

Structured Sensory Interventions



ACTIVITIES

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THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR TRAUMA AND LOSS
IN CHILDREN





Back-to-Back Activity

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: paper, pen/pencil/marker

Directions:

1. Two people need to partner up, sit in chairs, back-to-back with paper on their lap.
2. Ask one person to draw a picture of anything. (Keep it fairly simple)
3. Next the person who drew must help their partner replicate the drawing by giving them directions as to what to draw BUT they cannot name the objects. For example, they can't say draw the sun. They must say, draw a circle in the upper right hand corner and draw lines coming from it.

OKAY – GO!

Process:

What was hard for person giving directions?

Hard to know how to describe. (We assume teens can identify their feelings – not so easy)

What was hard for the person trying to draw?

Not always sure what I was to draw – not sure if I was interpreting right what I was being told to draw)

Compare drawings – may be close but always different.

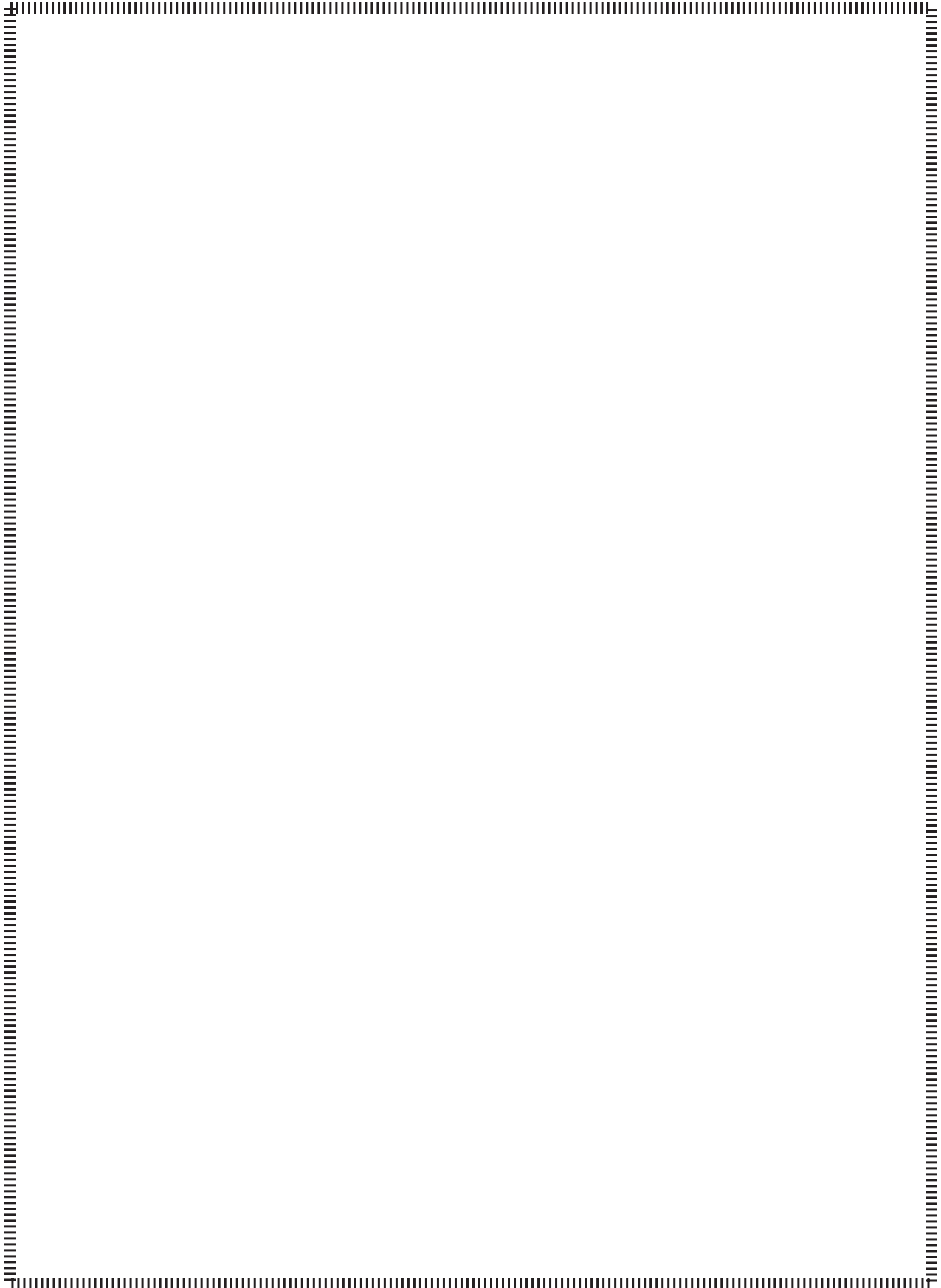
We cannot assume that what we are saying is being interpreted the way we think it is. We must constantly check – does this make sense?

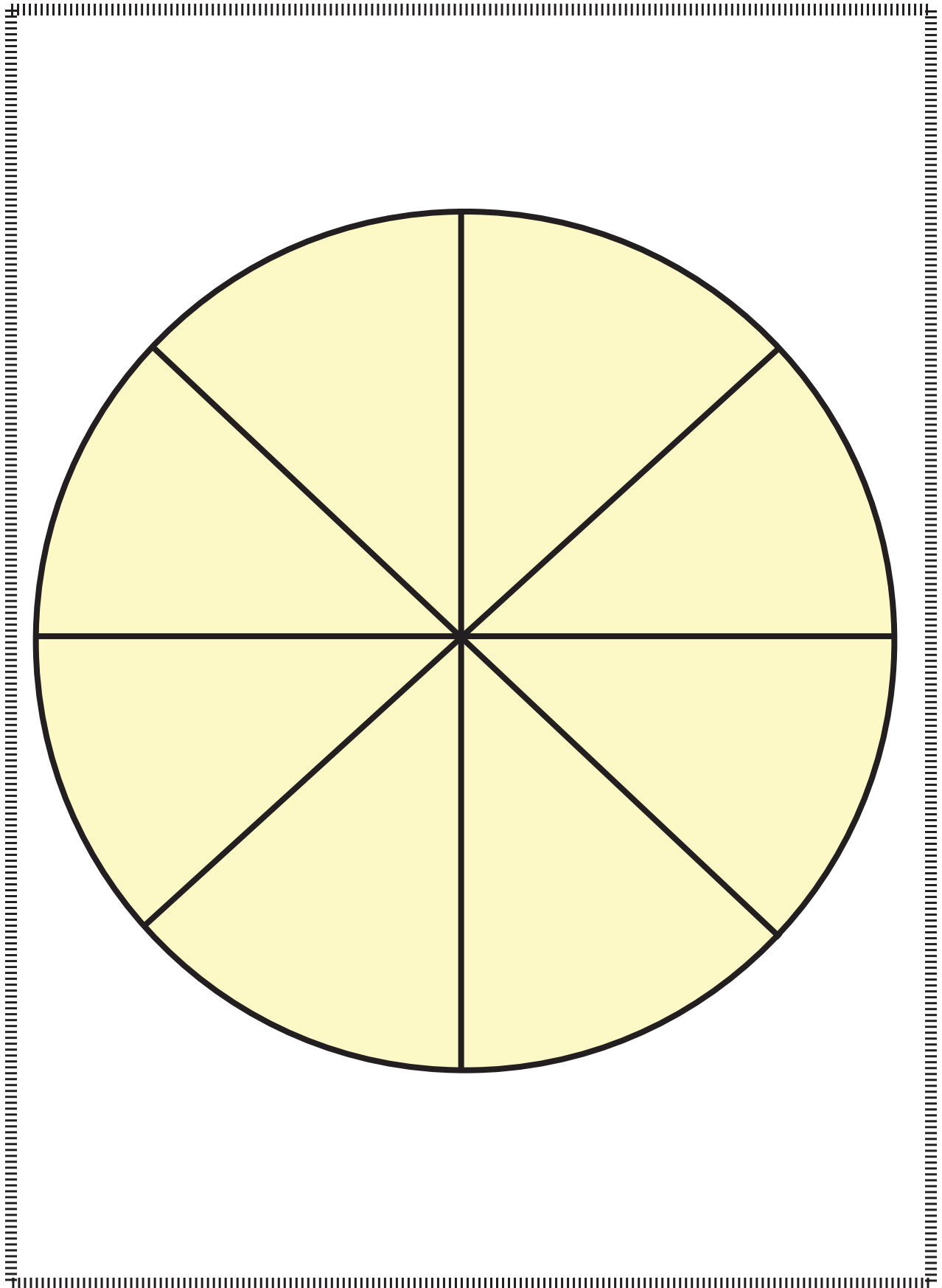
OK – now repeat with partner so you all can have the experience of how difficult it can be to communicate what we want to communicate as well as hear what we think we are hearing.

LESSON – Have thoughts, questions, statements prepared ahead of time and constantly check to see if folks understand what you want understood.

Notes:

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children
Back-to-Back Activity Worksheet

A large rectangular area with a dashed border, intended for drawing or writing. The border is composed of small, evenly spaced dashes, creating a frame around the central space.



ROUTINES	RITUALS

Ages 3-5

SAFETY

Keep this Kitten Safe!

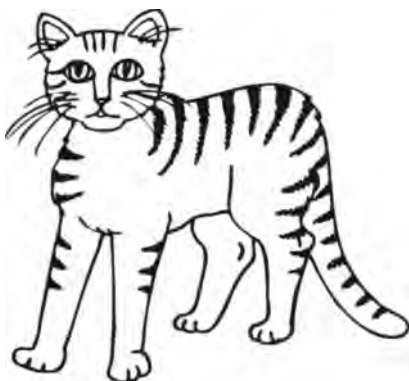
Directions:

Ask the child to draw in what this kitten needs to feel safe. If the child needs help getting started suggest that the kitten might like to have a blanket or toy near them.

Reframing:

All of us have certain things or people in our lives that make us feel safe. This kitten needs _____ to feel safe. What things or people do you need to help you feel safe? Why do those things make you feel safe? Why does that person make you feel safe? Listen and acknowledge their responses.

Keep this kitten safe!



SAFETY

Note to My Safe Person

Directions:

Help the child write a note to one of their safe persons.

An Example:

Dear _____ Will you be my safe person? If I need you can I call you or come over to your house? From: _____


Reframing:

Now that you have written your safe person a note, give it to them. I'm sure they will be happy that you picked them as your safe person. You can count on them to be there if there is ever a time when you don't feel safe. Being close to our safe person makes us feel better.

Write a post card to one of your safe persons:

POSTCARD

To:



WORRY

There is an Elephant Living in My House!

Framing:

Sometimes when we are really worried about something it can feel like that worry is as big as an elephant.

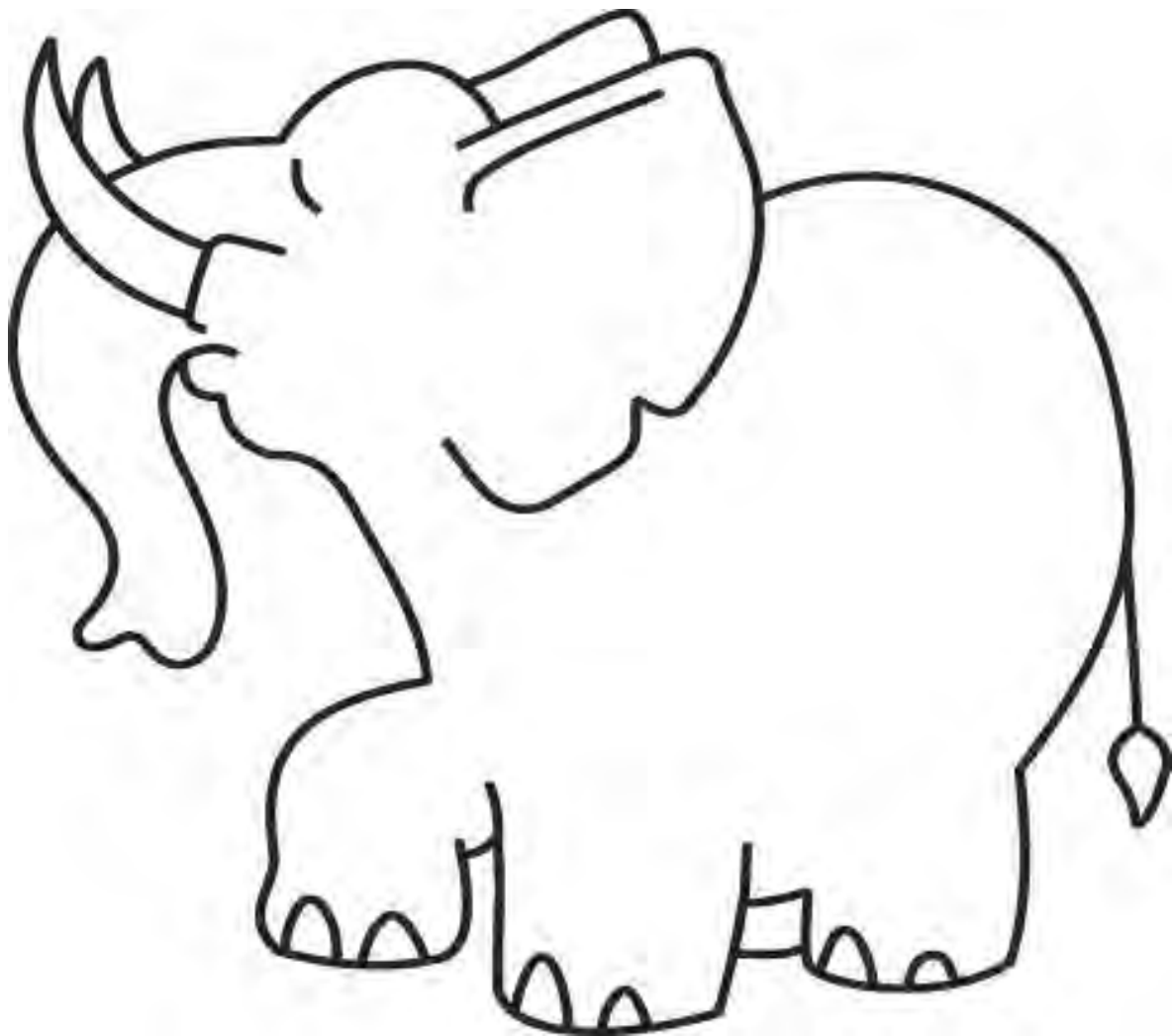
Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture or have you write a word on the elephant that represents their worry. Ask the child to color the elephant in.

Reframing:

I bet it is hard to ignore that worry because it seems so big, and an elephant is really big huh? Well, remember that even though your worry seems like it is as big as an elephant, you can still do things to help you worry less. Brainstorm with the child on things he can do to help them worry less – (ie call or be with their safe person, play with a special toy.)

Write a word in the elephant that describes your worry:



WORRY

My Worry is as Big As...

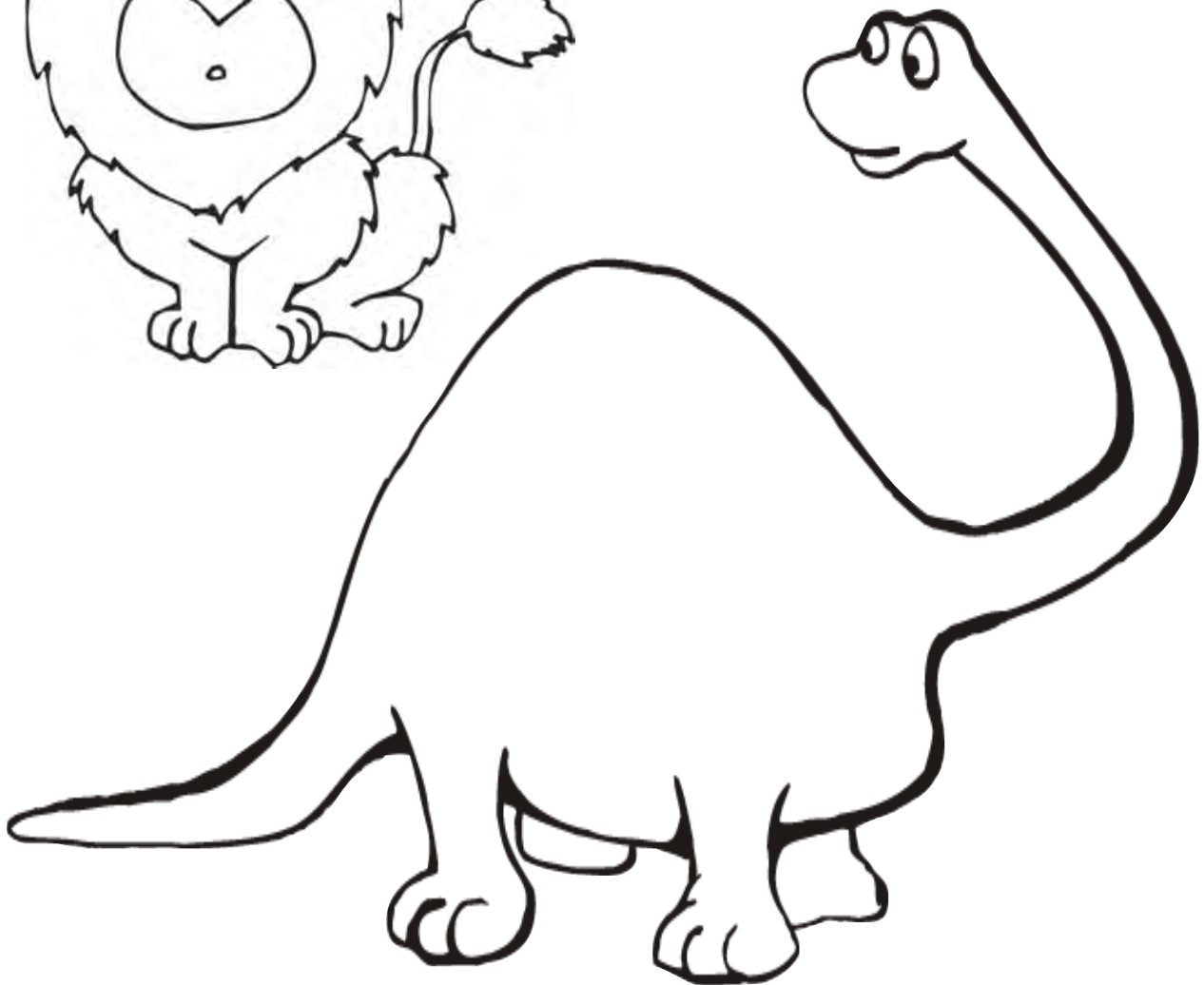
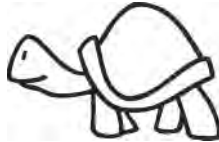
Directions:

Ask the child to color in the image that represents how big their worry is.

Reframing:

When it rains it doesn't rain forever, does it? NO. Worries don't last forever either. Some worries seem like there is nothing we can do to change them or stop them. But we can't do anything to stop the rain either, but it stops doesn't it? YES. And when it rains don't we usually find something to do until it stops? Sure we do.

This is how big my worry is:



HURT

Cherry Blossom Hugs

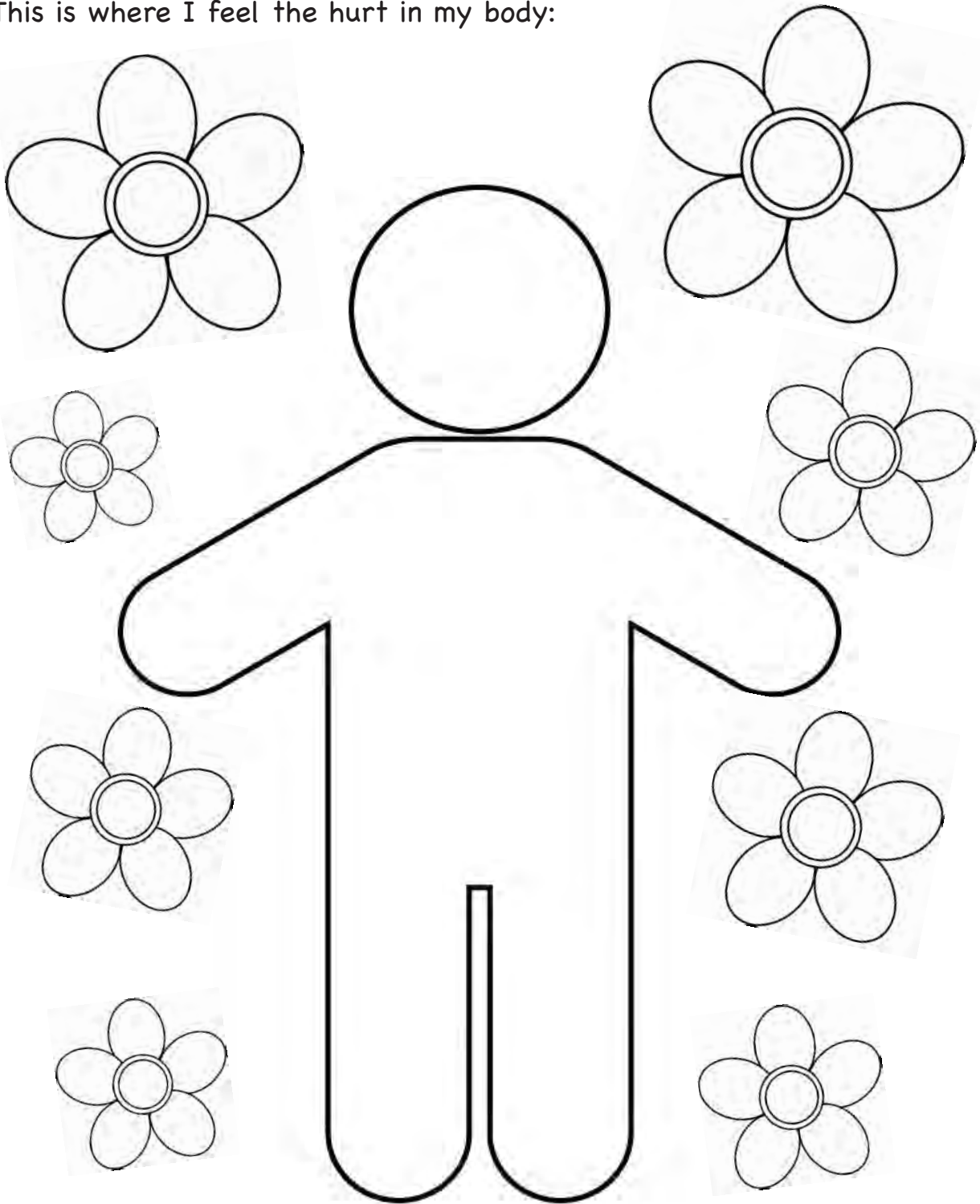
Directions:

Ask the child to color in the part of their body that feels their hurt.

Reframing:

Sometimes when we feel hurt we feel it inside of our bodies. Even though this kind of hurt might not look like a bruise or cut or scrape, it sure feels like we are bruised or cut or scraped on the inside. What does your hurt feel like? Yes, that is definitely what a hurt can feel like. Well you can always give yourself a “cherry blossom” hug to make that hurt feel better on the inside. And, no one will even know you are doing it. I’ll teach you how. Take your arms and stretch them out wide, now cross your arms so that your hands go around towards your back. Now, tap your fingers on your sides. That is a cherry blossom hug!

This is where I feel the hurt in my body:



FEAR

A Scary Monster in my Closet Looks Like...

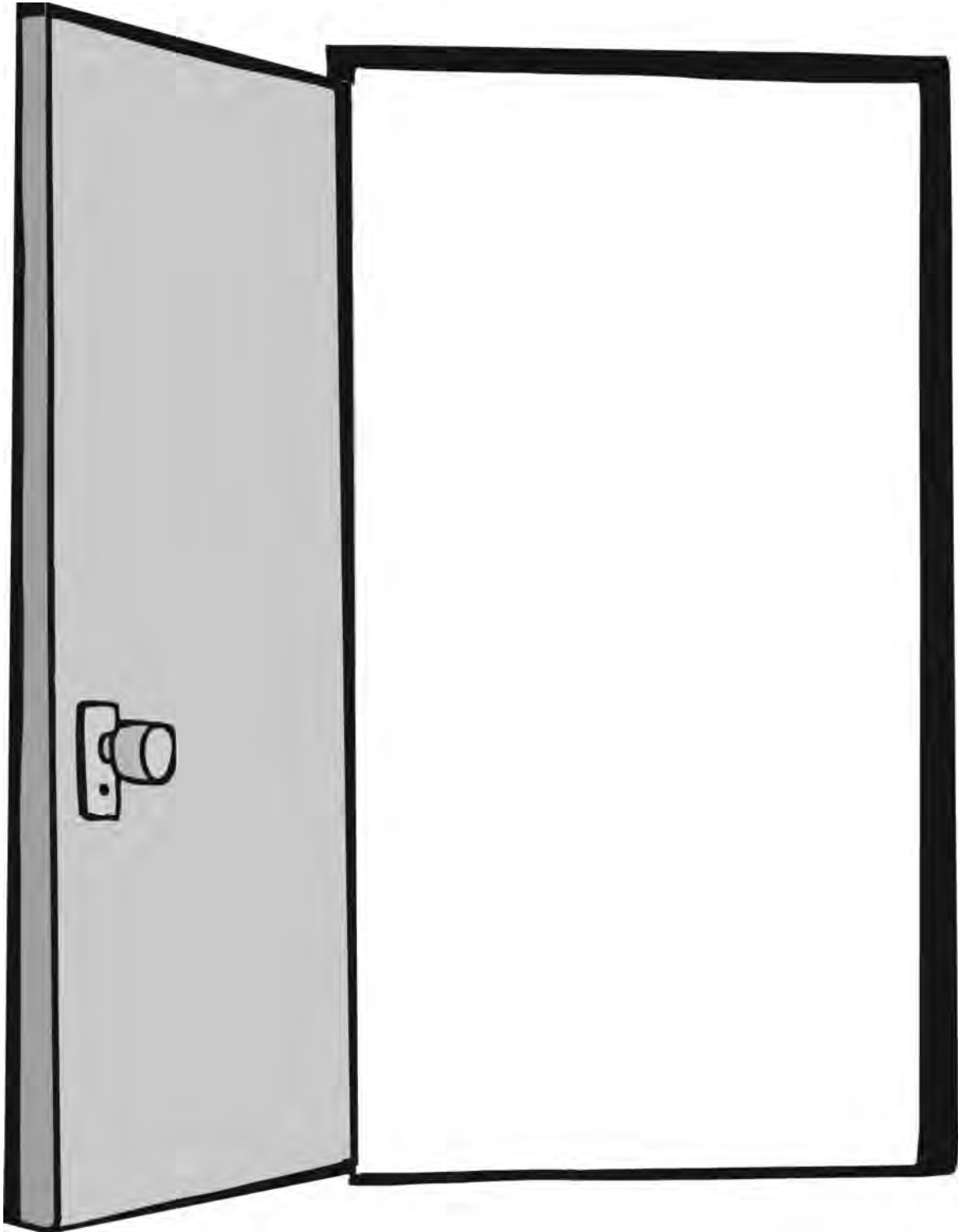
Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture of what the monster in his/her closet looks like. Then, ask the child what they would like to do to the monster that scares them. Have them draw that in as well. You can also ask the child to draw how the monster would look if he weren't scary looking anymore.

Reframing:

See, you can change how the scary monster in your closet looks just like you did here on your paper. Whenever you start to feel scared try to draw how it would look if you weren't scared anymore.

This is what the monster in my closet looks like:



ANGER

When I am Mad it Helps to...

Directions:

Ask the child to circle or color in the pictures that represent things they can do when they are mad.

Reframing:

So now you have lots of things to choose from to do when you get really mad. Next time you get mad try doing one of the things you circled.

Here are some things I can do when I'm mad:



RELAXATION

Activities for 3-5 Year Olds

BLOWING BUBBLES

Directions:

You will need a bottle of bubbles with a blower for this activity. Ask the child to watch you as you blow bubbles. Tell the child to pay close attention to your chest as you take a deep breath in 1-2-3 and as you blow through the blower 1-2-3. Repeat a few times. Then, ask the child to practice the breathing a few times and then try the bubble blower himself.

Reframing:

When we get stressed out it helps us to take deep breaths in and out to help us to calm down. A fun way to do this is by blowing bubbles like we have done here today.

SPAGHETTI ARMS

Directions:

Ask the child to get comfortable in his seat. Then ask them to squeeze their fists as tight as they can while you count to three. 1-2-3. Then have them release their fists and relax their arms. 1-2-3. Repeat this a few times. Then on the final time tell the child, "This time when you release your fists we are going to count to 10! I want you to relax your arms so much that they feel as loose and relaxed as spaghetti noodles!"

Reframing:

There are lots of different ways to get relaxed, to calm down. One way is to notice how tight your arms feel when they are stressed or really mad and then to let them hang loose like we did here today. So, the next time your muscles start to feel tight, concentrate on how you can make them feel really loose again, as loose as spaghetti noodles!

SURVIVOR

Survivor Flag

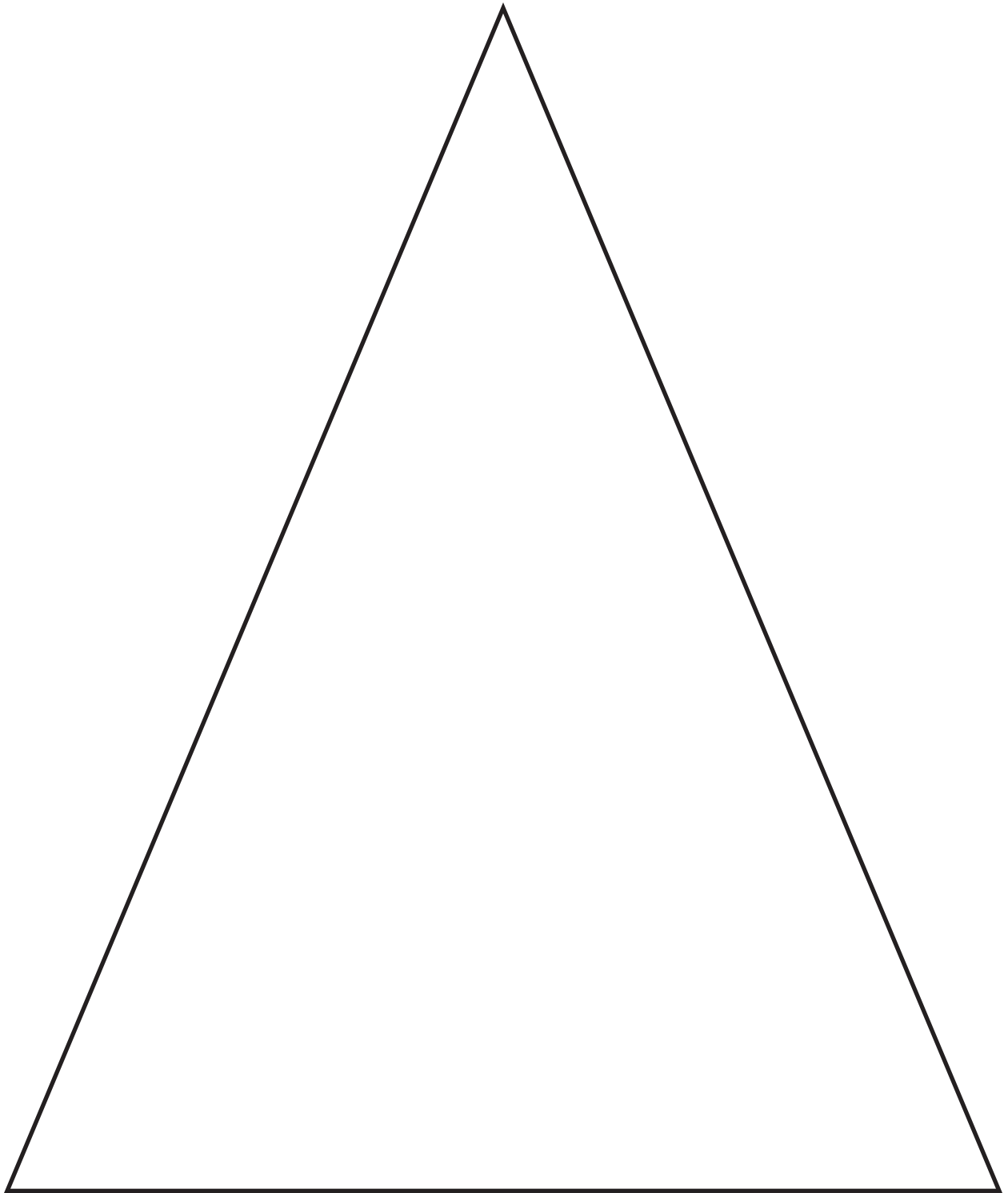
Directions:

Ask the child to decorate their survivor flag.

Reframing:

You are a survivor!

My Survivor Flag!





Pick a Color, Tear a Shape

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Several sheets of various colored construction paper

Directions:

Select a piece of colored construction paper (choose a color that represents the way you are feeling). Without using scissors, just your hands, tear a shape out of that paper that also reflects the way you are feeling.

Process:

1. Now I am going to ask you to tell us about your color and your shape. What does that shape/color represent (Let 5-7 people respond)
2. What would be the limitations of trying to do this at the cognitive level? (i.e. Tell me what you are feeling?)
3. This simple sensory process and use of a visual form to express yourself allows you to really find the words and vehicle to get descriptive and detailed. Help us better see what you are feeling that just the use of words alone.

Notes:

This is me:



This is me (continued):



This is me (continued):



Add other aspects of yourself that are not portrayed on the previous pages:



Keep Your Bendy Safe

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Rubber bendy, paper, feathers, chenille stems (pipe cleaners), crayons/markers

Directions:

Using the materials provided make a safe place for your bendy. (You can make a drawing or build a safe place for your bendy.)

Process:

- *What did this activity teach you? In what ways can we use this activity? Is there something you might do differently, or use different materials?*
- *Tell us your story. The following are questions that can be used to help the person elaborate.*
- *Where does the bendy live? Where would the bendy live to feel safe and happy? Does the bendy live alone or with other bendies? What does your bendy like to do? How does your bendy have fun?*

Lesson:

What makes this a safe activity? This activity lowers arousal, provides safe container and character to express safety worries and needs.

Notes:



If My Body Could Talk

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: Worksheet

Directions:

Take out your body part worksheet. Check in with each of the body parts listed on the worksheets to determine what that body part might say if they could talk. Write the things that each body part might say in the boxes provided.

Process:

- *Go around the room and ask for examples from participants. What does your head say, your chest say, etc. Normalize.*

Lesson:

This activity helps us to get into our bodies (sensory) and out of our heads (cognitive). We can see that everyone has a different place in their body that they might hold anger, worry, fear or just being tired or worn out. Remind the children you work with to check in with their bodies often so that they are better able to identify reactions and say what they might need to feel better (and to help understand what makes things feel worse).

Notes:

A black silhouette of a human figure is centered on the page. Surrounding the silhouette are ten empty speech bubbles, each connected to a specific body part by a line. The speech bubbles are arranged as follows: two on the left (head and chest), two on the right (hands and feet), and six at the top (neck/shoulders, arms, back, stomach, and legs). Each bubble contains a prompt for the user to write what that body part would say.

If my head could talk it would say...

If my neck & shoulders could talk they would say...

If my arms could talk they would say...

If my back could talk it would say...

If my stomach could talk it would say...

If my legs could talk they would say...

If my chest could talk it would say...

If my hands could talk they would say...

If my feet could talk they would say...



Good News Article

Time: You are Good News 10-15 minutes

Time: News Article 15-20 minutes

Materials: Reflection from “Ready...

Set...R.E.L.A.X.” paper, pen/pencil/marker

Directions:

Now based upon what you imagined during the guided imagery, write a short news article describing who you are and why you are good news. Include a drawing of yourself if you wish.

Process:

1. What reaction did you experience as you were telling yourself, “I am good news.”

Have several participants share their good news with all of us. (Pause for a minute)

What were some of your reactions when we asked you to share your good news. (Some will be reluctant because they are shy , embarrassed, have been taught – therefore expect different reactions and various responses).

2. Now several, please share your good news...Now as the rest of you were listening how did it feel to hear people share good news? (Sharing can motivate others, encourage, change present “experience”)

Notes:

Good News Script

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Objectives:

To have children appreciate and imagine themselves as being unique and special. To reinforce the key words calm and relax.

Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor and your eyes closed. Take three long, deep breaths. (pause) Feel yourself relaxing more and more with each breath. Let the rhythm of the music calm you. Feel your muscles relax and your heart and breathing slow. Say to yourself, “I am calm and relaxed.”

The room is quiet, as you slow your breathing. Your seat now transforms into your favorite soft lounging chair. On your lap is today’s newspaper. On page one, in big, bold print, it says, “You are CALM and RELAXED.” When you see or hear these words, you feel calm and relaxed. Below these almost magic words, there is a picture of a young person who has done something special. Look closer at the picture of a young person who has done something special. Look closer at the picture, and find that this person is you! You are the news today. You have done something unique.

You have used a special talent that you have to achieve a goal, a dream. You are a winner, a heroine or hero, a hard worker, who has earned recognition in the newspaper. Breathe slowly and read the good things about you. (pause) How are you feeling? (pause) Close the newspaper. You have many talents and with patience and hard work you can make some of your dreams come true. Next time you see a newspaper, think of your good news.

Take a deep breath and return to your room. Open your eyes and stretch. (pause) Take a few moments to appreciate the good feelings that come with relaxation.

Discussion:

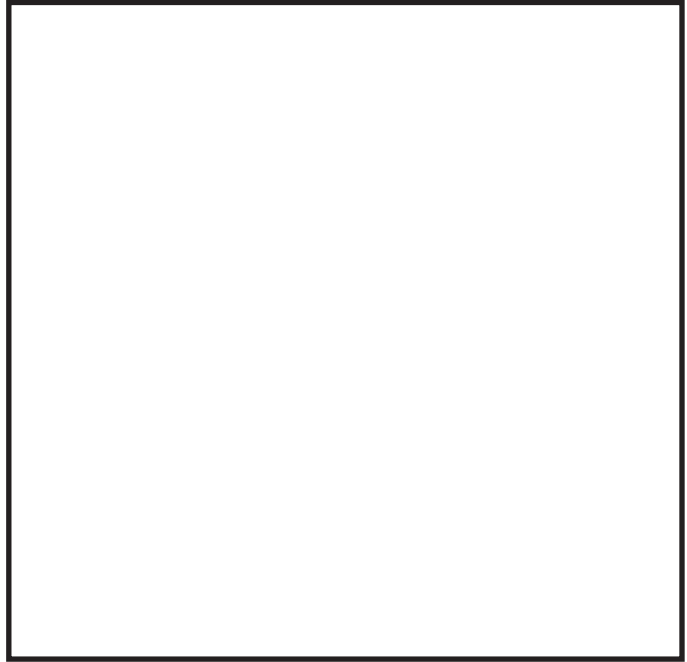
How did it feel to read the good news about yourself? What was the good news about yourself? Share something good you imagine yourself doing this year.

Activities:

- Make your own newspaper with an article about a Very Important Person – YOU! Include articles that talk about your special interests and talents.
- Find five words in a newspaper that describe you
- Find each letter in your name and write a word that describes you for each letter

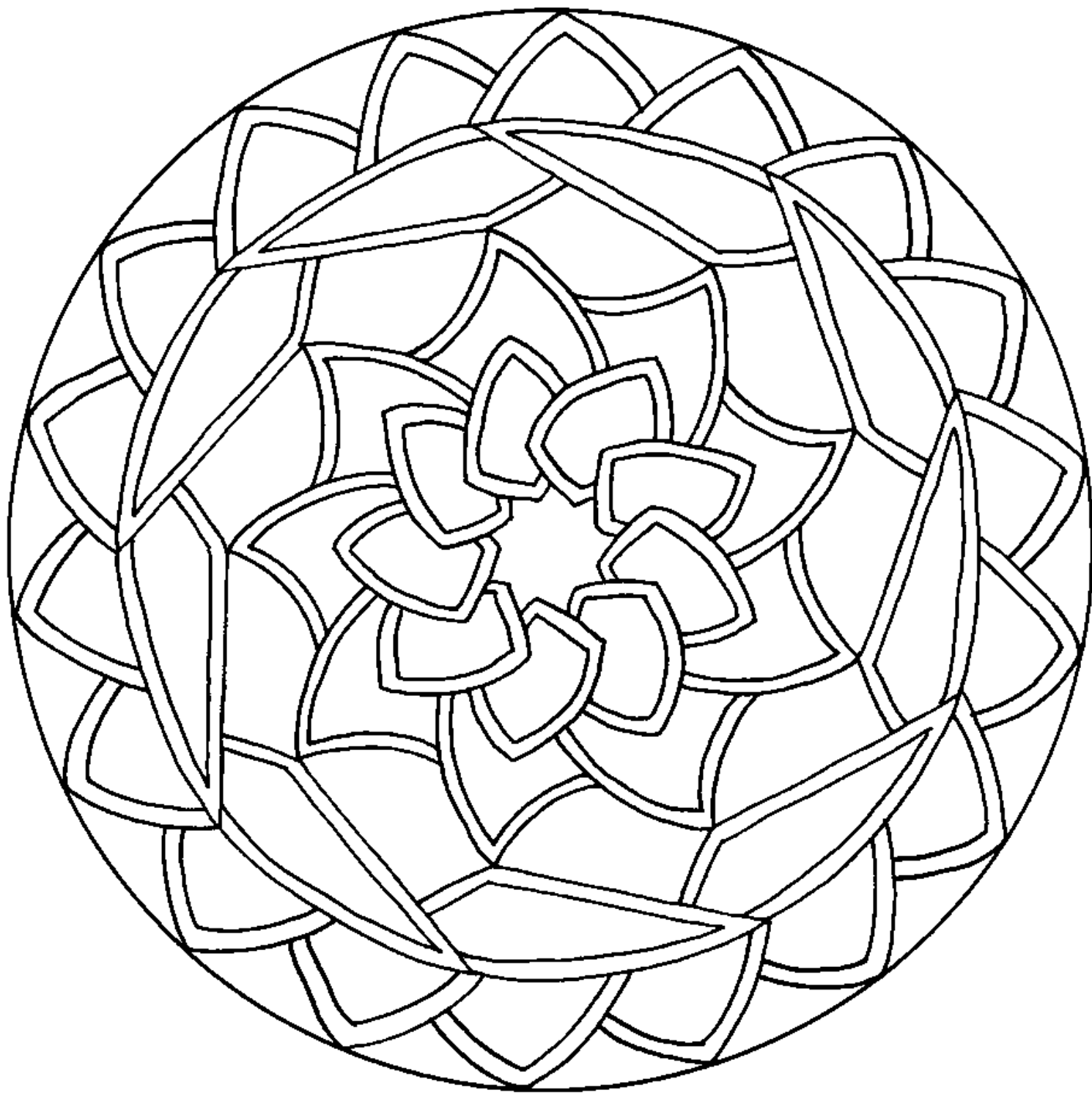
DAILY NEWS

Good News!



Picture above:







Rap it Write

Time: 15 minutes

*Materials: Musical Instruments (optional)
paper, pen/pencil/marker*

Directions:

You will receive a card with one of the trauma themes (Hurt, Worry, Anger, Fear, Revenge, Survivor) written on it. Write a brief song or a rap that describes or expresses the experience of that trauma theme.

Process:

Have the first person read their song/rap.

1. Audience – What is your feedback?
2. How many found this task difficult to do?
3. Can you think of another activity that might be easier for others?

LESSON: You have to be flexible with the “medium” that is used for each theme and have a back-up plan if needed!

Notes:

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children
Rap it Write Activity Worksheet

Final Questions

What stands out the most from the past 2 days of training?

How will what you have learned change your view of treatment?

What have you learned about yourself?