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Chapter 16

TRIED-AND-TRUE THERAPLAY ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

This is a compilation of activities that have been used successfully with the classes we have talked about in this book. If your children are developmentally delayed, you will want to pick activities based on their developmental ages rather than chronological ages. Also consider your children's emotional ages. Often children who are behaviorally or emotionally disturbed will not have an intellectual delay, but an emotional delay, and this is the age to consider when picking activities. Whether or not there are delays involved, most activities can be adapted to appeal to the children you are working with.

We begin with activities for all ages, continue with those appropriate for preschoolers, with the activities becoming progressively more challenging. The first section contains activities that we have used in special education classrooms with approximately ten children. With some modifications, they can be suitable for larger groups. The last section contains activities, developed by kindergarten teacher, Mary Alice DaCosse, that are ideal for large groups as well as small. If you have a small group, be sure not to bypass this section. Hers are some of the most appealing and creative games we have ever seen.

Each activity provides different combinations of the Theraplay elements of nurturing, stimulation, structure, challenge. You will need to judge whether an activity is appropriate for your group. As we have mentioned elsewhere in this book, you can modify these activities so that they focus on the particular messages that your group needs. Also, you can always adjust activities so that they are comfortable for you.

SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**Opening Songs****“Where oh Where?”—To the tune of “10 Little Indians”**

Where oh where is our friend _____?

Where oh where is our friend _____?

Where oh where is our friend _____?

... (Child peeks and says, “Here I am!”)

Since this resembles the game of Peekaboo, this song is best for preschool children. If your children are at the younger end, each child (at his turn) can be given a scarf, blanket, or towel to drape over his head. This seems easier for them to do than holding their hands over their faces. At the pause, the child can pull the blanket off and say, “Here I am!” Variations: Children do not hide, but watch as the leader looks for each child in a pant leg, behind other children, etc., until the child says, “Here!”

“We Welcome”—to tune of “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” (Jernberg, pg. 131)

We welcome our good friend _____.

We welcome our good friend _____.

We welcome our good friend _____.

And we like his _____.

(or And he looks so happy)

A member, or the whole group, decides on something special, new, or important to say to recognize each person that day.

Closing Songs**“The More We Get Together”**

The more we get together, together, together.

The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

Cause your friends are my friends,

And my friends are your friends.

The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

“I Like to Play with You” (Make up your own tune as Phyllis Rubin did)

I like to play with you. (or: We like to play together)
I like to play with you.
Today we **ACTIVITY #1** (played patticake),
And then we **ACTIVITY #2** (ate pretzels).
And now we’re singing a song.
And we had fun.
I like to play with you.

“Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star”

Twinkle, twinkle little star.
Oh, what special kids you are.
Nice brown (soft, shiny, etc.) hair
Nice soft cheeks
Big bright eyes from which you peek
Twinkle, twinkle little star.
Oh, what special kids you are.

“Bingo”

I know a farmer had a dog
And Bingo was his name-O
B-I-N-G-O
B-I-N-G-O
B-I-N-G-O
And Bingo was his name.

“If You’re Happy and You Know It”

If you’re happy and you know it **clap your hands.**
If you’re happy and you know it **clap your hands.**
If you’re happy and you know it
Then your face will surely show it
If you’re happy and you know it **clap your hands.**
(Each person says a different thing to do)

If the group or a member has reason to be mad about something, you can sing, “If You’re Mad and You Know It,” and make an appropriate (for school) gesture (mad face, stamp feet, make a fist, say “I’m mad”). Other feelings can be used also: “If you’re sad and you know it . . .”

Games for All Ages

Check-Ups or Fixing Hurts

This is a way to say “Hi” to each child as a special welcome. Each child gets checked out by the group to see if he still is the same child he was last session and if he has brought with him all his special “things”: fingers, nose, blue eyes, loose tooth, etc! “OK, Jimmy gets a big hello! Hi, Jimmy, welcome back today. We’re glad you’re here. Let’s see how you look. Hey, you’ve still got your big brown eyes, and those long eyelashes. Still got your feet and toes? Yup. Good. Oh boy, and your smile, you brought it back! I love it. Looks like you’re ready to play.”

Along with acknowledging each child, you can also spend some time seeing if each child has any hurts to be “fixed” with some lotion or powder around it (not on it—it is not medicine). If a child does not have a hurt, the group can give him a congratulatory cheer and he can pick the body part on which he would like some powder or lotion.

In a beginning group, the adults should be the nurturers. Later on in the life of the group, each child can check his neighbor for hurts and do the nurturing with supervision. If a child often comes with more than his fair share of hurts, the adult should show real concern, telling the child and group that she will check the hurts next week to see if they are better, that this child brings too many hurts and maybe he might try not to bring so many next time. During the next session, remember to count the hurts to see if there are less of them. In an established group, the children can begin to relate how they got the hurts. Bring lots of empathy.

Beach Ball Name Game

This is a good game for new groups that can get progressively harder and more challenging. Initially, it can be used as an opening game, good for getting-to-know each other. A sponge ball is passed from person to person, but the passer must first say the catcher’s name **before** passing. To get harder, instead of calling out the catcher’s name, the passer must now describe something about the person. Each time the game is played the group could try giving different descriptions of each person: Type of hair; color of hair; description of clothes or shoes; favorite things to do; favorite foods (these last two would have to have been discussed at a previous time). For older groups, pass an imaginary ball that each child can change into whatever he likes (watermelon, fish, T.V., teacher, etc.)!

Do the throw and catch match up to what the imaginary object is? (Orlick, 1982, pg. 59)

Partner Stand-Ups and Sit-Downs

Partners sit on the floor, hold hands, and touch toes together. Then someone (one of them, or the whole group watching) counts, "1-2-3-Go." On "Go," the partners pull up and stand at the **same time** so that neither falls and both get pulled up. Cooperation is necessary to be successful. This can be reversed by beginning in a standing position while touching toes and holding hands, and then sitting down on the count of 1-2-3-Go. For older groups that have been successful in pairs, challenge them by trying a 3-person stand-up. Key: **Toes together**, simultaneous, balanced, cooperative pulling up. Also, older kids can try stand-ups with backs together and elbows linked. Hard! How many people can stand up together in your group? (Orlick, 1978, pg. 31)

One Potato-Two Potato

Everyone sits in a circle and you pass a ball (balloon, towel, kleenex, etc.) around and sing "1 potato—2 potato—3 potato—4 . . . 5 potato—6 potato—7 potato—MORE!" Whoever has the ball on "MORE" gets a variety (depending on the set-up of this particular game) of surprises: A tickle (soft and gentle, please) by as many of the group as possible. **Be careful** because a tickle can easily turn into an attack that can be more sadistic than pleasant (Jernberg, personal communication). To prevent this from occurring, the surprise can be a tickle given by the "MORE's" two neighbors rather than the entire group. Or a pretzel given by a neighbor, or a hug given by the two neighbors. What other surprises can you come up with?

Again, take special care that this is kept at a pleasant level under the tolerance of the child receiving the surprise. Tregay suggests, in fact, calling it a "soft surprise" and emphasizing the gentleness of the interaction.

Balloon Balance

Partners must balance a balloon, beach ball, or foam ball between them without using their hands and while walking. Try using stomachs, upper arms, foreheads, backs, chins. Sophisticated groups can try with more people or more balloons or both! Hard, fun, but can get wild. Keep calm! (Orlick, 1978, pg. 17)

Crazy Foam Play

Crazy foam is aerated foamy soap that looks like shaving cream but feels like a puff of bubbles. We found it in toy stores. We recommend the white kind, since colored foam stains hands and clothes until they are washed. No matter their ages, all people (adults included) are amused and intrigued by crazy foam games.

The first time this is introduced to the children, they might simply want to feel and “sh mush” it. Then you can put a ball of foam on your finger and blow it to your neighbor (or his tummy, knee, nose, hair, etc.). Usually when playing this game, we include the structure of, “Get ready, get set, go!” Then you can pass it by “squooching” it from chin to chin, cheek to cheek, etc. (No hands, please!), around the circle, or encourage independent thinking by having each person pass it to a different part of his neighbor. At the end, you can put the foam in your hands and all clap to make snow. This game is just “PURE FUN.”

Pass-It-On

This is a good getting-to-know-you activity for new groups, getting them used to touching each other, and getting touched, gently. The leader touches his neighbor in a special way (a soft tickle for his ear, a wiggle for his nose, a hug, a kiss, a rub, etc.) or gives him something gentle (lotion, powder, treat, etc.), and this is passed around the circle until it comes back to the leader. Each person can have a turn to be the leader when you want to encourage independent thinking.

For older children, ages nine and up, we have played **Cumulative Pass-it-Along**. The leader passes one touch to his neighbor who passes both it and a new touch to his neighbor, and on it goes around the circle. The number of touches passed increases each time, and at the end, the leader gets back all the touches that everyone has passed along. (Brody, pg. 29)

Lotion Body Part Pass

The leader puts lotion on any of her body parts (elbow, chin, ear, nose, etc.). She passes it to her neighbor by rubbing it off her nose, for example, and onto her neighbor’s nose, and so on around the circle. If someone runs out of lotion, put more lotion on his body part so the passing can continue. People are always amused by this one! It is a playful way to get nurtured.

Pillow Smash or Pillow Throw

This is a very handy activity when the entire group or the majority of its members is upset and anxious about something and you cannot settle them down to do any other activity. The leader takes a small pillow (or anything good to hit), and while hitting it with her fist, says something that she is mad about. The pillow gets passed around the circle. This can be modified by each person throwing it to another member of the group, the thrower saying, "I'm mad because we didn't get to play a game." If the group is significantly anxious, just this pillow game, followed by nurturing activities like treats, will be enough for the session.

Food Share

This is a good closing activity along with singing a song. Each person feeds his neighbor a treat—i.e., pretzels, raisins, chips, etc. Very young children will need help and modeling to feed the treat into their neighbor's mouth without eating it first! It helps for the leader to start the feeding so that each child has gotten his treat before he is asked to give one to his neighbor. The eater must also allow himself to be fed. This way, all get and give nurturing. Eye contact and caring should be promoted. Use your imagination to modify this activity to meet your needs, taking into account the ages of your children and their social development as they progress through the year.

1. You can put the treat on various body parts (fingers, shoulders, knees, chins) for neighbors to eat it without using their hands. At first, young children may all go around the circle using the same body part. Later, to foster creative and independent thinking, and as a challenge to older groups, each person could pick another body part on which to put the treat.
2. Raisins can be stuck onto various body parts and eaten off.
3. Older children, with an expected age-appropriate resistance to body contact and to feeding each other, can throw—GENTLY—raisins or rounded pretzels into their neighbor's mouth. Or they can give their neighbor a pretzel in his hand. Do not try to force this regressive type of activity on teens or preteens. Always modify your activities so children can be nurtured in an appropriate way for their age.
4. More sophisticated groups can actually pass around the bag of

pretzels, each offering his neighbor a treat which the neighbor eats himself.

5. Older children love to put treats on various parts of their own bodies and try to eat the treat themselves. Sometimes they make designs on their faces with pretzels. Pictures can be taken of their creations.

Preschool to Teenage Games

Silly Bones

This can be a partner or circle game. Partners must touch their hands (ears, elbows, knees, feet, noses, etc.) together on cue. For older children, they can add new touches while keeping the old ones! Young children in a circle can pass around an elbow (ear, etc.) touch, one-at-a-time, to each neighbor until it gets back to the starter. A small group can attempt for everyone to touch at once, but probably only certain body parts like heads, arms, elbows, big toes, shoulders, pinky fingers. This does sound like fun and good picture material. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 43)

Row-Row and Group Row-Row

Partners sit facing each other with legs straddling the other's legs and holding hands. One lies down and they take turns pulling each other up into a sitting position as they sing "Row-Row-Row Your Boat." One child at a time can be added to each side of the boat, until the whole class is rowing a giant boat. Adults may have to help each side take turns going up and down. Make sure all holds are gentle and that nobody gets pulled too hard.

Tunnel

The children make a tunnel with their hands and feet (or knees) on the rug and their bodies arched in the middle for one classmate to crawl through.

Group Patticake

Because it is more challenging than the typical two-person Patticake, it is a good structuring activity for five and six year olds as well as for preschoolers.

The class sits in a circle. Each person holds up his hands so that his

right hand is clapping his neighbor's left, and his left hand is clapping his other neighbor's right.

All together as you clap, you also chant:

Patticake-patticake baker's man.

Bake me a cake as fast as you can.

(Now hold hands with partners and make a circular motion:)

Roll it

(Now clap again:)

And pat it,

And mark it with a "K."

And put it in the oven for us today!

(or: the kids today)

(or: the Group today)

(Everyone can "put" a gentle tickle in his neighbor's tummy.)

Hand Prints

Gently rub powder on a neighbor's hand and help the child press his hand on dark construction paper to make a print. You can also make nose, chin, elbow, etc. prints. Try to get all prints on one piece of paper for display. Can each child remember which print is his, hers, or whose? (Jernberg, 1979, pg. 117)

Ring-Around-a-Rosie

The usual game with the children falling down gently. This is a game for your youngest or most delayed children. Even a class of autistic children loved this.

Group or Partner Rock-a-bye

This is modeled after the individual Theraplay activity of cradling a child and singing him a song. The group sits in a straight line, each child next to the other. One child lies down across all the laps, and the group sings to him. Each child has a turn.

To do this with partners, each child gets a turn to cradle the other, while the whole group sings together. Rock-a-bye Baby has a unique Theraplay twist:

Rock-a-bye (___), on the tree top.

When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.

When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall
And we will catch (____), cradle and all.

Train

The group sits in line, each person in back of the other, with legs straddling the child in front and arms around his waist. The first person (teacher, or maybe a child) is the engine; the last is the caboose. They all try to move the train by shuffling on legs and bottoms, around curves, into stations, whatever your imagination and the room allows. (Brody, pg. 30)

Toesies

Partners lie down with feet or toes touching and try to roll across the rug without breaking their "toe-hold." Try this with other body parts touching. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 17)

Making a Christmas Tree

At Christmas time, we tried this activity to give one child a chance to feel special. He was made the group Christmas tree. He got in the center of the circle, and the rest of the group adorned him with pretend Christmas tree ornaments. Then we all admired him. This activity may be modified for other holidays also.

Walk Around the Circle Hug

While everyone sits in a circle, two partners try to walk around the circle while hugging each other. Naturally, you can increase the number of children hugging until the entire group tries to maneuver around the area in a giant hug! Leaders, don't forget to have your turn!

Hot Dog Wrap

The children turn their backs to the middle of the circle. The adult picks one child to be wrapped in a blanket or large towel. Others turn around and guess who is the "hot dog." Then he gets gently unwrapped and "found."

Wrap Up Present

This is similar to Hot Dog Wrap, but the children do not "hide their eyes." Everyone watches while one child gets wrapped up in a large sheet

or light blanket. A pretend ribbon can be tied around the package. Then the group can open it up, delighting in the special present inside.

Scotch Stick

Using a piece of scotch tape or masking tape, each person sticks the tape onto a body part of his neighbor. The tape is passed around the circle. Sounds simple, but little kids get a kick out of it. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 33)

Walking with a String

Partners must either hold the ends of a small piece of string, or each must keep a finger stuck to a piece of tape, and walk around the group circle without letting go or coming unstuck! This fosters awareness of working with a partner. For successful partners, increase the challenge by adding a third person to the string- or tape-holding group. You can easily spot the children who walk as though they are the only ones holding onto the string! (Orlick, 1982, pg. 27)

Duck-Duck-Goose Hug

The children sit in a circle. With very young children, adults may need to stay outside the circle to direct the game. Each child has a turn to do the usual "duck-duck-goose," with pats on the head around the circle. When the "goose" is picked, he runs in one direction around circle, and the first child runs the other way. When they meet, they hug gently. (Brody, pg. 30)

Cotton Ball Tickers

One cotton ball is passed around the circle. The child who is to be tickled can close his eyes and guess (feel) where his neighbor has touched him gently with the cotton ball. This can also be done with eyes open, so the child just enjoys the pleasant feel of the tickle.

Wheel-Barrel Walk

Be sure you have a soft floor covering to do this game. Children can divide into partners, or each child can have his turn with one of the adults. One child gets on hands and knees. His partner (or the adult) takes a hold of his ankles, and carefully and slowly lifts the first child's legs off of the floor. Then the child must walk on his hands, while his partner follows him from behind, holding his legs. The partners can go

from one side of the group area to the other, while the rest of the group cheers them on. (Jernberg, 1979, pg. 123)

Run to Us

Half of the group is on one side of the group area with an adult. The other half is on the other side. One-by-one, each child has a turn to run, on cue, to the other side. To get ready for the runner, the “catching” side holds hands and forms a large semicircle. Then they say together, “Get ready, get set, GO!” When the runner runs, the group surrounds him in a giant hug. Then it is the turn of someone on the catching team to be the runner. Everyone must have a turn, of course. As with all games, if the groups can handle it, the leaders should also have a turn to run and be “caught.”

People Roll

The children lie on their stomachs on the rug, side by side. One at a time, each child has a turn to roll over the “logs” of people with adult help. The rollers should lie parallel to the “logs” and roll gently! (Fluegelman, 1976, pg. 117)

Shape/Color Matching

Cut pairs or triplets of squares, circles, triangles, etc. in the same color, or use the same shapes in different colors. Have just enough, or one extra, of the cut-outs for all the people in the group. Lay the shapes in the middle of the circle on the floor. The group stands up, holds hands, and walks around in a circle to a record or while singing a song. At the end of the song, each child must pick up a shape (or color) and find his “partner(s)” with the same shape (or color) and then hug together. This adds a bit of conceptual learning to a challenging and nurturing game. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 41)

Group or Individual “Sandwich”

This is OK for a small group of small children. The group is challenged to make a sandwich and each child decides what he wants to be (i.e. bread, mustard, ham, pickle). As each decides, he lies on top of the others on the rug or mat. Adults can “eat” them up or peel off layers one at a time.

For Individual “Sandwich,” one child decides what kind of food he wants to be: i.e., a pizza, cake, or some type of sandwich. He lays on the

floor in the middle of the circle. The group decides what to put on him (pizza sauce, cheese, pepper, etc.), and then all pretend to eat him up. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 35)

Shoe Find

The group sits in circle. The first time this game is played everyone takes off **one** shoe, and all shoes are put in the middle of the circle. The adult mixes them up. Everyone closes his eyes and picks a shoe—hopefully one belonging to someone else. Everyone opens his eyes and guesses whose shoe he has and gives it back to the owner. Watch out for kids who just have to pick their own shoe! Then you can try finding two shoes at a time. This game gets better the larger the group.

Circle Ball Pass

This is a good game for beginning groups and young groups, but there are creative ways to make it more challenging for older groups as well. The children sit close together in a circle. Pass the ball around in various ways—first a regular hand pass, then rolling it over your neighbor's outstretched legs, rolling into his lap, using different body parts to do the rolling, etc. Older groups can try rolling it to neighbors without using their hands, just legs! (Orlick, 1982, pg. 43)

Brown-Skin Day

This was a game we created for a class which seemed to be dividing into racial groups. We announced in the group that this was Brown-Skin Day. We looked for brown skin, felt its softness, and lotioned it. Some people had more than others. Some had very little or none at all. Freckles, moles, etc., even scars were brown skin that received our interest, appreciation, and nurturing. Certainly this can be done, with sensitivity, for any color of skin or physical difference. We think that this type of activity can allow the leader to show her appreciation of such characteristics, and serve as an important model for the rest of the class. Such experiences could prevent alienation between subgroups within the class.

Powder or Lotion Guess

One child closes his eyes, or is blindfolded. His neighbor picks either powder, lotion, crazy foam, etc. to put on his hand. The first child must guess, without smelling, what was put on him.

Ball and Blanket

The children sit in circle and hold an edge of a large towel or small blanket. The leader starts a foam ball or beach ball rolling in a direction.

1. Call out someone's name and all must help in getting the ball roll to that person.
2. Describe a person and get the ball to roll to that person.
3. All try to roll the ball from neighbor to neighbor around the edge of the blanket.
4. All stand up and try to throw the ball in the air and catch it in the blanket. This can easily get too wild since the balls move around. You may be able to try this sitting down with the goal of throwing the ball in the air carefully enough for it to land back in the blanket. Everyone really has to work together to accomplish this. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 221)

Blindfold Walk

One child is blindfolded—putting a towel over his head is good—and the group holds hands together and with him and slowly walks him around the room being reminded to be careful for the blindfolded child so he does not hurt himself or bump anything. This game not only gets the helpers to be concerned for the blind child's safety, but the blind child can express his needs to his helpers, such "Not so fast, cause it makes me scared." The helpers must be responsive to the "blind" child. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 27)

Follow the Leader

This game is most often played sitting in a circle, but if you have a good group, you can stand up and play the real game. It can be a good game for structure and for practicing asserting, and it gives the children a chance to take different roles. Each person has a turn to be "leader," picking an action for all the others to do along with him. The child/leader can announce or demonstrate the action, and then give the direction, "One, two, three, GO!" (or "Get ready, get set, GO!") He can be encouraged to watch for children who may not follow his direction or his action, and helped to assert the direction again. The "leader" should also tell the group when to "STOP!" and make sure everyone listened.

Depending on the size of your group, you may not be able to give all the children a turn to be leader in one session. We did this activity across

many sessions, keeping a list of who had had a turn, and giving two people a turn in each session until everyone had been leader. Plan ahead to make sure you have enough time, or enough sessions, to give each child a turn. (Brody, pg. 29)

Partner Body Check

This is a relaxing, nurturing, yet somewhat challenging activity that heightens the children's awareness of their classmates. Each person must feel his neighbor's hand (nose, cheek, chin, ear, etc.) and tell if it is warm or cold. This is good for children who need help focusing on reality and therefore is excellent for development of functional language.

Talking Through a Balloon

The leader starts by holding a balloon against the ear of her neighbor, and whispering, or talking very softly into the balloon. The neighbor then does the same thing to his neighbor, passing around the message in this fun way. Be sure the children remember to talk very softly since the sound is amplified through the balloon.

Guess Who's Hugging You

This is a game for children who may have trouble accepting a face-to-face hug from a peer. Each person gets a turn to get covered up with a blanket. Another child is picked to give him a hug, and then the covered child tries to guess who hugged him. The focus should be on getting the hug, and not on the child guessing correctly. It is amazing how blocking eye contact can make otherwise embarrassing nurturing possible. Although Theraplay stresses the importance of eye contact (and so do we), sometimes eliminating it for a time allows children to get a sample of nurturing which can then be built upon. Also, not being able to see adds challenge and fun.

Blanket Merry-Go-Round

One child sits in the middle of a good sized blanket. The group picks up the edges of the blanket and walks around turning the blanket in a circle **without** lifting the center person off the ground. Sing a song while giving each person a ride. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 46)

Swinging in a Sheet

This is for children either small enough or strong enough for one to actually be picked up in a sheet by the group. It is just like Blanket Merry-Go-Round, except the group very carefully holds the blanket or sheet and lifts the person slowly off the ground, swaying him gently for a short time.

Touch Colors

This game is modifiable for varying levels of difficulty, challenge, and cooperation. At its easiest, the group sits in a tight circle. The leader picks a color, saying, "Touch blue," for example. Then she touches something blue on someone else, and one-by-one, each person has a turn to touch something blue without others letting go! At the end, everyone should be touching someone else.

With a more sophisticated group, you can all reach for your blue color at the same time—but no hurts! Each child can have a chance to pick the next color to touch. For older groups, everyone can touch one color, then hold that color and touch a new color with another part of his body, seeing how many colors you can touch at one time. This last modification has not really been tried with our groups yet, but it does sound like fun! We challenge YOU to try it! (Orlick, 1982, pp. 61, 195)

Guess Who's the Leader?

One child is picked to leave the room. The rest of the group picks a leader. This leader will begin with one movement (clapping hands, patting head, swaying, etc.), but after a few rounds, he will switch to another movement for a few rounds. The leader continues to vary his movements. Meanwhile, the rest of the group must follow the leader's constantly varying movements! Then, the first child is called back into the room, and must guess who the leader is. Naturally, he must carefully watch the children in the group to see who they might be looking at, or which child is the first to change his movement. This really requires the children to work together and to be highly aware of each other.

Paper Patticake

Partners play patticake with both hands clapping the other's hands, but with a piece of construction paper between their hands! They must try not to let the paper fall. It is amazing how cooperative the partners

become. This is not an easy game. But the challenge is perfect for older and well established groups. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 52)

People Shapes

The children cooperate to make shapes by lying down on the floor in a pattern. They can start with squares, circles, etc.; then they can try letters, numbers, words, etc. One class made a 1 with one child, a 2 with two children, etc., until the whole class formed numbers and we took a picture. Another class did it by having volunteers to be part of each number, so that each time a number was made, some of the children made the number and others watched, directed, and admired the result. Then they switched places and made the next number. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 12)

Blindfolded Friend Guess

Every group gets caught up in the challenge of this game. Each person (one at a time), including adults, gets blindfolded and must guess—by feeling, smelling, whatever—the person who is picked to sit in front of him. For older children who might peek under a blindfold, have each child's neighbors help to hold a large pillow in front of his face while watching that he should not peek. The kids love it when the adults guess wrong! (Brody, pg. 31)

Over and Over

The children stand behind each other in a line. The first child holds a ball and passes it over his head to the next person and so on down the line. The last person runs to the front of the line with the ball and starts it going over everyone's head again. The group can be challenged to move the group, relay by relay, from one point in the room to another. With more space, this game can be changed to Over and Under, in which kids must alternate passing the ball over their heads and under their legs. (There needs to be more space between the children so they have room to bend.) (Orlick, 1978, pg. 43)

Where's the Lotion?

All members of the group, except for two partners, hide their eyes. One partner puts lotion (or rubs in powder) on the other so that it does not show. The others, one by one and gently, must guess—by smelling, of course—where the lotion or powder was rubbed.

Special Lists

In long-standing groups (year-long), as the ending approaches, each person (including the leader) has a special list made about him that can be taken home as a remembrance. Each group member says something about the person whose turn it is to be “special.” The leader writes the comments down, and the lists can be displayed in the room until all are finished. There are different focuses that can be given to the lists you make. One year our lists were example #1. The next year in the same class, we did example #2.

1. What you think is most special about the person.
2. Tell one thing the person does that you do not like, and one thing the person does that you do like.
3. “Bad Day List” –for bad days: Each person says what he does when he is having a bad day. Members of the class can talk about their own behavior, how to be aware of what they or their peers are feeling, more constructive ways to act, or ways to avoid getting someone else’s bad day passed on to you. (This is for the oldest and most sophisticated groups.)

Finding Shapes in Another’s Hand

Each person must find a shape or letter in the lines on his neighbor’s palm. Outline the shape with lotion, or chalk. Show it to the group. Then, of course, you get to rub the lotion into your hand, or share excess lotion with others in the group!

Tug of Peace

Break into small groups of three to five people. Each group gets a long piece of rope. Each group must hold its rope in such a way as to make letters or numbers. These can be held horizontally or vertically. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 15)

Faces or Noises

Everyone has a turn to make the funniest, meanest, etc., face he can or the funniest noise he can. The children often make faces and noises during Theraplay sessions anyway, and turning this natural occurrence into a planned activity invariably brings the children into the adult’s structure.

Shaping Twin Statues

Three people from the group are picked. One is the statue shaper, the second is the statue, and the third is the statue's twin. The shaper gets blindfolded. Then the statue person strikes a position. The shaper must feel the statue, and put the third person into the same position as the statue. The shaper is un-blindfolded to see how closely he was able to shape twin statues. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 66)

Cotton Ball Blows

Each person can try blowing a small cotton puff ball off various body parts (elbow, shoulder, knee, shoe!) to other classmates, or try blowing it to the body parts of their peers ("I'm going to blow this to your nose!") These are similar to games you can play with foam balls and crazy foam.

Circle Peas Porridge Hot

This is a harder form of Patticake, so children from six to eight years of age have been challenged by it. In a circle, you alternate clapping your neighbor's hands (as in Patticake) and clapping your own hands once while chanting the song. Since that should be easy, next try it with everyone's eyes closed!

Peas Porridge hot	Some like it hot.
Peas Porridge cold	Some like it cold.
Peas Porridge in the pot	Some like it in the pot
Nine days old.	Nine days old.

Hand Moldings

Bring aluminum foil and a pillow. Lay a piece of foil on top of the pillow. Each person can make an impression of a body part (hands, feet, elbows, chins, knees, etc.) by gently pushing the part into the foil while peers help shape the foil around the part. Gently remove your body—the impression is on the underside of the foil. These can be unique souvenirs of the session or the Theraplay Group. (Jernberg, 1979, pg. 118)

Body Part Pair Walk

Partners must walk around a specified area with different parts of their bodies touching: shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back, nose-to-nose, etc. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 35)

Valentine Tear

Partners get a piece of construction paper. Each puts one hand behind his back and holds the paper with the other hand. Together they try to tear the paper into the shape of a heart. (Other shapes can be used for other occasions.) This can be frustrating.

Crazy Foam Sculpture

Each child has a turn to form a part of a sculpture out of crazy foam. When finished, the class can keep the sculpture and see how long it lasts.

Giant Sandal

This is a growing partner game. Start with two children. They get two towels or pieces of construction paper, something they can walk on safely. They each put one foot on one towel and the other foot on the other towel and must walk together without coming off the towels. Real togetherness! If couples can do it—increase to three people together. Also you can vary how the partners walk.

1. Partners face the same direction and walk forward and then backward; they can walk sideways also.
2. Partners face each other and try the same series of walks. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 151)

Mirroring

One partner is the person, the other is the mirror. The person moves slowly (while standing in one place) and the mirror imitates him as simultaneously as possible. The children need to really work together in order to do this well. (Brody, pg. 30)

There is one important caution in choosing this game, however. With children who are not certain as to who they are, not well differentiated from others, mirroring can make them feel “creepy” and fearful of losing their fragile body boundaries. With such children, avoid this activity (Jernberg, personal communication).

Cross-Over Dodgeball

The group divides into teams and stands facing each other. Towels, enough for half of the entire group, are given to various group members on both teams. On cue, people start throwing towels, trying to have them land on people on the other team. When someone is “hit,” he must

cross-over to the other team. If there is an end to this game, it is when all people are on one side! Otherwise, it is a fun, NON-HURTFUL way to express mock anger. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 47)

Writing with Another's Hand

Have ready large pieces of paper and markers. One person holds the marker and is either blindfolded or closes his eyes. The other person holds the hand that is holding the marker (he cannot hold the marker itself!) and guides the hand to write his own name, or a message, on the paper. Then the blindfold comes off so all can see the message and how well they cooperated to write together. The person blindfolded cannot write what he wants. He must be led by his partner.

Blind Letter on the Back

One child turns his back to the rest of the circle. His neighbor traces a letter, number, or shape on his back with his finger. (Everyone else is watching, of course.) The first child must guess what was traced. This may be difficult for learning-disabled children. Be sure the tracer does not trace so hard that it hurts. But it may be that a timid child traces so gently that the shape cannot be felt, so he must be encouraged, by the "feeler" or the adult, to trace a bit harder.

Connecting Eyes

The group stands in a circle. The children look around until they connect eyes with someone. As two children make eye contact, they exchange places in the circle. Children who tend to avoid eye contact cannot avoid it in this game! (Orlick, 1982, pg. 87)

Nose to Nose

The group watches as one child closes his eyes and tries to connect his nose with the nose of his neighbor who is watching but remains still. If necessary, the child who can see can make noises (sighing, clicking) to help the first child find his way. This is another good way to promote closeness with older children. (Orlick, 1982, pg. 90)

Dots

This is a very challenging, and verbal, game. A large paper is mounted on the wall. One child is blindfolded and a classmate marks a dot somewhere on the paper with a marker. The blindfolded child is given a

marker of a different color, and is helped to place his marker on the paper. The class takes turns in a joint effort to give verbal directions that the blindfolded child must follow to lead him to the dot.

The directions can be simple (up, down, sideways) or more sophisticated (left, right; east, west) depending on the level of the group. This requires the children to take fair turns, respond to the directions of others, and to modify misinterpreted messages. To make this more challenging, an adult can keep a score of the number of directions needed to get to the dot, as incentive for developing more responsiveness and involvement.

Non-Verbal Birthday Lineup

Without talking, the children must line up in order of age—or whose birthday comes first. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 48)

Dr. Tangle

Two people (one adult if necessary) leave the room or go to a far corner. The rest of the group holds hands in a circle and then twists itself into a tangle. The first two people come back and must gently untangle the group without breaking them apart. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 39)

Aura or Vibes!

Two people stand facing each other at arm's length and touch finger tips. They close their eyes or are blindfolded. Then they both take three steps backward and turn around three times (all with help from the group). Then the two people must try to find each other again by sensing their "aura" and once more touching finger tips. This can be as interesting a game to do as to watch! Try doing this with the entire group at one time. (Fluegelman, 1976, pg. 37)

SUCCESSFUL LARGE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Big Snake

The children get into a crawling position and hold onto the ankles of the child in front of them. (They can start out in pairs and grow bigger and bigger until they make a giant snake.) Then they try to move around the designated area in one piece—they can try moving backward, try

“going to sleep”—anything that snakes do. **Keeping together** is the real task. (Orlick, 1978, pg. 14)

Detective

Pass around a large hand-held magnifying glass. Look at each other's beautiful eyes, beautiful noses, etc. Admire! This develops great eye contact. (DaCosse)

Eskimo

Pretend to be Eskimos with your bodies all bundled up except for your noses. Hug each other by passing an Eskimo kiss: rubbing noses together! (DaCosse)

Butterfly Kisses

Set the scene by talking about butterfly wings. Then use your eyelashes to kiss or flutter against the next person's cheek. In my class, “kissing” was very popular and the children came up with a lot of their own kinds of kisses. We played cheek kissing, chin kissing, and one that really tested their skill at being gentle—forehead kissing! (DaCosse)

Bunny Tails

Hold up a large cotton ball. Call it a bunny's tail and explain that it is for gently tickling a friend's chin. As each person leans over to the next person's chin, he says, “Chinny-chin-chin.” You are welcome to say anything you like!! (DaCosse)

I See Somebody Special

This can be done two different ways, depending on the season. Take a hand mirror and drape a scarf over it, concealing the mirror. Tell the group that each of them will peek under the scarf and will see “someone very special.” Tell them to look for two beautiful eyes, a soft squishy nose and a big wonderful smile, but not to tell anyone who it is. Make them promise not to tell! This builds the excitement.

The second version which really was fun, was putting a small round compact mirror inside a plastic pantihose egg. Say that you have a special person inside, and that each child should take the top off, look inside, and look real close at the “special person's” eyes, etc. Again, they must not tell anyone who is in the egg! (DaCosse)

Tongue Curls

Some people can curl their tongues and others cannot. It's all in the genes. Whether or not you can, you can always find a **child** who can. Go around the circle finding those that can and those who cannot. The fun is sticking out your tongue and trying. When you find those that can, enjoy the discovery of their "specialness." (DaCosse)

Face Painting

You need a soft, dry paint brush and an empty egg carton. If you have a large group, use two sets and start at both ends of the circle. You explain that this is a magical brush and inside are magical colors. There is a magical green, magical blue, etc. You dip into a magic color and paint the face of the child next to you. I called out the colors I was using, wiped the paint off the sides of the brush, and painted the child, stressing that I was taking care to be very gentle. When you are through, make sure the child shows his face to the group. His facial expression is priceless—so is this work of art. (DaCosse)

Funny Faces

This starts out with the whole group imitating a silly face that **you** make. Then as the group gets better at it, you can call out a feeling, such as an angry face, and try to pass that around the circle. Sometimes, you are laughing too hard to maintain the face. That's OK—you're having fun! (DaCosse)

Pretzeling

Don't ask where this one came from, but it is a favorite. Sit in a circle and put your legs out in front of you. Do some form of "pretzeling," count to three, then "unpretzel." To pretzel, you cross your legs, cross your arms, criss-cross arms with someone else's arms, cross legs with a neighbor, cross arms with another neighbor, or criss-cross your arms over your head. There are many variations!! (DaCosse)

Make a Round Circle—Color it Purple

This activity is based on a family tradition and was used with a baby to get it to quiet down and go to sleep, but it adapts well to Theraplay Groups. One child is either blindfolded, closes his eyes, or turns his back so he cannot see. You take your finger and pick a part of the body such as

his nose or cheek. You trace a circle on that body part with your finger, saying, "Make a round circle, color it purple. S.O.M.E.B.O.D.Y poke!" (Stretching out the word "somebody.") Then the person who has been poked has to guess who did the poking. (DaCosse)

Is it Huggable?

Pass around any stuffed animal, doll, or another child. Slowly draw that animal, doll, or child close to you and slowly envelop it into a hug. Is it huggable? You bet! (DaCosse)

Telephone Line

If broken toys are a common occurrence in your classroom, create imaginary ones! For this game, pass an **imaginary** telephone by talking into your baby finger and thumb. Say the name of the person next to you: "Tommy, it's for you." Usually all you will hear is silence as the child is "listening" to the phone. The fun is if the children remember to say "It's for you," and the anticipatory wait to see what that person might say. (DaCosse)

Musical Instruments

Using different parts of the body, you play music. Use your arms to play an imaginary violin, your legs to play a guitar, slap your knees or thighs for drums, etc. Then you can gently "play" on someone else. The piano is easy to "play" on your neighbor's leg or arm or back. Drums can be a bit of a challenge, but they usually are a favorite. (DaCosse)

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