

Child Preparation *Recipes for Success*



Updated: Summer 2021

Introduction

This collection of Child Preparation activities was gathered throughout the years from members of the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN)* as part of various workshops, swap meets and requests for activity submissions. These activities represent the skills and creativity of the network to engage with children and youth, working with them to heal from their past and build a vision for their future.

The intent of the *Child Preparation Recipes for Success* is to provide the network with a resource of activities to use as part of the SWAN Child Preparation Unit of Service. Many of the Child Preparation activities included can be modified to fit a child or youth's particular situation, though we recommend that workers discuss any proposed changes with their supervisor.

*SWAN is a program of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Child Preparation Overview

Unresolved issues can result in feelings of insecurity and inadequacy for anyone. For the children and youth we serve who have been separated from their birth homes and families, knowing about their past becomes even more critical. They have often lost important people and cannot remember important events. Sometimes, they were not able to ask important questions. Child Preparation provides children and their families with this link. It allows them to revisit their past and look towards their future.

Child Preparation helps the child to deal with the seven CORE issues: grief and loss, abandonment, identity, control, loyalty, attachment and shame. The CORE issues are:

- **Common** among children raised in out of home placements;
- **Ongoing** throughout their lifespan;
- **Relational** – they had their source in relationships and affect every relationship a child has or tries to have; and
- **Experiential** – the effects of the CORE issues are part of the child’s daily life and impacts how the child experiences their world.

Child Preparation services should always be child-centered and child-focused. What does the child find important? What does the child want to know? How does the child view their world? Where would they ultimately like to be?

The SWAN Child Preparation unit of service (also known as Child Prep) is available to any Pennsylvania child or youth in the legal custody of a county children and youth agency (CCYA) who resides in an out-of-home placement. The CCYA can make referrals and must certify referrals upon completion of the service. (Certification indicates the work is completed as outlined in the Benchmarks and to the CCYA’s satisfaction.)

Child Preparation can be used for all permanency goals: (1) reunification; (2) adoption; (3) permanent legal custodianship (PLC); (4) permanent placement with a fit and willing relative and (5) another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA).

3-5-7 MODEL

BASIC CONCEPTS OF CHILD PREPARATION

Three Major Tasks of Child Preparation

Clarification
Integration
Actualization

Five Questions That Must Be Answered

Who Am I? (Identity)
What Happened to Me? (Grief, Loss)
Where Am I Going? (Attachment)
How Will I Get There? (Relationships)
When Will I Know I Belong? (Safety, Belonging)

Seven Critical Elements to Preparing Children

ENGAGE the child in the process.
LISTEN to the child's words.
When you speak, tell the **TRUTH**.
VALIDATE the child and the child's life story.
Create a **SAFE SPACE** for the child as they do this work.
It is never too late to **GO BACK** in time.
PAIN IS PART OF THE PROCESS.

Child Preparation Goals

These activities address one or more of the five SWAN Child Preparation goals:



Gives Child a Voice: Many things can cause children and youth in the child welfare system to feel like they have lost their voice, including their removal from their home of origin. Activities that address this goal encourage and allow the child to voice their feelings and emotions. This is an important part of the healing process.



Honors the Past: Activities that address this goal explore past relationships the child had and what relationships were important to them. These activities can also focus on gathering information and learning about the child's heritage, culture and birth family.



Answers Child's Questions: Children and youth in the child welfare system rarely have a good understanding of what has happened to them, how they got where they are and what will happen next. Activities that address this goal help the child answer questions that most people take for granted; Who are my parents, grandparents and extended family members? Where was I born? Where are my siblings? Why don't I live with my parents? The child may not be able to verbalize these questions; however, the Child Preparation worker can provide answers through their review of the child's case record and conversations with others.



Makes Connections: Many children in the child welfare system have lost most or all of the people who are important to them. Child Preparation helps to identify people who are part of the child's past and sometimes re-establish connections with them if it is healthy for the child to do so. Activities that address this goal help the child to remember past connections, who was important to them and what role that person played in their life.



Looks to the Future: Child Preparation helps children weave the influence of past relationships into current relationships. It helps the child put their past into perspective and begin to believe their future hold hope. Activities that address this goal help the child to visualize what it might be like to be a member of a family or help prepare a child for ongoing contact with a sibling(s) or other birth relatives. These activities help the child explore the expectations of future relationships and allow the worker to guide the child into more realistic expectations, if necessary.






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Age Range

Child Preparation Goals Addressed

Please note: age range refers to the child's developmental age, not necessarily the child's chronological age.

Key
























- Gives Child a Voice 
- Honors the Past 
- Answers Child's Questions 
- Makes Connections 
- Looks to Future 



































































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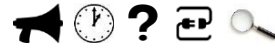
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Tree of Self-Awareness



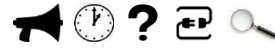
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Summary (Link to submit new activities)

Activities for:

All Ages

3-D Life Map House

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

This activity creates a book with a house image on it when closed and a 3D circular doll house when tied open. (Depending on the age of the child, you may want to complete the initial construction prior to the session.)



Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: Varies - 2 to 3 sessions may be needed

Materials Needed: Cardboard, paper, glue, ribbon or string, crayons and markers

1. Take two pieces of equally-sized cardboard and create the book binding.
2. Glue a piece of paper on the front and back of the 2 pieces of cardboard to attach in book form.
3. Glue ribbon to each side in order to tie the book/house closed/opened.
4. Attach paper from one side of cardboard to the other in accordion style.
5. When opened, it should appear as a circular house with multiple wedge shaped rooms.
6. To create a downstairs and an upstairs, glue small triangle shaped pieces of paper in the middle of the wedges as the floor to the upper room.

Allow the child to design each room (wedge between the accordion style papers) of their book/house. Allow the child to be creative and decorate the rooms with stickers, crayons, and pictures of the families with whom they previously lived.

Processing:

While working with the child, talk about the different homes the child has lived in and allow the child to remember and talk about the time they lived in each home. If you are able, talk with the previous foster families and get pictures to add into the house.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can also be used with a child who may return to a home with possible safety concerns. In this situation, have the child decorate each room differently. They can also include outside, school, etc. When creating each room, talk with the child about different situations that could occur in the house and discuss ways to handle them.

No matter the activity chosen with the 3-D House, allow the child to be creative and allow open communication.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

All ages

Caterpillar to Butterfly

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors Child's Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Take an empty egg carton and cut out the individual sections. Flip these over and use yarn to string them together to create a chain – this will be the “body” of the caterpillar.

Write the name of a birth family member on each section, and let the child decorate each section using paints or markers. Add a face to the first section, and use pipe cleaners to create antennae.

During the same or next session, trace each resource family member’s hands on brightly colored paper. Cut out the handprint; paste the handprints as wings to the butterfly.

Processing:

This activity will help the child understand that their birth family and resource family are both an important part of their life. You can discuss the ways that both families help them and the roles they play in their life. Relate this discussion to how the caterpillar needed wings to change into a beautiful butterfly.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Activity can be used for a variety of situations.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes (may need more than 1 session)

Materials Needed: Egg cartons, scissors, paints, markers, string or yarn, pipe cleaners, colored construction paper, glue

C-O-U-R-T Bingo

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Preparation

Prior to meeting with the child, go to the Office of Children & Families in the Courts website www.ocfcpcourts.us. Click on the "Children" tab. Click on the "Courtroom Guide." There are 3 different age ranges to choose from:

- 0 to 6 years Courtroom Guide
- Age 7 to 12 Courtroom Guide
- Age 13 to 18 Courtroom Guide

Click on the guide for each range. Print out the guides. The number of copies needed depends on how many Bingo boards you make.

To make the Bingo boards, follow the format of a typical Bingo board. Cut out the letters C-O-U-R-T and glue/tape across the top of the board. Cut each face picture from the guide and randomly glue/tape on the Bingo board. You will need to create different boards placing the different faces under each letter so each board is different. Each player will need a Bingo board.

Make 2 to 4 copies of the guide and cut out each face to be used as individual pieces for the game and place in a basket or bag. Cut out several sets of letters spelling out the word C-O-U-R-T and place them in a separate basket or bag.

Note: You will only need to do the above steps one time. Once the game pieces are made, little prep time is needed for this activity.

Game Rules

Make sure to give each child enough pieces of wrapped candy to be able to play several rounds of the game. Explain to the child(ren) that you are going to play a game that will teach them about the many different people in their lives who are working together to ensure their safety and who are responsible for making decisions regarding permanency such as a judge, caseworker or guardian ad litem (GAL).

To start the game, pick a letter (C-O-U-R-T) from one bag and a slip of paper with a face of a person with a specific role from the other bag. Players will then put a piece of candy (or other marker) on their board if the picture on their board is found under that specific letter. During the first round of play, as each picture is pulled from the bag, you should provide a simple explanation of individual's role in helping to ensure safety/determine permanency before pulling the next two game pieces. (An age-appropriate explanation is written in the different guides.)

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time. It is best to complete prior to a court hearing.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes (Note: 1 to 2 hours prep time is needed when completing this activity for the first time.)

Materials Needed: Pre-made Bingo boards, pre-made game pieces (see directions) and wrapped candy

The game continues until someone gets Bingo (C-O-U-R-T). When a winner is declared, each child clears their board and gets to keep their candy pieces (so no one really loses). During subsequent rounds of play, have the child(ren) provide their own definitions of the job tasks for each game piece pulled from the bag before continuing with the game.

Processing:

Repetition (playing several rounds of the game) helps the child to recall the specific tasks associated with each individual identified, aiding their understanding. There are colored versions of the Courtroom Guide, so you can create the bingo board in color and laminate for long-term use.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This game can be played by very young children, as it is mostly pictorial. The game easily holds a child's attention and using small pieces of candy (preferably wrapped) as markers help to prevent hurt feelings or competition among the players because each player gets to keep their candy.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Exchanging Emotions

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Have the child/youth and the birth parent(s) answer the questions below separately. You may need to write in the answers for a younger child. Discuss with the child/youth and the birth parent(s) separately what makes them nervous, scared, excited, happy, relieved, etc. about the child/youth's planned return to the birth parent(s). It's important to address any insecurities the birth parent(s) may have and any hesitations on either part. If appropriate, the things discussed can be shared with the other party.

Questions for child/youth:

- How do you feel about going home to live with your birth parent(s)?
- What makes you excited about going home?
- What makes you scared about going home?
- What makes you nervous about going home?
- What makes you happy about going home?
- Is there anything that makes you sad about this transition?

Questions for birth parent(s):

- How do you feel about your child coming home?
- What makes you excited about your child coming home?
- What makes you scared about your child coming home?
- What makes you nervous about your child coming home?
- What makes you happy about your child coming home?
- Is there anything that makes you sad about this transition?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done when a child is being reunified with a birth parent(s).

Time Needed: 1 to 1 ½ hours

Materials Needed: Questions (included in activity)

Processing:

This activity deals with the child/youth's emotions surrounding their return home with their birth parent(s) and allows both parties to process how they are feeling. When workers are preparing for a child/youth to return home, we sometimes forget to address the child/youth's feelings as well as their birth parents' feelings.

It's important to show the child/youth that their birth parent(s) are working hard and are dealing with issues too. The child/youth may be nervous about reunifying with their birth parent and they need to see how excited their birth parent is to have them return home. It's also important for the birth parent to see that the child/youth may be apprehensive about returning home.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If a child is too young to participate in the activity, it can still be completed with the birth parent(s).

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Feelings Go Fish

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Prior to the session, select which emotions will be used in the game. Consider the child's age and possible emotions they are struggling with. Review each emotion with the child before starting the game and provide a definition and example if needed.

Shuffle the cards and deal five to seven cards for each player.

Processing:

When a match is made, the player gives an example of when they felt that emotion. When the worker gets a match, they can also ask the child to give an example of when they felt that emotion.

Some children may give superficial answers. When this occurs, the worker can reference something discussed in a previous session such as something from their past or a specific event.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Instead of purchasing the Feelings Playing Cards, a worker can make a deck of playing cards using pictures of faces depicting different emotions.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed when a worker has developed a rapport with the child.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Feelings Playing Cards by Jim Borgman (available from Amazon)

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Begin by asking the child to tell you about their life. If the child says they cannot remember anything, this is a cue the child is not ready to do the activity. Other cues include the child's level of nervousness shown by their body language, facial expressions and the words they say. Be prepared with a second activity in case the child indicates they are not ready or able to have this discussion.

If the child is willing and able to discuss their history, record what the child tells you on a piece of paper. Once you get a good sense of the details, use the decorative paper and the stickers to illustrate the story the child just told you. Play close attention to the child's words and always allow the child to direct this process. Some children will ask you to do the writing, and that's okay. Still include the child in on the preparation of the map by asking them for ideas on what stickers to use and the placement of the stickers.

Processing:

As the child tells you their story, stay engaged by gently asking questions to help you understand their experiences. Also, remember this is the child's version of their life story, and it may not match what you know to be the truth based on other sources. Respect this and do not try to correct the child. Allow the child to make this the story they remember.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For young and non-verbal children, a life map can be developed using information from the county agency's case record and the stories told by other people in the child's life.

A child struggling to understand an absent parent might benefit by seeing that parent's life map.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be introduced to the child early in the process by asking the child to tell you about their life. Pay attention to the child's reaction to this request; this must happen when the child is ready.

Time Needed: About 2 hours - probably more than 1 session

Materials Needed: Stickers representing different life events, decorative paper with map or papyrus décor, markers, other paper

Oh, The Places I've Been

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

You first need to look through the child's case records and identify their placement history. You will need the exact location/addresses of homes where the child lived, service providers, schools, county agency office, daycare, etc. If a timeline and/or life map have already been completed, they can be used as a reference. Otherwise, you may want to complete these so you can talk with the child about each of their placements. Additionally, you will want to talk with the child and identify what activities they did (and where they did them) while living in each placement (see adaptations below for more ideas). Then, you and the child can visit each of these places. You can take pictures or video tape the child there and add this to the child's Lifebook. You can add to this by having the child talk about their memories at each of their former homes – who lived there, what they liked/didn't like about it, what school was like, what they remember about leaving and any other information the child remembers and wants to record for their Lifebook.

Processing:

Visiting significant places in the child's life can help them to answer the question "Who Am I?" by giving them pieces of their history and validating the history as a part of who they are. It also addresses the question of "What Happened To Me?" by retracing the child's steps and revisiting significant places, literally looking at what happened to this child. The child will need a great deal of support to talk and work through issues of grief, loss and guilt that may become fresh after revisiting these places and their past.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be done at the beginning of the child's time in care. It is helpful to do the "Timeline" and "Life Map" activities first, and then ask the child to direct the course of this activity.

Time Needed: Possibly several sessions

Materials Needed: Phone for videos and pictures, child's placement history, paper, markers, crayons, pens, glue/tape, stickers and crafts for decorating pages

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be done in conjunction with the “People I’ve Known” activity. It can be done with any significant places in the child’s life. This can include the birth home, foster homes, group homes, residential treatment facilities, therapist offices, doctor’s offices, schools, daycare centers, favorite play spots, court, CYS offices, vacation spots, sports fields, homes of friends and relatives and the hospital where child was born. You can do a variation of this activity that includes significant places in the child’s life where they have not been before such as a gravesite, the place where their birth parents met or where they grew up or went to school.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

People Who Care About Me

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Begin by talking with the child about how everyone has people in their lives that care about them. Ask the child to help you brainstorm the names of people in their life who care about them. The child may be resistant to this initially; some children don't feel like anyone cares about them. Give suggestions (if needed) including birth family members, previous foster parents/siblings, caseworkers, therapists, teachers, neighbors, friends and others. Then ask the child how they know this person cares. Some children will only think of concrete things like "they give me presents." Prompt the child to consider other less obvious ways people show they care. For example, parents may make a child eat their vegetables or go to bed on time to show they care. After identifying the people, use the paper and pens to make a list, possibly making individual pages for each person. The paper should identify person's name, how the child knows the person and how the child knows the person cares about them. In addition, to address the question "How Will I Get There?" you can have the child identify how the person can or has helped them throughout their journey. Follow the child's lead of how creative they want to be. Help the child decorate the pages with stickers, stencils and glitter. If possible, take a picture of the child with each person and use it for the activity as well.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time in a child's placement. It can include any number of people involved in the child's life.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour, possibly more

Materials Needed: Pens, markers, crayons, paper, camera (optional), crafts and decorations, stencils

Processing:

This activity can help children who feel very alone and unloved to see there are people in their lives who care about them. In addition, prompting the child to consider less concrete ways adults show children they care about them helps teach a child about non-verbal communication. This activity can help answer the question "Who Am I?" by identifying people who have contributed to the child's life in the past by supporting and nurturing them. By discussing how these people have or could help the child, you can discuss the question "How Will I Get There?"

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

With an older child, you can talk about when the child first knew the person cared about them. This can help them identify significant moments in their life when they felt particularly cared for by someone. For a younger or non-communicative child, you can have a caregiver help by identifying people in the child's life who have cared for the child.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Sibling Memories

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

Make time to specifically discuss siblings. Ask the child to recall all memories they have of their brothers and sisters. Record the specific memories as stories that can be made into a collection for the child's Lifebook. You can make collages of the things the children like to do together, things the siblings like the most or of the things that remind the child of their sibling(s).

Take pictures of the child during sibling visits and maintain them as part of their Lifebook. Help the child send duplicate pictures to their sibling(s).

Schedule opportunities when possible to have sibling visits and plan ahead to have each child share a few of their memories of their sibling(s). You can record these stories so each child can hear the stories over and over.

Processing:

As you discuss and record the memories, be sure to help the child draw connections between his or herself and their sibling(s). Help them to see the similarities and the differences to help them build self-esteem and a stronger sense of self-awareness.

Be aware of and prepared to process not only happy memories but also those less pleasant memories that may be brought up. Ultimately, it is all of the memories that will help them to form a most complete picture of who they are and what happened to them.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Don't forget that a "sibling" created through any out-of-home placement, although not genetically related, is still sometimes a sibling with whom the child has formed a great connection, and this should be recognized.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be introduced as part of the initial work in starting the Lifebook and should be an ongoing piece of work depending on sibling contacts, visitation and the new memories created.

Time Needed: Varies

Materials Needed: This can vary. Some suggestions include camera (for pictures and videos), old photos, craft pens/markers, glue, border prints, paper and scissors.

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Use a light (flashlight, light from a phone, lamp) to project a shadow of the child's head and upper torso onto a piece of paper that is fastened to a flat wall surface. Trace the outline of the child onto the paper. When complete, remove the outline paper from the wall and move to a table with your pens, crayons, gel pens and markers. With the help of the child, write examples of characteristics the child gets from their birth family directly onto the silhouette. For example, "I get my blue eyes from my birth mother," or "I am good at playing baseball like my Uncle Charlie."

Processing:

Discussions about all types of birth family information are likely to arise from this activity as are questions about what the child might have inherited from different birth family members. Be prepared to listen to the child's words and to write down questions you and the child can investigate together later.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can use this activity to get to know the child. The silhouette can be referenced throughout the service and added to as you discover more information about who the child is.

A neat way to do this activity is to draw the silhouette on black paper and write in the characteristics with a gel pen. Gel pens can be purchased at any craft store. They are easy to use and children and teens love them!

Laura Waddell from Family Services of Northwestern PA used a blank, framed canvas and Sharpies for this activity. She took information she gathered from a youth, the youth's caregivers, caseworkers and Child Profile and added it to the canvas to fill in the silhouette. She only added positive and factual information. The youth decorated the rest of the canvas with drawings.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used early on in the process as you and the child are reviewing and discovering who the child's birth family is.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour

Materials Needed: Light to shine and make a shadow on a flat surface, paper, pencils, markers, gel pens, knowledge or pictures of the birth family's physical characteristics, personalities and abilities.

Thanks for Being Part of Me

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Start by taking a picture of the child with each family member. Have each family member state why they are glad this child is a member of their family. This could be anything from positive personality characteristics to favorite shared activities. Each person should then illustrate this by making a page with a picture and/or words such as, "My favorite thing about Carlos is ..." or "I'm glad Aisha is my sister because..." Adults can help a younger child to write. To complete this activity, mount the corresponding picture at the top of each family member's page. If the child is old enough, you can also have them do a page about what they like about each family member.

Processing:

This activity will help the child and their family talk about what it means to be a family. It can help to answer "Who Am I?" by focusing on the unique traits the child brings to the family. In addition, discussion can focus around the variety of families and how each person contributes something unique to make the family a whole. It should help the child to feel more a part of the family unit and should help to strengthen the family bonds. In this way, it can help to answer the question "How Will I Know I Belong?"

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be adapted for younger or non-communicative children by having the caregiver contribute the child's point of view. For example, the page could have a picture of an infant with their older sister stating, "I like Monique because she reads me a story every night before I go to bed."

Questions Answered: Who Am I? How Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done in a foster or adoptive family. It will be most effective if done after a child has been in a placement long enough to get to know their foster/adoptive family and vice versa.

Time Needed: Depends on family size - at least 1 hour for a small family

Materials Needed: Camera, paper, pens, markers and crayons

T-Shirt Success

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Tell each family member to brainstorm silently what they believe are the most important things they need from the other family members in order to succeed.

Provide examples such as cooperation, hugs, time together, communication, laughs, fun, respect, quiet time, etc.

After five to ten minutes, ask the family members to discuss their responses as a group, working to develop one list of the top ten things. After a discussion of the process and the selections, give each family member a white T-shirt and fabric markers, asking that each person write the "Top Ten" list on their shirt.

Finally, have all family members sign all of the shirts.

Processing:

Use this activity as a way for you and the family to discuss perceptions and expectations both of the child/youth and the parents.

The activity assists a child/youth and their resource family as they build a rapport with each other. It also assists the child and family as they establish expectations and begin to form a commitment to one another. Finally, this exercise can help the child/youth see themselves as part of a family and to recognize what being a part of the family is about.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If a child isn't able to write on their shirt, an adult family member may do that part for them. Another alternative would be for the family to draw pictures on their T-shirts instead of using words.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be used when the child/youth is ready to consider what family is and to begin to see themselves as part of a family.

Time Needed: 1+ hours

Materials Needed: 1 T-shirt per family member, fabric marker or paint

Questions Answered: How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Coordinate activities to gather the materials listed, such as going to the library to find a copy of the newspaper or searching online. Ask the child/youth to decorate the outside of the keepsake box.

Processing:

Once all of the items are collected, look at each with the child/youth and discuss what they are, what they mean, and why they are important to the day the child/youth was born. Help the child place all of the items in the box for safekeeping. Discuss what importance or value the child/youth places on the contents of the box. Explain that the box is special because it describes the day of their birth.

This activity helps a child/youth connect with something that belongs to them as well as make sense out of the day that they were born. This can help them understand part of their past and to recognize the importance of their birth day. This activity can also be used in conjunction with the book *On the Day that You Were Born*, written by Debra Frasier. It's another way to symbolize for (and discuss with) the child/youth how important their birth day is.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If the child is too young to complete the above task, this activity can be completed by the resource family and presented to the child on a special day later in their life. In the process, the resource family has the opportunity to get to know more about the child, where they were born and some of the history of the child's birthday.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is wonderful to do with a child/youth so they can learn their personal history and birth information.

Time Needed: 1+ hours

Materials Needed: Sturdy keepsake box, markers, crayons, glue, scissors, collage materials, a copy of newspaper from child's date of birth, a recording of hit songs at the time of child's birth, a birth announcement, coins from the year child was born, baby/family pictures, picture of hospital where child was born, articles of infant clothing and baby blanket, any other keepsake from the child's birth

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Who Cares about Me?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Hang a poster-sized paper on the wall at the child's home. (Or, if the caregiver prefers, create a Lifebook page instead.) Consult with the child (and their family depending on the child's age) and add a title to the poster such as "Who Loves Me," "What Makes [child's name] Special" or "Reasons We Care about [child's name]."

Once the title is added, begin by writing on the poster something they like about the child, what makes the child special, etc. Then, let the child write something about themselves that makes them special. Next, ask the child's caregiver and family members to write something positive on the poster. Each person who makes a comment should include their name.

Leave the paper or Lifebook page with the family so other visitors to the home (family members, service providers, neighbors, family friends, etc.) can add their comments.

The child should take the poster or Lifebook page to any appointments or visits with birth family members so they can add to the poster as well.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 sessions

Materials Needed: Poster - size paper or lifebook pages, markers and painter's tape

Processing:

When the worker returns for the next Child Preparation session, review the poster or lifebook page. Read the comments aloud so the child can hear the comments and who wrote it. Discuss why each person wrote what they did and encourage the child to share special memories about each person.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Some children may need assistance in writing.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Activities for:

Pre-school Age

(and older)

All in the Family

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Supply the child with paper and crayons, markers or gel pens. Ask them to draw a picture of their family. If the child looks at you for guidance regarding whom to include in the drawing, assure them that it is their decision and there are no "wrong" answers. Ask them to label each person in the picture.

Processing:

If the child does not include people who are obviously a part of their family, (birth, foster or adoptive), raise the issue for discussion. It is important not to make the child feel as though they have to include anyone in particular. This discussion can be a helpful diagnostic tool to identify unresolved issues.

Similarly, if the child includes people in the picture who "probably" should not be included, it is important to validate this, regardless of more traditional definitions of family. For example, some children will include caseworkers or favorite teachers in their family portrait. Because these people may play a significant part in the child's life, it is important to recognize this. Many children in placement feel closer to the 'non-family' adults in their lives than typical children do. This can offer feelings of safety and security and should not be discouraged.

This activity addresses the question "Who Am I?" by validating the family the child was born into. You can also raise issues touching upon "What Happened to Me?" as the child may begin talking about why they were removed from their birth family or discussing previous foster families with whom they have lived. The discussion that revolves around family and the child's definition of family will help to address the question "When Will I Know I Belong?" For children in foster placements, you can talk about how they "belong" with a particular family (they have their own bedroom, they have chores, receive an allowance or are part of the family portrait). For children who have been placed with a potential permanency family, talk about the things unique to this family and placement – indicators of how the child feels like they belong, such as a name change, inclusions in decisions or child's picture hanging on the wall.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done with the child any time during their placement.

Time Needed: Approximately 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons, markers or gel pens

Beautiful Oops!

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Read the book *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg to the child. While reading, talk about how the different mistakes made in the book turned into something beautiful. Relate the same concept to the things that happen in our lives that can make it difficult to see the good or beautiful.

Give the child some potting soil and let them play with it - feeling its texture and observing its properties. You can talk about it being messy, dirty, etc. Ask the child if there is anything good about potting soil.

Bring out the pot, seeds and water. Tell the child even though the potting soil is messy, it can make something beautiful if used in the right way. Have the child decorate their flower pot. Have child add potting soil to the pot, plant sunflower seeds and water.

Processing:

Discuss how something that comes from the ground and is messy can create something beautiful with the proper nurture and care. Relate this concept to the positive things occurring in the child's life, even if it seems a bit messy or uncomfortable at the time.

Watch over the next several weeks as the sunflower grows. Track its growth and when stable enough, plant it outside. Continue to relate the conversation to the flower's growth and development and ENJOY!

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Other flower seeds can be used if the child does not have an outside space to plant the sunflowers.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be started at the beginning of the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: Will need several sessions as you watch the flowers grow

Materials Needed:
Beautiful Oops! book by Barney Saltzberg, flower pot, items to decorate flower pot, sunflower seeds, potting soil and water

Candy Land

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors Child's Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the sessions, make labels and place on the Candy Land board as follows:

- At start of game: Birth Family Home
- Near the Gingerbread Tree: Family and Friends
- Near Peppermint Forest: Foster Care Home
- Near Lord Licorice: Court and Caseworkers
- Near Gramma Nut: Kinship Care
- Near Mr. Mint: Visitation
- Near Snow Flake Lake: GAL (Guardian ad Litem)
- At top, winning spot, Candy Land Castle: FOREVER FAMILY HOME/
PERMANENCY

Take a few 3 x 5 inch cards and cut down to 3 x 1 ¾ inch rectangles (to match size of game cards). Place a star sticker on a few cards and add phrases such as:

- Your court hearing was rescheduled, go back three spaces.
- You got an A in math, move ahead three spaces.
- Your visit was cancelled, move back one space.
- You are somebody special, move ahead ten spaces.
- You argued with your parents, move back four spaces.
- You forgot your therapy appointment, move back three spaces.
- You decided to go to college, move ahead five spaces.

You can make these statements specific to the child/youth's situation.

Shuffle the deck with the regular game cards and play per Candy Land instructions.

Introducing this to the Child: This game can be played with the child/youth anytime during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed:
30 minutes to 1 hour
(depending on age of child)

Materials Needed: Candy Land board game, letter stickers to make words, 3x5 inch cards, markers

Processing

The custom cards can be used to foster more specific discussion throughout the game. After each move, even with the traditional game cards, discuss each place on the board as the players land on them. Talking about fears and resilience, hopes and dreams, excitement and disappointment are a few of the topics that can occur anywhere throughout the game.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Developmental Age Range:

3 years and older

Celebration Countdown Chain

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Cut strips of construction paper wide enough to write on and long enough to link together. (You can do this ahead of time or with the child.) With the child and family's input, write positive things about a family member on each strip. The statements should include how each member is important to the family, special family memories, traditions and things that make the family special and unique.

Make one strip for each day as they countdown to a special event. For example, if a child is returning to a birth parent in 30 days, the chain should include 30 strips of paper, each with a statement on it.

Connect the paper strips together to form a chain. As the child/family counts down to the special event, they can remove a link of the chain once a day when all family members are present and read the statements together.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Colored construction paper, markers, scissors, tape

Processing:

This activity promotes family interaction and helps children to recognize how important they are to the family. Additionally, it gives a child a visual countdown to the special event.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The celebration countdown chain can be used for multiple occasions, such as counting down to a child returning to a birth parent, an adoption hearing, placement with a new family, holiday, birthday or family event.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Dianne Ott, Diakon/Voce

Developmental Age Range:

5 years and older

Chutes and Ladders

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Follow the instructions included with the board game.

For the child, the object of this activity is to identify both the positive and negative experiences they have had while in foster care. For every ladder the child climbs up, they have to identify a positive experience. For every chute the child slides down, they have to identify a negative experience.

If possible, include the child's birth parent in this activity. For the birth parent, the object of this activity is to identify both the positive and negative experiences they have had while their child has been in foster care. For every ladder the birth parent climbs up, they have to identify a positive experience. For every chute that birth parent slides down, they have to identify a negative experience.

Processing:

This activity stimulates conversation and answers questions about positive and negative experiences the child has had in foster care, as well as positive and negative experiences the birth family has had while their child has been in foster care.

Take pictures of the child and birth parent playing the game to include in the child's Lifebook.

Make Lifebook pages for both the positive and negative experiences. Statements made going up the ladder (positive experiences) might include things such as "I still see my mom," "I am thankful that my children are ok," or "Just seeing my kids makes me happy." Statements made going down the chute (negative experiences) might include such as "I really miss my dad," "It's hard finding a good worker," or "It's hard knowing what to say and how to say it."

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The game can be adapted to suit a variety of situations. Resource parents can easily be included in the game.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

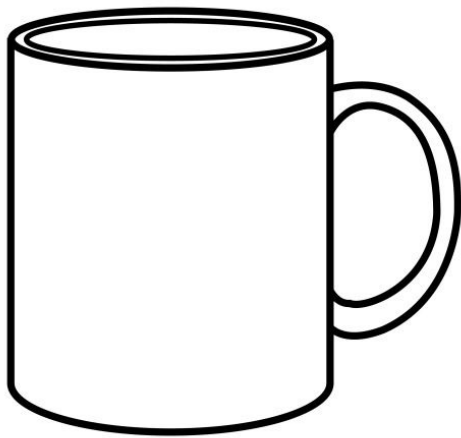
Materials Needed:
Chutes and Ladders board game, white paper, pencils, crayons, pens

Deep Breathing Mug

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Prior to the session, make a 'Deep Breathing Mug' worksheet. It should consist of a picture of a mug of hot chocolate. Under the mug write, "I can breathe in my nose and smell the hot chocolate and out my mouth to blow on it. Breathing this way can calm my mind and body."



Ask the child to color the mug. When they are done, have the child "smell" the hot chocolate by inhaling deeply and then blow the hot chocolate to cool it down by exhaling slowly. Have the child repeat this a few more times and ask them how they feel. Next, discuss how deep breathing calms the body and mind and can help the child refocus. Practice this breathing technique with the child a few more times and explain when the best time for them to use this

exercise would be such as when they are starting to become angry. Demonstrate for the child how they can make a pretend mug with their hands and have them practice the exercise a few times. Remind the child they can always ask for help to calm down if they need it.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Crayons, markers, stickers and Deep Breathing Mug worksheet (see directions)

Processing:

Talk with the child to help them identify how they feel when they begin to get overwhelmed, angry or anxious. Explain to the child what their physiological responses might include to help them understand what is happening to their body when they feel the way they do. Include the child's resource parents in the discussion and ask them to use this technique before the child's behaviors escalates as this exercise will not work once the child is escalated.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Deep breathing exercises can be done in different ways. Teach the child to blow out candles by lighting five candles. Hold up five fingers and have them blow out each candle one at a time. Pretend the child is a dragon. Have them take a deep breath and then 'breathe fire' by blowing the breath out of their mouth.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Dream a Little Dream

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture of their dreams or wishes.

Processing:

Ask the child to tell you about their picture, trying first to identify whether the picture is of a “dream” or a “wish.” Initially, this exercise is used to get to know the child, but as time goes on it can be repeated to help the child identify what they want in a family or how they know when they are accepted into their family. These later discussions will take more time and should present opportunities to address some of the confusion the child may feel about what a family is and what it means to belong to a family.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Variables for different ages would include the type of markers or crayons used. The dream bubble can also be filled with a collage of pictures.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done on the initial visit and at later visits as appropriate.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Dream bubble picture, crayons, markers

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Looks to the Future

Directions:

To make the dream catcher:

1. Paint some tacky glue along one tip of the ribbon and press it against the hoop. Use one hand to hold the end in place as it dries, and use the other hand to start wrapping the ribbon around the hoop. Continue wrapping the hoop until the entire hoop is wrapped tightly in ribbon.
 - a. Tightly wrap each loop to touch the adjacent loop of ribbon, but do not overlap the loops.
2. The very last loop should slightly overlap the beginning loop. Take the end of the ribbon and insert it under the second to last loop, forming a half-stitch to secure the ribbon in place.
3. Take the loose piece of the ribbon and shape it into a loop that juts out vertically from the top of the hoop. Keeping the loop in place, use the end of the ribbon to make a knot at the base of the loop. Pull it tight, then use scissors to cut off the last dangling piece of ribbon.
4. Next, tie one end of the embroidery floss in a knot at the base of the hanging loop.
5. Working clockwise, stretch the embroidery floss to a spot a few inches down the hoop and loop it around the hoop.
6. Stretch the embroidery floss a few inches to the right and loop it around the hoop again. Continue making loops that are evenly spaced apart until you reach the beginning. If your hoop is 3 inches (7.6 cm) in diameter, the traditional method is to make 8 loops around the hoop. The embroidery floss between the looped peaks should be slightly loose. It will be pulled tight as you continue weaving.
7. Take the end of the embroidery floss and weave it under the loop created between the first and second looped peaks.
8. Make a "hitch" by using the embroidery floss to make a loop over the loose embroidery floss. After making the first hitch, make another hitch at the embroidery floss between the second and third knots. Continue weaving the embroidery floss in this manner until you have made a hitch at the embroidery floss between every knot. Each hitch should fall at the exact midpoint of the embroidery floss between the knots. As you weave, pull the embroidery floss snug, but not too tight. After making the first row of hitches, continue weaving the embroidery floss between the new segments you have created and making a hitch in the middle of each one. The circle you weave will become smaller and smaller. As it becomes smaller, pull the embroidery floss tighter

Introducing this to the Child: The activity will initiate a discussion regarding the child's hopes and dreams for the future.

Time Needed: about 60 minutes

Materials Needed: 72 inches of ribbon, 3-inch and 8-inch metal hoops, embroidery floss, tacky glue, beads and feathers

and tighter. If you desire, add a few beads or gemstones to the dreamcatcher as you weave. Space them out randomly or create a pattern.

9. When you have woven the web down to a tiny circle in the middle, tie the end of the embroidery floss over the place where you would have made the final hitch. Make a double knot to ensure it won't come undone. Pull it tightly, and snip off the end.
10. If you wish to add an ornamental feather or two, tie a new piece of string securely around the base of a feather. Tie the other end of the feather to the center of the dreamcatcher over one of the hitches in the center circle. Use a double knot to make sure it's secure. Snip off the dangle embroidery floss on either end. You can add beads to the string after one end has been tied to the base of the feather before you secure it to the dreamcatcher. You can wrap the base of the feather in ribbon if you want to hide the knotted string. Brush the end of a piece of the ribbon with tacky glue. Hold it to the stem of the feather to let it dry for a minute. Wrap the stem of the feather, then trim the ribbon and glue the end to the base of the feather.

Processing:

The activity will help the child think about their hopes and dreams for the future including what type of family they hope to live with. No dream is too big!

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If you are a more visual learner, you can go to this website to see a demonstration on how each step looks: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Dreamcatcher>.

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going?

Developmental Age Range:

5 years and older

Emotions Frisbee

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Before you arrive at the session, choose several emotions to type or write on strips of paper. The emotions selected should be dependent on the developmental age of the child. The emotions may be simple ones for a younger child such as sad, mad, happy and silly. For older children and youth, select more complex emotions such as disappointed, frustrated and jealousy.

Tape the strips of paper around the outer edge of the Frisbee. At the session, explain to the child that you will be throwing the Frisbee back and forth. When the thumb of their catching hand lands on an emotion, they have to tell of a time they felt that way. If it makes the child more comfortable, you can tell of a time that you also felt that way.

Processing:

The activity allows the child to discuss their emotions in a relaxed way.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity works well with a sibling group. It can also be done as a family activity.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the child at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Frisbee, strips of paper with emotions written on them, tape

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Brittany Kline, The Children's Home of Pittsburgh & Lemieux Family Center

Emotions Scavenger Hunt

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Start by talking with the child about all of the emotions they can feel in one day. Make a list of the emotions the child would like to discuss more.

Start with the first emotion and give the child about 30 seconds to find something in their house that relates to the emotion. (For example, a child may choose sadness and select a picture of themselves and their birth father from when they were younger.) Repeat until the child has chosen an item for each identified emotion.



Processing:

For each emotion, talk with the child about why they chose the specific item and how it relates to the emotion. Take a picture of them with each item, and write why the item was chosen. Include each picture in their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed virtually. Screenshot the child with each item or ask the caregiver to take the pictures and send them to the worker.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be a fun icebreaker in getting to know a child. It can also be used if a child has a difficult time expressing their emotions.

Time Needed: 30+ minutes

Materials Needed: Camera, white lifebook paper and markers

Exclamation Mark!

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Begin by reading the first several pages of the book, pausing when you encounter a question mark. Ask the questions on the punctuation prompt page labeled CURIOUS. Together with the child, spend time writing or placing pictures on the punctuation prompt page marked FACTS. Periods on the page will contain factual descriptions of the child. (Some examples include eye color, favorite food and favorite class in school.)

Continue reading the book until you get to the page that says "Then." Pull out the COMMA punctuation prompt page and explain a comma is a sign for a pause or brief period of stopping. Take time to write and/or draw pictures that allows the child to share their past and how it has affected them. Take time to listen, ask questions and talk.

Continue reading the book until you get to the page that says "Look what I can do!" Pull out the FANTASTIC punctuation prompt page that contains the exclamation mark. Help the child write or place pictures on the exclamation mark that describe unique characteristics or abilities the child possesses. (Some examples include the child was able to work through a difficult situation, an activity they can perform well or a characteristic unique to the child that would be cause for exclamation!)

Finish reading the book. Give the child a piece of white cardstock paper and markers or paint. Ask them to trace or paint their handprint on the paper.

Processing:

Use their handprint to talk about their future and the opportunity they have to make their own mark (their handprint). Finish the activity by talking about how all these punctuation prompts will help them as they grow and have the opportunity to write their own story and make their unique mark (handprint) in the world.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time.

Time Needed: Several sessions

Materials Needed: The book *Exclamation Mark* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichenheld, punctuation prompts (in book), magazines, pencil, white cardstock paper, markers or washable paint

Family Collages

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Give the child several magazines to look through, and ask them to cut out pictures of families. These can include parents, siblings, pets or entire families. Once the child has cut out several pictures, have them sort the pictures into categories that describe what families are or what families do. Some examples are: family having fun together, families provide food and shelter and families care about each other. Have the child make a collage of each group of pictures and title each grouping such as "belonging," "safety" and "caring."

Processing:

As you and the child work on cutting, sorting and gluing, talk with the child about their concept of family and what "real" families are like. Point out that all families have rules and chores and that all families argue at times. Talk about how families define who belongs and what make the family members feel like they belong.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

A child can draw pictures or add stickers to their collages. Younger children may need help sorting and giving a title to the categories.

Introducing this to the Child: Use this activity when the child is ready to consider what family is and begins to see themselves as part of a family.

Time Needed:
Varies - may take several sessions

Materials Needed:
Magazines, scissors, glue, paper, markers and stickers

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Family Connections

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Talk to the child about things they enjoy and people they know. Talk about the ways they are different from some and how they share common bonds with others. Then, roll out the paper so it is larger than the child. Have the child lie on the paper and trace their outline.

Talk about who they connect with.

Family: Some will give the names of their birth family and foster family.

Friends: (Past or present.) Are they someone they can trust?

School: Where do they go to school? Who is their teacher?

Church: Do they attend a church? Has it always been the same? Do they participate in any activities there?

Sports or after school activities: Ask how long they have involved in the activity. Are they friends with the coach or instructor? Include their names.

After each category, write the name of the person or activity by the part of the body the child associates with that person or activity. For example, the family's name may go by the heart, soccer may be listed by the feet and art club may be listed at the child's hands.

Processing:

After each section discuss how the child made these connections and their importance to the child. This exercise can be used to help the child define who they are and who their supporters are. Reinforce these concepts throughout the activity.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Depending on child's age and the ability to express themselves, the people or activities identified by the child can be drawn instead of written.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be used after a relationship with the child has been established. Be sensitive when using this activity with a child who has been sexually abused.

Time Needed: About 1 hour

Materials Needed: Roll of paper, markers

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Family Jenga

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

Set up Jenga blocks as you would for a regular Jenga game. For each block a player pulls out, name something a family does for each other. When the tower falls, ask the child to imagine each block was an actual thing family members do for each other. Ask the child what happens when a family stops doing those things for each other. (When the blocks are removed, that represents that the family stopped doing those things.) The child will see that as the blocks are removed, the structure (family) becomes weaker. When enough blocks are removed, the tower falls (or the family begins to crumble and needs help to be rebuilt).

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: about 1 hour

Materials Needed: Jenga game

Processing:

The Jenga game provides a visual experience for a child to see what happens when family members do not help and support one another.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This game can be adapted to fit a variety of situations. Young children to teens can easily play Jenga and understand the concept.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Jill Schmidt, The Bair Foundation

Developmental Age Range:

3 years and older

Family Puzzle

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Makes Connections

Directions:

Create a puzzle in any shape using 2 pieces of poster board – one is the background you will glue the pieces onto, and the other is the puzzle itself. Make a piece for every person that the child considers to be a part of their family. Have the child and family members color their pieces. They can also draw pictures on the puzzle pieces or decorate them however they want to. Write the names on the puzzle pieces, and ask the child and caregivers to identify what makes each person special, and write that on the pieces as well.

Processing:

Talk about how like the pieces of a puzzle, each family member is different, but they fit together to make one big family/puzzle. For a younger child, help them put the pieces together and glue them onto the larger background poster board. Take a picture of the puzzle and include it in the child’s Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with a child at any time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Poster board, markers or crayons, scissors and glue

Questions Answered: When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Jen Stewart, Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC)

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Engage in a discussion with the child and members of their “family.” This could include their foster family, birth family or anyone the child views as being a member of their family. Ask the child to make a list of all the members of their family. For each person on the list, ask the child to choose a bead that represents each person. Then, have the child identify why they chose each bead. (You may want to write down the child’s responses.) String the beads into a necklace, bracelet or key chain. The finished product is something tangible that the child can keep close by to remind them of the people they care about and whom care about them.

Processing:

Inevitably, a discussion will arise about members of the “family.” Be prepared to actively listen and perhaps journal some of the discussion for the child. Talk about how all members are different, as is represented by the different bead choices, but they are all linked together as members of the child’s family.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can make additional pieces of “jewelry” as the child identifies more family members or when a permanency family is identified.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used early in the process as part of getting to know the child and/or it can be used later when the child is learning about a potential adoptive family.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours

Materials Needed: Variety of beads, stringing material, writing utensils

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Family Tree

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Talk with the children briefly about what makes a family. Discuss things such as being related by blood, living in the same house, making a commitment to someone else, etc. Emphasize during the discussion a common theme of families is they are united, support one another and love one another.

After this discussion, have everyone in the room (including caregivers who are important to the child) select a paint color. Once this is done, speak with the children about the people in the room and how they are all connected. Discuss the circumstances of the family (such as if siblings have different birth fathers or how a birth parent is part of a child's family even though they may not live together).

After this, bring out the blank tree paper. (The tree should consist of the tree trunk and branches; there should be no leaves on the tree.) Have each family member dip their thumb in the color of paint they selected and put thumbprint leaves on the tree. Also, have each individual place a thumbprint in the bottom left corner, and write the name represented by that color. At the end of the session, you should have a tree with many different colors of leaves representing each family member. This original tree can be framed and given to the family to keep somewhere special, while copies of the tree can be included in all of the children's Lifebooks.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is geared to be completed with siblings and family members, including foster family members the child views as permanent supports.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: blank tree, 1 paint color for each member of the family, markers and wipes to clean off messy thumbs

Processing:

Gear the conversation so the children realize that even though not everyone in the room has the exact same connection to one another, everyone in the room has made a commitment to love and care for one another and that's what makes a family.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If you are able to get other birth family members to place thumbprints on the tree at a later time, that is great! Some birth parents will do this during interviews for Child Profile questions, at supervised visits, etc.

If you are doing Child Preparation services with siblings placed in different homes, you can use the Family Tree activity to show a connection among the siblings. The tree can be used to show a child they are still connected to their family and are a part of their family even if the siblings do not reside in the same house.

*Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?
When Will I Know I Belong?*

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Talk about the different feelings a child may feel. Engage the child with examples of different feelings such as happy, sad, frustrated, excited, angry, comfortable, lonely, confused or surprised. Be prepared and have different feelings written down to offer suggestions. Explain to the child you will be taking a picture of them acting out each feeling. Have the child select several feelings they want to physically portray. The child may choose to demonstrate a facial expression or a full body demonstration of the feeling.

After the child has chosen the feeling and their physical expression of the feeling, write the feeling on a piece of paper or on a chalkboard. Have the child stand beside the word while acting out their chosen feeling and take a picture. You can also be creative with ways of helping the child enact their feelings such as using props or including other people.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 sessions

Materials Needed: Markers, paper, index card or poster board or chalkboard and camera

Processing:

Engage the child in conversation about each feeling such as when have they experienced this feeling before or circumstances that led them to have this feeling. When discussing negative feelings be sure to offer suggestions on how to cope with negative feelings. Include the pictures and their statements about the feelings in their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Some children may want to write the words themselves which allows the activity to be more personalized. If a child does not like their picture taken, drawing pictures of their feelings may be more appropriate. The child may prefer to make a collage using magazine clipping or other material to create their feelings. Video can also be taken of the feeling portrayals; some children may want to act out a scene that portrays a feeling.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Feelings Matching - Memory Game

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Prior to this activity, take pictures of the child showing different feelings/emotions such as happy, sad, scared, angry and surprised. If you are unable to take pictures of the child, you can use duplicates of the pictures you found of other children.

Cut out and mount the feeling/emotion pictures on individual index cards. Do the same thing with the pictures of other children or family members. If you are using pictures from the internet, make sure to include pictures of both boys and girls.

First, lay out the pictures of the other children or family members. Explain to the child what feeling/emotion each face is showing. Then, give the child a picture of themselves (one at a time) and have them match their feeling/emotion to that of the child in the picture.

Next, play "Memory" with the cards. This is a great cognitive exercise for young children, because the child isn't just matching two identical pictures, they are having to recognize the feeling/emotion in the faces and match it to the same feeling/emotion of the picture of their face.

For an older child, use this activity to help them identify how feelings and emotions are different. Explain the difference between a feeling and an emotion:

- Feelings can either refer to something experienced as a result of outside stimuli, such as reacting with one of the five senses or someone's sensibilities, attitude, or emotional perception. Feelings are experienced for short periods of time. If you touch a stove, it feels hot and you quickly remove your hand. Within minutes, you no longer feel hot. If someone jumps out from around a corner, you will feel startled, but that will soon pass. Feelings of excitement will subside after the awaited event is done.
- An emotion is technically a state of consciousness in which we experience various internal sensations. Emotion can be produced by a thought, memory, or external motivator and can often change one's physical state. Emotions are often long-term states. Love is an emotion that will usually last for years or forever. Sorrow too, takes a long time to go away. Because emotions are internal, you have to change your mindset to change your emotions, and this process takes time.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity helps a child to recognize their feelings/emotions.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: 8 index cards, 4 pictures of child showing different feelings, 4 pictures of other children showing same feelings

You could say that the biggest difference between feelings and emotions is that feelings are triggered by an external motivating factor and will go away when the motivating factor is gone. Emotions are completely internalized and will last until the person's mindset is changed. Emotions need to be worked out. If we constantly bottle up emotions, they can cause an emotional breakdown, or outburst.

Processing:

This activity helps a child to recognize the emotions of other people by observing their faces while also relating to that emotion by recognizing their own emotions in certain situations. This activity provides a positive opportunity to talk about what types of things make people happy and sad in a fun, interactive way.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This is also a great activity to do with the entire family. Make sure to take pictures of each family member displaying the same feeling/emotion. Then have the child match their feeling/emotion card to their family member's feeling/emotion card. Have the child and family member relay the feeling/emotion to a certain situation. Point out the similarities and differences. This helps the child form a sense of self-identity as well as helps them identify how they are a part of their family system.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Developmental Age Range:

5 years and older

Feelings Pizza

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Along with the child, make a list of feelings such as happy, sad, scared, frustrated, anxious and confident.

Have the child choose pizza toppings to represent a variety of feelings. Direct the child to explain a time when they felt each feeling as they place it on the pizza. This will encourage the child to talk about past memories of their family members, experiences, etc., as well as how they have dealt with each of the emotions.

Encourage family members and caregivers to join in on the activity and talk about emotions they have felt as well—the more people involved, the better!

Processing:

Explain to the child everyone has emotions and events in their life have impacted the way they feel, and that emotions can be layered just as they are represented on the pizza. You can expand this conversation appropriately, depending on the child's age and comprehension level.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The type of emotions can be more complex depending on the age of the child.

For older children, consider making a real pizza!

Introducing this to the Child: This is a great activity for children who have experienced trauma, have difficulty processing feelings or struggle with behavioral issues.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: colored construction paper (can be pre-cut into shapes of pizza crust and toppings)

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Rachel Beals and Lindsey Snow,
Family Pathways

Developmental Age Range:

3 to 14 years old

Flower Pot

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Help the child paint their hand with a color of their choice to represent a flower. Next, have the child place their hand on a blank piece of construction paper with fingers spread apart; this will represent the stems of a flower. While the paint dries, have child color the flower pot.

Once completed, ask the child to think of memories with loved ones and friends and have the child write them on the flower pot.

Next, have the child cut out the flower pot and glue it to the paper with their handprint. Using the base of the hand as a guideline, place the pot directly under it. Have the child stick foam flowers on the tips of the fingers. The child can include drawings of the sun, grass, or outdoor animals around the flower pot.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paint, construction paper, foam flowers, clipart of a flower pot, colored pencils and markers

Processing:

The overall theme of this project is to show the child their love for family and friends is always blossoming into something beautiful and special. Whether or not they are living with their birth family, they can still think of positive memories.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

To help younger children, you can write out the memories for them.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Gracious Shavers, Pressley Ridge

Freeing the Captive Heart

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Begin reading the book *The Heart and the Bottle* by Oliver Jeffers. When you reach the page where the girl sees an empty chair, pause. Ask the child to draw or write things that make them feel sad, confused or uncertain on the strips of paper and then fold them up.

Pull out the bottle and ask the child to place the heart in the bottle. Talk about how we often try to protect our heart from the hurt or grief we feel.

Demonstrate how, at this point, the heart can go into or come out of the bottle fairly easily.

Ask the child to place the strips of paper in the bottle. The strips will cover the heart. Show how it is now difficult, if not impossible, to get the heart out of the bottle. Set the bottle aside.

Continue to read the book until you come to the section where a young girl on the beach may be able to help with the dilemma of retrieving the heart from the bottle. Look at the bottle and ask if the child has an idea as to how to get the heart out of the bottle. Talk about what may or may not work to free the heart. By taking the papers out and talking about the sadness, loss, or concern, it allows the opening of the bottle to be clear enough to free the heart.

Processing:

This activity may need to happen over an extended period of time. Once the child has talked through their concerns, you can discard the papers.

When the heart is free to be removed from the bottle, give the child the heart and bottle as a symbol of having talked through the grief and loss they have experienced. Remind them it's important to talk through our sadness so our heart doesn't get stuck. The empty bottle can signify the heart is back where it belongs, and the bottle can be then used for another purpose like storing good memories!

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity addresses grief and loss issues for the young child.

Time Needed: May need several sessions

Materials Needed: *The Heart and the Bottle* book by Oliver Jeffers, clear bottle, small heart (that can fit through the opening of the bottle), strips of paper, pencil

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Getting to Know You - M&M Game

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Note: Preparation for the session will take between 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how many people are playing.

You can set up the game to work one of two ways:

1. Make six lists of random "getting to know you/ice breaker" questions, and write a color on top of each list. When a person (child or adult) picks an M&M, they must answer a question from the corresponding list.
2. Break the colors down into categories, such as red candy - hobbies, green candy - favorite foods, yellow - favorite things about themselves, orange - favorite movies, brown - most memorable moments, blue - wild card (they can share anything they choose). When each person takes a piece of candy from the bag, they have to answer a question that corresponds to the topic of the candy's color.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is a great ice breaker activity and allows everyone to learn about each other.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: M&Ms, 6 lists of random questions with a color code on the top of the paper.

Processing:

This activity can be completed during one of the first sessions. This ice breaker is a simple way to help introduce facts about each person. Write down the child's answers to include in their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

M&Ms are not safe to eat for children with peanut and/or tree nut allergies. You can also do this activity with other candies such as Skittles, Lifesavers, Jolly Ranchers or colorful Goldfish.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Ashlee Smochek, The Bair Foundation

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Prior to the session, make up a prompt sheet for the children to use during the scavenger hunt. The prompts can be made specifically for the children. Here are some possible prompts:

- Find something outside you all enjoy looking at.
- Find something you all find useful.
- Find something that is a color you all like.
- Find something that makes everyone happy.
- Find something everyone thinks tastes good.
- Find something everyone thinks smells amazing.
- Find something everyone in the family enjoys.
- Discover something new together.
- Find something that makes everyone feel safe.
- Listen to a beautiful sound.
- Find someone you are all grateful for.
- Find something that makes all of you laugh.
- Find something unique to each person.
- Find something in the night everyone enjoys.
- Find something in the morning everyone enjoys.
- Find an animal you enjoy spending time with.
- Find your favorite place to enjoy alone time.
- Find something that reminds you of people you love.
- Find something everyone likes doing outside.
- Find a place everyone loves to be.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with a sibling group as a bonding activity.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
Scavenger hunt prompts (see Directions), camera

Provide each sibling with a scavenger hunt sheet. Have each sibling take turns reading the prompts one at a time. After a prompt is read aloud, have the children discuss the prompt and come to an agreement regarding their response. Follow the children as they move through the home (inside and outside) to where the identified item is located, and take their picture with the item (or person). This procedure continues until all prompts have been answered. Later, you can print out the pictures and place them in each child's Lifebook.

Processing:

The children may need your assistance if they difficulty reaching a mutual answer. You can discuss any issues they may have had. The children can discuss what they had to do to reach an answer. For example, did someone have to compromise their answer, was one of the children overly bossy or did the children work together or separately? Point out what the children have in common and what is unique about each child.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity is designed as a sibling connection activity. It can be modified to be done with a single child by changing the prompts. They can be modified to be more simple or complex and adapted to different age ranges.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Guess the Sound

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child's identified resource family to record/video common sounds that occur in their home. Some examples are the door bell, telephone ringing, children laughing, father snoring, vacuum cleaner running, dog barking, etc.

Play the recording/video for the child and ask them to identify what they are hearing.

Processing:

Talk about each sound and help the child identify what the sound is. Have the child close their eyes and relax while you play the recording again without stopping. Discuss the sounds with the child and answer their questions. Ask the child to draw a picture of their home and what it looks like (or might look like if they haven't been there). Be sure to encourage the child to include his or herself in the drawing.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Supplement the recorded sounds with a picture of what or who is making the sound. For younger children and those with developmental delays, ask the current caregivers to play the recording for the child on a regular basis so they become familiar with the sounds they will hear in their new home. Prospective family members can read books on the recording/video and this will help a child become familiar with the various voices of their "new" family.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed prior to a child's placement in a new home. It's a great way to help a younger child become familiar with the environment of a new home and helps them know what to expect when they are placed.

Time Needed: 1 to ½ hours

Materials Needed: Cell phone to record/video, camera (optional), photo album (optional)

Questions Answered: When Will I Know I Belong?

Habitats and My Home

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Prior to the session, divide a Lifebook page into three sections using the colored construction paper: dark blue (water), green (land) and light blue (sky). Glue the construction paper on to the Lifebook page.

On a blank Lifebook page, draw an outline of a house.

Then, look through the animal search book and engage the child by discussing the animals, their habitats, what they like to eat, etc. Give the child the Lifebook page divided into the water, land and sky. Explain there are thousands of different kinds of animals living on the earth, and each one is unique and special.

Give the small animals to the child and ask them to place each animal in their habitat: a fish is in the water, a giraffe is on land and a bald eagle is in the sky. (Note: include the flying animals in the sky.) Explain that some animals can live in more than one place, such as a hippopotamus, which can live in water and on land. Discuss how some animals can only live in one place; a whale cannot survive outside of the water and a dog cannot fly in the sky.

Give the child the Lifebook page with the outline of a house. Explain that animals have their own habitats that make them feel safe and healthy, and people need a habitat or a home to make them feel safe and stay healthy too. Discuss how the size of a home doesn't matter, and people need a home that keeps them safe. Explain that most homes include a roof and walls to protect from the weather, food to eat, etc. Ask the child to make their "home" using the outline page. The home can be one from the past, the home they currently live in or one they wish they lived in.

Processing:

Help the child identify what makes their home feel like a home and what they like about it. Talk about how a family provides for them and keeps them safe by having locks on the doors and windows, safety gates, fences, car seat, outlet covers, etc. The child can add stickers, draw people in their house and color it, if desired.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Variety of small plastic animals, stickers, markers, crayons, construction paper, blank Lifebook pages, glue, an animal habitat book such as *The Great American Animal Search* by Ian Jackson

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Any animal book about animal habitats can be used. Make sure the book talks about a variety of animals and their habitats.

Be mindful about using this activity if a child has experienced homelessness in the past.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Heart Pocket

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Create a pocket (you can have it ready ahead of time or help the child make it) with 2 hearts made from construction paper. Glue the bottom of the 2 hearts together, but leave the top open. Make several more small hearts from various colors of paper. The small hearts will represent all of the people the child loves.

Tell the child the heart pocket is their heart, and they will be putting all of the people they love into their heart. When the child names each person, write it on the smaller hearts and have the child put the smaller hearts into the heart pocket one at a time. The child can decorate the heart with pictures or stickers when they are finished putting people inside. Talk about how they have enough room in their heart for everyone (birth family, foster family, adoptive family, etc.) and room for even more. Take a picture of the heart pocket and include it in the child's Lifebook, along with a description of all the people they included in their heart.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the child at any time.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Colored construction paper, glue, markers, scissors and stickers

Processing:

The activity helps a child, especially a young child, see they can love several people at the same time. Their heart has no limit to the number of people they can hold inside it. Let the child keep the heart pocket, and suggest that they take the hearts out to remember all of the people they hold close. A resource parent can help a young child to remember their love for their birth parent and family members even when they do not live together.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None noted

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Developmental Age Range:

3 years and older

Heart Strings

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Cut out a large heart about the size of a full sheet of construction paper. Cut several little hearts with room to write names on them. Cut ribbon to various lengths. Place the child's name in the center of the large heart with the letter stickers.

Have the child think about and name all the people they love. On each little heart, the child can write the names of the people they will love or who will love them no matter where they go in life.

After all the little hearts are completed with names of loved ones, tape ribbon to the back of each little heart with some extra ribbon room to spare. Then, tape the other end of the ribbons to the back of the big heart so the little hearts cascade down from the big heart. An extra ribbon can be added to the back of the big heart for hanging.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Red or pink construction paper, red ribbon, tape or glue, markers and letter stickers

Processing:

This activity will allow you to discuss many topics. The child can identify their birth family members whom they love and/or whom love them. Resource family and friends can be identified. Allow for pets to be named as well. Prompt a discussion about the love that can be forever held in a heart; one can never have too many heart connections, so don't be afraid to add everyone the child names.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Barbara Hicks, Children's Home of Reading Youth and Family Services

Developmental Age Range:

5 years and older

I am...

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to select 2 colors for their tie-dye project. One color will represent their birth family, and the second color will represent their resource family. Use the 2 colors and make a traditional tie-dye T-shirt with the child, following all basic tie-dyeing instructions.

Note: Be sure to have the child select colors that will blend together to create a third color such as yellow and blue blend together to make green.

Processing:

Once you complete the tie-dyeing, talk to the child about the colors on their shirt. The 2 colors will blend during the tie-dye process and create a third color. Discuss how the third color, which is the blended color, represents them.

When the shirt is completed, take a picture of the child in their shirt to create a lifebook page. Title the page "I am [Insert name of blended color]." Ask the child to identify members of their birth and resource families who are important to them and list them on the lifebook page with their assigned color. Discuss the significance of the how 2 colors creating 1 color relates to their permanency and who they are.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can typically purchase a complete tie-dye T-shirt kit that contains all of the materials needed for this activity.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 2 sessions

Materials Needed: Cotton T-shirt, tie-dye colors, rubber gloves, rubber bands, plastic grocery store bag

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Natasha Seasoltz, Pressley Ridge

Kids Need to be Safe

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

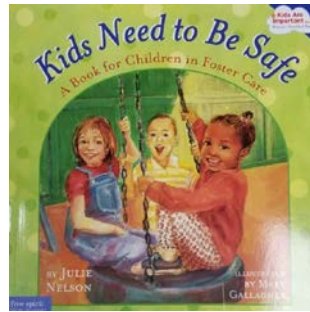
Read the book *Kids Need to be Safe* to the child. Different props can be used to further explain the message in the book.

For a younger child, place a **teddy bear** on the couch and describe to the child the bear was living with their birth parent(s). For example, the Bear family didn't have any food in their house and the young bear was hungry and not safe. Move the bear to the other side of the couch and explain the bear had to move to a new home with their resource parent(s) to keep them safe. Explain the bear will stay with their resource parents until their birth parent(s) can safely take care of them. Reinforce that this has to happen because the bear is important and needs to be safe. Remember to intertwine details of the child's story into the bear's story.

Another option to illustrate the safety concept to the child is to wrap a **blanket** around the child and highlight how the blanket is a covering that keeps them warm and cozy. Continue to explain to the child how a resource parent(s) wraps the child in the arms of their family, keeps them safe and provides them with food, clothes and a bed to sleep in.

For an older child, show them an **umbrella** and explain how it shields people from things such as rain, snow and hail. Connect this to what the resource parent(s) is doing for the child by keeping them safe and protecting them while the child is in their home.

You could also use a picture of a guard rail to explain to an older child how it is in place to not fence them in, but rather to offer a way to direct them and keep them safe. This can help explain that their resource family is there to keep them on the right path and although they may get off course, the resource family is there to direct them back on the right path. Emphasize that the child is important, and that is the reason this is needed is to keep them safe.



Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed early in the Child Preparation process so a child can have clarity why they do not reside with their birth parent(s).

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: *Kids Need to be Safe* book by Julie Nelson, teddy bear, blanket or umbrella

Processing:

Throughout the activity, discuss the importance of keeping the child safe wherever they live. Remind them that if a child is living in a place where they are not safe, they may need to live with someone else until it is safe for them to return.

The props provide the child with a visual as they process the concept of safety. Take pictures of the child with the different props and include them in the Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If desired, the child can color a picture of a teddy bear or umbrella while the worker reads the book to them. The picture can be included in the child's Lifebook.

This activity can be adapted in other ways, all of which are up to the worker's imagination. *Kids Need to be Safe* allows for several ways to discuss safety. It is an extremely important message that every child needs to hear and know! The book also opens up other areas of discussion such as respect for birth parents, the importance of the resource parent(s), the need for the other legal workers (social workers, police officers, Guardian ad Litem (GAL), attorneys and judges). There is also a second book in this series, *Families Change*, which broaches the topic of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR).

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Kinship Coloring

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Let the child color pictures of the characters, and facilitate a discussion about how their caregiver is acting as their parent while their birth parent cannot care for them.

Processing:

Begin the discussion by pointing out that children sometimes have to live away from their birth parents. Explain that, while some children go live with a foster family (you can explain what a foster family is or read a book about foster care), other children often live with relatives or “kinship care.” While discussing the different types of kinship care, show the child pictures of characters that have lived with relatives. For example, Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, Spiderman, and Luke Skywalker all lived with aunts and uncles, Lilo lived with her big sister, and Huey, Dewey and Louie lived with their uncle, Donald Duck.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The activity can be easily be adapted for a child who is not placed in kinship care. Some fictional characters who lived with non-kinship families include Superman, Princess Leia, Buddy the Elf and Annie.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed when discussing the child’s placement.

Time Needed: About 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Coloring pages (can be found online) of characters such as Dorothy (Wizard of Oz), Spiderman, Lilo (Lilo & Stitch) and Huey, Dewey and Louie (Donald Duck)

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Life Path

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Using the roll-out paper, trace one set of the child's feet for each place they have lived. As you go, talk with the child about where they lived and who they lived with. Ask them to share any memories they have from the placement.

Processing:

Write the dates, family names, locations and memories next to each set of footprints. Take a picture of each set of footprints and create pages in the child's Lifebook to represent the different places they have lived.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Instead of tracing the child's feet, you can use paint to make their actual footprints.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Roll-out paper, markers and crayons

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Jen Stewart, Three Rivers Adoption Council (TRAC)

Love and Respect Meter

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Make a meter on a piece of paper by drawing a half-circle. Write the numbers 1 through 10 in the curved part of the meter. Draw a large dot in the middle of the flat line. Label the meter as appropriate, either "Love" or "Respect" at the top of the meter. Depending on the child, you may need several copies of each meter.

Using a scale of 1 (least) to 10 (most), ask the child to draw an arrow indicating how much they love or respect the person you are discussing (birth parent, sibling, resource parent, caseworker, etc.) and to write an explanation of why they selected that number. Some children may write 2 numbers - a low number if they are currently upset with the identified person and a higher number where they would typically rate this person.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time with any child.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons, markers or colored pencils

Processing:

The child's answers will typically show their feelings toward others without having to probe for additional information. The feelings expressed by the child usually correspond to the score they give. A child will not give a high score if they do not have positive things to say about the person.

To help the child distinguish between love and respect, it is suggested that "love" be used when talking about family members and the word "respect" be used when discussing friends, workers, teachers, etc.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For a younger child, you may need to write the child's answers for them.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened to Me?

Developmental Age Range:

5 to 14 years

M&M Icebreaker

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Tell the child you are interested in getting to know them better. Ask them to take a handful of candy. You do the same. Separate the candy into piles by color. Ask them to name some different feelings. For each color of candy, specify a feeling. The number of candies the child has for each color determines how many things they have to share. If a child has 4 blue candies, they share 4 things that make them sad and so on. Go back and forth between yourself and the child. Talk about the things they are sharing. In the end, eat the candy!

Processing:

Some children may not be open to talk about their feelings initially. Allow them to decide what they want to tell you about themselves. This activity can be flexible.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For children with peanut and/or tree nut allergies, you can use other candies or snacks such as Skittles, Lifesavers, Jolly Ranchers or colored Goldfish.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: M&M candy, paper and markers

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Erica Massella, Family Services of NW PA

Developmental Age Range:

5 years and older

Marshmallow Tower

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Put the marshmallows where everyone can reach them and give each person toothpicks or raw spaghetti noodles to use.

Tell the child that the goal is to build the tallest tower they can, using only marshmallows and toothpicks or raw spaghetti noodles. If siblings and/or other family members are participating, instruct everyone to work together as a team to build the tower. Encourage communication and support among the participants.

Processing:

Engage the child and other participants in a discussion about how family members support each other. Ask questions such as: What is something a child can do to help a sibling? How does a child let their family know they need support? What are the ways family members show they support each other? Questions can be tailored to the child's situation.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None noted

Introducing this to the Child: This is a good activity to do with siblings or a child and parent(s). It can also be done with just the child and worker.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed:

Toothpicks or raw spaghetti noodles and marshmallows

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Christine Walter and Katie Hermann, Bethanna

Developmental Age Range:

3 years and older

Matching Game

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Select pictures centered on parents, children and families. Cut up the Manilla folders into 2 x 2 inch squares. Tape or glue each picture to a square. Make doubles of all the cards so each one has a match. Save the cards for future use.

Place all cards face down in rows. Players take turns flipping over 2 different cards to try to find a match. When a player finds a match, they have to say what the picture means to them, what it reminds them of or how it makes them feel (e.g., if a child matched a picture of a family eating dinner together, they can talk about what meal time was like in other homes they lived). After each successful match, the player gets to try for another match. If they do not get a match, it is the next player's turn. Continue on until all of the cards are gone.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is a great icebreaker for any child.

Time Needed: 1 session

Materials Needed: Manilla folders, clip art pictures (double of each picture), tape or glue

Processing:

Many children are tired of telling their stories. This activity is a great way to get to know them and get information without being intrusive. It is also a good activity because the child feels some control over the information they share.

Repeat this activity again later in the Child Preparation process. Chances are the child's answers will be more revealing than the first time they played.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If a child is reluctant to share information about themselves, this is a subtle way to get to know more about them. A worker can play the game as well. This will allow the child to learn more about the worker and begin to build a relationship.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: The Institute for Human Resources and Services, Inc.

Message to Heaven

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

As often happens when a loved one dies, the child may not have had the opportunity to say everything to the person they wanted. Many children believe in Heaven and it is “in the sky.” If a child holds these beliefs, let them know this activity is a way to communicate with their loved one. (This may be especially helpful for younger children who need something tangible other than “prayer.”)

Talk with the child about someone close to them who has died. Talk about things they remember about the person and what they were told happened to the person. If the child is younger, their current caregiver can be involved in the conversation as well.

Ask the child to write a letter (or draw a picture) to the loved one. Roll the letter or drawing and tie it to the helium balloon. Tell the child to release the balloon into the air. If the loved one’s gravesite is near, this can be the place for the balloon launch.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is for the child who has experienced the death of a loved one.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Helium balloon with long string (about an adult’s arm length), paper and writing utensil

Processing:

This activity helps the child understand it is ok to talk about loved ones who have died.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity may not be useful with a child who does not believe in “Heaven” and life after death. A discussion with the county worker and child’s current caregivers is recommended prior to introducing this activity to the child.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

2 to 5 years old

Mindful “Belly” Breathing

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Play the YouTube video "[Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat - 'Belly Breathe' with Elmo](#)" for the child. Let them dance and sing along as they watch it. They may want to watch the video a few times!

When the video is over, tell the child they are going to make something that will help them practice belly breathing, and they can do it when they need to calm down. Explain to the child they are going to make a pinwheel, and open the craft kit. Let the child color the paper for their pinwheel however they like, and help them assemble it.

Processing:

Talk with the child about how they feel or what they notice about themselves when they are having big feelings. Help them identify feelings that can be 'big' and make them feel dysregulated. Try to get them to name times, things, thoughts, people, places or situations that cause them to have big feelings. Validate, normalize and/or answer any questions the child mentions.

After the video, talk about how Elmo seemed to be feeling and how he looked different before and after belly breathing. Have them practice using their pinwheel and make plans for when they might need to belly breathe. While they are coloring their pinwheel, talk about their favorite colors or how awesome their designs are!

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Instead of making a pinwheel, you can use bubbles if the activity would be too difficult for the child.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the child any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Access to YouTube video "Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat - 'Belly Breathe' with Elmo," a Pinwheel craft kit and crayons/markers

Note: *You can order pinwheel kits online in bulk or purchase them at a craft store. There are online instructions available to make a pinwheel; however, craft kits are the easiest!*

Submitted by: Rebecca Haling, Every Child, Inc.

Mine and Yours

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Make a family map by drawing 2 circles on a piece of paper. In the first circle, write the following:

- Kid's Job
 - Have fun!
 - Care for your body
 - Be a kid

In the second circle, write the following:

- Adult's Job
 - Get and keep a safe place to live
 - Get or stay healthy
 - Protect their children

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can help a child understand why they are in placement and clarify what they can do to stay healthy.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper, markers and family map (included in directions)

Processing:

Talk with the child about the work it takes for everyone to stay healthy and make good choices. Discuss how adults need to work on taking care of themselves and their children, and as a child, their job is to provide self-care, have fun and be a kid.

Talk with the child about the different people and places that can help an adult and a child with their jobs. Place the words Mind, Spirit, Body, Feelings and Being a Kid around the first circle. Work together with the child to identify activities that they can do for themselves under each category.

This activity can help a child understand what they and their family members can do to take care of themselves.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can make the family map on a computer prior to the session.

If they are known, the adult's (birth parent) specific goals could be placed around the adult circle. Older youth could use a journal to continue to document their thoughts and ideas about what they can do for themselves. A younger child can use dolls to represent a child and parent and act out some of the identified activities.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

My Rainy Day

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

On the top of a blank sheet of paper, have the child draw a large rain cloud. On the bottom of the page, have the child draw an umbrella. In between the rain cloud and umbrella, have the child draw large rain drops (as many as desired - 3 is the suggested amount) and a bolt of lightning reaching from the cloud to the umbrella. If the child is younger, you can create this picture prior to the session. Once the picture is complete, have the child write inside the rain cloud what they identify as their greatest problem or challenge in life.

Next, have the child identify 2 or 3 obstacles that stop them from being able to fix their problems or overcome their challenges, listing these obstacles in the raindrops. If they have more than 3 obstacles, they can add more raindrops as needed.

Next, ask the child to identify things that "protect" them from the obstacles or make it easier to cope with them. List those inside the umbrella. Inside the lightning bolt, ask them to identify at least one thing that makes it hard for them to use their "umbrella" of skills. Underneath the umbrella, ask them to identify who can help them hold up their umbrella (their supports).

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Sheet of paper (8" x 11" or larger if desired), pen, crayons or markers

Processing:

At the end of the activity, discuss the importance of using their supports and coping skills to move past the identified problem(s). This activity can help the child vocalize what things would look like without the obstacles they identified.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For younger children, adapt the language when discussing coping skills and supports by asking them, "What do you do to feel happy when you are sad?" "Who helps you feel happy?" etc.

Questions Answered: How Will I Get There?

My Safe House

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Start a discussion about what feeling safe means. Then, give the birdhouse to the child and explain that they are making a "safe house." The child can use markers or paint to color their birdhouse in any way they want. Once the house is dry, the child can add small decorations to their house.

Processing:

As the child is working on painting/decorating their birdhouse, talk with them about what makes them feel safe. Either you or the child can write the answers on the outside of the birdhouse once the paint is dry. Depending on the child's current living situation, you can ask the child what makes them feel safe in their current home.

If the child is open to it, you can ask them to talk about times in their past when they did not feel safe.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity may take more than one session if paint is used.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours

Materials Needed: Wooden birdhouse, markers, paint, paintbrush, glue and assorted small decorations.

**Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?
What Happened to Me?**

My Sss-Support System

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

On a blank piece of paper, draw a picture of a snake using a colored marker. Using a black marker, draw 5 to 7 circles anywhere on the snake's body. The circles can be outside the snake's body as well. (You can also let the child do this on their own.)

For a younger child, explain what a support system is in words they can understand, as this may not be a term they are familiar with. Ask them to name the people who support them and identify how they help them. For each person that the child names, write their name and how they help in one of the circles. Repeat for all of the names given by the child. (You can add more circles if needed.)

For an older child, the process is the same, but you can facilitate a more in-depth discussion about their support system. Ask them to think about how a person has been there for them and supported them. Ask them to identify qualities the person has that makes them a good support person.

Once the circles are filled in, the child can color the snake. Add the picture to the child's Lifebook.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at the beginning of the Child Preparation process to help build a rapport with the child.

Time Needed: 20 to 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Blank paper, crayons or colored pencils and markers

Processing:

While the child is completing the activity, discuss the purpose of this activity is to show them their connections and people in their life that love and care about them. Remind the child everyone needs people to support them even though the levels of support may be different.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Developmental Age Range:

All ages

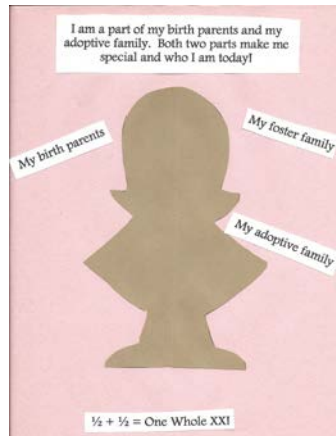
Nature vs. Nurture Paper Doll

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

Trace or draw an outline of a paper doll on a white piece of paper. Cut the paper doll out and glue it onto a piece of colored construction paper.

Using the white paper, make headings to place on the construction paper. The top heading should state "I am part of my birth family and my resource family. Both parts make me special and who I am today!" At the bottom of the doll cutout, add " $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = \text{One Whole}$ [insert child's name]" Headings can be added to each side of the doll cut-out. One side should state "My Birth Family" and the other side should state "My Resource Family." Glue each one to the construction paper. Refer to the picture above for placement.



On one half of the construction paper, have the child write down traits they received from their birth family. Some of these traits are physical ones such as hair color, eye color, dimples and height. Other traits might include medical history, race, culture, siblings, talents and strengths.

On the other half of the paper, have the child write some things they receive from their resource family such as safety, a forever family, a home, pets, support, love, etc.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: White paper, piece of colored construction paper, scissors, glue stick and markers

Processing:

Discuss with the child how both their birth family and resource family have impacted their lives, and discuss the different things they have received from each family. Acknowledge the child's connections to each family.

This activity is a visual way to see how each family contributes to the whole child and what they have gained from nature (birth family) and nurture (resource family).

Submitted by: Gail Tranbaugh, Pinebrook Family Answers

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Depending on the child's situation, you can replace "resource family" with a more apt description, such as kinship family or adoptive family.

For a very young child, you can complete this activity for them, and their resource parents and birth parents can assist.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

On The Day You Were Born

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Begin by talking with the child and gathering the information they already know concerning their birth. Add the additional information from the child's birth records.

- Be sure to verify what the child believes they know with the county records. If this information is not included in the record, ask the caseworker to send for the birth records. At times, birth information is lost. If that is the case, try contacting a relative to determine the name of the hospital. A Release of Confidential Information form can be sent to the hospital to request the child's birth records.

Processing:

Allow time for the child to process their feelings concerning when they were born and what their early life was like. Accent positive aspects you may be aware of from the records, such as if their birth father was present at their birth or if their birth mother had prenatal care during her pregnancy. Talk about what the child believes their care was like or how they think it should have been.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

After recording the known information, you can arrange a visit to the hospital and take a picture for the child's Lifebook. There has been some success in visiting the maternity floor and helping the child get a sense of where they began their life. You can purchase a newborn outfit for the child to give them a sense of their size. Take a photo with them holding the outfit to show how much they have grown.

Introducing this to the

Child: After establishing a relationship with a child, you can begin to talk with them about what they know of their birth.

Time Needed: Varies with openness of child and situation

Materials Needed: Camera, Lifebook page to record information

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Paper Doll Houses

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Prior to the Child Preparation session, assemble the paper houses by cutting the poster board in squares. Cut roofs and doors out of colored construction paper. Glue the roof and doors onto each house. On the front of the house, add the name of the families the child resided with in the past and is currently residing with. Cut out the paper dolls for each individual that resided in the homes (foster mother, brother, cousin, child, etc.). Label each doll with the individual's name.

During the session, explain the child's placement history beginning with their birth parents' home and each subsequent placement. Discuss why the child moved from each home.

Processing:

As this activity continues, the child has the opportunity to move their doll from home to home. It is important to explain and show the dolls from each home to help the child remember whom they lived with.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity gives a young child a visual aid to help them understand their journey through placement.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed:

Poster board, construction paper, glue, scissors and paper dolls (can be found at various websites on the Internet)

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Parent Roles - Child Roles

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, prepare a list of child roles and parent roles. It is nice to use pictures from Google Images or clip art to further illustrate each role. Print out the various roles and cut them into individual pieces of paper so that each role is on a different piece of paper. Put each small piece of paper in a small paper lunch bag.

During the session, explain there are parent roles and child roles, and sometimes they get mixed up.

Discuss the importance of understanding clearly what are roles (or jobs) of children and what are roles (or jobs) of the parent. Use 2 pieces of paper. (Scrapbook paper can be used so the completed activity can be included in the child's Lifebook.) Designate 1 piece of paper for the parent roles and the second piece of paper for the child roles.

Ask the child to pick a paper out of the bag. Either have them read it or read it aloud to them. Then, ask them to put the role on the correct paper.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Glue, scrapbook paper, pre-made example of parent and child roles and paper lunch bag

Processing:

Have a conversation with the child about each role they have picked and give assistance if the child is unclear about where the role belongs. Some roles may be placed on either paper – make sure to have 2 of each of these roles in the bag. After all of the roles have been picked from the bag, have the child glue each role to the appropriate paper and add the papers to their Lifebook.

Some examples of parent roles: getting food for the family, making meals and having a safe home for the family.

Some examples of child roles: going to school, telling an adult who they trust when they feel upset and completing their homework.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

People I've Known

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Start by asking the child to identify people who have been important in their life, such as previous resource parents, siblings, extended family members, teachers, therapists, caseworkers, friends, etc. Also, gather information from current people whom the child is close with and from case records. Contact these people to ask if they would be willing to contribute to the child's Lifebook. This can be done by letter for previous resource parents and people who knew the child in their early history. Each person you contact should decide on their own contribution, but you can offer suggestions like a letter to the child, meeting the child in person, pictures, and/or spending time reminiscing.

This information can be included in many different ways. For example, the child may want to make a page for each person stating their name, where and when they knew them and any memories they have of the person and the time the child spent with them.

Processing:

When addressing the question of "Who Am I?" you can talk to the child about the things they have learned from each of these people or the impact the person had on their life. This may need to be prompted more for a younger child or a child with limited insight. This activity can literally fill in the missing pieces of "What Happened To Me?" by simply identifying the important people who were a part of the child's story. Similarly, by using the knowledge and experience of the people who are in the child's life at the time, you can start to answer "Where Am I Going?".

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be done with every child and can be done at any time. It is intended to put together some missing pieces of the child's history, as well as give some closure to relationships that did not end well or have formal good-byes.

Time Needed: Several sessions in total

Materials Needed: Phone for pictures and videos, child's history (names, addresses and phone numbers of important people), paper, markers, crayons, glue/tape and various craft items for decorating Lifebook pages (optional)

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If you do not get a response from the people you have contacted, you can simply talk to the child about these individuals, reminding them about their time together and asking the child to tell you what they remember about each person. While not as effective, it can still be helpful for the child to recall those who have been significant in their life.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Purchase a puzzle kit or similar product. Then, take photos of the child/youth alone and also with their family or siblings. Use a computer to print the photos on transfer paper and iron the transfers onto the puzzle pieces following the directions in the kit.

Processing:

Introduce the activity with the child/youth by talking about ways their “pieces” make them special, and explain that the purpose of the activity is to make a puzzle of them. Help the child/youth decide where the photo is taken, what they will wear and who will be in the photo on the puzzle. (Some puzzle kits come with 2 puzzles, so one can be done with the child/youth alone and one with the child/youth and family or siblings.)

After the puzzle is completed, ask the child/youth to take the puzzle apart, and use the process of putting the pieces back together to discuss what makes them happy, sad, etc. Ask them to tell you where their eye color came from, or discuss other features that make them special. Do the same thing with the puzzle that includes family or siblings. While doing this puzzle, have the child/youth talk about how the parts fit together. If they struggle with getting pieces to fit, talk about how sometimes things don’t always fit well. Sometimes a puzzle tears while being worked on; talk about how it’s sad, but still fixable.

Print an extra copy of the picture on photo paper for the child/youth to have. The photo may also be framed. Ask the parents/caregivers to work with the puzzle between sessions and allow the child/youth to talk about frustrations.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Use whatever feelings this activity evokes with the child/youth.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used on many different levels. It can be used after working with the child/youth, especially after talking how it is okay to have feelings for more than one family. It can also be used in dealing with siblings and how they get along. Be creative!

Time Needed: One session needed to take photos; about 1 hour at a different session (after puzzle is made) to process and talk about the puzzle, taking pieces apart and putting them back together.

Materials Needed: Picture puzzle of original picture (can be purchased at craft store or ordered online)

Popsicle Family

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Explain to the child they will be making a house for each place they have lived. Start with the first home they lived in and move in chronological order to their current home. If the child wants to, the last home can be where they hope to live one day.

For each house made, open the envelope so it looks like the shape of a house. Have the child decorate the house. Glue the envelope onto the colored paper. Next, have the child decorate the Popsicle sticks: one for themselves, one for each person they consider a part of their family while they lived in that house. Add the Popsicle stick family members inside the envelope/house.

Processing:

Depending on the number of homes the child has lived, there may be a single house or several houses.

After completing the house(s), take out the Popsicle stick family members from each envelope. Ask the child to share a memory they have of each family member. If the child doesn't recall any, suggest some things the person might have done for them while they lived in the home. For example, an older sibling might have played games with them or read them a story or a resource parent would have feed them a bottle and kept them safe. Be prepared a child may share some sad or difficult memories.

If the child chooses to make a house where they hope to live one day, you can ask the child what each Popsicle stick family member needs to do to make it possible for the family to be together one day.

A fun way to end the session is to share a box of Popsicles with the child and current family.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed after the worker has established a relationship with the child.

Time Needed: 1 to 1 ½ hours

Materials Needed: Sheets of colored paper, white business envelopes (No. 10), large Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors, markers and glue

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Positive Memory Chain

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to select three different colors of construction paper. Cut each paper into strips lengthways, and sort by color. Ask the child to select a color to represent the past, one to represent the present and one for the future.

Ask the child to think of some positive memories they have before their out-of-home placement. The memories can include feelings, activities, vacations, etc. The child should write the memories on the strips representing the past. Repeat the same for positive memories from the present. For the third color, ask the child to name some positive goals they have for the future.

Create a chain by looping the strips and gluing them together. You can loop each color in order or mix the colors together.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed once the child and worker have established a relationship.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Various colors of construction paper, glue, scissors and markers

Processing:

When the chain is put together, talk about the positive memories they have had and those that are yet to happen. The chain serves as a visual reminder of memories they may have forgotten or goals they want to achieve. Take a picture of the child with their chain to include in their Lifebook. Hang the chain where they can see it daily.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For a younger child, you will have to write down the memories. To involve a younger child more, have them draw a picture on the strip of paper to represent each memory.

When completing this activity with an older child, you can involve both positive and negative memories and help the child process why it was a positive or negative memory.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Developmental Age Range:

5 to 12 years

Roadway Life Map

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Talk to the child about their life, the important people, significant events, times they felt scared, sad, angry, happy, unsure (bumpy), etc. Introduce the roadway and explain how this can be the roadway of their life. Help them design the roadway to fit their timeline and story. If the child is old enough, let them glue on the clip art signs and photos where they feel it is appropriate. If the child is not developmentally able to do this, you can assist them. This activity can also allow the child to try and begin planning for the future – the future roadway.

Processing:

This activity allows the child to talk about their life experiences, timelines, feelings, fears, important people, etc. The Child Profile can be referenced for details surrounding timeline and the child's placement(s).

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be tailored to suit the child's age and developmental stage. It can be revisited throughout the Child Preparation Unit of Service.

Introducing this to the Child: Prior to introducing this activity, the worker should have a rapport with the child.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour (may need more than 1 session)

Materials Needed: Child Profile, pre-designed roadway or pieced together road, paper, pens, markers, crayons, stickers, photos and clip art road signs such as bumps, cars, trucks, smoke, traffic lights and hills

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Submitted by: Misti Lehman, Lisa Richards and Kristin Walters, The Children's Aid Home Programs of Somerset County, Inc.

Roll of the Dice

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

On one of the whiteboard dice, write different feelings such as love, grateful, worry, sad, scared and happy. On the second dice, write the names of people in the child’s life such as mom, dad, siblings, aunts/uncles, resource parents or grandparents. (Note: The writings on each dice should be customized to the child and their situation.)

Have the child roll both dice for different combinations of people and feelings, and ask them to discuss what they roll. For example, “tell me a worry you have about your mom” or “share a time your dad made you happy.”

Processing:

Depending on the child’s needs, this activity can help them articulate their thoughts and feelings about different situations or concerns they may have. You can also emphasize positive things in their lives. You can shift the conversation in any direction based on what you write the dice.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can use the dice to discuss several different topics and people; the combinations are endless.

If whiteboard dice are not available, you can use regular dice. To do this, just assign each number on the first die to a different feeling. On the second die, assign each number to a specific person.

For older children and youth, you can use multiple dice or dice with more than six sides.

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Two whiteboard dice (can be purchased at dollar stores) and whiteboard markers

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to make a list of the people they have (or had) a strong connection with. (You can write the names for a younger child.) The list might include a birth parent(s), resource parent(s), sibling(s), extended family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, dance teacher, etc. Ask the child to select a color of sand to represent each person. Write the selected color of sand next to each name.

Ask the child who they feel the least connected to from their list. Add the colored sand to the container. Continue through the child's list (least connected to most connected) and add the colored sand to the container until the list is completed.

Introducing this to the Child: The activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Several colors of sand, paper, markers and different shaped plastic containers

Processing:

If the child has a strained relationship, encourage them to add a little sand to the container to indicate a willingness to work toward mending the relationship. Discuss how the sand mixes together to show that important people can remain in the child's life even when they are not together. Discuss positive memories that the child has with each person and what changes might need to happen to help mend a strained relationship.

Remember to include the list of people and a picture of the sand container in the child's Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Self-Esteem Mirror

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture of a mirror or have a picture already printed.

Next, have the child write some of their positive qualities or traits on the mirror. You may have to prompt the child by asking questions like, "How do you see yourself?" and "How do others see you?" Before meeting with the child, ask other people such as team members and birth or resource parents to share some positive words about the child. You can share these to write on their mirror. The more positive words you have, the better!

Describe a scenario where the mirror breaks. For example, say the child accidentally drops their mirror and it shatters, which could represent when they are having a bad day. Ask the child to talk about the people in their lives who can help them pick up the broken pieces of their mirror. Discuss what these people can do or say to help them feel better.

Processing:

This activity helps remind the child of the positive qualities they have and the people in their lives who are there to help them.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Instead of having the child draw a mirror, the worker can purchase a small mirror at a dollar store and have the child decorate the mirror using things like beads and sequins.

This activity can be virtually too. Tell the child to pretend they are looking in a mirror instead of the computer. Then, you can write down the positive qualities for them.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process. It is a good activity for a child who has low self-esteem.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Pens, paper, markers and crayons.

Optional: small mirror from a dollar store, glue and various small decorations

Sibling Charades

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Ask each child to think of memories they have with their sibling(s). It could be memories from a vacation, summer activities, holiday events or everyday life with their family. Make a list of each child's memories.

Decide which sibling will go first. Each child should act out a memory from their list not using any words. You might need to offer suggestions if the child is having a hard time acting out their memory. It's also helpful to be prepared with a list of things the children can act out in case they have a difficult time recalling memories. The other children can shout out what they think their sibling is acting out.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is designed for a sibling group and can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper and pencil

Processing:

Discuss the shared memories the children had together. In many cases, siblings have a different perspective of an event or forgot about something that happened. An older sibling may be able to share details of the event a younger sibling didn't remember. Point out some reasons why one sibling may know more than the other(s).

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed with the children's birth parents.

Activity can be completed virtually. You will need to talk with each sibling before the session to get a list of their memories so that you can help out if needed.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Sibling Placements

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past

Directions:

Make cutouts of houses from the cardstock paper. Create 1 house for each of the places the children have lived. This information can be obtained from the children, family members and each child's Child Profile. Label each house with the name and address of each home. You can add a picture of each family.

Lay each house on the floor in a life map pattern. The life map should follow each child's placement. If a sibling was separated from the others in a different home, place that home next to the sibling's home.

Explain to the children they started out in their birth parents' home (or wherever their first placement was) and show how they moved from 1 home to the next with their siblings. If there was a separation, ask the separated child to step to their separate home. When reunited, ask all the children to step back together on the home where they were reunited.

Processing:

With each step to another home, discuss how it felt to move to another home. Discuss memories of the resource family home. Discuss how each child felt about being placed together/separate/reunited. Explain to the siblings even though they did not live together in every home, they are still a family. Stress the importance of being together.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

When working with a younger child, you can make the house cutouts prior to the session.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is a sibling activity and can be completed once the worker has met with the children several times.

Time Needed: 1 hour

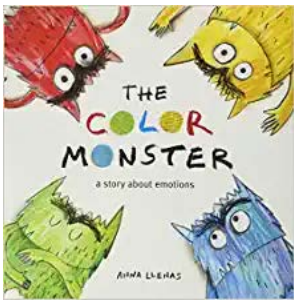
Materials Needed:
8.5" X 11" cardstock cutouts of houses, Child Profile and pictures of each family with whom children have resided (if available)

The Color Monster

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Read *The Color Monster: A Story about Emotions* book to the child. The book encourages the child to open up and discuss how they feel even when feelings can be confusing.



The book has discussion questions for the child to answer about identifying feelings. After discussing these, you can ask the child to draw their own version of a color monster.

Encourage the child to use different colors to represent the different feelings they feel inside.

Processing:

Talk with the child about the different emotions (feelings) they experience and how they deal with them. This activity may bring up emotions about the past, present and future, and it helps to encourage and normalize the wide range of feelings a child may have in an out-of-home placement.

Include the drawing in the child's Lifebook.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes or longer depending on discussion

Materials Needed: *The Color Monster: A Story about Emotions* book by Anna Llenas, drawing paper, crayons or markers

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed virtually. The book is available on YouTube, and there are different read-aloud versions available. Review the options prior to the session as some read-aloud versions are better than others.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Developmental Age Range:

3 to 10 years old

The Invisible String

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

Read *The Invisible String* book to the child. Discuss people they miss and still think about. Write each person's name down on a small heart that fits inside of a larger heart. Have the child draw houses for as many people that are in their large heart. Lay out all the houses, and place each heart in their appropriate house. Cut pieces of string and connect each small heart to the child's large heart to show they can always be connected by pulling on the invisible string, as discussed in the book.

Processing:

This activity helps the young child develop a visual representation of the connection to their birth parents and loved ones, even though they may not reside in the same house.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Pictures of the child's loved ones can be glued to the small individual hearts.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: *The Invisible String* book by Patrice Karst, paper hearts, paper houses, string, markers, pictures of people important to the child (optional) and glue

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Bethany Leas, Project STAR at The Children's Institute

The “Newly Familied” Game

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child’s Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Tell the child and family they are going to play a game to see how much they know about each other. Explain that the child (or whoever the questions will be asked about) will leave the room. Then, you will ask the other family members a series of questions, and they will write down the answers that they think the child would give. Once all questions are asked and answers are recorded, the child can return to the room.

Then, you will ask the child the same questions, and the child will state their answers aloud. One at a time, each family member will reveal their answer. Points can be awarded for correct answers. If the answers are similar, allow the family member to explain why they chose their answer, and let the child judge if the answer is correct.

You can base the questions on the child and family’s relationship. Perhaps the child is being reunified with their birth parent(s), being adopted by their resource family or was recently placed with a family. Here are some possible questions:

- What is your favorite...? (Snack, board game, holiday, color, etc.)
- If you could spend the day with a celebrity, who would you choose?
- If you had to eat one food for the rest of your life, what would you choose?
- How many bed pillows do you sleep with?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- If money was not an object, what would you buy first?
- If you could travel anywhere you wanted, where would you go?

Questions can go from easy to hard as the game progresses, and the questions can be funny or serious or somewhere in between!

The game can be played with any number of participants. Allow each participant to take a turn answering the questions. There are endless options to this game!

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with a child and their family (resource or birth) or a sibling group.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: List of questions (see Instructions), paper and pen/marker

Processing:

The purpose of the activity is for the family members to learn more about each other and strengthen their connections. This will occur naturally as the game is played and the participants laugh at each other's answers or discuss why they had a different answer.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed virtually via Zoom. Use the Chat feature to have the family members share their answers with you before the child answers the questions.

*Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?
When Will I Know I Belong?*

Developmental Age Range:

4 to 12 years old

Things that Make Me Strong

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Start by introducing the rules of the game Kerplunk. As you are setting up the game, ask the child (or children) to take turns placing sticks in the tower. Each time the child places a stick, ask them to identify something that makes them feel strong. If the child cannot think of something, you can provide choices or give examples, such as talking to a trusted family member or another adult, coping skills, healthy eating, exercising, practicing self-care, being kind or giving hugs.

Once all of the sticks are in place, give the child the marbles to put in the tower. Each time a marble is added to the game, ask the child to name a stressor in their life. Some possible answers could include going to a new school, doctor's appointment, being sick, trying new things, making new friends or missing family members.

Once the game is done, have the child color a superhero mask or coloring sheet while you process the activity with the child.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed once the worker has developed a rapport with the child. It can be played with more than one child at a time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Kerplunk (game), superhero coloring sheets or superhero mask and markers

Processing:

Explain that the sticks represent the supportive people in the child's life, and those people help them to be strong even when there are stressors present. Explain that the marbles represent the stressors in their life. Point out how one stick alone cannot hold up the marbles; however, when multiple sticks are added, they are strong enough to hold up, even with the stress still present. This example represents how the child needs to have things that help them be strong such as coping skills, supportive people, family and workers to help them handle stressors in life. Help the child process that part of being strong is being able to talk about their emotions and ask for help.

Submitted by: Julie Wagoner, The Bair Foundation

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can also incorporate the book "*Finding your Hero: A Book about Succeeding as a Foster Child*" by Dr. Jamie Schwandt into this activity. The book talks about how it can be difficult for a child to come to a new foster home and miss their birth parents. The child has "superheroes" (like coaches, teachers, resource parents and workers) who can help them be strong. While reading the book, talk about how the child can be a superhero too by talking about their feelings and being strong.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? How Will I Get There?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Using computer graphics or graph paper and a ruler, draw a rectangle approximately 1½" by 6" across the top of the page. Divide the rectangle into ½" boxes, creating 12 squares that each represent one month of the child's life. Repeat this down the page until there are enough "months" to cover the child's entire life. Next, label the months by year. Using a different color for each change in placement, color and label the number of blocks that represent each of the places the child has lived.

Processing:

Creating a timeline with the child gives you the opportunity to correct misinformation and clarify the sequence of events regarding the child's placements. As you discuss the timeline with the child, listen to how they remember things, and gently replace the inaccuracies with the facts clearly displayed by the dates and colors you have prepared. Use this time to gather information about people and places the child remembers. Talk about why the child thinks some placements lasted longer and what happened in those that were shorter or ended quickly. Discuss any patterns you note and what may have contributed to the development of those patterns.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The dates and name of each placement can be added to the timeline prior to the session. The child can color the different sections as you process the information together.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be introduced when the child's behavior indicates they are ready for this information. It's best to complete the timeline after the "Life Map" activity.

Time Needed: At least 2 hours

Materials Needed: Child's placement history, markers, graph paper, ruler or computer

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Walk of Life

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Put newspapers down and place the blank paper on top. It is easiest if you have the child sit in a chair and use a paper towel to apply the paint to their feet one at a time. Then, have the child stand up and place their foot on the blank paper. Repeat with the other foot. You can wash the child's feet off with the water and extra paper towels. After the paint has dried, cut out the footprints and mount them on the craft paper. Decorate the paper, identifying the date on the page. Repeat this activity using the child's baby feet photocopy and mount them to a separate piece of paper.

→ Note: It is best to do this activity outside because it is messy.

Processing:

This activity easily addresses the questions "Who Am I?" and "What Happened To Me?" by acknowledging and validating the child's life story and experiences. This activity, along with the "Places I've Been" activity, will likely generate discussion about the child's removal from their birth family, the various moves the child may have experienced and the multiple losses they may have experienced along the way.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Introducing this to the Child: Activity can be completed anytime during the child's placement.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour

Materials Needed:

Photocopy of child's baby footprints, craft paper, newspaper, washable paint, paper towels (to apply paint to foot and dry feet), water (to wash off paint), glue/tape/scissors, markers, pens and crayons

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Laura Hutchinson, The Children's Institute/Project STAR, Original Recipes for Success

Watering Cans

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Prior to the session for a younger child, draw and cut out a watering can to represent each important person in the child's life, one flower to represent the child and multiple water drops. The worker, resource parent or an older child can also assist a younger child with cutting out the items.

During the session, ask the child who has been important to them throughout their life. Write the name of each person the child names on a watering can.

Glue the flower to a piece of paper. The positioning of the flower on the paper will depend on the number of watering cans. For a child who names multiple important people, more than 1 piece of paper will be needed.

Work on 1 name at a time. Ask the child to name something each person has done for them to help them become who they are and helped them grow. Focus on the positives. Write each positive thing on the water drops that are coming from that person's watering can onto the flower. For example, the rain drops might say safety, trust, clothes, shelter, love or hugs.

Introducing this to the Child: Activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Colored paper, pen, markers, crayons and scissors

Processing:

It is important to show the child and the birth parent(s), the positive things people involved in the system (resource parents, caseworkers, therapists, etc.) have done for the child during their involvement in the child welfare system. This activity is made into a page for the Lifebook. The activity also provides the child with a visual representative of how the important people in their life have helped them to grow into the person they are today.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Birth parents can participate in the activity if appropriate.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

4 years and older

Worry Web

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Find a space where the entire room can be used. It is best if the child's sibling(s) or other family members participate in the activity too. If that is not possible, the activity can easily be done with just 1 child.

Explain to the child they will be making a worry web. Ensure they understand what "worry" means. Have each participant name different things that worry them. Allow each individual to pull out as much yarn as they need to indicate how big or small their worry is. Tie 1 end of the worry to 1 spot in the room (the back of a kitchen chair, door knob, etc.) and tie the other end of the worry to another area in the room so the worry is stretched across the room. Write down the name of the worry each individual stated on a small piece of paper and tape it to the piece of yarn designated for the worry. Make sure each worry is labeled. You can add your worries too. Encourage the children and participants to name as many worries as they would like.

By the end of the activity, there will be a maze of yarn throughout the room. Children will have to step over and under it to help tie worries up.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours

Materials Needed: 1 skein of yarn (rolled into a ball), scissors, pen, paper and tape

Processing:

Discuss how everyone has worries; some are big and some are small. Worries can make a person feel all knotted up inside, just like the worry web in the room. Sometimes it's important to find ways to take worries away.

Go to each worry in the room and read the label. Have the participants in the room come up with people, activities, etc. that can help them feel better about the particular worry. Then, use the scissors to cut the worry down. Once all of the worries are cut down, talk about using those coping strategies in the future for worries they may have.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If space is not available, use a pen and paper to draw a worry web and label each worry.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Emily Welte, Every Child, Inc.

Activities for:

School Age

(six and older)

Developmental Age Range:

10 years and older

All About Me Board (Pinterest)

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Preferably the child will already have a Pinterest account. If not, create an account can for the child by accessing Pinterest via the app or at www.pinterest.com. Be sure to record the user name and password in several places, including the child's Lifebook and Child Preparation reports.

Assist the child in creating a new "Board" that is "All about me" by searching Pinterest and choosing interests, hobbies, quotes, etc. to pin.

Processing:

Depending on what the child pins to their board, this activity can begin discussions regarding the child's interests, life events, family circumstances, etc.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Boards can be made private or public.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes or longer

Materials Needed: Computer, tablet or phone, Internet access and access to the Pinterest app or website

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Kristine Kline, Diakon/Voce

Developmental Age Range:

6 years and older

Balloon Release

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prepare the child for this activity during the prior visit; explain the purpose of the activity and talk with the child about any feelings or memories they wish to “release” or “give away.”

Have the child write a message on each of the balloons. More than one message can be written on a balloon. Provide assistance if needed.

Then, take the balloons outside together. Release one balloon at a time, and, with each balloon, talk about the messages and why they chose to release it. This gives the child the opportunity to reflect before “releasing” their emotions.

Processing:

This activity can help the child process memories, habits, feelings, etc. that they are working through. This allows the child to symbolically “let go” of bad feelings, as well as past hurts or disappointments.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You could also use this activity when a child has lost a parent or a loved one and frame it as “sending them a message in the sky.”

Introducing this to the Child: This activity may be more appropriate after rapport/a trusting relationship has already been built with the child.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed:
Permanent marker and helium balloons (around 5)

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: The Institute for Human Resources & Services

Body Outline

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

To begin, have the child lie down on the sheet of paper and trace their outline. (If the child does not feel comfortable with you doing this part, have a family member help trace them.) If the child is interested, they can cut their outline out with scissors.

Next, let them decorate their outline by drawing their face, fingers, feet, heart, etc. and writing phrases to describe them. Ask others to contribute encouraging and positive traits. (e.g. "soccer" written next to their feet or "funny" written next to their mouth)

Next to their heart, encourage the child to write the names or draw pictures of people they care about; this can include anyone the child wishes.

Processing:

This activity addresses the CORE issues of Identity, Attachment, Loyalty, Control and Grief/Loss. Drawing or writing about connections to people they love can help the child process the loss of birth family. It can also give child a way to show how they express love and affection for past and current family members. They can draw physical traits, which might connect them to birth family members whom they resemble, and they can add other traits (such as a love of sports), which can help connect them to their current family.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done once a relationship with the child has been established.

Time Needed: 1 to 1 ½ hours

Materials Needed: Roll of butcher paper, scissors, crayons, markers, pencils and gel pens

Breaking Bad Eggs

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Explain to the child that this activity gives them an opportunity to show just how upset they are. Find a location outside where it will be okay to make a small mess. (This activity should mostly stay contained to the bucket.)

Ask the child to think of things that make them angry; these can be big things such as being placed into care, moving, birth parents no-showing for visits, or little things like losing their favorite toy or not liking the TV shows their siblings watch.

Ask them to name the things that make them angry, and for each thing, give them an egg to throw into the bucket. They can throw the egg hard if it is something that makes them really angry, or they can drop it lightly in the bucket if it's something that only irritates them a little bit.

Note: *You should empty the splattered eggs into the trash bag after every couple of throws. If you leave all the eggs in the bottom of the bucket, they might begin to splash back up.*

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is best with children who harbor a lot of anger and resentment toward their placement situation or past events.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Outside location, carton eggs, large bucket, paper towels for clean-up, trash bag

Processing:

Once the child has thrown all of the eggs in the bucket, talk with them about what or who makes them feel better about those "angry things." Discuss different coping mechanisms that might be helpful, or harmful with them.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

In the summer months, some kids enjoy throwing water balloons at the ground instead of eggs. Likewise, if it is winter time and snowing outside, snowballs can be equally effective.

For no-mess option, try a bouncy ball. If a child is very angry, they can bounce the ball high and fast and it'll be hard to catch; for things that make them less angry, they can bounce the ball slowly, and it will be easier to catch.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Building Connections

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

This is a great activity to do with a child and at least one other person with whom they are building (or re-building) a connection. It could be with another child (birth or foster sibling) or an adult (birth or resource parent).

Print question cards ahead of time with the following questions or statements on. Make one set of cards for each player using different colored paper for each person. Questions can be tailored to fit the child's particular situation.

- Name something you like about the other person.
- Name something you have in common with the other person.
- Name a favorite memory of the other person.
- Name something fun you do together.
- What is something the other person does that makes you feel loved?
- Name something special about the other person.
- Name something that makes the other person happy.
- How do you know when the other person is angry?
- Name something that helps to calm you down when you're angry.
- Name a superpower you think the other person would like.
- Name something the other person has taught you.
- Use 3 words to describe the other person.
- Name something you would like to do with the other person.
- Name a fairytale or Disney character you think describes the other person.
- Describe what you would do if you spent an entire day with the other person.
- Name an animal to describe the other person and explain why you chose that animal.
- When you are feeling sad, what helps you feel better?

Each person playing the game should turn their cards over so the writing cannot be seen. One at a time, each person rolls one of the dice. Whoever gets the highest (or lowest) score, randomly pulls out a card from their own deck and answers the question or statement on the card about the other player. The game continues so both players have a chance to pull a card and answer the question or statement about the other player.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the child and their sibling or parent (birth or resource).

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: One set of question cards for each person playing the game (questions are included in directions), colored paper and a pair of dice

Processing:

The game allows the players to learn more about each other and what they have in common. The answers will promote further discussion and commonality.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The game can easily be adapted to fit in a shorter or longer time frame.

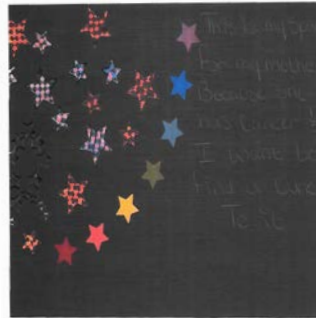
Questions Answered: When Will I Know I Belong?

Constellations

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Start by explaining what constellations are. A good way to do this is by reading a book, and there are many great ones to choose from. Select one best suited for the age of the child. If you don't use a book, give the child pictures of different constellations to look at and discuss.



Ask the child what is important in their life. Next, tell them to close their eyes and pretend it's nighttime, and they can see all the stars in the sky. Tell them to imagine they can control the stars to form constellations that mean something to them.

Allow the child some time to keep their eyes closed and imagine. Once they are done, give them the black paper and star stickers and have them make a new constellation map. Ask them to explain what their constellation means, and they can name it if they want. Using the white pencil or crayon, their answers can be added to the black paper. If desired, the child can draw a picture with their constellation.

Processing:

Discuss the child's constellation with them and the meaning behind it. Use open-ended questions to allow for more discussion.

In the sample picture above, the child wrote on the paper, "This is my space constellation for my mother because she has cancer and I want to find a cure for it." The child also included a support ribbon in their constellation.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The worker can write the child's answers on the black paper if they are unable to do it.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Black paper, white pencil or crayon, constellation pictures or book and various colors/sizes of star stickers

Don't Puzzle Me

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Distribute the puzzle pieces among the participants. Allow a few minutes for putting the pieces together, but explain that it must be done without talking to one another or looking at anyone else's puzzle pieces. Next, allow an additional few minutes for completing the puzzle, but this time give everyone the opportunity to touch each other's puzzle pieces—still without talking.

Finally, let the group work together, with verbal communication, to complete the puzzles.

Processing:

This activity demonstrates the importance of working together to complete a task as well as the importance of using good communication skills along the way.

This activity works in many different circumstances and can not only be used to demonstrate the need for communication to the child/youth, but also to all the people who are working with the child/youth to help prepare them for permanency. When this activity is completed early in the process, it can help the family explore and define expectations around communication before a lack of communication interferes in the child/youth's permanency process.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity is adaptable for all types of situations, whether you are working one-on-one with a child/youth; working in a group; meeting with all of the team members at the beginning of the process; working with a sibling group; and/or working with the family who is preparing to provide permanency for the child/youth. In all circumstances, it highlights the need for and the importance of good communication.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Introducing this to the Child: This is an activity to complete early in the Child Preparation process when the importance of communication is being addressed.

Time Needed: about 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Jigsaw puzzle (100 pieces or less), additional puzzles depending on size of group

Developmental Age Range:

7 years and older

Dreaming of Permanency

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to cut a hole in the center of a paper plate, leaving about two inches of the outer edge.

On the inner rim of the paper plate, have the child evenly punch five to ten holes around the plate.

Cut a piece of yarn long enough to weave in and out of each hole. Begin by tying one end of the yarn to one of the holes. Add beads to the yarn as it is woven through the holes.

At the bottom of the plate, punch three holes horizontally. Cut three pieces of yarn at desired lengths. Tie one piece of yarn to each of the three holes. Feathers can be added to the bottom of each piece of yarn.

Have the child decorate the dream catcher with markers, stickers, etc.

Introducing this to the Child: The activity can be completed with a child to explain permanency.

Time Needed: about 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper plates, scissors, single-hole punch, yarn, feathers, decorative materials such as markers, stickers and beads



Processing:

As the child decorates the dream catcher, ask them these questions to elicit discussion.

- What is your permanency goal?
- What does your permanency goal mean?
- Who do you want to live with when you attain your permanency goal?
- Who do you want to have contact with after you achieve permanency?
- What interests/activities do you want to continue doing once you achieve permanency?
- What do you wish for once you have permanency?
- Who are the supports in your life?
- Who can you talk to about permanency and how it feels?
- What is a question you have about your permanency goal?
- What are some keepsakes you have collected through your journey to permanency?

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Questions can be changed depending on the child's situation.

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going?

Emotional Baggage

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Talk with the child and ask them to list any emotions they struggle with from their past. Have them assign a number to each emotion on a scale from one to three (One means they struggle with the emotion a little, two means sometimes they struggle and three means the child/youth often struggles with the emotion.) Blow up a balloon for each emotion based on the number assigned by the child/youth. For example, if three was assigned to anger, blow up three balloons. Using a Sharpie marker, write the emotion on the balloon. Continue this until balloons are made for all of the emotions identified.

Have the child hold all of the balloons in their arms. Ask them to complete a simple, everyday task, such as tying their shoes or putting on a coat while holding onto all of the balloons.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed:
Balloons, Sharpie markers

Processing:

Explain how this activity illustrates that holding onto past emotions can impact future relationships. You can ask the child to complete additional tasks such as shaking your hand, patting you on the back or giving you a side hug while still holding all of the balloons. The emotional baggage can also affect the child's everyday life. Ask them to open a door, read a book or brush their teeth to illustrate the effect. Discuss how the balloons represent their emotional baggage and when it is not dealt with, it can impact everything in their future.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Either in the same sessions or the next session, discuss some coping skills that the child can do to either shrink or eliminate their emotional baggage. For a younger child, this activity can be used to start discussing adoption and how emotional baggage can impact their fear of connecting to a new family. For teens, this activity can be a lead-in to the steps they need to achieve future goals and how emotional baggage can impact those goals if it isn't dealt with.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Family Crest

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Explain to the child and family what a family crest is. You can do research ahead of time and print examples for everyone to see or complete the research with the participants during the prep session. Make sure to look at what different symbols and colors mean within the crest.

Brainstorm with the child/youth what colors they want to use, favorite sayings or quotes, symbols and family initials. The family can work together to design a crest for their new family or the child can design the crest.

Processing:

While the child works on designing and making their family crest, talk about why specific symbols and colors were selected. Talk about each family member and how they are represented within the family crest.

Ask the family if the crest can be framed and displayed prominently in the family's home.

Add a copy of the family crest(s) to the child's Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Instead of a family crest, a child can make an individual crest. Alternatively, two family crests can be made when a child is being adopted: one to honor the birth family and one to honor the adoptive family. If the child is artistic, the crest can be painted on a canvas or art paper, framed and hung in the family's home.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This is a great activity to do with a child or youth who is being adopted or reunified with their birth family. Family members can also participate in the activity.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours

Materials Needed: Outline of a crest (can be obtained from the Internet), paper or canvas, markers, crayons or paints, print out of favorite quotes and sayings

Family Home - Future Home

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors Child's Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture of the home they lived in with their birth family. Ask them to describe it as they draw it. Ask them to share things that happened in different rooms in the house. Try to have them share positive and negative things. What was their favorite room and why? What was their least favorite room and why? What were the feelings they had when they lived in that house?

Next, ask the child to draw a picture of the home where they would like to live in the future. Ask them to describe it as they draw it. Ask them who will live in the house with them. How will this house be different than the house they lived in with their birth family? How will this house feel different than their birth family's home?

Processing:

Birth family Home: Ask the child to identify positive and negative things about their birth family. If possible, try to get them to have a realistic and balanced view of their birth family.

Future Home: Ask the child to identify things that will be the same and different in their future home and in their birth family home. If they focus on material things, try to get them to move on to emotional aspects by asking how it will feel in this home, what type of interactions will occur between the members of the household. Talk about what they can do in their lives to make these differences come about.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be introduced to the child when they are ready to discuss their birth home.

Time Needed: about 1 hour

Materials Needed: paper, crayons, markers and colored pencils

Feelings Heart

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Draw an outline of a heart on a piece of paper. Have the child select a color to represent each of the following feelings: happy, sad, mad and worried. Ask the child to fill in the heart with the color that represents how they are feeling now.

Processing:

Discuss with the child their present feelings and what causes them to feel each emotion. This is a teaching opportunity to explain to a child that we often feel more than one emotion at a time. Also, ask the child what color/feeling they would like their heart to look like.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For older children, have them color a heart to reflect back on their emotions during a difficult past event such as a change in placement, termination of parental rights (TPR) or some other equally significant event.

The activity can also be done as a group activity that includes an opportunity for resource or birth parents to color a heart as well as the child. Ask everyone to share their hearts with the group.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used after the second or third session when some rapport has been built between you and the child.

Time Needed: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: White paper, crayons or markers

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

8 to 14 years old

Feelings Mancala

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Prior to the session, add emoji faces to the game board. (See below)



Follow the traditional rules of Mancala, going around the board until landing in an empty hole with no stones. Ask the child to think of a time when they have felt the emotion they landed in. If the worker or family is playing, they can also share a time when they felt the identified emotion.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 20 to 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Mancala game board, stones and emoji pictures

Processing:

Feelings are processed as the game is played. This activity can also be completed as a follow-up to a discussion about feelings.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Ask the child to think of a time when they have seen another person feel the emotion they landed in. This can be helpful if the child is struggling to talk about their own emotions, as it takes the pressure off the child.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Morgan Adams, COBYS

Gains and Loss: Iceberg Edition

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, print two pictures of an iceberg. Glue each picture on a piece of construction paper or cardstock.

Give the pictures to the youth. Explain that one iceberg represents the things the youth has lost as a result of their placement in foster care. The second iceberg represents the things they have gained from their placement in foster care.

Have the youth write at the top of one picture "Things I've Lost" and on the second picture "Things I've Gained." On the bottom of both pages, have the youth write "while in foster care."

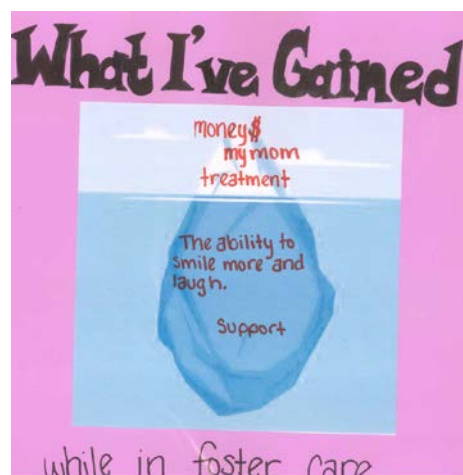
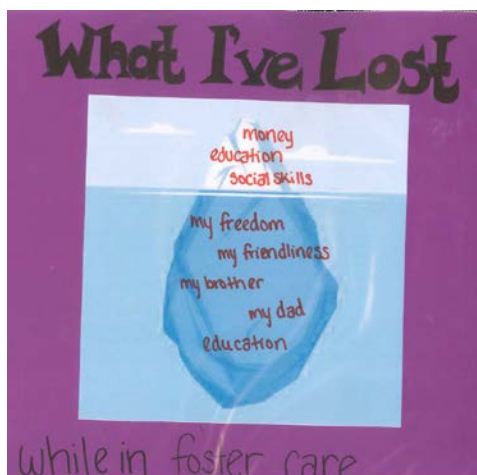
Starting with the "Things I've Lost" picture, ask the youth to identify some outward things they have lost as a result of their placement in foster care and write them on the part of the iceberg above the surface of the water. Explain these are things anyone who knows they are in placement can see. Ask the youth to identify things they have lost due to their placement that lie below the surface – things that are not as obvious yet equally important to the youth. Have the youth write their answers below the surface of the water.

Repeat using the "Things I've Gained" picture.

Introducing this to the Child: The activity can be completed after a relationship with the youth has been established.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Two printed pictures of an iceberg, construction paper or cardstock, glue and markers



Processing:

Open a discussion about the youth's feelings surrounding their gains and losses. Talk about the differences and help the youth understand that placement can result in positive changes in their lives.

Include the pictures in the youth's Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The "Things I've Gained" page can be completed first if desired.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Developmental Age Range:

6 years and older

Get to Know Me Chain

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Cut out strips of paper with the child or ahead of time. On each strip of paper, have the child write the name of someone they know. Create a paper chain. Keep going until the child runs out of names.

Processing:

This activity helps the child remember people in their life, past and present. As you add each name to the chain, discuss the person's significance to the child, their relationship with the child, memories the child has about the person, feelings the child has regarding the person and the type of relationship the child would like to have in the future with the person. It is a great way to get to know the child and understand who they perceive as important.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be referred back to later in the service to show the child their social network/supports.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done in the first or second session with a child/youth. The paper chain can become a decoration in the child's room or something the child wants to keep. It also gives the child's family an easy way to talk about important people in the child's past and present.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

Construction paper, markers, scissors, tape or stapler

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Janae Sauder, Bethany Christian
Services of Central PA, Original Recipes for Success,
Part 2

Glitter Support Jar

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Ask the child to name the people in their life who they trust and who support them. Write down the names and have the child assign a color of glitter to each name.

Pour water into the jar and add an equal part of glue until the jar is no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ filled. (For example, if $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water is used, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup glue is added to it.) The amount of water and glue added will vary depending on the size of the jar.

Have the child add the glitter to the jar. The amount of glitter used for each person depends on the jar size. More glitter can be added for someone who the child views as very supportive. Seal the jar and have the child shake it.



Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time.

Time Needed: about 1 hour

Materials Needed: Small jar, various colors of glitter, water, glue (can also use glitter glue), pen and paper

Processing:

The glitter support jar provides the child with a visual reminder of the people they trust and those that support them. The completed jar can lead into a conversation about trust and why the child trusts certain people more than others.

This activity can be used as a calming technique for a child when they become frustrated, worried, sad or feel alone. They can shake the jar and be reminded of the people they trust and support them as they watch the glitter fall to the bottom of the jar.

Take a picture of the child with their jar and add it to their Lifebook. Make sure to add a page in the Lifebook to explain who each color of glitter represents and why.

An older youth might like to write their reasons about the colors they chose. One youth wrote “The royal blue glitter represents my Grandma Yvonne. She has been a big part of my life and helped raise me. My grandmother has been there for me since the beginning and has continued to support me. This is why there is more royal blue than the rest of the colors. My Aunt Bettina is my second biggest supporter because she helped take care of me as well. Her color is yellow. My Aunt Bettina helped raise me as well but not as much as my grandma. The third color is purple and that represents both of my birth parents. They have taken care of me but had some problems along the way. Both of my birth parents still contact me, but I do not live with them. They have taken care of me when they could and have raised me as well. Pink is the least color shown which represents all my friends. They are supports for them because hanging out with them helps me forget about any problems that might be happening. Hanging out with my friends is a stress reliever for me. My friends make me happy and are fun to be around.”

A youth might love knowing they are the only one who knows what the colors mean and who they represent. An outsider may look at the jar and just see liquid and glitter. A youth may look at it and see their support system.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None noted.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? How Did I Get There?

Great Expectations

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Looks to the Future

Directions:

This activity is about preparing both the birth parents and the child/youth for their transition home. We see youth succeeding in foster care once they have established a good routine and schedule and feel stable and safe. We often forget to prepare the birth parents for their child's arrival. So much has gone on with their child since their involvement in the child welfare system, and they may not be aware of it all; we need to prepare them for their routines and anything that has changed. This will help make the transition as smooth as possible for both the parent(s) and child.

Consult with the birth parent to complete the chart to fit the needs of the family. The child/youth may also have some expectations they want clarified.

Here is a sample chart:

Introducing this to the Child: This activity works well for the child/youth who is returning to the care of a birth parent.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed:
Chart

Routine	Youth's Expectations	Birth Parents Expectations
Wake up time on weekdays		
Wake up time on weekends		
Shower time		
School expectations		
Homework		
Meal time		
Bedtime		
Chores		
Discipline		
Medication		
Personal Hygiene		
Other items as needed		

Processing:

Seeing the expectations in writing will assist both the child/youth and the birth parent. You can give a copy of the chart to both the birth parent and the child/youth. Suggest that the chart be placed in a common area of the home, such as on the refrigerator door or kitchen cabinet for easy reference.

It is best to complete this activity prior to the child/youth's return home.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can also be used when a child/youth is having a difficult time in their resource home placement and the expectations in the home need clarified. The chart can be modified to meet the needs of the child/youth's situation.

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

How well do I know my Family?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

The game can be played between any family members (2 at a time). The family members could include birth, foster or adoptive siblings and parents.

Give each participant a copy of the questions (listed below). Have each person write their answers to the questions first (without letting others see the answers). Then, one person guesses the answers for the other person and vice versa. Small prizes can be given for correct answers (pennies, small candy pieces, marbles, etc.) if desired. You could also give a prize for the most correct answers overall (depending on how the participants handle competition) or for completing the game.

Questions for game:

1. Where were you born (city or town)?
2. What is your favorite food?
3. What is your favorite color?
4. What is your favorite TV show?
5. What is your favorite movie?
6. How many states have you lived in?
7. Who is your best friend?
8. Would you rather go on vacation to the beach, mountains or the city?
9. What is your favorite sport?
10. What is your favorite sports team?
11. What kind of music do you like?
12. What is your favorite animal?
13. What is your best skill or trait?
14. Are you a morning or an evening person (do you like to get up early or stay up late)?
15. What is your favorite book?
16. What is (was) your favorite subject in school?
17. What is your favorite season of the year?
18. What is your favorite holiday?
19. If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
20. What is your biggest dream for the future?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time.

Time Needed: 20 to 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Several copies of the questions and small prizes (optional)

Processing:

Encourage the family members to discuss the answers and make it fun. The point of this activity is to help family members learn about each other in a fun way. From their answers, point out similarities and differences between members in their likes, habits and experiences.

Children and teens love this game. It gives them a non-threatening way to tell about themselves, and they like trying to guess their parents/siblings' answers. Almost everyone learns something about the other person and it leads to further discussion. Young teens seem to like the game-type competition, though it's important not to emphasize the competitive part of the game and focus on the learning and interaction.

This game can be used to help the family get to know the child better (and vice versa), as in a new placement or after a child has been in a family longer and is beginning to feel they belong. The game can also be played between siblings, whether they live together or are just visiting with each other.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

For the younger children or those who have difficulty reading the questions or writing the answers, you can read or write for them. Give hints when the child tries to guess the answers of the adults. Also, any question from the list above can be deleted, added or substituted depending on the situation, age and ability of the child.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

I am a Bouncy Ball

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Show the child or teen a small bouncy ball like the ones in the quarter machine at a grocery store. Ask what they think they have in common with the ball. (Note: They will probably look at you like you are NUTS!) Explain they are more like this ball than they think...

Ask the child to remember your discussions during previous Child Preparation sessions about why they were removed from the care of their birth parent(s), all of their placements "bouncing" from place to place or about some difficult experiences they have had.

Throw the ball hard so it bounces off the floors, walls and other safe objects in the room. Explain to the child the ball is "bouncing all over" from place to place, is having a hard time settling down (ball keeps bouncing and rolling), may get lost under the couch or chair and is sometimes forgotten. Using your imagination, relate experiences the child has had and how they have felt like this at one placement or another along their journey.

Next, pick up the ball, step on it, try to squish it and try to twist it in half. Nothing breaks it. Explain to the child how the ball represents them. Even after all the bouncing around, the "trauma" of trying to break it or damage it, the ball is still smooth and round and intact. It looks just the same, even though it has been through a difficult time.

Processing:

Connect the ball activity to the word resiliency and explain what the word means if they don't already know. Resiliency is a **crucial** quality for the success of our older youth, and they need to believe they are resilient individuals to become healthy and confident adults. Discuss how, like the ball, they have been bounced around, and people along the way may have tried to hurt them. The youth may have felt lost at one time and maybe even forgotten. Through talking, therapy (if recommended) and journaling, they can become a resilient person. They can move forward with their lives, and they are destined to do great things. Let the youth keep the bouncy ball. Encourage them to take it out and look at it often to remind themselves how resilient they are.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed at end of the Child Preparation process. It is a good last session activity.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Small bouncy ball

Let it Grow!

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives the Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, search for a template of a flower petal and the center of a flower. You can hand draw the templates if desired. Photocopy the templates onto colored cardstock using two different colors. Ten flower petals (five of each color) and two flower centers are needed. Depending on the age of the child and time limitations, the worker may want to precut the pieces.

Cut the Styrofoam piece to fit inside the bottom of the flower pot. Glue it to the bottom of the pot. (It's helpful to do this ahead of time so the glue has time to dry.) The Styrofoam keeps the flowers upright in the pot.

Write 'Adoption' on one flower center and 'Reunification' on the other flower center. Note: The words may be different based on the child's permanency goals.

Ask the child to identify five things they miss about their birth home (Reunification flower) and five things about adoption that makes them excited (Adoption flower). Have the child write down their responses on the corresponding color flower petal.

Glue the flower petals to the flower center with the writing displayed to the front. Glue the cardboard straw to the back of the flower. Put the straw in the flower, anchoring the straw in the Styrofoam. Use a small amount of brown basket stuffing to cover the Styrofoam, giving it the appearance of dirt.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity works well for a child whose permanency goal is changing or is struggling with the concept of adoption.

Time Needed: 1 hour + prep time

Materials Needed: Small flower pot, cardstock, template of flower petal and center of flower, 2 cardboard straws, scissors, glue, small piece of Styrofoam and basket filling



Processing:

While the child is writing on the petals and putting their flowers together, talk with them about their permanency goals and what each one means. Explain how some relationships may change. Discuss other things in their life that may change, such as school and community activities.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The child can paint their flower pot or use small decorations such as rhinestones to glue on the pot. Decorations can be based on the child's tastes.

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? What Happened To Me?

MapQuest: Where Have I Been?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Talk with the child/youth about their knowledge of where they were born and help them fill in any gaps with information you have obtained from the records. Make sure the child/youth has an understanding of where they were born, and show them the location of their birth on the various maps. Have the child/youth label the place of their birth on the photocopies of the maps. Encourage the child/youth to add the maps to the Lifebook.

Processing:

Discuss the location of the child/youth's birth in relation to the rest of the world. Depending on the child/youth's circumstances and comfort level with this topic, you can also talk with them about the sequence of various past placements since entering the child welfare system; where they lived, where their ancestors came from, where their resource family lives and the ancestry of the resource family.

This activity gives a child/youth a sense of where they have been and where they are going in terms of their geographic location in the world. It could also be useful in helping a child/youth understand ethnic traditions of past, present, and future families. Ultimately, this information can be critical to the child/youth's identity and they may want to add some part of what they learn through this activity to their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity also provides an opportunity for a child/youth to discuss and learn about family traditions, especially those traditions that are connected to certain ethnic groups. It also gives a child/youth a better understanding of some of the families they lived with in the past, and a better idea of expectations regarding a new family.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened to Me? Where Am I Going?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done early in the process when discussing child/youth's history.

Time Needed: 2 hours

Materials Needed:

Laminated maps of the state, United States and world, color pictures of the same maps, markers, crayons, stickers and child/youth's Lifebook

Mask-Making: Part 1

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

1. To prepare for making the mask, cut the plaster gauze into strips of various lengths between 3 and 6 inches. The width should be no smaller than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and no bigger than 1 inch. Ideally, pieces should be about 4 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Set up a small bowl of warm water for each mask being made.
2. Assign each child/youth to work with a partner. This can be another child/youth in the group, a sibling, parent or worker.
3. Next, have the child/youth apply the Vaseline to their face (including under the chin) being very liberal around the hairline. Cut a hole in bottom of trash bag and place over child/youth's head to protect their clothing.
4. Once the child/youth is prepared, begin applying the gauze by wetting it in the warm water 1 strip at a time. Beginning at the top of the forehead, work around the face from side to side and then under the chin. Place the wet gauze on the skin and rub it in a circular motion with your fingers.
 - a. Warn the child/youth that applying the gauze to the face may feel a bit funny to them, and be sensitive that it can be uncomfortable, especially if a person is claustrophobic.
5. Once the face is framed, apply a long strip from the forehead down to the tip of the nose. Now fill in the gaps working around the eyes, mouth and nostrils.

The mask is complete when all the skin is covered (except for the eyes, mouth and nostrils) with about 2 layers of gauze, and the gauze has a smooth appearance. To complete the nose and lips, work around the nose leaving openings for the nostrils and, if the child/youth can handle it, cover the lips with 1 or 2 layers of gauze as the last thing you do.

The mask will dry in about 10 to 15 minutes. As it dries, it will begin to pop off the child/youth's face. It should be carefully removed from around the hairline. Next, apply a layer of white tacky glue to the entire mask, front and back, and allow it to dry overnight.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is great for addressing identity issues with children and youth. A parent should be notified in advance of the activity and give permission to complete the activity.

Time Needed: At least 2 hours

Materials Needed: Plaster gauze found at medical supply stores or in sculpting department of craft store, 1 small container per mask to hold water, Vaseline, large trash bags to be worn as a "bib," 1 bottle of white tacky glue per mask.

A standard roll of gauze makes about 3 masks. It's suggested you buy more just in case.

Processing:

At the next session, the child/youth should be encouraged to decorate the mask in whatever they want. See “Mask Making – Part 2” for processing directions.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Take care to prepare the child or youth for this experience, as not all children will be able to tolerate having the gauze applied to their face.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Mask-Making: Part 2

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Have child/youth paint their mask, if desired. Allow time for the paint to dry. Children/youth can use various decorations provided and glue to add to their mask however they want. Let them use magazines to cut and paste words or images that express how they feel about and see the world.

Cover the completed masks with another layer of white tacky glue and allow to dry overnight.

Processing:

Some children/youth will try to make the mask look like their own face, and others will be more abstract. Discuss the idea of making the front of the mask look one way (i.e. how the world sees the child/youth) while the inside of the mask might reflect something else (i.e. how the child/youth feels inside).

If you're working with a group, have the participants hold up their masks before and/or after they are decorated. As they look through the eye holes, discuss individuality. Have the children/youth exchange masks and talk about what it's like to see the world from another person's perspective.

As they decorate their masks, encourage the child/youth to be thoughtful about how they portray themselves on the inside and outside.

Once the mask is made, you can be very creative with how the rest of the process evolves—enjoy it!

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is great for addressing identity issues with children/youth. Some people hesitate to have the mask covering their face but are pleased they did once they get the chance to add decorations and see “who they are” come alive. This process is especially interesting for children/youth and parents who do not look alike, as it gives them a chance to see how they would look with each other's face by looking through one another's masks in front of each other.

Time Needed: At least 2 sessions

Materials Needed: 1 bottle white tacky glue per mask, acrylic paint (various colors), miscellaneous items for decorating mask (gems, feathers, puzzle pieces, magazines, pictures, beads, etc.), scissors, markers, paint brushes, completed mask

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Memories of Home

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives the Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Prior to meeting with the child, write the following questions out on one set of slips of colored paper:

- What did my bedroom look like?
- Where did I feel safest in this home?
- Who lived with me?
- Who took care of me?
- Who did I spend time with?
- How did it feel living here?
- How did we show love in this home?
- Did everyone get along?
- How did we talk to each other?
- What did I worry about in this home?
- What made me feel happy living in this home?
- What was my favorite thing about living in this home?

On the second set of slips of colored paper, write the same questions in the *present tense* about the child's current resource home:

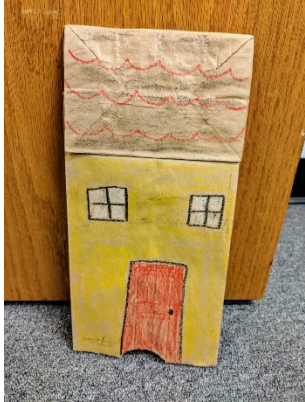
- What does my bedroom look like?
- Where do I feel safest in this home?
- Who lives with me?
- Who takes care of me?
- Who do I spend time with?
- How does it feel living here?
- How do we show love in this home?
- Does everyone get along?
- How do we talk to each other?
- What do I worry about in this home?
- What makes me feel happy living in this home?
- What is my favorite thing about living in this home?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed once a rapport is established with the child.

Time Needed: 1+ hours

Materials Needed: 2 brown paper lunch bags, markers and small square pieces of paper (Use 2 different colors of paper)

Ask the child to draw a picture of their birth home on one of the paper bags. If they don't remember what it looked like, ask them to draw what they think it looked like. On the second bag, ask the child to draw a picture of their current resource home.



Processing:

As the child answers each question about the respective home, you can help them process the information. Another option is to discuss the child's answers after they are finished. Ask the child how the questions made them feel. A child may gain a more realistic understanding of what their life was like in their birth home and how it differs now. It may help the child to begin to express their feelings about their sense of belonging in their resource home.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? When Will I Know I Belong?

Message to Mom or Dad

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Ask the child to draw a picture of a bottle and cut it out. Glue the bottle onto another piece of construction paper. Add straight lines (for the child to write on) across the middle of the bottle. Ask the child to decorate the background paper.

Talk with the child how it is sometimes difficult to express feelings using one's voice so they are often bottled up inside. Explain how holding feelings inside can be unhealthy and make things worse. Compare this to a bottle of pop or soda. When the bottle is shaken, the liquid explodes from the bottle when the lid is removed. Discuss how this can also happen when feelings are held inside.

Tell the child they have a chance to express their feelings to a birth parent (or someone else if they choose) by writing their feelings on the bottle.

Processing:

Talk with the child about what they wrote. Use this time to emphasize to the child the importance of using their voice to express their feelings and how to do it in an appropriate manner. It may be easier for the child to write their feelings rather than say them aloud.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be done after the worker has a relationship with the child.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
Construction paper,
scissors, markers, glue,
decorations, pen or pencil

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Developmental Age Range:

7 years and older

My Family Recipe

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives the Child a Voice, Answers the Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Talk with the child about qualities they feel are important in a family. This could be in reference to their birth family, current family or pre-adoptive family. They may name qualities like love, acceptance, trust or honesty.

Ask the child to create a recipe using the qualities they identified. A sample recipe might include:

- 4 cups of Love
- 1 cup of Fun
- 3 tbsp. of Trust
- 1 tsp. of Honesty

Have the child write their recipe on the apron. Then, they can decorate the rest of their apron, if desired.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Canvas apron and fabric markers

Processing:

While the child is decorating the apron, direct your discussion to their specific situation. For example, you might ask what the child would change about their birth family or what makes them feel like they are part of a family. Other possible questions include: What is the most important thing about feeling like part of a family? What do they like about their pre-adoptive family?

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Submitted by: Sarah McMillion, PA Child

Developmental Age Range:

7 years and older

My Life in the Rings

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Explain to the child when a tree is cut down, you can tell how old the tree is by how many rings are in the trunk. Tell the child to imagine they are a tree and what would they see if they could look at each ring of their life. Ask them to draw a small circle but still large enough to write inside. Then, direct the child to draw another larger circle around the small circle and continue until there is one circle for every year of their life.

Starting with the smallest circle, ask them what they remember or were told about their first year of life. Continue with each additional ring until they have all been discussed. After each ring is filled in, discuss how each of the events listed has impacted their life story.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the child at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Large piece of paper, marker or pen and a copy of the Child Profile

Processing:

Be prepared to discuss both positive and negative memories the child has.

If the child cannot remember specific years, prompt them with different ideas such as schools attended, where they lived and whom they lived with. The Child Profile can provide some of the needed information.

This activity can help a child understand why they are in placement and also visualize their timeline.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Submitted by: Vicki Gannon, The Children's Home of Pittsburgh and Lemieux Family Center

Developmental Age Range:

9 years and older

My Life Map

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

With the child's input, make a list of important places they want to highlight. (They can add to their list throughout the activity, if needed.) The list could include places they have lived, cities where family members live, family trips, cities they have visited or where they want to live in the future.

Help the child decide how they want to mark locations on the map. They could circle the location and add more detailed information on a post-it note, such as who lived with them. They can also add labels, pictures or other related items.

While the child is working on the map, encourage them to talk about their birth parents, extended family members and other important people in their life.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done early in the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Map of Pennsylvania and other states child has resided in, colored pens or markers, paper, post-it notes and other decorations as needed

Processing:

This activity could lead into a discussion regarding positive memories the child has of family vacations, trips to visit grandparents or special events such as the zoo. It is also possible this activity could lead into a discussion about losses and trauma the child has experienced, like a birth parent's incarceration, abuse experienced in a particular home or a birth home where the child and their siblings were removed from. Be prepared for both types of discussions.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If a child's birth parents or any extended birth family members are from another country, use a copy of that map as well and discuss how their relatives journeyed to their current location.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Submitted by: Thomas Brandon, Northwest Human Services

Developmental Age Range:

10 years and older

My Perfect Day

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, make a worksheet for this activity. Make three columns on a piece of paper. For a visual effect, make each column a different color. Label the first column "As a Child," the second column "Today" and the third "In the Future."

Ask the child or youth to imagine a "perfect" or "ideal" day in their **past**. They can choose any time in the past (a specific age or event, whether it was in the distant past or more recent). They can describe events that actually happened, or what they **wish** would have happened. Use open-ended questions to fill in details about the day (who are they with, what are they doing, where are they, etc.). Ask what makes this scenario perfect in their eyes. Either you or the child can write the description on the worksheet.

Use the same approach for their perfect day in the **present** (the age they are now). Again, they can use real events or a made-up narrative. Write down this description.

Ask the child to do the same for a point in the **future** (perhaps when they are a certain age).

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
Worksheet (see directions)

Processing:

Process the three descriptions with the child. Look for similar themes, people, places, events, emotions, or other elements. From the three narratives, you can help the child identify similarities and differences.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Submitted by: Mary Tarbell, Jewish Family Service of Greater Harrisburg, Inc.

Netflix Timeline

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Introduce the idea of making a timeline for a youth by creating a Netflix original television series based on their life. Each year of their life will be an episode. Give the youth the option of using real names or fictitious names to represent the people in their life.

The first thing the show needs is a title. The youth can come up with a creative title for their show. Once they one, the youth can design a poster featuring the title of their show.

Every television show has a cast of people who play different roles. Ask the child to name people who were part of their life starting at birth and ending with their current age. Help them select an actor to play each person they name. Create a cast page including the person's name and the actor who will portray them. Later, print out pictures of the actors so that the youth can add the pictures to the cast page at a later session. New people can be added as the youth remembers them.

Explain that each episode of the youth's television show will represent a year of their life. The episode number should coincide with the child's age during that episode. (For example, episode eight is when the youth was eight years old.) Make an episode page for each episode that includes the title of the episode, setting where it takes place and the plot.

Once the youth is finished with all of their episodes, you can add the pages to their Lifebook or make them into a separate booklet to give to the youth.

Introducing this to the Child: It is suggested this activity be started early in the service as it may take several sessions to complete.

Time Needed: several sessions

Materials Needed: Timeline template pages (movie poster, cast pages, episode pages, plot pages - see *Directions* for details), paper, pencils, crayons or markers

Processing:

As you work on each episode, talk with the youth about significant events that occurred during that year of their life. Information can include where they resided, who they lived with, school(s) attended, special events, places they visited and any other information the youth wants to include. Have the youth write the information in the plot section of the

episode page. Some episode plots will be longer than others. Once the youth writes the setting and plot on the episode page, they can create an episode preview picture by drawing a picture or cutting pictures from a magazine.

Once all episodes have been completed, “flash forward” episodes can be created if desired. “Flash forward” episodes can include the youth’s plans or hopes for the future. Ask the youth to talk about what their future might look like. You can suggest topics such as: where they want to live and who they want to live with, high school, who will be part of their lives, will they live with a family, etc. These discussion topics will depend on the youth’s age and situation.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Magazines can be used if the youth would rather use pictures than create drawings.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Developmental Age Range:

8 years and older

Oh The Places You'll Go!

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Read the book *Oh The Places You'll Go!* to the child, and then process it with them. You can use different paragraphs with different themes and then ask the child to discuss their personal experiences with the same theme. Take a picture of the book's cover or any other page the child wants to put in their Lifebook.

Processing:

Talk with the child about all the places they want to go and how they will get there. Write and/or draw pictures. Talk about how people make decisions. Discuss some decisions the child has made in the past, including the consequences of those decisions and what they could have done differently. Make sure to validate the child and what they are sharing with you.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Introducing this to the Child: Best to complete once you have a relationship with the child. After talking about the child's past, this book is a great way to talk about the future.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour to read and process book for the first time

Materials Needed: *Oh the Places You'll Go!*, by Dr. Seuss

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Submitted by: Erin Barr, Jewish Family & Children's Services, Original Recipes for Success, Part 2

Path to Permanency

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Place the Twister mat or large colored circles on the floor. If you are using the colored circles, spread them about two feet apart. Ask the child to stand on the first circle.

Explain that each person is born into a family and that the first circle represents the child's birth family. Discuss what happened within their birth family that resulted in the child being placed outside of the home. This can be an extended conversation depending on the circumstances and the child's age.

Ask the child to move to the second circle, and tell them this circle represents their out-of-home placement. Explain how a birth parent has a time limit in which they need to resolve the issues that led to the child's placement. Further explain that when the issues are not resolved within the specified time, the court can look at terminating parental rights.

Ask the child to move to the next circle and tell them that this circle represents the termination of parental rights (TPR). Discuss what TPR means and its impact on the child and their future.

Have the child move to the next circle and tell them this circle represents permanency. Depending on the child's situation, it can mean adoption or Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC). Explain what adoption and PLC mean and the process to complete each one.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be done once a permanency decision is established for the child/youth.

Time Needed: about 1 hour

Materials Needed: Twister mat or 4 to 5 large circles of different colors

Processing:

Depending on the child's age and circumstances, the discussion for any circle may be more detailed and the child may have questions. This activity can be completed over multiple sessions if needed.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If possible, other people can participate in a session. For example, the county caseworker could help explain the topics in any of the circles; a resource parent could participate in the adoption/PLC discussion; or an attorney or judge could help explain the legal and court information.

The activity can be altered for any child's particular situation and permanency goals.

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Personal Building Blocks

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Draw 6 or 10 squares on a piece of paper. (If you use 6 blocks, 3 blocks will be in the bottom row, 2 blocks in the middle row and 1 block in the top row.) Each square represents a building block. Ask the child what they think are personal qualities, talents or unique features they can use for personal growth and development. After they fill in a block, take the time to discuss it in more detail. (For example, a child may write "I have good manners" or "I am able to control my anger better.") Ask the child why they listed the quality and discuss how it can be best pursued or managed, etc.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Paper, crayons, markers or colored pencils

Processing:

The building blocks can be discussed with the child and parent or reviewed with the child alone. It is good to get the child's perspective because sometimes a parent is well-meaning with their intentions, but the child views things differently. Putting ideas on paper may help resolve and clarify statements.

Targeting some of the qualities a child has and putting them on paper in a building block format helps the child increase their self-esteem and perhaps resolve other issues.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can also be completed with the resource parent and/or birth parent. Draw squares as listed above. Ask the parent how they feel they can help their child grow and develop or how can they help the child in their home setting. (For example, "I want Marcus to know it is ok for him to love his birth parents and to always hold them in his heart.")

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Red Cup Lesson

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Hand out a cup to each participant and keep one for yourself. Begin by holding the cup close to your nose so you get a blurry vision of the cup. Ask everyone to do the same and to describe the view of the cup.

Next, ask everyone to pull the cup a few inches from their nose. Ask them what they see and if there is anything they can see now that they didn't see before.

Then, ask everyone to pull the cup a few more inches away from their face. Ask them what they see and if there is anything they can see now that they didn't see before.

Then, ask everyone to raise their cup high so that they are looking at the bottom of the cup. Ask what they see and if there is anything they can see now that they didn't see before.

Next, ask the participants to bring the cup down and look inside the cup. Ask them what they see and if there is anything they can see now that they didn't see before.

Next, ask everyone to lay the cup down so either the bottom or top of the cup is facing them. Ask them what they see and if there is anything they can see now they didn't see before. Turn the cup over and ask the participants the same question.

Set the cups aside and ask the following questions:

1. Each time the view of the cup was changed, was it still a red plastic cup?
2. Which view did they like the most? Why?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done with a single child/youth or with a sibling group or family.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed: Red Solo cups, worksheet (directions included) and pen.

Processing:

Discuss with the child how the way something appears from afar might be quite different from the way it appears to their near-sighted eye. Point out that sometimes we need to give ourselves some distance to figure things out.

Discuss what the word 'perspective' means. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, it means "the appearance to the eye of objects in respect to their relative distance and positions" and "the capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance." A synonym for perspective is interpretation.

Give the child the worksheet on the next page to fill out, and discuss their answers.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

When working with a younger child who cannot write, you can write their answers for them. If possible, you can record their answers to the questions or they can draw some of their answers on the worksheet.

If a child is visually impaired, they can describe what they feel rather than what they see.

If a child has a short attention span, you can choose to only use two or three angles of the cup.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?



RED CUP LESSON



1. Think of an experience in your past that leaves you full of regret. Describe that same experience from a different perspective.

2. Think of a current situation and how you've been seeing it over the past few weeks. Describe that same experience from a different perspective.

3. Think of a person you see from a negative perspective. How can you attempt to see that same person from a different perspective?

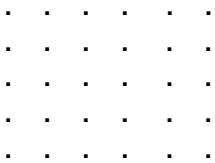
4. What are the benefits of seeing experiences, situations and people from a different perspective?



Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Make a dot grid like this one:



Talk to the child about the people they can talk to when they have something to share. For each name they give, write it by one of the dots. These could include birth parents, foster parents, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches or anyone else the child names.

When they have exhausted the names, ask what they do when they need “to deal with something.” This could include playing basketball, playing a musical instrument, reading a book or taking a walk.

When all have been identified, connect the dots to form a Safety Net. They can keep this with them for times when situations become difficult and they are at a loss to whom they can turn to for help.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be introduced after you have gotten to know the child for a few sessions.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper and pen

Processing:

The processing occurs during the activity. Encourage the child to talk about how well each of their “dots” works for them in terms of providing help through difficult and stressful times.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None

Questions Answered: Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Sands of Time and Place

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

After identifying the number of placements the child has had (birth, foster, residential and adoptive) ask the child to identify a color of sand for each of the different places they lived. Then, using the teaspoon, place one teaspoon of sand in the jar for each year the child resided in each place. Use the colors to match the placement settings as identified by the child.

Processing:

The colored sand will form layers in the jar, allowing the child to see their various placements in relation to each other. Talk with the child about the importance of each placement. Recognize the significance of all placements by asking the child for their thoughts about each of them. Discuss how this can provide a message about the importance of the past. (e.g. If the child lived with their birth family most of their life and is wishing they were still there, point out how much more sand there is related to this time, compared to the rest.) If the child wants to “forget” a placement, demonstrate that all of the colors blend together to make us who we are, and that in time, the sand that corresponds to that place will seem less than it does now.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Chances are the child will stir the sand so that it is all mixed together before the end of the session. This is a good demonstration of “integration,” and it can be used again to show the child how much and how little sand there is related to each placement.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is effective to use when a child is preparing for the official adoption hearing and has a need to recognize how the past and the future are connected.

Time Needed: At least 1 hour - allow time for processing

Materials Needed: Different colors of sand, jars, teaspoons

Developmental Age Range:

8 years and older

Self-Esteem Word Search

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Gather information about the child to include descriptive words such as their physical features, personality traits and favorite things. Gather information from the child, caregivers and family members. Try to get about 20 words to create the puzzle.

Go to www.puzzle-maker.com to create a word search. (The website is free!) Name the puzzle, determine the puzzle size, make it easy or hard and add your words. The word search is created for you. Print it off. The puzzle can be cut out, put on colored paper and decorated. Then, the puzzle is ready for the child!

Processing:

The word search puzzle provides an opportunity to talk with the child about the many positive qualities they have. You can ask them what positive qualities they received from their family members or who in their birth family or resource family has similar interests. You can make additional puzzle copies so family members can have fun finding the words too.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials Needed:
Computer, Internet access,
paper and stickers

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Jen Hilbrich, Catholic Charities
Counseling and Adoption Services

Developmental Age Range:

10 years and older

Self-Portrait through Words

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Provide the child with paper, colorful writing utensils and materials so they can be creative and expressive. Ask them to draw their self-portrait using words instead of lines. When creating each facial feature, they can use words to describe themselves that can be associated with each part. When creating the eyes, the child can include things they have seen in their past and how it made them feel. They can also list goals they “see” themselves accomplishing in the future. When creating their mouth, they can express things they have said to others that have influenced them in a positive or negative way. The nose can consist of a list of people who love them. Hair can be sentences related to their placement and how they feel about the transitions occurring in their life.

Processing:

This activity allows the child to create a self-portrait using sentences or words to represent how they feel about themselves. Encourage them to discuss each of the feelings or characteristics they have chosen to write. This activity is a good way to help the child verbalize their fears and emotions about the past, present and future. It also allows them to express themselves while building self-esteem.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Using this activity in the beginning of the preparation process allows you to get to know the child and build rapport. Revisiting this activity later in the process can help the child talk about their feelings and emotions that are more deeply related to their placement experience. Allow them to be creative and use a variety of materials.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be done at any time during the Child Preparation process. It can be used to get to know the child or later in the process after rapport has been established to build discussions on deeper thoughts and feelings.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper, colorful pens, markers or pencils

Developmental Age Range:

12 years and older

Sharing Family Medical History

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

Review available medical history from the child's profile with the child, as well as any other documentation that may be available (such as old records and reports). Look up any difficult to understand terms. Have the child write down ANY questions they have. To help the child understand just how serious this information is, type their questions and leave space to write in the answers as you and the child gather more information.

Processing:

Consider making an appointment with the child's pediatrician to have the doctor answer any questions a child may have regarding any family medical history or personal medical history. Make certain that the doctor will be helpful in this process and will not unnecessarily minimize the child's concerns.

→ Note: There may be a cost involved with such an appointment. You could coincide this session with the child's annual medical check-up.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be altered to cover any information in the child profile, not just the medical information.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is best introduced when child is able to understand how medical history affects their life.

Time Needed: Varies

Materials Needed: Copy of the child's child profile, pen and paper

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Sibling Synchronized Drawing

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives the Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Prior to meeting with the children, print out eight simple clip art pictures (more or less depending on the number of children). Select random pictures of objects or symbols (such as shapes, a smiley face, a street sign, a dog, a cat, etc.) that would be relatively easy for a child to draw.

Fold a piece of white paper in half lengthwise. Unfold it to show the folded line down the center of the paper. Fold a clip art picture in half and unfold it. Give the white paper to two of the children and explain that they each get one side of the paper to draw on. Explain that they will each draw one half of the clip art picture, and they will be drawing at the same time. Their goal is to draw the clip art picture together as siblings, as best as they can.

Ask the children to use a pencil to draw their picture and then color it with crayons. Remind them that that they must both color their sides at the same time.

Only give the children one clip art picture at a time to draw. Remind them that the drawing does not have to be good; the purpose of the activity is to show them how well (or perhaps not so well) they work together as a team.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used to promote a positive sibling relationship.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Pencils, crayons, white paper and easy clip art pictures

Processing:

After the children have drawn their pictures, review the drawings and discuss what went well and what could have been improved. Discuss how the children worked together and if there is anything they need to work on to improve their communication. Remind them they are siblings and are on the same team. Discuss any suggestions you have to improve communication between them and highlight things they did well together.

If there are more than two siblings, make sure everyone completes a drawing with each of their siblings.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed when siblings are being placed together in a home or returning to their birth home. It can also be done when siblings are visiting with one another or if the siblings' bonds need to be strengthened.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? When Will I Know I Belong?

Snakes and Ladders

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Before the session, find the blog post "[100 Brave and Interesting Questions](#)" by College Essay Guy, and print the questions out. Additionally, review the Toy Theater website and become familiar with how to play "[Snakes and Ladders](#)."

To begin the game, select the number of players and the color for each player's marker. During the game, when the youth lands on a number, ask them the corresponding question from the list of "100 Brave and Interesting Questions." (There are 100 questions and 100 squares on the game board.)

When the youth lands on the ladder to move forward, ask them to share something positive that has happened in their life. Whenever the youth gets 'eaten' by the snake and sent backward, have them share a time where they felt like they failed, had a bad day or something they are currently struggling with.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Internet access, computer and copy of 100 Brave and Interesting Questions

Processing:

As the youth answers each question, you can ask them questions and encourage them to talk about the reasons behind their answers. You can also answer a question for each of your turns. This allows the youth to learn more about you and how you have handled situations in your own past.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be completed with siblings or other family members.

This activity can be completed virtually. You can give the youth remote access and allow them to control picking their player piece and rolling the dice. While screen sharing, you can give remote control to other participants in the meeting, so all players can have access to the game.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Sticker Timeline

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Before the session, review the Toy Theater website and become familiar with [The Sticker Cartoon Animation activity](#).

Begin by asking the child to select a background sticker to represent the first place they lived. Ask them to select stickers to represent their house, family members they lived with and any pets they had. Repeat for every placement the child has lived. Use the Child Profile as a reference to ensure each placement is captured.

Next, ask the child to create their imagined future home. Depending on the child's situation, it might be the home where they currently live.

After each "house" is completed, take a screenshot using the snipping tool to capture the picture. Include a copy of each picture in the child's Lifebook.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours (depends on number of placements)

Materials Needed: Computer, Internet access, copy of child's Child Profile

Processing:

As the child completes each picture, discuss who lived with them and the connections they made. Ask the child about their knowledge of why they left each placement. (The Child Profile can be used for clarification if there are questions.) If applicable, ask them how it felt to live in different places and where they want to go in the future.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

There are sticker options for the child to create what their rooms looked like and the schools they attended. This activity can be completed virtually. You can give the child remote access to make their sticker selections.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? When Will I Know I Belong?

The Me That Nobody Knows

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Speak with the child/youth about who they are. Discuss the idea that each person has a face or side we show others, and this is often how we want to be seen by people we know. However, there is also a side we keep to ourselves, which we might hide from others until we trust them enough to share. We may also have secrets we are ashamed of that we keep inside. A secret kept from a child/youth's school might be that they are in a foster home or that they see a therapist.

This activity allows a child/youth to create a two-sided mask. On one side, have the child/youth draw their face or something that represents their outside - the side they show to others. On the other side, have the child do the same with their inside, or the side they hide from others, which they only share with people they trust. Remind the child/youth that anything they do is okay. Offer to give them space or privacy if needed while they do the inside.

Processing:

Ask the child to show you the outside of their face mask and have them tell you what it means to them. Have them talk you through what they show the world about themselves. Give them the option of showing you their inside face or not.

If the child/youth decides not to, you can revisit this topic during another session, but go ahead and talk about it abstractly now. How consistent is the outside to their inside face? Who do they share their inside with? Who knows this side of them well? Are there parts of their inside or outside faces that they got from their birth or resource parents? You can also talk about what would have to happen in the child's life that their inside face and outside face would be the same.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This might be helpful for adolescents who have secrets that are appropriate to keep and those that hurt. It also allows for identity work for teens who are struggling with this.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This can be done at any time during Child Prep, but since it is an identity activity, it would be useful in an early session. Since there is a built-in trust-building portion, this may help in establishing a working relationship with a child/youth.

Time Needed: Up to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Paper plates, markers or crayons, stickers, scissors, glue, yarn or elastic cord

Developmental Age Range:

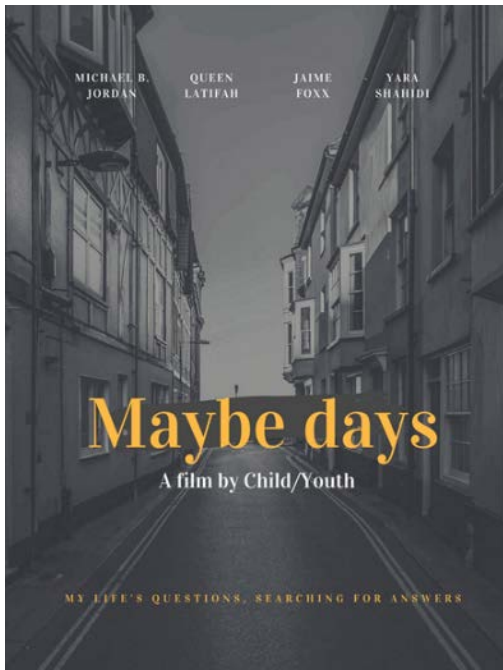
7 years and older

The Movie of Me

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

Explain to the child that they are going to create a movie poster that describes their past or present life. They can decide whether to make the movie whatever genre they like: comedy, drama, action, animated or mystery. The next step is to pick a title. (It can be from a real movie or one they make up.) Help them select the characters or actors playing the different roles in their movie. Do they want a hero/heroine or villain in the movie? They can choose a rating for their movie as well.



Next, the child can design a movie poster on www.canva.com, which has free layouts. (You should review the website before the session to become familiar with it.) They can include a picture of themselves as well as pictures they like from the site or other searches. They can also design their movie poster on paper.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed in the middle of the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed: Computer or phone, Internet access, paper, markers or crayons

Processing:

As the child/youth designs their movie poster, discuss why they chose the movie title, genre and actors. Discuss the plot of the movie and why they chose it. It's interesting to see if the child selects a movie parallel to their life experiences or one they hoped for. Depending on what they chose, this can lead to a discussion about their past or their hopes for the future.

Submitted by: Jamie Raddatz, Northern Children's Services

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If the child is interested, they can write a scene from their movie instead of (or in addition to) the movie poster.

If you are completing a digital Lifebook, the child could act out the scene too.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Treasure Hunting

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Preparation work:

1. Find colored images on the Internet of a treasure chest, treasure map and pirate hat and print. Print coin images if you won't be using chocolate coins. (See #4 below.)
2. Glue the treasure map onto a colorful piece of construction paper. Glue a pirate hat onto black construction paper. This makes the items sturdier.
3. Make eye patch out of black construction paper. Tape string to the back of the patch so the child can tie it around their head.
4. Purchase chocolate filled gold coins, if desired. Paper coins can also be made and used in place of the chocolate coins.

The preparation work is complete, and the activity is ready to go.

Engage the child in a conversation about various people one might treasure in their life and specifically people whom the child treasures. Ask why these people mean so much to them and how they show they cherish them on an ongoing basis.

Discuss how they may struggle with treasuring someone special, especially when the child is going through a difficult time. This could include a resource parent, birth parent, themselves, residential staff or a sibling. Explain how this activity can help them with this struggle and help the child identify a particular individual.

Have the child hang the treasure map in a place they can easily access it such as on the refrigerator door or on their bedroom door. Explain to them each dotted line on the treasure map represents a day in which they do a good job at "treasuring" their identified individual.

Tell the child for each day they want to advance forward on their treasure map, they must provide a reason why their person deserves to be "treasured." Reasons might include "Grandma gives me the best hugs," "Mom Selena makes my lunch every day" or "My dad calls me on the telephone every day." The child should deposit a coin in their treasure chest each day they identify a reason why they treasure their identified person. Once the child reaches the treasure

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can help a child learn to treasure themselves or someone in their lives

Time Needed: 1 to 2 hours prep time; 45 minutes to complete activity

Materials Needed: Treasure map, treasure chest or brown box, gold coins (preferably the chocolate filled coins), pirate hat, pirate eyepatch, construction paper, string, tape and glue

chest at the end of their map (this should take several weeks), they have earned a small prize or can eat the chocolate coins in their treasure chest.

Note: Depending on the age of the child, an adult may need to keep the treasure chest so the chocolate coins are not eaten until the end. Paper coins can be used and traded in for a small prize once the treasure map is completed if desired.

Processing:

This daily ritual builds the child's respect for the identified individual since it spans over the course of several weeks.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be used to help a child treasure themselves if they are struggling with self-esteem issues or self-harming thoughts or behaviors. Also, this activity can easily be a family activity so the child doesn't feel too singled out in the home. Everyone could give a reason for why "mom" should be treasured to help foster the household respect for mom, for example.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Where I have Lived

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Honors the Past, Answers Child's Question

Directions:

Explain to the child they will make a house for each place they have lived. The end result will be a timeline of the child's journey to date.

Start with the first house the child resided in and work in sequential order to their present home. Have the Child Profile to use as a reference for names, location and dates.

Ask the child the questions listed below, and add additional questions as needed. The child should write down their responses for each home on one side of the house. Continue until the child has answered questions for each home they lived in.

The child can decorate each house if desired.

Questions to ask child:

- What was the family's name?
- When did you live in this house?
- Who lived there with you?
- Where was the house located?
- Was it in the city, suburbs or country?
- Were there any pets in the home? If yes, what kind and names.
- What school did you attend? What grades(s) were you in?
- What are some of the things you did together as a family while living in the house?
- What did you like about being there?
- What was your favorite room in the house?
- Why did you move?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed:

Child Profile, silhouettes of a house on colored cardstock (need 1 house for each place child has lived), colored paper, markers, embellishments (such as feathers, sequins, stickers, glitter), glue, hole punch and ribbon

Processing:

The houses can remain separate and placed in a page protector within their lifebook. Another option is for the child to sew the houses together as a book. For the second option, punch holes in each house with a hole punch, making 6 or 7 aligned holes along one edge. The child can use the ribbon to sew the houses together making a book.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Note: Some children may need assistance with writing the information.

If the child wants to make a book, use the cardstock as the front and back covers and colored construction paper for the inside pages.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Have the child sit down and write a letter to anyone they feel they would like to address: birth parent, caseworker, foster parent, prospective adoptive parent, sibling, etc. If the child is hesitant to write (or unable to write) you can assist them in actually writing the letter as they instruct you in what they want to say. Tell the child they do not have to send the letter; they can use it as a tool to articulate some of the things they would like to convey to that person. Once the letter is composed, have the child place it in a sealed envelope and help them decide what should happen with the letter next.

Processing:

Sometimes it will be appropriate to mail the letter and other times it will not. Help the child to determine how they should use the letter. Consider what will be most beneficial to the child. (Keep in mind the goal for this activity is for it to be beneficial to the child in some way, not to be vengeful or vindictive to another person who may have hurt them.) Many times, it is helpful for the child to have had an opportunity to 'purge' themselves of the things they have written. This activity can also be helpful to you as a worker because the child's response to this activity can provide clues to other avenues that should be explored in the process of preparing this child for permanency.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

A child that is unable to write can put their ideas to paper in the form of a picture story and seal it in an envelope just as you would do with a letter.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Introducing this to the Child: Introduce this activity once the child has basic reading and writing skills.

Time Needed: About 1 hour (allow time for processing)

Materials Needed: Paper, pen or pencil and envelopes

Developmental Age Range:

12 years and older

What do I Value?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Print out a list of values prior to the session. Use colored paper, if desired. A list is included below, but you can also develop a list of your own depending on the youth’s situation.

Explain what a “value” means. Show the youth the list of values. Ask them to rank the values in order – starting with the most important value to them and ending with the least important one. The youth should cut out each value and glue or tape them onto another piece of paper.



Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be introduced at any time as a way to get to know the youth or after they are more comfortable in sharing information about themselves.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: List of values, scissors, glue, tape and paper

Disciplined	Motivation	Creativity
Family	Dependability	Education
Compassion	Justice	Honesty
Equity	Reliability	Fitness

Submitted by: Kimberly Burkholder, Catholic Charities Adoption Services

Career	Gratitude	Balance
Diversity	Service to Others	Loyalty
Freedom	Connection	Good Humor

Processing:

Talk with the youth about why values are important, and discuss the role they play to assist with decision making and setting goals. Ask them why they selected their top three values. Discuss why other values were closer to the end of their list. Ask if their birth family or other important people in their life share similar values.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can ask the youth to select their top three values instead of ranking them.

When working with resistant teen boys, the video game Plants vs. Zombies can be used in conjunction with this activity. In the game, a player has to defend their home (something most people highly value) against a zombie invasion.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Developmental Age Range:

10 years and older

Who is on My Team?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

Using the cardboard, create a football field. Add goal posts too. Cut out football players. If needed, you can complete this step prior to the session to save time.

Ask the child if they would like to have a team name and logo. If they do, the child (or worker) can write the name and draw the logo on the football field.

Ask the child to name the people in their life who are helpful, supportive or a good role model for them. Write each name on a football player and place them on the playing field. Add their name to the team roster. Continue until child is finished adding players to their team.

Processing:

Discuss each team member individually, including how the person has helped the child. Ask the child what the identified person means to them. Sometimes a child may not feel many people are on their team and need a visual reminder of the supports and resources surrounding them. You can add the child's team roster to their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If a child prefers another sport such as soccer, baseball or basketball, make the applicable sport's playing field instead of a football field.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: 1 large piece of cardboard, green and white construction paper, team roster sheets, football player cutouts, tape and a team logo (optional)

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Submitted by: Christopher Moyher, Adelphoi Village

Your Many Gifts

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

This activity is perfect to help a child or youth recognize the unique gifts (or qualities) they possess. It helps build their self-esteem and recognize the "gifts" they provide to others daily.

Think of all the wonderful things about the child or youth with whom you are working. Are they athletic? Artistic? Loving? Smart? Funny? Resilient? Thoughtful? Are they a good listener? Creative? Are they faithful? Do they have an awesome smile? Are they great at technology? Are they great with animals? Are they super kind? Make a list of the child's qualities.

To prepare for this activity, purchase several small items in advance. Take a trip to the local dollar store and look for items that could represent or symbolize the child's gifts. Don't forget the list you made!

As you buy each item, write down which gift it represents so you don't forget. Try your best to find at least 8 gifts—the more the better. Be creative! Anything can represent anything; it's all in how you spin it.

Here are some suggestions:

- A Mr. Goodbar candy to represent their goodness.
- Laffy Taffy candy to represent their sense of humor and ability to make others laugh.
- A bouncy ball to represent their resiliency.
- Smarties candy to represent their intelligence.
- Something heart-shaped (such as a pillow, cookie or candy) to represent the love they give to others, love they have been given from others and the love they hold in their hearts.
- A paint brush to represent their artistic ability.
- Something sporty such as soccer ball candies or a small football to represent their athletic ability.
- If they are religious, a religious item to represent their faith.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: Prep time - 1 to 2 hours; 1 session to complete activity

Materials Needed: Wrapping paper and bows (optional), various dollar stores items

Wrap each gift individually. It's very likely most of your items will be small and easy to wrap. Wrapping each gift individually helps to emphasize the idea each characteristic or talent is a gift. It also makes them feel special that someone took the time to do this for them. Who doesn't love opening gifts?

Put all the gifts in a gift bag or a basket of some kind. Presentation is key here because you are presenting them with something very special.

When meeting with the child or youth, explain you are celebrating them! Tell them they will open some gifts they hold within themselves and some gifts they have to offer to others. Have them open one gift at a time. Talk about each gift and explain why you chose this particular gift for them. Make a list of the items and what each represents for their Lifebook. Take pictures of them opening the gifts to add to their Lifebook as well.

Processing:

When you present the gifts, explain the conceptual idea of this activity and how you want to help them see how special they are. This activity gives you the opportunity to hone in on all the child's strengths. It's important to emphasize the gifts they possess are what will help them reach their goals and what they can draw upon in times of struggle. Ask them to remember this activity anytime they are down on themselves. Ask them to keep the items (if they are edible they can eat them) to always remember their gifts. Providing them with a list to keep is a good idea.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity is good to do during the holiday season or around the child's birthday, as these are times when gifts are typically given.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? How Will I Get There?

Yellow Brick Road

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Makes Connections

Directions:

Begin a discussion with the child about the type of family they see themselves being a part of. Ask them to draw a picture of the type of permanency family they would like. Encourage them to be specific. For example, ask them if they want a one or two parent family, pets, siblings, family of a specific race, etc.

Processing:

If a child is unsure about what they may want their future family to look like, encourage them to draw several pictures of different families. The child can add words to the pictures to describe a potential permanency family such as loving, caring, funny or active for example.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be done more than once as the child continues to explore the type of family they would like to belong to. Also, when a permanency family is identified, the child may want to draw a picture of the family.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used when the child can begin to see themselves as a member of a permanency family.

Time Needed: Varies - 1 hour to several hours

Materials Needed: Paper, markers, pens or pencils

Questions Answered: Who Am I? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Activities for:

Teens

(13 years and older)

All About Me: Teen Edition

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

All about Me Teenage Edition: The Story of Your Life is a question and answer book for teens that covers a wide variety of topics. Review the book ahead of time and structure the activity in a way that will be most effective with your particular teen.

This activity can be formatted in a variety of different ways depending on each individual teen. Below are some suggestions:

- Using the table of contents, make strips of paper with each chapter on a strip. Throw all the strips into a bag and have the teen draw a strip at random to select the topics.
- Have the teen call out random page numbers and ask the questions from each page they select.
- Hand select the topics you feel would be most beneficial to the teen and only ask those.
- Go back and forth with the teen and you answer some questions from the book as well.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time. The more sensitive the topics you choose, the better the relationship you should have with the child.

Time Needed:
1 hour or longer

Materials Needed:
All About Me Teenage Edition: The Story of Your Life by Philipp Keel

Processing:

Some teens may enjoy recording their answers on scrapbook pages to then add to their Lifebook at a later time. Others may just want to talk and not want to record their answers at all. Be flexible! Regardless of the relationship you have with the teen, assure them that they are free to skip any question which they do not feel comfortable answering.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Pages 73 - 76 of the book contain sexual information and may need censored.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Connecting The Missing Pieces

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

At a scheduled session with the youth, explain that you would like to talk with them about what has happened in their life. Be prepared to give the youth a copy of their Child Profile (not to keep but to use during the session) and a copy for yourself. Most youth will recall the profile being completed.

Discuss the purpose of a Child Profile and read it together. (We have all experienced the value of having something else to look at so while the youth is telling you or you are reading about their difficult stuff, they don't have to look at you.) Have a pen or marker handy so you can circle items needing clarification.

Processing:

You may need more than one session to complete this activity. The youth may take longer to process certain parts of the profile or you may get sidetracked answering the youth's questions. This is not a bad thing. Don't be afraid to let the youth see that you have questions about certain things too; this works to build your rapport with them.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

This activity can be tailored to go at the youth's pace in whatever way best meets the youth's needs.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used early on in the process as you and the youth review what their history involves. It can be introduced simply as a means for you to discuss together what happened to them and what their story is.

Time Needed:
Varies from 1 hour to several sessions

Materials Needed:
2 copies of youth's child profile, pens, markers

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Developmental Age Range:

13 years and older

Door-to-Door

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections

Directions:

Work with the youth to establish a timeline of all their previous placements. Engage in conversation and allow them to tell you all the places they remember living. Use their Child Profile or placement history information from the placing agency to fill in the blanks for the child.

Once you have created the timeline together, assess the list and see if it will be feasible to travel with the youth to their previous placements. If the placements are within a reasonable traveling distance, allow the youth to use a digital camera or phone to take photos of the outside of the homes. If it is possible to get out of the vehicle and take photos, some youth prefer to have their photo taken in front of the homes as opposed to just a photo of the house itself.

For youth who have placements in other states or too far to physically travel to, Google maps and the street view option is an excellent alternative for obtaining photos.

Processing:

Use these photos/prints to create Lifebook pages. The youth can talk about each placement, likes/dislikes and memories from each placement. An actual photo of each of the youth's previous placements frequently generates a flow of conversation and memories.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If the youth is not into scrapbooking, simply having the photos and talking about each placement works just as well.

This activity can be modified to just use Google maps street view option for the entire activity rather than travel "door-to-door."

Questions Answered: What Happened To Me?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed once you have met with the child several times and has established a relationship with the child.

Time Needed: Several sessions

Materials Needed: Digital camera or phone, scrapbooking materials, computer, Google maps

If I were in Charge of the World...

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Look to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, make a template of the questions listed at the end of this section.

Work with the youth to complete the questions. They can be as creative and wild as possible with their answers. If the youth wants to be outrageous and silly, let them!

Some youth may look at the questions and be introspective and serious.

This activity can go in whatever direction the youth decides to take it.

Questions for the template:

IF I WERE IN CHARGE OF THE WORLD

by _____

If I were in charge of the world

I'd cancel _____,

_____ and

_____.

If I were in charge of the world

There'd be _____,

_____ and

_____.

If I were in charge of the world

You wouldn't have _____.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the youth at any time.

Time Needed: 30 to 60 minutes

Materials Needed:
Template of "If I were in Charge of the World" (see Directions for details)

You wouldn't have_____.

You wouldn't have_____

or _____.

You wouldn't even have_____.

If I were in charge of the world

A _____ would be a _____.

All _____ would be _____.

And a person who sometimes forgot to _____,

and sometimes forgot to _____,

would still be allowed to be

in charge of the world.

Processing:

This discussion for this activity depends on the direction the youth takes to answer the questions. They may take a silly approach and give goofy, unrealistic answers. In this case, you can try to steer the conversation into a direction more relevant to the youth's situation. The youth may also answer the questions as they relate to their current situation and the discussion may be more serious.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Questions can be changed to fit into the youth's situation.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Question, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Use iMovie to create a video that creatively documents the life of the child. The movie's focus could be specific events, a "Year in the Life of [insert name of child]," a digital lifebook, etc.

Step 1: Get iMovie

iPhone, iPad, and Apple computers purchased on or after 09/01/13 should either have iMovie already installed, or you will need to open the Apple Store app, search for iMovie and install it for free. If you don't meet this requirement, Apple charges around \$4.99 for iMovie.

Step 2: Create a Project

Open the iMovie app once it's installed.

To get started, tap the **Projects** tab and then tap the **Create Project** button. iMovie will allow you to create either a **Movie** or a **Trailer**. A movie allows you to combine videos, photos, and music to create your own project. A trailer follows a rigid template that features a predetermined order of scenes and transitions. A trailer is fun for a quick project you want to look like a Hollywood movie trailer. The Movie template is more flexible and lets you determine the length of your clips and how they are arranged.

Step 3: Pick a theme

For a Movie project, the first thing to do is pick a theme. There are 8 themes. Each theme features its own graphics for the title screen and transitions along with its own theme music. If you want the least intrusive theme, pick Simple or No Theme.

Step 4: Add pictures and/or video clips

After choosing a theme, you can now start adding video clips to the project. Click **Import Media**.

Highlight the file(s) you wish to import and then click **Import Selected**. Importing may take several minutes depending on the size of each file. Imported media is stored in your iMovie library, ready to be inserted into your timeline.

The iMovie timeline is where you piece together the movie, clip by clip. Once you decide on the storyline/order, you can begin to insert your imported media into your timeline in the correct sequence.

Select and highlight the photo/video you would like to insert into your movie. Then drag and drop your chosen media into your timeline.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time.

Time Needed: minimum of 1 hour

Materials Needed: iMovie (available on Apple computers and devices)

Add Audio:

For video clips with pre-existing audio, this can be removed and masked with a soundtrack if desired. To do this:

- Right click the clip and then select **Detach Audio**.
- The audio will then be displayed directly below the inserted media.
- Highlight the detached audio and then press the Delete key on your keyboard.

Add Music:

Click the **iTunes** icon on the left side of the screen to display the contents of your library. Drag and drop your chosen song into your timeline and adjust the length of the track to suit your movie.

Give Your Movie an Opening and/or Closing Title(s):

Introduce your creation to your audience by adding an opening title. An opening title can be placed directly over a video clip or background of your choice.

- Click **Maps & Backgrounds** (on the left side of the screen).
- Select and highlight a background.
- Drag and drop your chosen background into your timeline.
- Click **Titles** (on the left side of the screen).
- Select and highlight a title style.
- Drag and drop your chosen title style into the beginning of your timeline.
- Double-click the title element to edit the text, font and size.

Add a Transition Between Each Clip:

Adding a transition between clips ensures that each one merges seamlessly into the next to avoid appearing choppy.

- Click **Transitions** (on left side of the screen).
- Select and highlight a transition.
- Drag and drop your chosen transition into your timeline and then repeat for each additional transition.

Add a Sound Effect:

iMovie includes a host of sound effects for you to choose from such as Dogs Barking, Door Squeak, Pinball Machine and more.

- Click **Sound Effects** (on left side of the screen).
- Select and highlight a sound effect.
- Drag and drop your chosen sound effect into your timeline. Gradually fade out your sound effect and accompanying audio by dragging the Fade Handle to the point in the clip where you want the fade to begin.
- Click the Volume icon to adjust the volume of your sound effect and then move the slider until satisfied.

Finishing Touches:

iMovie includes a number of features designed to automatically improve the appearance of your movie.

- Click **Enhance** to enhance the Color Correction, Color Balance and Volume of your movie.
- Highlight a video clip, click **Adjust** and then **Stabilization** to stabilize shaky video. Move the slider up or down to adjust the amount of stabilization needed.

Play with the various options all you want. You can always tap the **Undo** button on the right side of the screen to undo a change. You can also tap **Play** to preview your movie.

Step 5: Saving and Sharing your iMovie

When you are finished, tap **Done** and your movie will be saved. You can then play it from here to show it to other people or tap the **Share** button and share it via email, Facebook, YouTube or other applications.

Processing:

Once the movie is completed, encourage the child to talk about when the pictures were taken, people and places in the pictures, where the child lived at the time, who they lived with, etc.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Learning to Self-Advocate

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past

Directions:

This is a two-part activity completed over 2 Child Preparation sessions.

For the first part, write “Words to Live By” at the center-top of a piece of paper. Next, write these words on the paper: Resiliency, Honesty, Integrity and Strength. Ask the youth to write a definition for each word. Review the correct definition for each word with the youth and ask them to give an example when they had to use each of these values. Add a text box to the page with “Things I Want to Work On” written in the box. Encourage the youth to include some steps they need to do to move forward with their life. Add a third text box with “Goals for Me to Become More Independent” in the box. Discuss the youth’s responses with them.

For the second part, write these phrases on a piece of paper: Be Brave. Be Honest. Be Respectful. Add a text box to the page and write “Has there been a time in your life when you needed to use these concepts?” In a second box, write “Describe an experience that forced you to be brave.” In a third box, write “How did being brave and honest make you feel?”

Ask the youth to write their answer in each box.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is geared for the youth who has a difficult time expressing themselves regarding their past history and trauma.

Time Needed: 2 hours (1 hour each during 2 separate sessions)

Materials Needed: writing utensil, paper, laptop (if desired)

Processing:

The purpose of this activity is to help a youth begin to discuss some of the trauma they experienced. It will help them be brave about their own history and advocate for themselves. It will show them the importance of being honest with themselves and those who are caring for them and to respect themselves and those trying to help them.

Some youth may struggle with writing down their thoughts or give superficial answers. This activity may be a springboard for more in depth discussions with the youth in the future.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The above-mentioned words and phrases can be made into pages on the computer before the session using graphics and colored text boxes. It may be easier for some youth to complete their answers using a laptop rather than hand-writing them.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Look Below the Surface

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions

Directions:

One of the first considerations in any discussion of culture is to define it and differentiate it from other related terms such as race, nationality and ethnicity. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they have very different meanings. The focus of this activity is on culture.

Ask the youth to look at a picture of an iceberg and talk about what they see. Ask the youth how much of an iceberg they think is visible above the water. (The answer is 10% to 20%.) Remind them that this leaves 80% to 90% of the iceberg under water, meaning most of the iceberg cannot be seen above the water's surface.

Explain that sometimes people likened culture to an iceberg, as there are some things one can tell about a person's culture simply by looking at them (what can be seen above the water). However, most of the aspects of a person's culture are not so obvious and are hidden below the surface as in an iceberg.

Ask the youth to draw a large iceberg on the flipchart paper. It can just be a simple outline of the outside of the iceberg. Remind them to add the water line. Above the water line, ask them to write down things on that someone would know about them simply by looking at them. Their answers will include things such as clothing, food, art/music, gender, talents, language, celebrations, behavior and race. Explain that most of one's culture is noticeable as experienced through the senses – food, dress, music, physical look, language and literature. This is the part of culture that is in one's consciousness. It is the part of culture one can hear, see, smell, touch or taste.

Under the water line, ask the youth to write the parts of their culture that are not easily seen and lie under the surface of the water. Their answers will most likely fall under topics such as roles, rules, traditions/customs, parenting, communication (nonverbal, body language, eye contact, facial expressions), sexual orientation, medical care, child rearing beliefs, abuse, personal, political and religious beliefs, personal space, touching, patterns of handling emotions, death and dying practices, conflict resolutions or courtship practices.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with the youth at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Picture of an iceberg, flipchart paper and markers

Processing:

Explain that many people get stuck at the tip of the iceberg – what one can easily see. Some people assume they know someone based on what they can see. Often, we need to look past the surface to truly understand someone.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None noted

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Past, Present, Future

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Have the youth select 3 pieces of paper; 1 to represent their past, 1 for their present and 1 for their future. Next, ask them to draw symbols, words or pictures or cut the paper into whatever shape they want to represent each of the above time periods. They can connect the papers any way they would like or place them on a table in an order that feels best to them. Do not get preoccupied with how the papers are arranged; the main focus is to help the youth to express themselves freely on paper.

Processing:

This activity encourages the youth to construct a representation of how they perceive their life and future. Once the drawings are finished, encourage them to discuss their drawings. If they refuse to do so, this is a sign they have not reached the point in the working relationship where they are ready to disclose this information. Just collect the drawings (if permitted) and put aside for another opportune time to discuss again.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Some teens can complete this activity in 1 session, while others may need to process each portion of their life presented in the activity over a period of time. You can assess this by gauging their responses as they discuss each drawing.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed once the worker has met with the youth several times and a relationship has been established.

Time Needed: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Multi-colored construction paper, markers, scissors, tape or glue

Developmental Age Range:

13 years and older

Permanency/Adoption Interview

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

A youth who is achieving permanency through adoption or permanent legal custodianship (PLC) may have questions regarding the process. Speaking with another youth who has already achieved permanency may help answer their questions and alleviate anxiety.

For the youth preparing for permanency: Discuss the questions they would like to ask of a youth who has already achieved permanency. Help them list questions to take along to the interview.

For the youth who has already achieved permanency: Prepare them for the types of questions they may be asked, and let them know they can decline to answer any question asked of them.

Chose a restaurant or supply food for the interview to help calm nerves and give the youth something to do with their hands. Facilitate the introductions and begin conversation that will help the both youths find common ground such as school, music or sports. Refer to the list of prepared questions as a level of comfort is established. Throughout the interview, help clarify questions and answers as needed.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be used after the youth has a basic understanding of permanency/adoption.

Time Needed: Varies - may take part of several sessions

Materials Needed: Youth who has already achieved permanency, food

Processing:

In a following session, debrief the interview including the impressions of the interviewee. Use the teaching moment to help normalize foster care and the permanency process. Reflect back on the questions asked and the answers provided.

Submitted by: Janae Sauder, Bethany Christian Services of Central PA, Original Recipes for Success, Part 2

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

If you are not able to locate interviewees, have the youth choose a famous person who was adopted or who grew up in the child welfare system. Discuss what questions the youth would want to ask that person. Search online or take a trip to the library to research the famous person.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going?

Pongo Teen Writing

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Go to pongoteenwriting.org. You should explore the website before the session to review the available activities.

Click on "Writing Activity" and select a poem. Then, click on "Download Activity." Once the poem is downloaded, print out the poem.

Here is a sample poem. The underlined words were filled in by the youth.

If My Fist Could Speak

If my fist could speak, it would tell you how many walls I have punched.

If my feet could speak, they would recall how many shoes I have worn.

If my eyes could speak, they would tell you about all the good and bad moments I have seen.

If my pounding heart could speak, it would say how much it really takes to keep going in life.

If my hair could speak, it would explain how many times it has been cut down.

If my ears could speak, they would share all the things I have heard.

If my body could speak, it would tell you about all the pain I have taken and all the bad moments I have endured.

If my brain could deal with everything, it would want to ask why everything is happening like this.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed: Internet access, poems downloaded from Pongo Teen Writing website

Processing:

Give the youth some time to process their writing. Review their writing with them by asking questions why they selected different answers. Have them go into more depth about their writing, and allow them to express their true feelings.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

The Pongo Teen Writing website includes a variety of topics and activities. It also includes teaching resources for the professional working with the youth.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Scales of Self-Care

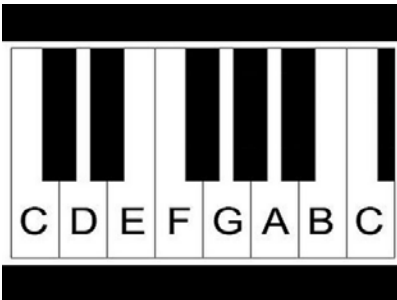
Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Prior to the session, print and cut out paper piano keys. Then, download a virtual keyboard app or access one online.

Begin a discussion about coping skills. Explain that some are more effective than others; some may feel good at the moment; however, they may distract a person from expressing feelings responsibly or from “facing the music.”

Lay the paper piano keys in front of the youth in the proper order, starting with C. (See picture)



Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed at any time during the Child Preparation process.

Time Needed: 20 to 30 minutes

Materials Needed: 8 paper cut-outs of white piano keys, 5 paper cut-outs of black piano keys and a virtual keyboard.

Ask the youth to list some coping skills they use. Have them write eight effective coping skills on the white keys and five non-effective ones on the black keys. Some effective coping skills include taking deep breaths, playing sports, talking to a trusted adult or friend, painting or listening to music. Non-effective coping skills include punching a wall, excessive sleeping, drug use, yelling, over-eating or throwing objects.

When all of the keys have a coping skill written on them, play a C major scale on the virtual keyboard. (A C major scale only uses white keys.) Explain that when they use effective coping skills, it can create “music to our ears,” which helps one have a healthy mind.

Play the scale again – this time substituting a black key for one of the white keys. The scale will not sound right when the black key is played in the C major scale. Relate this to when the youth doesn’t express their feelings responsibly.

Processing:

As the youth listens to the two scales, they will hear the difference between them. Discuss how a non-effective coping skill impacts their life the way that playing a black key impacts a C major scale. Include how an effective coping skill can make things flow better for them without creating a disruption.

This activity works well for youth who are into music and/or play a musical instrument.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Depending on the youth, you may want to have eight effective coping skills and five non-effective coping skills already written down, making sure to include any the youth uses.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There?

Stages of Change Sculpture

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Explain to the youth the activity has three stages to it, and each stage will relate to a part of their lives. The sculpture will be their opportunity to express themselves and how they feel about each part of their life.

Song selection is an important piece of this activity. One option is to give the youth the lyrics to the song "Carry On" by Fun. Play the video of the live performance of the song from the 2013 Grammys. Tell the youth to pay attention to the lyrics used in the song and also to the video. A second option is to ask the youth to select a different song that carries a similar theme to "Carry On." This can be done prior to the activity so the worker can print out the lyrics. Search to see if the selected song has a video to view. It is suggested the worker preview the song and video prior to the sessions.

After watching the video or listening to the song, ask the youth what stuck out to them. Allow them to express their opinion, and guide them in discussing the theme of the song. For example, if the song "Carry On" was selected, point out how, in the performance, the effects made it look like a rain storm, but the clouds cleared and the sun came out. Ask the youth what that means to them. Discuss the key lyric in the song. In "Carry On," one lyric states "Let your past be the sound / of your feet upon the ground and / carry on." What does this lyric mean to them? What is it encouraging someone to do? If the youth is having trouble discerning the meaning of the lyric, you may need to explain that it is telling the listener to let the past be the encouragement they need to move forward in their life and move past their adversities. Urge them to think about their past and how it has affected them to this point in their lives. Have the positives and negatives in the past moved them forward or pushed them back in life? Ask them to think about the lyrics of the song again. How can they use this lyric in their own life? How can they take the experiences of their past and let those experiences propel them forward? If a different song is selected, tailor the questions to fit the lyrics and meaning of the song.

Ask the youth to take the answers they have come up with (either in conversation or just in thought) and sculpt something out of the clay to express how their past has affected who they are and how they progress in their lives. Tell them they are shaping the clay, just as the past has helped to shape them. Encourage the youth to be creative, as well as reassure them they do not have to be perfect or even artistic. Their sculpture can be of something (representational) or just shapes (abstract), as long as it means something to them. Once they are done sculpting their piece, ask them to describe what their sculpture is of

Introducing this to the Child: This activity is designed to help the youth understand how each time in their life (past, present, and future) affects who they are and how they decide to move forward in their lives.

Time Needed: Minimum of 2 1-hour sessions

Materials Needed: Smart phone with YouTube to play music video, lyrics to selected song, clay (air dry, bake, or wet set), newspaper to protect workspace, sculpting tools (optional), bowl of water if using air dry or bake clay, craft paints, paper plates, paper towels, plastic cup, paint brushes, acrylic or polyurethane spray (optional)

and/or what it represents in relation to the earlier discussion.

If the youth has completed their sculpture after 1 session, air dry, bake, or set the clay before the next session. Bake or wet set clay comes in handy in case the youth does not finish during the first session; the clay will not dry by itself before the next session.

The second stage of the project can be completed once the clay sculpture has hardened. Show the sculpture to the youth and talk about how once the clay hardens, its image is set. Tell the youth just as the air (or heat with bake clay or water with wet set clay) causes the clay to harden, the present time in the youth's life and the circumstances they encounter serve as experiences that will help them solidify who they are as a person; their ideals, their values, and their aspirations.

Ask the youth to think about what things they are experiencing currently in their lives that they feel are influential in solidifying who they are. Discuss their ideas.

Finally, the youth can paint their sculpture. Stress that, in painting the sculpture, they are exercising their freedom to choose, representing their choices in the future. Encourage them to keep in mind their current future aspirations as they paint. Let them know that they can paint the sculpture with images of their chosen future, colors and shapes that represent that future or with any colors while just imagining their future; it's their choice.

Processing:

During and after the painting process, talk with the youth about their hopes for their future. What do they want to be when they grow up? Where do they want to go to college? Do they want to live where they grew up or move far away? Do they want to live in the city, suburbs, or a rural area? What else do they envision in their future? What will their life be like? Encourage them to dream big. Help them think of ways that they can achieve their goals and positive choices they will need to make along the way.

You can make a Lifebook page on this experience with a picture either of the finished sculpture or of the sculpture at each stage of the process. Beside each picture, have the youth write a short description of what the stage was meant to represent in general and in their own life.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me? Where Am I Going? How Will I Get There? When Will I Know I Belong?

Taking Down the Mask

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

To begin, lead a discussion about the different things that people hide behind and the images we present to others versus what truly makes us who we are. When we meet new people or we face new or difficult situations, we may hold up a "mask" to hide behind. This lets us present one side of ourselves - what we want people to see - to others and keep a more personal side, including our true thoughts and feelings, on the inside. This can be an eye-opening discussion for the youth as it allows for an honest inside look without being too invasive.

Give the youth a mask and ask them to write down the things they believe people hide behind on the front of the mask. They can do this through words, pictures, symbols. There are no correct or incorrect ways to complete this part of the activity.

On the inside of the mask, ask the youth to write down the things they believe makes a person their true self. You can point out how some things may overlap and can be included on both sides of the mask.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed after the worker has met with the youth a few times.

Time Needed: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Materials Needed:
Cardboard or paper mask, markers or pens

Processing:

Discuss with the youth how they felt while completing the activity and discussion. Some youth are more comfortable writing down their answers instead of discussing them. The discussion can help the youth explore their feelings and thoughts more. If they are reluctant to discuss their own feelings, you can have a general discussion instead.

You can take pictures of the youth with their completed mask, both the inside and outside. Include the pictures in the youth's Lifebook.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened to Me? Where Am I Going? When Will I Know I Belong?

Tree of Self-Awareness

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Makes Connections

Directions:

When starting the activity, explain that no words, letters or numbers can be used in the drawing—only pictures, squiggles and shapes. Explain that their tree can look any way they would like. Their tree will include roots, branches, flowers, leaves and fruit.

1. **Roots**

Instruct the youth to draw one root for each parent, grandparent and caretaker in their life. The people they represent with roots are the people who supported them while growing up or are still supporting them in some way. If someone is absent from their life and is important to them, they should draw a root for that person also. After drawing the roots, instruct the youth to draw a small simple picture beside them like a squiggle or shape that will help them remember which person the root represents.

2. **Branches**

Draw one branch for each family member such as a brother or sister. Other branches can include a boyfriend, girlfriend or friend that is important to them. Do not include parents, grandparents, or caregivers here. Alongside each branch, draw a little picture to represent the person it belongs to.

3. **Flowers**

Draw a flower for each thing in their life that makes them feel good about themselves. Draw a little picture inside each flower of the things that make them feel good.

4. **Leaves**

Draw a leaf for each significant event in their life. A significant event is anything that happened that has changed the youth or their life in some way. Draw a picture inside each leaf of the important event.

5. **Fruit**

Draw a fruit for each of the achievements in their life no matter how big or small. Inside each fruit draw a little picture to represent their achievement.

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed with a youth at any time.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Large piece of paper, pencil, colored pencils, markers or crayons

Processing:

When the youth has completed their tree drawing, discuss and review every item on their tree. Ask more questions to gain a better understanding of any of their details, if needed.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

Most teenage boys do not want to draw flowers on their tree. Instead, allow them to choose something else to represent the flower. Some boys have used clouds or have drawn a baseball around the tree and put their drawings inside.

If the youth is having a difficult time coming up with a picture and can better express themselves using a word, number or letter, let them use this and then discuss with them why using a word, number, or letter is a better representation.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened to Me?

What I Know, What I want to Know, What I Don't want to Know...

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Answers Child's Questions, Makes Connections, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Check with youth's county caseworker to make sure it is acceptable to review the Child Profile with the youth. Request a copy of Child Profile from caseworker, if needed.

Give the youth the attached questionnaire and three different colored highlighter markers. Make a key so each different colored highlighter represents 1 of these 3 statements.

For example:

Yellow: What I know

Green: What I want to know

Pink: What I don't want to know

Ask the child to read through the list of questions and highlight it according to the key above.

Questions:

Birth and Early Childhood:

1. Where was I born (name of hospital, city and state)?
2. What time was I born?
3. How much did I weigh and how long was I at birth?
4. Did I have hair when I was born? What color? How much?
5. What was my birth like? Were there any complications?
6. Who was present during my birth?
7. Did my birth mother hold me after I was born?

Birth Parents:

17. What are my birth parents' full names? (first, middle, last, mother's maiden name)

8. Who named me? Was I named after someone?
9. Where did I go when I left the hospital?
10. Did I have a room decorated for me when I went home? What did it look like?
11. When I was a baby, what was my personality like?
12. Who did people think I looked like as a baby?
13. What were my first words?
14. When did I crawl, walk, etc.?
15. What did I like to eat?
16. What did I like to play with?

18. How did my birth parents meet? Did they have an ongoing relationship?

Introducing this to the Child: This activity should be completed when the youth is ready to review their Child Profile.

Time Needed: Multiple Child Preparation sessions

Materials Needed: List of questions (included in directions), 3 highlighter markers, Child Profile

19. How old were my birth parents when I was born?
20. Were my birth parents married when I was born? After I was born?
21. Where did my birth parents go to school? How far did they get in school?
22. What were their favorite subjects in school?
23. What kind of students were they (did they get good grades)?
24. Were they involved in any activities in school (sports, clubs, band, etc.)?
25. Did they have any special talents?

26. Were they athletic?
27. What did they like to do for fun when they were my age? What kind of people did they hang out with?
28. Did they have jobs in high school?
29. What kind of music did they like when they were my age?
30. What kind of home life did my birth parents have?
31. What was their relationship like with their parents, siblings, etc.?
32. Did my birth parents have pets growing up?

Other Family Information

33. What is my ethnic background/heritage?
34. What is my religious background?
35. Are there medical concerns in my family?
36. What traits did I inherit from my birth parents and other family members?
37. Who do I look like or take after in my family?
38. Do my birth parents think about me and wonder how I am doing?
39. How do my birth parents find out how I am doing?

40. Do my birth parents ever regret the choices they have made?
41. Have things changed at home since I left?
42. Does my extended family know what happened to me?
43. What have my birth parents told my extended family about me?

Placement

44. What happened that caused me to be removed from my home and placed with Children and Youth Services?

45. How long do I have to be here? When can I leave the system?

Processing:

Look at what the youth highlighted in green and yellow and see if information in their Child Profile can fill in blanks about what they want to know and/or misconceptions about what they think they know. If it is not included, locate the missing information to address in future sessions.

Information highlighted in pink, indicating what they don't want to know, can open up a conversation about why they think they do not need and/or want the information. It may be too upsetting, too personal or a reminder of difficult times in the life.

Questions Answered: Who Am I? What Happened To Me?

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice

Directions:

Prior to the session, create a 'My Life Soundtrack' worksheet using the prompts below. You can format or decorate the page however you like.

Provide the youth with the worksheet and talk with them about the emotional connection a singer has to the songs they sing, regardless of their genre of music. Discuss the emotions they feel while listening to a song. Ask the youth to write their answers to the prompts.

My Life Soundtrack

- ❖ My theme song is:
 - I chose this song because:
- ❖ A song that makes me happy is:
- ❖ A song that makes me sad is:
- ❖ A song that helps me release my anger is:
- ❖ A song I can relate to is:
- ❖ My favorite song is:
 - And this is why:
- ❖ This song creates a lot of feeling when I listen to it:
- ❖ This song reminds me of a particular event in my past:
 - The event was:
- ❖ My favorite style of music is:
 - This is why:

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed once the worker has established a relationship with the child.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed: 'My Life Soundtrack' worksheet (included in directions)

Processing:

Suggest the youth pretends they are a songwriter and ask them to share what life experiences they would write about.

Process each response they give on the worksheet with them to understand the emotions they are experiencing and how they are managing those emotions.

Sometimes, the youth can provide specific lyrics to the songs they chose, which you can process with them. If they do not know the lyrics, you can extend the activity by printing out the lyrics and processing those specific lyrics during the next session.

You can then add the songs to a CD to give to the youth or place in their Lifebook.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

You can give the worksheet to the youth during the prior session to give them more time to think of their responses. If you present the worksheet during the session in which you intend to complete the activity, be prepared to give the youth more time to think about their responses.

Questions Answered: Who Am I?

Writing Letters to Myself

Child Prep Goals Addressed: Gives Child a Voice, Honors the Past, Looks to the Future

Directions:

Ask the youth to write a letter to their “past self.” They can choose a specific age or point in time. The youth may want to give themselves advice or reassurance. Talk with them about the ways it helps to look back and see the lessons they have learned and how far they have come.

Next, ask the youth to write a letter to their “future self.” Discuss the youth’s future plans, or ask them to imagine themselves at a certain age. Ask them if there is anything they want to remind themselves of or something they do not want to forget.

Give the youth the option to draw or include pictures with each letter.

Processing:

This activity allows the youth to put their thoughts into words and gives them a way to reflect on their past experiences. It also helps them to think about the future and identify what they need to do to make some of their future plans a reality.

The letters can be placed in the youth’s Lifebook. If they want, give the youth a copy of each letter.

Notations Regarding Adaptations:

None noted

Introducing this to the Child: This activity can be completed when the youth is ready to look at past experiences.

Time Needed: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials Needed:
Stationary and a pen

Questions Answered: Who Am I? Where Am I Going?

Submitting a Child Preparation Activity

We would like to thank all of our contributors from across SWAN who came together to create this tool. We hope that these activities can continue to serve as a statewide collaboration to support and enhance the work of SWAN Child Preparation workers.

Submissions for new Child Preparation activities can be made at any time. If you would like to contribute an activity, you may download the submission form from the [SWAN Permanency Toolkit](#). (To find the form, click on "Child Preparation Forms.") Please send completed forms to Dianne Ott, SWAN program technical assistant at dott@diakon-swan.org. Submitted activities will be added to the *Child Preparation Recipes for Success* once they are reviewed and approved.

As you work with a child or youth on their journey to permanency, always remember:

"All kids need a little help, a little hope and someone who believes in them."

- Magic Johnson