, cut your yarn and tape the end to the back of your ring.

Now, take your short piece of yarn and tie it to the bottom of your ring. Thread your other 4 beads on the yarn. Tie a knot at the bottom so that the beads can not slide off.

Next, tie a piece of yarn to each feather. Now, tie the feathered string any where you want on your ring. Do this for each of the four feathers.

Now, you have a bead and feather for each direction of the compass, North, South, East, and West. All the directions that dreams can come from. Now your dream catcher can let the good dreams pass through while holding the bad ones until the morning sun melts them away.

Take the final piece of yarn and tie it to the top of the ring to make a loop so that you can hang your dream catcher. Each of you can take your dream catcher home to hang on your bed.

Discussion:

1. What kinds of dreams do you think children have been having since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)? Help children identify both good as well as bad dreams.
2. Like the Native American legend says, sometimes bad dreams may get through the dream catcher reminding us that we need to share something with a special person. Who can children share their dreams with?

## GOOD DREAMS AND BAD DREAMS

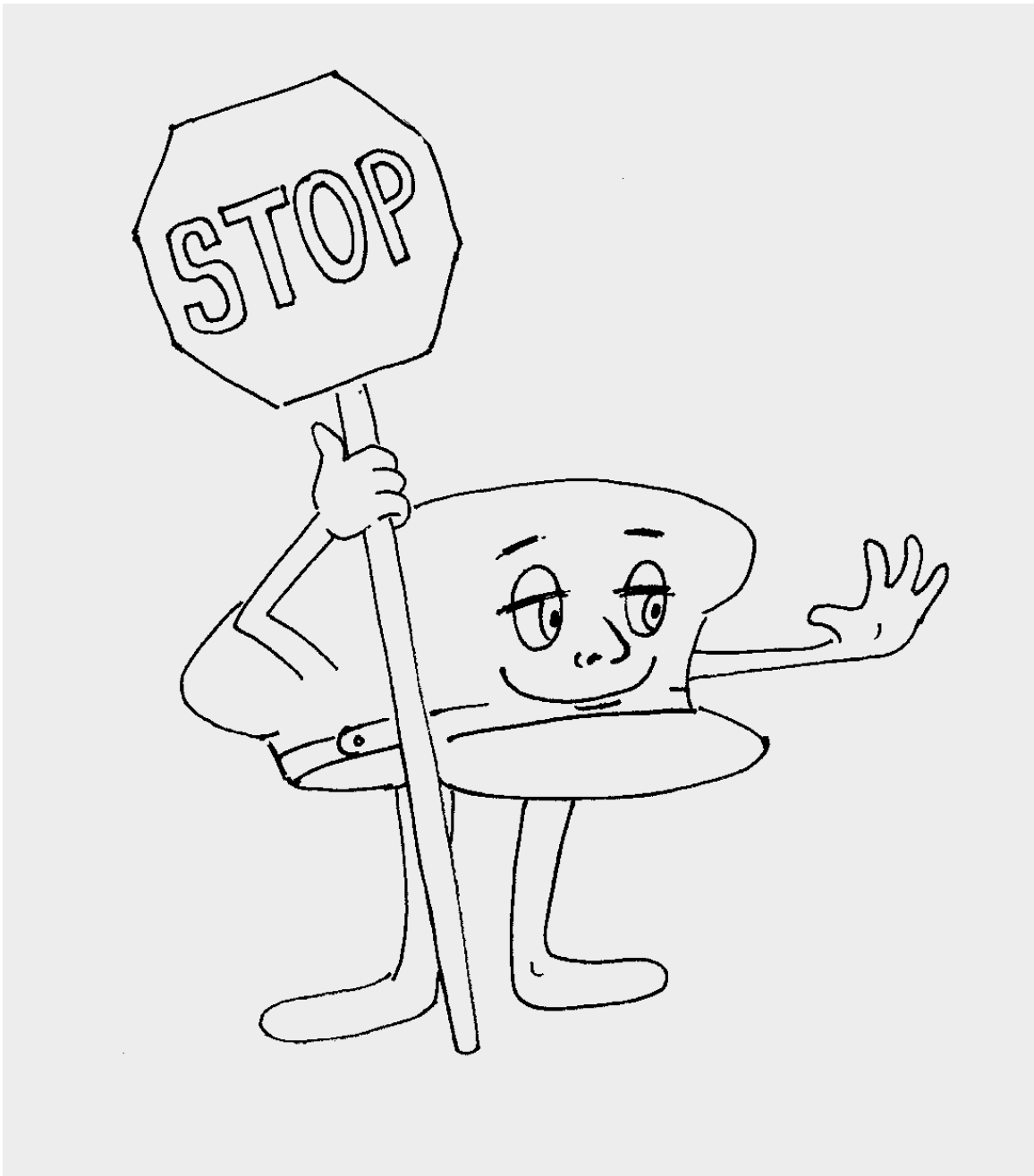
### FAMILY EXERCISE

Sleep problems are very common after a trauma/disaster. These may include trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, and bad dreams. Often, children may want to sleep near parents at night. At school, your child learned the story of the dream catcher and made one to bring home. Please ask your child to tell you the story. If they do not remember it, you can read it to them. After you have reviewed the story, together with your child, hang the dream catcher on your child's bed. Remind your child that if bad thoughts come through, this is a sign to share them with you. By talking about any bad dreams or thoughts, you can be like the rays of the sun and help to make them disappear.

#### Story of the dream catcher:

**The dream catcher story comes from Native American legends. A long time ago, a tribe called the Anishnabe were all being visited by bad dreams. The people tried many things to get rid of the nightmares but nothing seemed to work. The people asked the elder council for help. They, too, could not come up with a solution. That night one of the elders was visited by a dream about the Spider Woman. She wove a beautiful web. In it were feathers and beads. The feathers and the beads would catch bad things while the beautiful web would let the good pass through. When the morning light hit the bad things caught in the web, they would disappear or be destroyed. When the elder awoke, he shared his dream about the Spider Woman with his people. All the families made something like he saw in his dream. These were hung on the beds. The dream catchers would allow only good dreams to pass to the sleeper and trap all the bad ones inside. When the morning light touched the dream catcher, the bad dreams and nightmares would perish or disappear. If a bad thought did get through, the elders believed this was a sign that the people should share the thought with someone important and together they could come up with a solution for the problem. It worked and the people had good sleep. To this day, many tribes make dream catchers to hang on the cradleboards of babies and on their beds and the beds of their children.**

## REDIRECTING THOUGHTS





## REDIRECTING THOUGHTS

Intrusive thoughts or flashbacks are common following a trauma/disaster. These are thoughts or images of the event that can surface at any time. They may be triggered by reminders or appear without any reason. Sometimes, children may be frightened by these thoughts and images. It is important to normalize flashbacks and intrusive thoughts. When children experience intrusive thoughts or flashbacks, these may interfere with school work, attention, concentration, and increase their focus on the trauma/disaster. If children associate the intrusive thoughts or flashbacks with certain activities, they may begin to avoid these as well as other pleasurable events, thus restricting activities which were previously enjoyable.

Length of exercise: 45 minutes

Objectives: Learn that intrusive thoughts and flashbacks are normal after a trauma/disaster

Identify ways to redirect uncomfortable thoughts

Identify activities that can be fun

Materials needed: Red construction paper cut in shape of a stop sign  
White construction paper (cut in circles about 8" in diameter)  
Arrows cut from green construction paper  
Colored pencils or crayons  
White crayon  
Gold brads  
Scissors

Instructions:

**Sometimes after something bad happens like (TRAUMA/DISASTER), we have thoughts about it or pictures in our heads about it. These can come even if we are not thinking about the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). They can come even if we are trying very hard not to think about it. These thoughts and pictures in our minds make us feel very uncomfortable inside and sometimes we may even think there is something really wrong with us. These thoughts and pictures in our minds can interfere with our schoolwork, homework, chores, and with other things that used to be fun for us to do. We sometimes will stay away from fun things, hoping the thoughts and pictures will go away. Believe it or not, as much as we don't like what is happening, these thoughts and pictures in our minds are very, very normal after something really bad happens like (TRAUMA/DISASTER).**

**Today, we are going to learn some ways to handle the thoughts and pictures that we don't want in our heads. Who can tell me what this is? (Hold up the stop sign you**

have made from red construction paper) **That's right, it's a stop sign. When we see stop signs, it means we have to stop what we are doing. We see them on the roads and we have to stop driving. We may even see them or similar types of signs that say No Smoking, No Climbing. We are going to make our own stop signs for bad thoughts or pictures that come into our minds when we don't want them to. We can tell ourselves NO very loudly in our minds. This makes our minds stop and we can then give it something else to think about or do.**

**On your red construction paper, write STOP with your white crayon. On the back, write or draw two good thoughts or pictures you can imagine that you might use after saying STOP to the bad thoughts or pictures. Can you think of good thoughts or pictures children could use? (Write these on the board) (Allow children to complete their stop signs; you may need to help some children generate ideas for the back of the sign) Now, whenever you have an uncomfortable thought or get one of those pictures when you don't want it, you have a STOP sign in your mind and other positive things to think about or picture.**

**Now take out your white circles. Draw lines to make your circle look like it has pie pieces. (Show them one you made as an example) In each pie piece, write or draw an activity that you think is fun for you or other children to do. Some can be easy ones, others may take lots of time. Let's think of some ideas together. (Write the examples on the board. These may include: playing with your pet, singing a song, reading a book, riding a bike, eating cookies and milk, playing a game, shooting baskets, kicking soccer balls, stringing beads, calling a friend on the phone, coloring a picture, watching a favorite show or video, etc.). There are no right or wrong ideas. Next, take your gold paper fastener and put it through the middle of your pie, and through the green arrow so that your pie and the arrow are connected. Your arrow should be loose enough to spin with your finger. Now, if you have a thought or picture that pops in your mind when you don't want it there, you can spin the arrow (or remember what is on your pie) to choose an activity that can help get rid of the thought or picture.**

**Sometimes you can use the stop sign; sometimes, you can use the activity wheel; and sometimes, you can do both. When we feel bad, we may not want to do things that used to make us feel good. To help us heal, getting back to these activities, even if they are not fun at first, is important.**

Discussion:

1. What kinds of thoughts and pictures could children get in their minds after (TRAUMA/DISASTER)?
2. When are times that these thoughts and pictures might come in children's minds? (Include in discussion reminder triggers like images on TV or in the paper, overhearing adult conversations, loud noises, activities related to the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). (See introduction to relaxation exercise for other

examples. Also, include ideas that are completely unrelated to the event such as completing schoolwork, playing with friends, listening to the radio.

3. Have children discuss different skills they can use when thoughts and pictures come (e.g., relaxation exercise, STOP sign, activity wheel, talk to parent)

## REDIRECTING THOUGHTS

### FAMILY EXERCISE

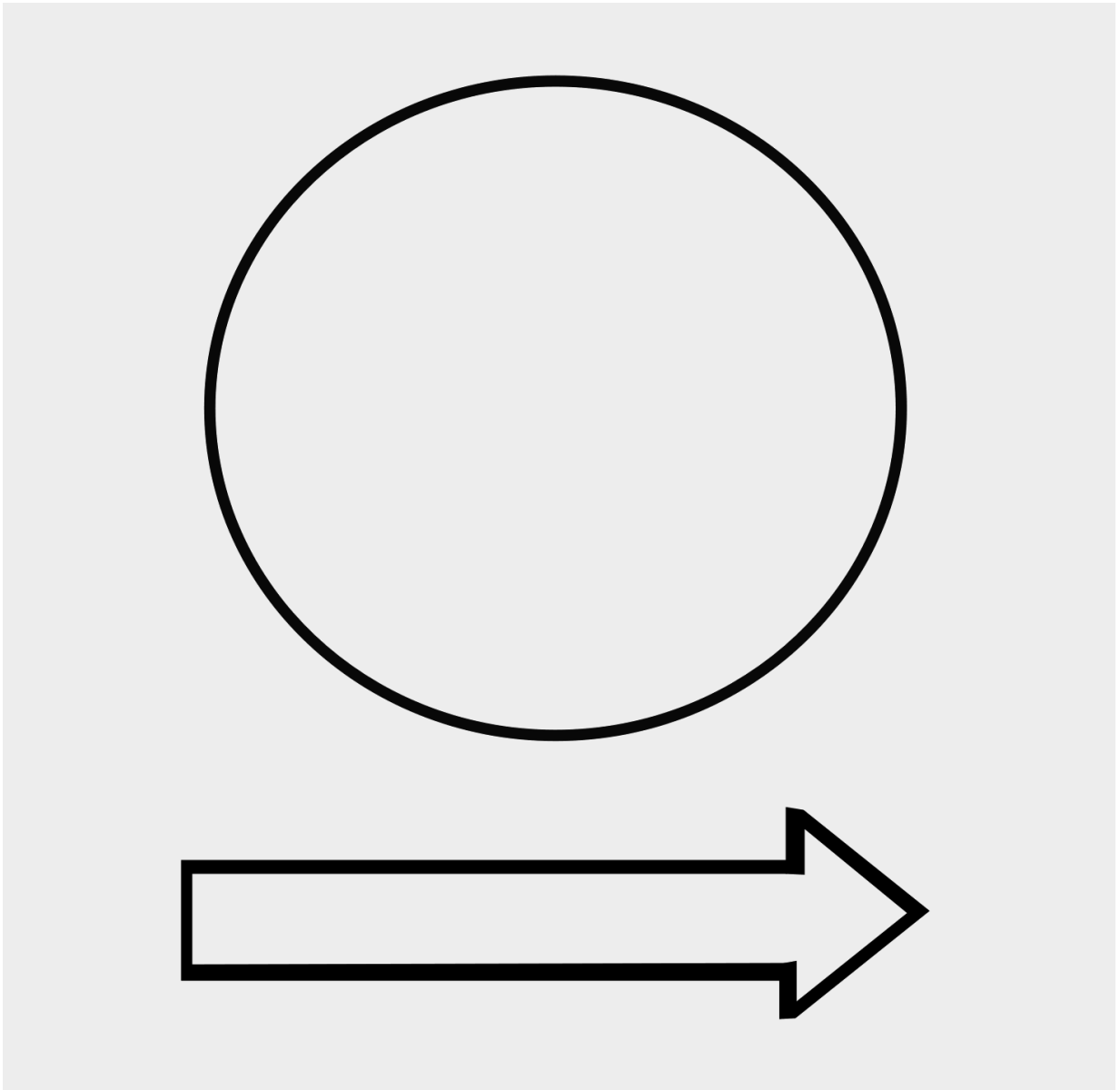
Intrusive thoughts and flashbacks are common experiences following a trauma/disaster. These can be triggered by reminders of the event such as watching TV reports of the trauma/disaster, seeing buildings which may have been damaged or destroyed, listening to adult conversations about the event, hearing noises like sirens associated with the trauma/disaster, or helping in clean-up activities. Intrusive thoughts and flashbacks may also occur without these types of triggers. They can come when your child least expects them. For example, these thoughts and images may come while doing school work or playing with friends. They can be very real and very frightening to your child. Sometimes children think there is “something wrong” with them or that they are “going crazy.” If your child shares these thoughts and ideas with you, patience, understanding, support, and acceptance are important. Help your child understand that these experiences are normal and will go away with time. Let your child know that you will be there to talk with.

In school, your child made a stop sign as a reminder to say stop to intrusive thoughts. On the reverse of the sign, your child wrote or drew examples of positive thoughts and pictures that can be used in place of the uncomfortable ones. Discuss these ideas with your child. Together, think of one or two additional positive thoughts to add to the sign. Remember, there are no right or wrong ideas as different thoughts and pictures in the mind will work for different people.

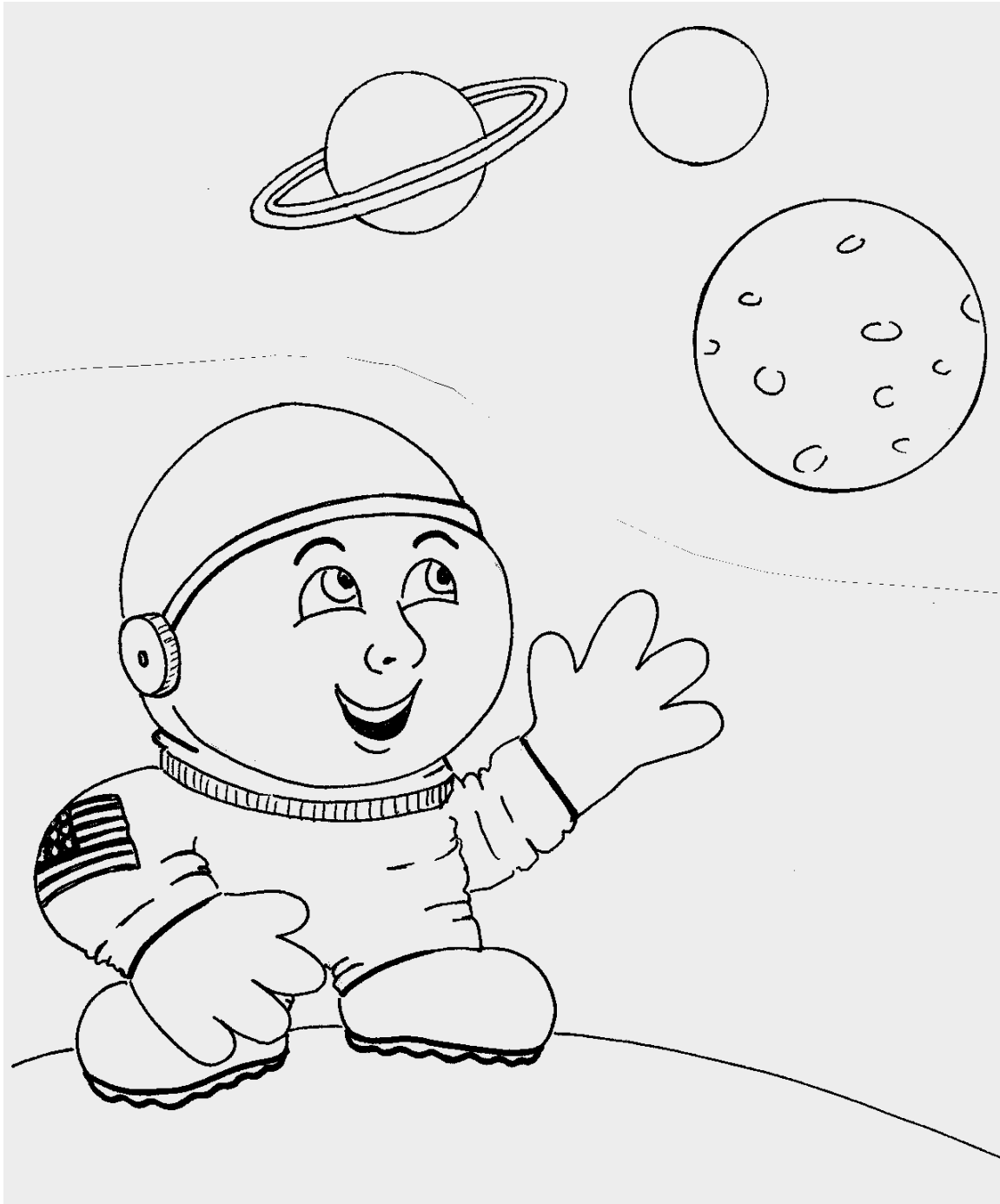
Your child also made an activity wheel. Becoming involved in pleasurable activities is another coping skill to battle intrusive thoughts and flashbacks. You may have noticed a change in the number or types of activities your child now enjoys. Children may believe that by avoiding certain activities they can prevent the negative images. This is generally not true. Children also may have lost some of their regular energy since the trauma/disaster. They can begin to recover their enjoyment of pleasurable activities by doing them (even if they are not initially fun).

Discuss the wheel with your child. Take some time to spin the wheel and, if possible, do the activity indicated. If it is not possible to do this activity, spin again. Or, you and your child may think of an activity the family can do together. Encourage the use of activities as a skill to use when bothered by troubling thoughts or flashbacks. Encourage your child to continue to share thoughts and feelings with you.

# PATTERN FOR WHEEL AND ARROW



# LOOKING AHEAD AND SETTING GOALS



## LOOKING AHEAD AND SETTING GOALS

It is important to the healing process for children to be instilled with hope and promise for the future. They can begin to approach each new day with a growing sense of confidence and security that positive things can be theirs. This is not always an easy task. Through coping skills they are learning to use (e.g., relaxation, discussing feelings, establishing routines, understanding safety, sharing with others, releasing negative feelings and thoughts, identifying positive treasures, etc.), they are building strong foundations for their futures. These skills can be used for many problems they may encounter in life. Teachers, parents, and counselors are essential to facilitate the task of looking ahead with hope. The more consistent, reliable, and supportive these individuals are to the children, the greater their sense of hope can be and the greater the sense of healing can become.

Recognizing positive events, feelings, and circumstances (even little ones) in children's lives as days pass is essential to healing. This is a way to balance their focus on the recent trauma/disaster with looking ahead with some optimism to the future. Setting goals is another way for children to begin to focus on the future. These can be short range goals as well as long range ones. Helping children to identify realistic goals and how they can achieve them is important. Attending to their accomplishments is equally special to the children.

Length of exercise: 1-1 1/2 hours

Objectives: Identify positive changes that have happened

Identify positive feelings that they have

Review coping skills they have learned

Set realistic short-term goals

Set realistic long-term goals

Materials needed: Empty small baby food jar with lid (brought 3 days before the exercise)

Colored tissue paper

Scissors

Glue

3 White construction paper circles (3" in diameter, pre-cut)

3 Green construction paper circles (3" in diameter, pre-cut)

Pencil

Instructions:

**Many things have happened to us since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Some of them may have made us feel bad or uncomfortable, but there also have been some good things in our lives. Along with some of these come nice and pleasant feelings. Let's write down some of the positive or good changes and feelings that you or other children may have had happen since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER).** (Write the list on the board. These may include starting to rebuild, return of electricity and other utility services, return to school, playing with friends, having a birthday, activity with family. Include some positive feelings also by asking the children to name the feelings that could accompany each event and listing these on the board.)

**We have been working together to learn some new skills to help us after the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Let's remember these and put them on the board too.** (Help children remember and list skills covered by HATS exercises such as the importance of sharing, recognizing positives in our lives, releasing uncomfortable feelings, learning to relax, stopping unwanted thoughts and pictures in our minds, identifying safe and helpful people in our lives, and getting back to a regular routine. The children may have others to include as well.) **We need to keep using the new skills we have learned. Each time we use them, we get better at them. Just like with sports, music, or even spelling words, the more we practice, the better we get.**

**Today we are going to be talking about goals and hopes for our future. A goal is something we want to accomplish or do. These may be ones we want to do pretty quickly like learning to do a somersault or finishing the book we are reading. Goals can also be something that may take a long time to accomplish like becoming a teacher, doctor, or police officer. Sometimes imagining and setting goals are hard to think about because of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER) that happened. It is normal to still have some uncomfortable feelings and thoughts when we think ahead. But, when we start to plan for our futures, it can begin to help make us feel a little better and make things seem a little bit easier.**

**Goals can sometimes be thought of as wishes for things in our lives that we want to come true. There is an old story that if you find a genie in a bottle, he will grant you any three wishes you want. Since we don't have one, we can try to be our own genies.**

**First, let's think about our wishes or goals. The circles of paper are going to be our goal coins. On the white circles of paper, write or draw something that you want to happen in the next few weeks or month. These three things should be something that you can try to make happen. It is OK if in order to make them happen you will need help from parents. Let's see if we can think of some examples. Remember, these are things that you can make happen, not just wishes that you may have no control over. For example, one quick goal might be to share a book with a friend or have a special dinner with your family, or making a new friend. Would a short goal**



of winning a million dollars next week be a realistic goal that you could make happen? What about making the sun shine every day? What about making the trauma/disaster go away like it never happened? No, these are things we might want very much to happen, but we can't make happen no matter what we do.

Next, I want you to think about goals you can have for the next year rather than just in the next few weeks. These might be things that you will be working toward even after school is finished. For example, one long range goal might be fixing up a new room for yourself, or planting a garden, or learning math facts, or going somewhere special with your family. Would a long range goal that you could make happen be never having a bad feeling again? No, all of us will have bad feelings or uncomfortable ones from time to time. We might not like them, but they are normal and we can't do anything to make them disappear forever. We can have a goal of learning how to deal with the feelings! What about a goal of taking a balloon ride around the world? Unless there is something you're not telling me about you and your family, my guess is this would be something that might be fun to do in the next year, but is unlikely to be real, no matter how hard you work at it. (Have the children share some ideas. Help them to recognize the difference between realistic goals and unrealistic ones.) **Write or draw three long range goals on the green goal coins.**

Now that the coins are made, we will need a genie jar to keep them in. We are going to make it from the jars you brought from home. Take the colored tissue paper and cut small pieces to glue on your jar. Have the pieces overlap each other a bit and they will stay on better. Put a piece on the lid also.

**After you finish your jar, fold your coins and put them inside.**

Discussion:

1. What are some of the short range goals you want to share with the class? What are some ways you or other children could do to help make this happen?
2. What are some of the long range goals you want to share with the class? What are some ways you or other children could do to help make this happen?
3. How do you think children might feel when they start to plan ahead or set some goals?
4. Who can children ask to help them meet their goals?
5. Have the children take the jar and coins home to share with their families.
6. **Special Note:** When a short goal has been reached, the parents can draw a star next to the accomplished goal on the coin. When all three of the short goals have been met, have the child let you know. Congratulate the child on work well done. If possible, explore how the child felt to accomplish the goals and what was easy/hard about

doing so. To acknowledge the success, give the child a special sticker, candy, or similar small tangible recognition.

## LOOKING AHEAD AND SETTING GOALS

### FAMILY EXERCISE

It is important to the healing process that your child be instilled with hope and promise for the future. Your child can begin to approach each new day with a growing sense of confidence and security that positive things occur. This is not always an easy task. Through coping skills your child is learning to use (e.g., relaxation, discussing feelings, establishing routines, understanding safety, sharing with others, releasing negative feelings and thoughts, identifying positive treasures, etc.), your child is building strong foundations for the future. These skills can be used for many problems encountered in life. Teachers, parents, and counselors are essential to facilitate the task of looking ahead with hope. The more consistent, reliable, and supportive these individuals are to children, the greater their sense of hope can be and the greater the sense of healing can become.

Recognizing positive events, feelings, and circumstances (even little ones) in your child's life as days pass is essential to healing. This is a way to balance the focus on the recent trauma/disaster with looking ahead with some optimism to the future. Setting goals is another way for your child to begin to focus on the future. These can be short range goals as well as long range ones. Helping your child to identify realistic goals and how these can be achieved is important. Your attention to the accomplishment of each goal will be equally special to your child.

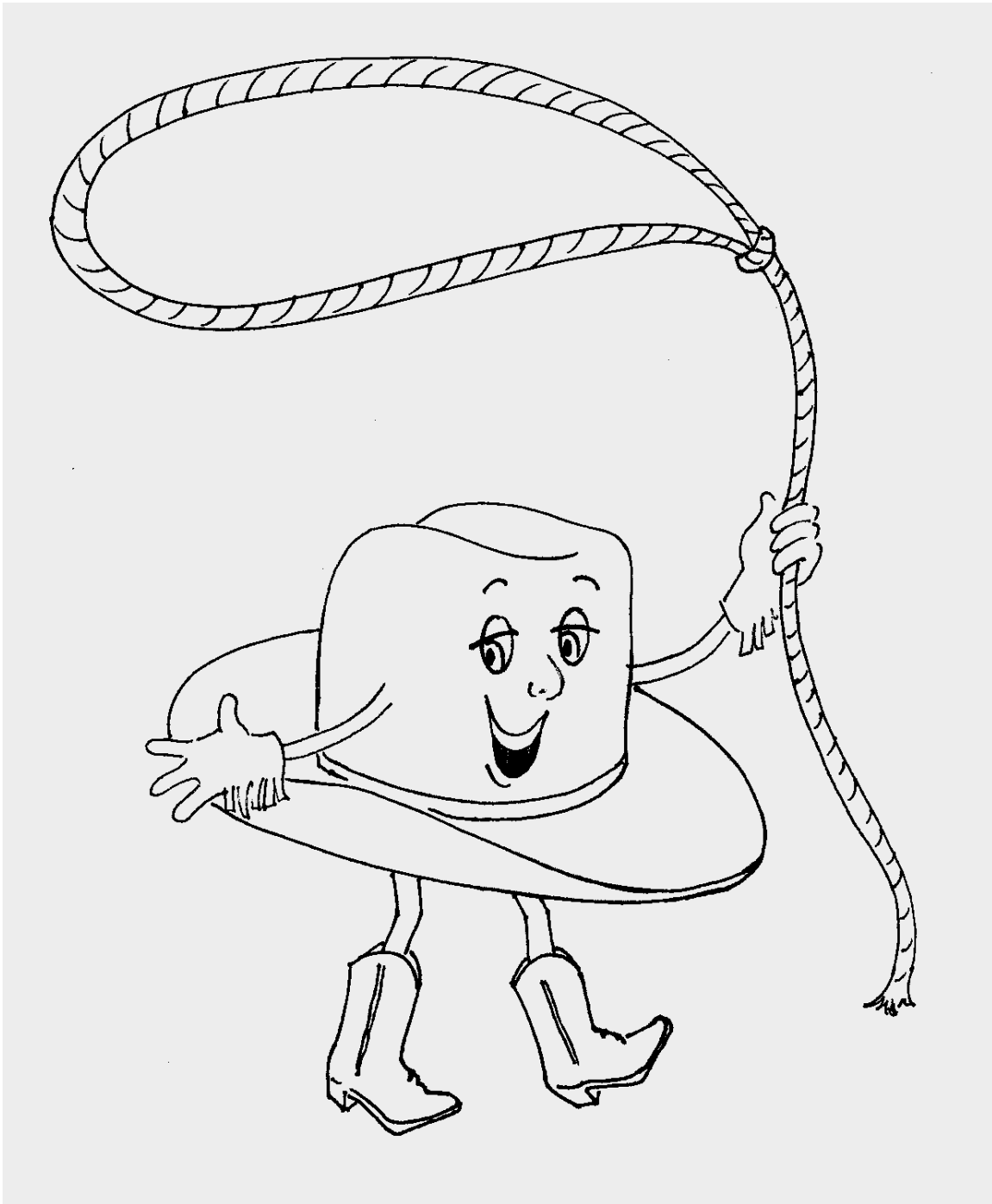
Your child made a special genie jar to hold three short range and three long range goals. Your child decided on the goals he/she wanted to achieve. The goals are listed or drawn on the circles in the jar. Please review these goals with your child. Discuss how to help make these happen. What can your child do? What can you do as a family to reach the goals? Remind your child that sharing thoughts and feelings while working toward the goals is important. Think of one goal you can have as a family and write it down; place it inside the jar.

After each short range goal is completed, congratulate your child and draw a star next to it. Next, place the circle from the jar into your child's treasure chest. When all three short range goals have been completed, encourage your child to let his or her teacher or counselor know of this accomplishment.

Continue to work on the long range goals together. Talk to your child about the progress on a regular basis. When a goal is met, put the coin in the treasure chest.

Remember to congratulate your child on accomplishing all goals and encourage your child's work on looking toward the future.

## ROUNDING IT ALL UP



## ROUNDING IT ALL UP

The HATS activities have given children many skills that they can use after TRAUMA/DISASTER. Many of these skills can be used to solve other problems which may arise. Children may continue to experience feelings of frustration, irritability, sadness, and anger. Over the past several weeks, children have learned some ways to feel better (e.g., share with others, relaxation skills, focus on positives, thought stopping, safety ideas, and setting small goals). They have done this in an atmosphere of support, respect, and trust. The children have also identified ways that can make things worse (e.g., keeping thoughts and feelings inside, getting angry or aggressive, blaming others for things that happen, being disrespectful and teasing others, denying feelings, being alone). This exercise is an opportunity for the children to bring skills all together and pass what they have learned to others.

Length of exercise: 1 hour

Objectives:

- Review skills learned through HATS
- Identify skills that can be helpful when facing problems
- Identify actions that can make problems worse
- Working with others in a positive manner
- Sharing what they have learned

Materials needed:

- Hat (any kind) with slips of paper numbered to produce groups of four children each. For example, all the 1's will be together to make a group of 4, 2's together to make a group of 4, etc. By doing this, children will have an opportunity to work with classmates they may not regularly interact with. They can practice their respect and listening skills. Hopefully, new friendships may develop.

- Markers
- White poster paper for each group

Instructions:

**Together we have learned many ways to handle problems such as those that we had after the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Some of the feelings and thoughts may still be with us from time to time, but we are doing better and better each day. We are continuing to strengthen our skills for handling problems by practicing what we have learned. I have noticed that each of you seem more confident in how you**

**handle difficult feelings and thoughts, and situations. You have all learned how to respect each others thoughts and feelings. You have all become even more fantastic listeners and sharers in our discussions. I have really enjoyed watching your creativity as we did the activities together. You have such wonderful ideas and talents!**

**Let's take a minute to review again what skills we have learned together. First , let's remember what kinds of things we want to stay away from because these seem to make feelings, thoughts, and situations worse.** (List ideas the children offer. Be sure to include making fun of others, not respecting other's thoughts and feelings, hurting others with words or actions, thinking almost all the time about the bad things that happened, keeping feelings and thoughts inside, blaming others for problems, acting without thinking, and pretending that the problems will just go away or are not there, and thinking there is nothing that can be done to help). **Now, let's remember what kind of things we have learned to help with problems related to the TRAUMA/DISASTER.** (List on the board skills learned that the children offer. Add any that have been omitted. Include in the list the following: respecting others feelings and ideas, listening to what friends have to share, learning to share, relaxation, identifying people to talk to and help with problems, stopping bad dreams, safety issues, remembering positives in our lives, setting goals, thought stopping and having fun to reduce negative feelings and thoughts.) **Wow, look at all we have learned to use. We can use these skills for any problems that may come up. For example, you might use your Relaxation Color Breathing skill if you are worried before a test. If you have a disagreement with a friend, you can use your listening, sharing, and getting help from others skills. If you have a great big thing to do coming up, you might want to set some little goals to help you get to the great big one. If someone close to a person dies or if a someone loses a pet, it is normal to feel sad, upset, lonely, and sometimes even angry. But a child can use the skills like talking about it to others, and remembering the good things about the person or pet to help make him/her feel better. If someone is feeling bad and can't get the thought out of his mind, he might want to think of something fun to do. Can you think of other times children might want to use these skills we have learned?** (Praise the creativity and brain-power!)

**Today, we are going to make posters to share with other children what we have learned. I want everyone to choose a number from the hat. I want all the children with the same number to get together.** (Direct each number group to assemble in a certain location). **I want each group to put on their thinking caps and come up with a poster idea to share something that we have learned through our HATS activities. Then draw this as a group on the poster and color it with your markers. Remember, there are no right or wrong ideas. If you have a lot of good ones, see how you could make all of them fit together to make one big message on your poster. After you are done, I am going to collect the posters for a display in our school. This way, others can learn from you.** (Have each child put his/her name on the back of the poster.)

After the posters are finished, have each child who wishes to in each group say one thing about the poster his/her group created.

**NOTE:** The children will be proud of their work. If the group is not conducted in a school, see if local merchants, hospitals, etc., would display the posters. For those displayed at school, consider sharing the children's work later with the community in the same manner.

Discussion:

1. What has been the favorite activity that we have done? (Remind the children that everyone may have a different favorite.)
2. Which skills do you think other children and their families would find most helpful?

As this is the last exercise (other than the anniversary exercise), again praise the children for their excellent hard work and their sharing. Encourage them to keep up their skills through practice. Remind them to keep their folder of HATS materials where they can look at them whenever they need to. Pass out the certificates that you have completed and signed. If at a school, please ask the principal to sign the certificates, perhaps even coming to the classroom to personally present the certificates and congratulate the students on their work.

## **ROUNDING IT ALL UP**

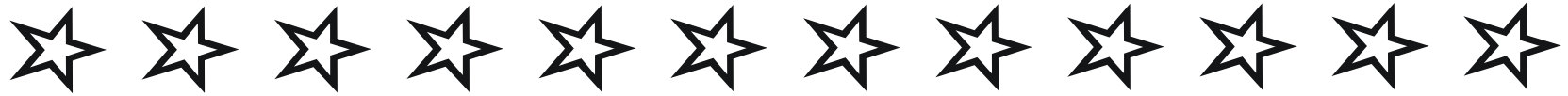
### **FAMILY EXERCISE**

Your child completed the HATS sessions. Your child received a certificate in acknowledgment of the hard work, dedication, and progress made over the past several weeks. Ask your child to share this with you. If possible, make a plan to do something special to celebrate this occasion. This can be having a special dinner, dessert, or even doing something together as a family (e.g., playing a child's favorite game, watching a favorite video together, taking a photo of the child with the certificate).

It is normal for some difficulties to remain or return periodically for some children. Talk supportively with your child if this occurs. Encourage your child to practice the skills learned, particularly sharing concerns with you. Remind your child of the HATS folder which contains all the activities completed. Should problems continue or intensify to the point that they are interfering with your child's abilities to enjoy day to day activities and participate fully in school, or you notice any drastic changes in your child's behavior or demeanor, please ask your school counselor or physician for a referral to an expert in working with children who have experienced a trauma or disaster. **DO NOT WAIT.**

We wish to extend our thanks to you for helping your child through a very difficult time and reinforcing to your child that you are always there to support, listen, and help.





CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE



*Has successfully completed*



*Healing After Trauma Skills*



*Date* \_\_\_\_\_





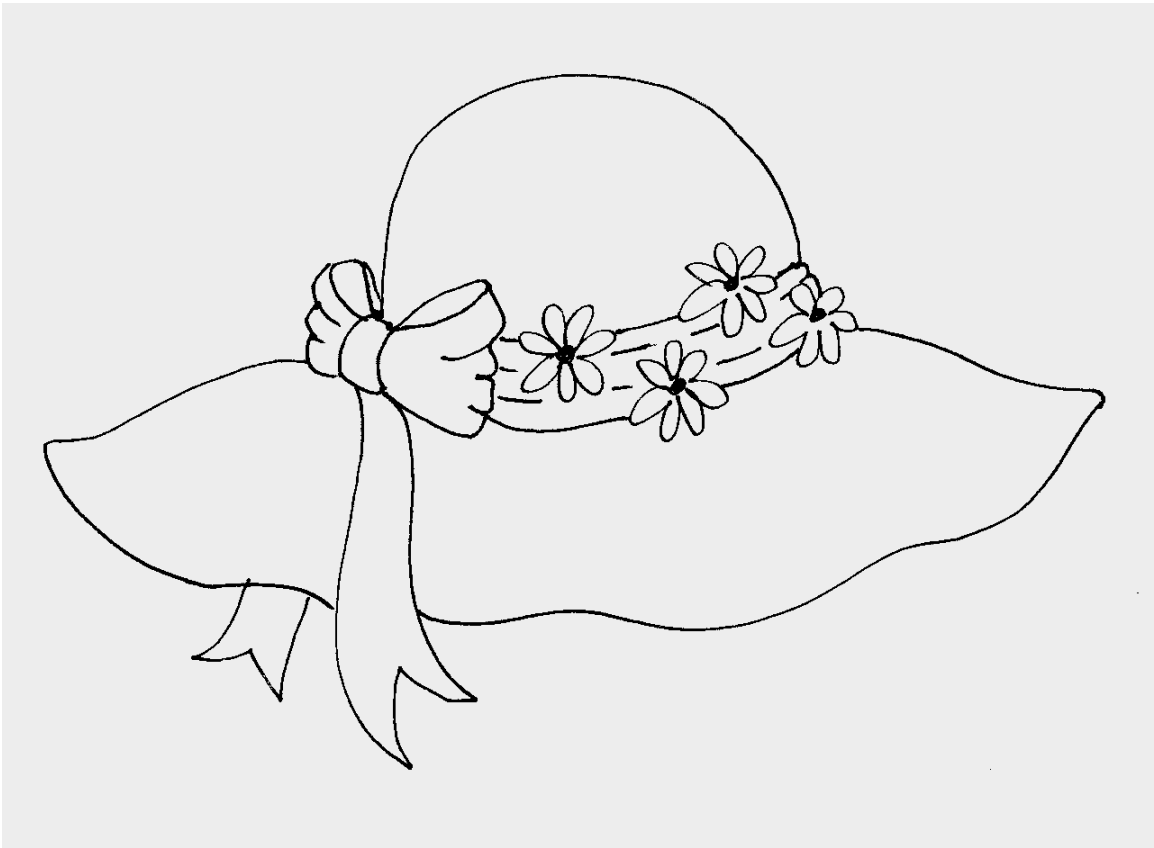
# **SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

**ANNIVERSARY OF TRAUMA/DISASTER**

**HOLIDAYS**

**THANKSGIVING**

# ONE YEAR LATER



## ONE YEAR LATER

Anniversaries are dates that people remember because something important happened on that date in the past. By acknowledging the date, we give it importance in our lives. Anniversaries can be thought of in connection with happy times, pleasant memories and celebration (e.g., birthdays, wedding anniversaries, end of wars). However, anniversaries can also represent dates when terrible things happened (e.g., Pearl Harbor Day, assassinations of leaders, death of loved ones). Traumas/Disasters also are marked with anniversaries. The date brings up mixed feelings and memories of the event. Just as we remember what happened on that date, it is equally important to reflect on what progress and positive steps have been made in the time since the TRAUMA/DISASTER. It is important to remember this date, as by ignoring it, we diminish the significance it may have in our lives and in the lives of our children.

Length of time: 1 hour

Objectives: Recognize the significance of anniversaries

Identify progress since the TRAUMA/DISASTER

Identify positive events since the TRAUMA/DISASTER

Materials needed: Coloring sheet with tree  
Colored construction paper  
Glue  
Marker  
Scissors

Instructions:

**Today we are going to talk about anniversaries. An anniversary is something that people remember because something important happened on that date in the past. Who can think of some types of anniversaries? (Examples: wedding, birthday) Not all anniversaries are happy ones. There are anniversaries to remind us of Pearl Harbor when the Japanese bombed the American ships and we entered World War II. We also remember anniversaries of when great leaders in our country were killed such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and President John F. Kennedy. Today we are going to think and talk about the anniversary of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). We can all remember some of the terrible things that happened because of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). But, it is just as important for us to remember some of the steps we have taken and some good things that have happened in the past year. Let's think of some together. When we start to think about these things, we may get some of the uncomfortable feelings again. That is normal and OK. When we also think about the good things, we can feel better.**

(List on the board good things that have happened over the past year. Examples may include rebuilding homes or other buildings, replacing lost or damaged items, getting a pet, birth of new siblings, moving up in school, learning new games to play with friends, making new friends, sleeping better at night, learning to relax, going on family vacation). **These are all wonderful things that you have done in the past year! Let's put this together in a fun art project.**

**Each of you has a picture of a tree trunk with branches. Nothing is on the tree now. The first thing I want you to do is copy from the board what happened to us on the trunk of your tree.** (On the board write the TRAUMA/DISASTER such as hurricane, tornado, shooting, bombing)

**Living trees all have leaves. Leaves are nature's way of telling us that the tree is continuing to grow and become stronger and healthier. We need to put the leaves on our trees because each of us has become stronger and healthier in the past year. Look again at all the wonderful things that we came up with together to show our growth and strength this past year. Our leaves can be any color and any shape. Cut out leaves for your tree. You can use the same color for all the leaves or you can make your tree have lots of different colors. On each leaf, write or draw one thing that has been positive or good in your life during the last year. Your leaves may also have positive or good feelings on them. Glue your leaves to the tree branches. It is OK to have more than one leaf on a branch.**

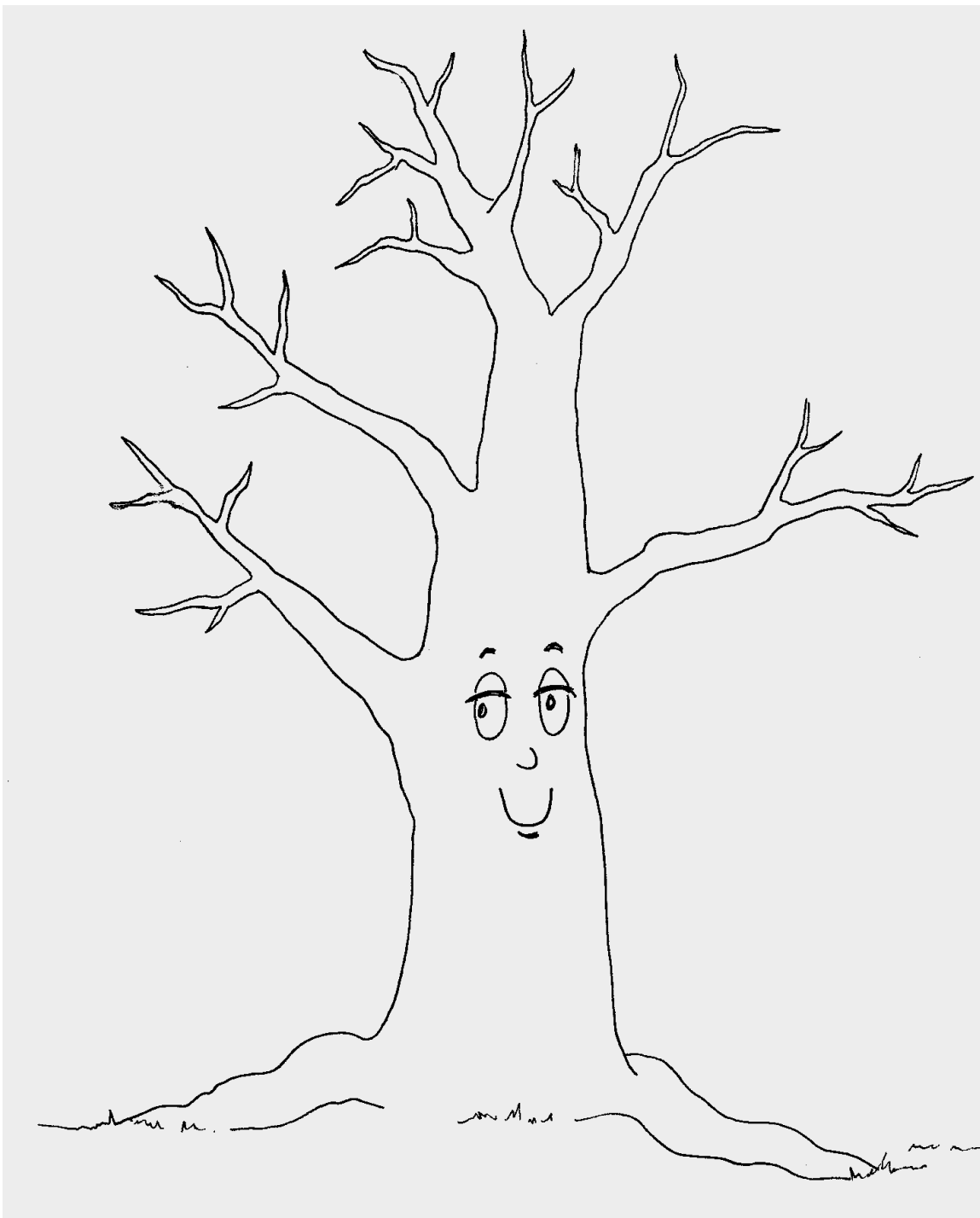
**When you have finished your tree, cut out five more leaves and keep them blank. Glue the blank leaves onto your tree. Each of you can take home your tree. Together with your parents, fill in the last five leaves.**

(Display each of the children's trees in the classroom and offer much praise for the progress they have made.)

Discussion:

1. What are some of the changes that have taken place in your life since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)?
2. What are some of the positive things around us that have happened since (TRAUMA/DISASTER)?
3. How do think children feel when they remember the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)? What are some positive feelings that children may have when they think about the progress they have made in the past year?

# TREE OF PROGRESS AND GOOD



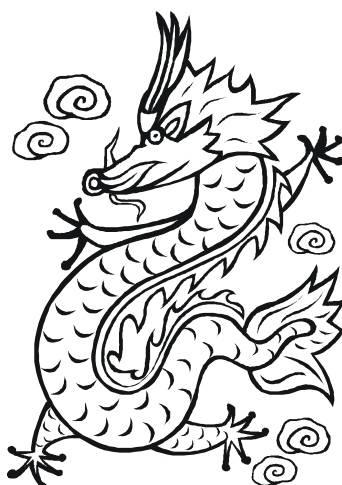
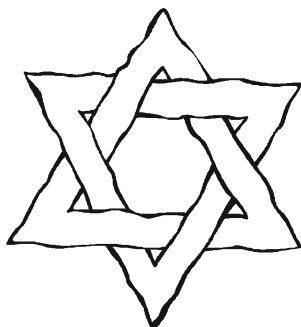
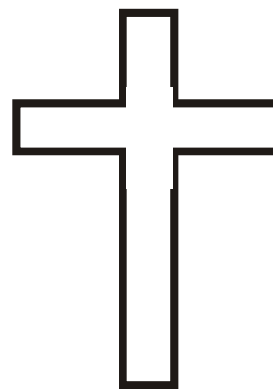
### **ONE YEAR LATER FAMILY EXERCISE**

Anniversaries were discussed with your child. Your child learned that thinking about the TRAUMA/DISASTER can make them feel a little uncomfortable and that this is normal. Your child identified many positive feelings and changes that have happened in the past year. Thinking about these can make your child feel better. Your child made a beautiful tree covered with leaves identifying the many positive changes in the past year. Five of the leaves are blank.

With your child, talk about changes in your family that have been positive and have strengthened your family. Write five of these on the blank leaves. If you have more, simply glue new leaves to the tree. Be sure to put the tree somewhere it can be seen as a reminder of the progress that your child and family have made.



# HOLIDAYS: HAPPINESS AND HUMBUG



## HOLIDAYS: HAPPINESS AND HUMBUG

Holidays after any trauma/disaster can be extremely difficult times for children and their families. Holidays are times when family and friends come together in celebration with traditions and sharing of joy and happiness. Following a trauma/disaster, the ideas of love, togetherness, and family may be overshadowed by negative emotions as the family may have changed in many ways. This emotional dichotomy of some positive feelings and the feelings of sadness, anger, numbness, etc. may produce extended feelings of guilt and much stress for children as well as the adults in their lives. When the adults are trying to cope with myriad mixed emotions, they may also have fewer resources to give to their children. This may result in continuing problems for the children as they try to cope in the face of trauma/disaster.

Holidays are stressful times even without trauma/disaster. We feel strapped for time and our energy levels often seem to be in need of a boost. We find ourselves thinking, “if I just had one more week, I could get everything done.” The balance between work responsibilities, family responsibilities, and holiday preparation may become shaky. Imposing a trauma/disaster on the balancing act may be enough to tip the scales. Moods may be more irritable and emotions, more labile. Children may pick up on the moods of the adults and have feelings of emotional stress of their own.

If there has been a personal loss in the family, holidays are a large reminder of an empty place in the family traditions. Certain activities may have been associated with that individual (e.g., she always made the desserts; he always read us The Night Before Christmas; Mom always helped decorate the tree; grandmother always said the blessings over the Hanukkah candles with me). A loss of a family member may also bring up a greater sense of emptiness during the holidays as children often view the family as now incomplete. As holidays may be times of reflections, the sense of loss may be heightened.

If material possessions have been lost in the trauma/disaster, holidays may serve as a reminder of these. For example, decorations, family heirlooms, or sentimental objects used during holidays may have been destroyed and are now unavailable for the celebration. If the trauma/disaster left a family without appliances, even activities such as food preparation and storage are not possible, reinforcing loss.

Finally, holiday times are often associated with gifts and elaborate meals. The non-monetary aspects of holidays such as the togetherness, love, and family may be overshadowed. When trauma/disaster strikes, a secondary loss is often one of extra finances. Families may be needing all monetary resources for rebuilding and replacing lost properties, clothing, etc. Little may be available for presents, large dinners, and the holiday “extras.” This financial burden often adds another layer of stress to families. Children may want presents, but recognize that these may not be possible. Emotions of anger, sadness, and a sense of “unfairness” may be heightened. Again, this conflicts with the expected feelings of joy and happiness that is the general sense at holiday time.

Length of exercise: 1- 1 1/2 hour

Objectives: Identify changes in this holiday since the last one

Identify and validate conflicting feelings

Reinforce holidays as a time of love and sharing

Create new holiday traditions

Materials needed: Prior to this activity, you will need to take a photo of each child. These will be used to place in popsicle stick frames. If children have current school pictures, you may ask them to bring this prior to the activity.

White paper

Crayons

**Popsicle stick frame**

(Try to make an example to show the class)

Popsicle sticks (4 per child)

Glue

Decorating materials (beads, glitter, sequins, buttons, markers, etc.)

Construction paper pre-cut in squares to cover the back of popsicle frame

Instructions:

**Holidays are coming. This holiday season may be very different from last year because of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). On your white paper, please draw a picture of what your holiday used to be like. You can draw anything or anybody you want in your picture. After you finish with the picture of what your holiday used to be like, please turn your paper over. Does anyone know what a tradition is? This is an activity, idea, or belief that is passed down from one year to the next. For example, in my family we read a Christmas story together after Christmas Eve dinner. In other families opening presents or what they eat can be a tradition. Think about some of the traditions that have been in your family. On the other side of your paper, I want you to draw a picture of your family with a new tradition. You can start something this year that your family can do year after year after year.**

After the pictures are completed, have the children share the “new tradition” picture with the class. Compliment their creativity and praise them for having something that their families can share and have this year and in the future.

**Holidays are times that we try to remember to show our love and appreciation for people important to us. We can do this by our words, hugs, and kisses. We also do this through giving gifts. After (TRAUMA/DISASTER), it may be hard to give the kind of gifts we would like to exchange. But gifts are a way of sharing what’s in our hearts. Little gifts can mean as much or even more than big ones. Homemade cards and gifts can be the most precious gifts of all. Today, we are going to make a homemade special gift for someone special to you (parents, grandparents). Each of you brought a picture of yourself a few days ago. We are going to make special frames for this picture.**

**Begin by carefully gluing your four popsicle sticks in the shape of a square. After you have done this, you can decorate the frame with the materials we have today. Use your imagination as you make your frame. When this is done, take your picture and glue it to the construction paper square. Take a crayon and write your name on the back. Also put the year on it and grade. Next turn your frame over, and glue the outside edges to the popsicle sticks. Now you have something very very special to give to a special person for the holidays.**

Discussion:

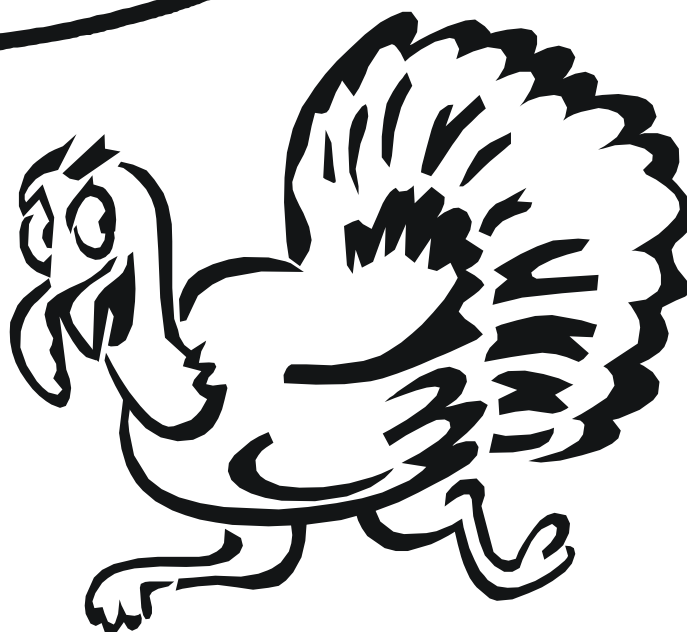
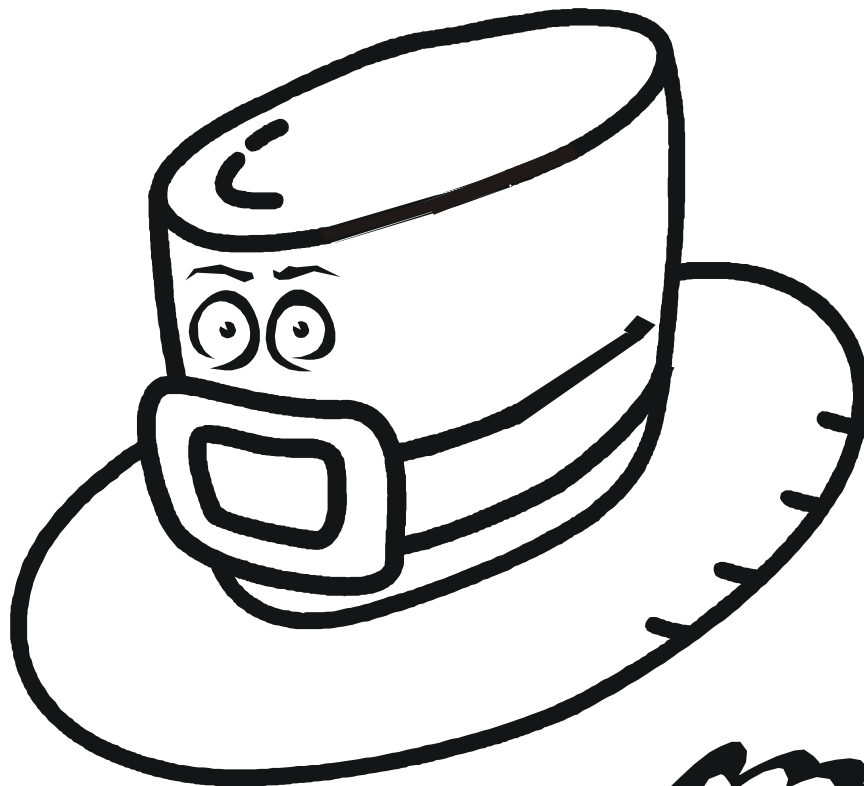
1. What different feelings may children have at holiday time?
2. What are some of the good feelings and what are some of the uncomfortable ones that may come up? (It is important to let the children know that the bad feelings are OK too).
3. What things have changed this holiday because of the (TRAUMA/DISASTER)? What things have stayed the same?
4. What are some ways to let important people know that we care about them?
5. How do you feel when people show that they love and care about you?

## **HOLIDAYS: HAPPINESS AND HUMBUG**

### **FAMILY EXERCISE**

Holidays can be a time of joy and sharing. But after a trauma/disaster, these feelings may also be overshadowed by feelings of sadness and loss. All your family traditions may not be possible this year due to changes that have taken place. These changes and losses may leave you feeling stressed and without much emotional or physical energy. Your children may be feeling the same way. In class, your child came up with a new tradition that may be possible for your family to adopt. Please look at the picture and discuss the idea with your child. Talk about how you can put your child's idea into place for this holiday as well as discussing other family ideas about traditions. Talk about the true meaning of the holiday with your child. If you have a treasure chest, this would be a wonderful opportunity to make a new coin together to place in the chest.

# THANKSGIVING



## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a time to express thanks for all the people in our lives and the good things that have happened. After a trauma/disaster, identifying good things may be difficult. It is important for healing to focus on what continues to be positive in their lives as they cope with the changes and losses.

Length of Exercise: 30-45 minutes

Objectives: Identify positive things and people in their lives they can be thankful for

Materials: Thanksgiving activity sheet  
Crayons

Instructions:

**Thanksgiving is a time for us to remember all the things that we are thankful for. Sometimes when bad things happen, it is hard to remember these. Remember the Pilgrims. They had many hardships. Can you name some? (Loss of friends on the journey, the hard winter, hunger, sickness). We have had many of our own hardships since the (TRAUMA/DISASTER). Like the Pilgrims, we also have people and things we can celebrate this Thanksgiving. On your Thankful Turkey sheet, draw your own turkey by tracing carefully around your hand. (Demonstrate how to do this on the board.) On each feather, write or draw one thing that you are thankful for this holiday. Then color your turkey.**

Discussion:

1. What kinds of hardships have children had this year?
2. What kinds of things can we be thankful for this year?
3. With whom can we share our feelings of good and bad this holiday season? These are people we can be thankful for.

**Remember to share your thankful turkey sheet with your parents. What kinds of things can they be thankful for too?**

# **THE THANKFUL TURKEY**



## THANKSGIVING

### FAMILY EXERCISE

Thanksgiving is a time to express thanks for all the people in our lives and the good things that have happened. After a trauma/disaster, identifying good things may be difficult. It is important for healing to focus on what continues to be positive in their lives as they cope with the changes and losses.

Your child made a Thankful Turkey today. Ask to see this wonderful creation. Together, trace all the hands in the family to make a "family" of thankful turkeys. On each turkey, write or draw at least one feeling or thing the family can be thankful for at this holiday time. Put the picture up where everyone can see it.

