

# Small Groups – Activities for the Fearful child

Regular repeated structure soothes and calms a fearful child. Keep group at the same time in the same place with the same people. This allows supportive relationships to grow and flourish.

Maintain the same structure for each group. Always start and finish with a sharing circle. This is physically representative of containment and helps to manage and regulate difficult feelings.

Start each group with a right brain activity. More cognitive, language based left-brain activity should follow.

## 1 Structure – Opening Circle

Calendar – make a calendar for the group. Each week open up the door to find out what will be happening that week.

Pass the ball – consolidate names by rolling the ball to each other saying the names. Supports eye contact between yourself and the children.

Mix and match – ask children to make different lines using different sorting methods. Tallest to shortest. Colour of eyes. Time since your birthday. Encourages seeking, exploring and activity within a structure.

## 2 Right Brain Activities – Setting the Scene

Create a feeling with playdoh – this can be how you are today or led by the group facilitator, today can you make a shape for a happy feeling.

Pictures and music – play a piece of music and ask children to draw what the music sounds like.

Outside Activities – gather materials for a collage. The collage can be your feelings or directed as above.

Sand tray – have a sand tray for each child. Spend 5 minutes at the start of each group creating your world in the sand tray.

Share the feelings – in a circle every person does an activity for a different feeling. The others have to copy – good for new groups, particularly if you are learning names.

## 3 Right Brain activities – Developing Creativity

Work on a mural together – collaborative collage allows everyone to have their section.

Work on shared art - a long piece of wall paper. Everyone has a section. After 5 minutes every one moves round and adds to the part already drawn on. This can be done to music – the children can start to pick the music after a few weeks. This activity is best done in silence initially.

Puppet making – simple puppets made from fake fur or other very tactile materials.

Junk art – collaborative construction. Provide large amount of boxes and other items. This stimulates the seeking system and is particularly good for fearful children who need “tickling into relationship”

Outside activities – collaborative construction. In an appropriate environment building structures and sculptures again stimulates seeking system. Good on the beach with drift wood if you have the opportunity!

Den Building – stimulates seeking system, social bonding and collaborative approach.

## **4 Snack**

A break for a piece of fruit provides containment between the activities. Provide unusual fruits or new tastes to keep children intrigued and playful.

## **5 Cognitive Left Brain Activities**

Exploring feelings – draw around a child on wallpaper on the floor. Ask everyone to put colours or pictures on the body for different feelings; anger, worry, excitement, etc. This can also be done individually or in 2's. Share the pictures and support developing language for the pictures. Return to the pictures and draw on extra pictures to help the feelings. Discuss how people, situations, activities help when you are experiencing difficult feelings.

Exploring feelings – people who help us. Create a paper chain of people and support each child to fill in the people who help them. Have lots of people's names on hand in school – and pictures of them too if some of the children may be unfamiliar with them. This works well within a whole school approach.

Exploring Feelings – guest speaker. Invite someone in from the school to meet children and explain what they do when someone has a worry. This might be the receptionist, a meal time assistant or the head teacher.

Exploring Feelings – safe places. Draw a map of the school and identify different safe places to go when you are having difficult feelings. Go out on a site visit and have a look at the places.

Transitional Objects – work on a craft activity that creates a transitional object that will link the child back to the safe supportive small group experience. Bead making particularly good for this as provides a structured sorting activity. You can ask children to pick specific beads to represent people, feelings, and friends. Worry dolls are a good activity also – create small worry dolls.

[http://www.ehow.co.uk/how\\_5510151\\_make-worry-dolls.html](http://www.ehow.co.uk/how_5510151_make-worry-dolls.html)

Transitional Objects – my journal. Build up a scrapbook of experiences in the group. Take photos and spend time each week writing about what happened in the group. This can be adapted to the learning styles in the group. For some children the journal can be used to share experiences when not in the group. Be careful that the journal does not become worry focused!

## **6 Closing Circle**

Pass a thought - in Chinese Whisper style pass a kind thought around the circle.

Compliment Circle – everyone to give a compliment to the person next to them. Practice receiving as much as giving. This takes much practice and modelling.

Music and refection – play the same piece of music at the finish of the group and invite children to lie down with eyes shut. Most appropriate for the end of the school day.

Today I am – use of metaphor. Ask children each week what sort of animal, plant, weather, etc. they are. Enriches right brain/left brain activity and language skills. Can bring humour to the close of the group.

Support children's return to class. They may be able to support each other or you may need to take them individually.

NB: Document produced in conjunction with Sue Ford a Thrive Licensed Trainer and South West Family Support