

Together

A Collection of Activities for Exploring
and Strengthening Relationships



20 Activities for those who
therapeutically support
children and young people
recovering from trauma

Together

A Collection of Activities for Exploring and Strengthening Relationships

Welcome to this collection of activity ideas for those who work therapeutically to support children and young people recovering from trauma. These activities have been drawn from the work of practitioners who engage with children, young people and families across the therapeutic services of the Australian Childhood Foundation.

This collection is a result of practitioners contributing practice-based ideas. Children and young people have helped us develop and evolve these activities along the way. We include a range of activity types, from self-reflective invitations, to one-to one ideas, family focused explorations, and group-based activities.

All activities encourage relational exploration, and we hope that they will spark your own creativity and support your work with children, young people and families.

This document is best printed single sided.



'Get To Know You' Jenga

'Get to know you' Jenga is a semi-structured way of learning a bit about each other as sessions begin with children, young people or families.

1. You will need a jenga game (generic block stacking versions of this game are also available at large department stores). Read the provided instructions if you don't know the rules.
2. Cut out the questions on the following page and stick them with clear sticky tape on individual jenga blocks. Over the years ACF counsellors have refined these questions to be based around experiences of family, safety, feelings and identity.
3. You could choose to leave some blank blocks. If so, negotiate what you might do when one of these is pushed out in the game. Getting a blank block might mean the person can ask any question they like, do a ten-second dance, tell a joke, do five push-ups or sit-ups, etc.



'Get To Know You' Jenga



A thing I like to do the most is ...	Something that's important to me is ...	A good thing about me is ...
I am looking forward to ...	I am excited about ...	If I need help I ...
I wish someone had told me ...	I feel safe when ...	Something I hope for is ...
Bad things happen because ...	Something I don't like about school is ...	Families are ...
I wish I could ...	Something that makes me laugh is ...	When I feel unsafe I can ...
I really miss ...	My favourite music is ...	I wish I knew ...
If I could change something about my family, it would be ...	Something I like about school is ...	I remember when ...
When I'm alone I ...	If someone were to give me a nice surprise, I would like ...	Someone who helps me feel safe is ...
The best thing about my family is ...	An important decision I've made is ...	Something I have learned is ...
Someone who has helped me ...	I believe that ...	A thing about me that I'd like to change is ...

'Get To Know You' Jenga



Something I'd like to try is ...

Something that frightens me is ...

I'd like to be better at ...

My favourite food is ...

Relationships to me are ...

A calming colour for me is ...

If I could go on a holiday anywhere, I'd go ...

My favourite animal is ...

Something I'd like to be different is ...

My favourite people to be around are ...

I feel hurt when ...

If I won 20 million dollars I'd ...

I feel happy when ...

When I lose a game I feel ...

The thing I like to do most in my free time is ...

Something I do well is ...

I feel angry when ...

The best thing about the weekend is ...

One thing that I would hate to lose is ...

I hope to find ...

If I were I superhero, I'd like my super power to be ...

I admire ...

When I lose an argument I feel ...

Something people like about me is ...

If I had a time machine, I'd go ...

When I grow up ...



HEART BUTTONS



Feeling connected when we are apart

Parting for kinder, or school, or whatever reason can be hard.
What if we drew a little heart on the back of each other's hands?
I will draw you a heart and then blow a kiss onto it to seal in my love.
You can draw a little heart or spot on the back of my hand
and blow a kiss onto it to seal in your love.
These are our heart buttons, and they are connected by love.
No matter where we are, all we have to do is press our
heart buttons if we miss one another and we will be connected.
When I press my button, I will think of a fun time
we had together and send you some love.
You can do the same.



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The Power of Relationships

A Reflective Activity for Parents/Carers

Recalling who helped us feel special or important when we were children can reconnect us to aspects of relationships that made us feel warm and glowing on the inside. When you were a child, was there an adult (other than a parent/carer) who stood out as important to you?

- What did the person do to make you feel special and important?
- How did you respond to them whenever you saw them?
- What messages did they give you about you? How did they do that?
- What do you carry with you from them still?
- What do you think they may have received in return from you? How did they know that?
- What changes did this person support you to make? How did they do that?
- How would your story be different if they had not been in your life?

Relationships are powerful and can help children to feel special and important in a way that can stay with them into adulthood.

Can you think about something that you could do to help a child in your world feel special and important today?

Children and young people learn about the world around them, others and themselves from key people in their lives.

In relationships, we form beliefs about what we know to be true of ourselves and the world around us that we carry into adulthood.

Parents and carers have unique opportunities to change the experiences of children through the power of their relationships. It is never too late to help children feel special and important.



JOINING UP THE STARS



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Would you like to go on an adventure into the night sky?

We can be stars together shining bright.

Let's make the room feel like night-time.

Here is your torch to make starlight, and here is mine.

We can be next to each other and shine our torches up onto the ceiling of our inside sky.

**Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.**

Can you make your star twinkle by pointing your torch at the ceiling and switching it on and off?

I will try to match your star's twinkling by switching my torch on and off.

Can you make a shooting star? I will try to follow your star with my starlight.

Can you make your starlight dance around the room?
Can our stars dance together?

Can you make your starlight move fast and slow?
My light will try to stay with yours.

**Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.**



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Line of my day



What if you were to draw one continuous line to represent and communicate the ups and downs of your day. How might you draw it?

You might like to draw or colour around your line to represent feelings or events of the day.

Afterwards ...

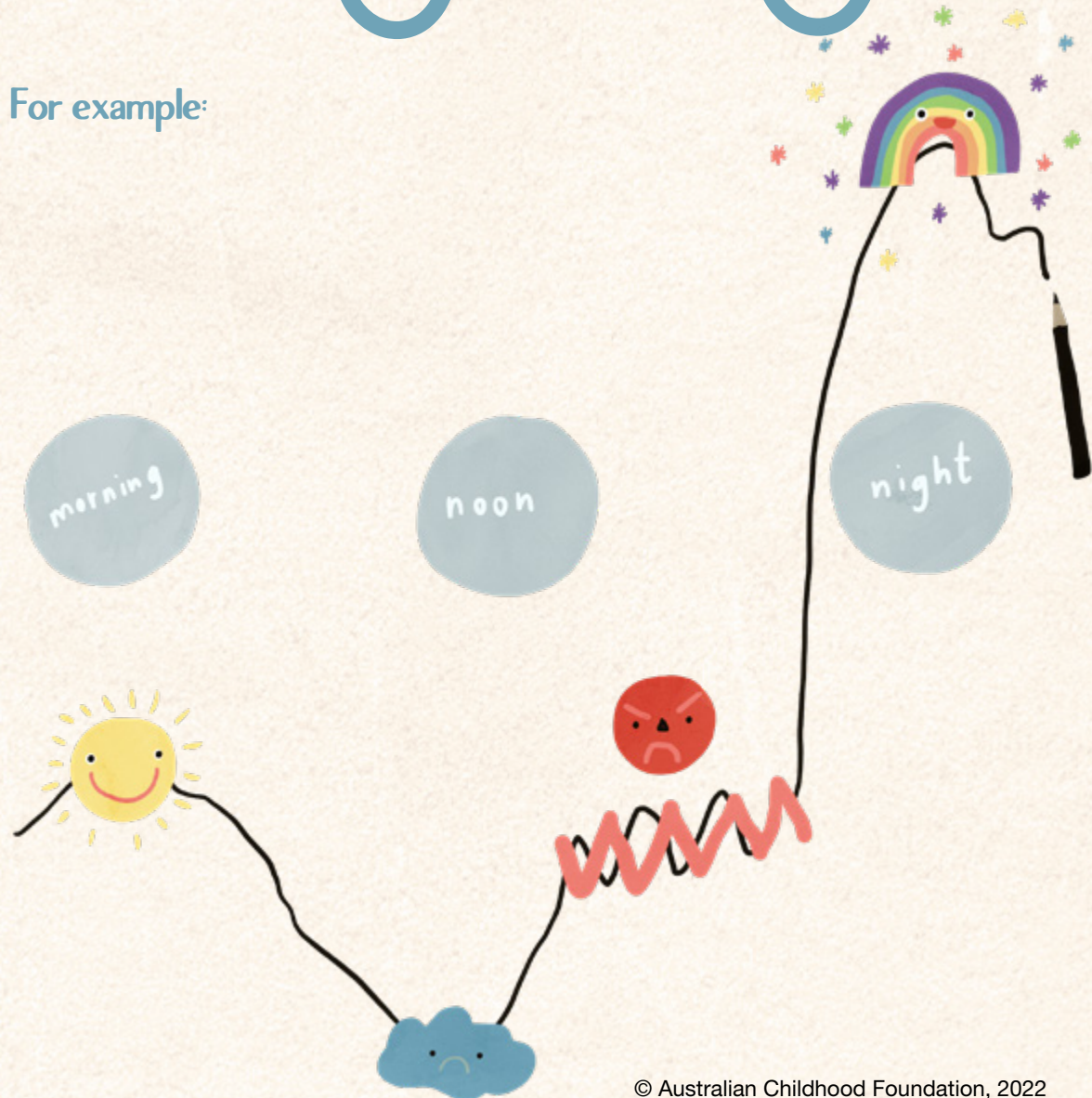
You might like to reflect on any feelings that arise when you stand back and look at your line.

You might like to reflect on any words that come to mind as you look along your line.

Activity Extension ...

Daily Lines - This quick and easy drawing task could become a daily point of reflection. Instead of a journal involving words, use a blank notebook and sketch a line a day. You can eventually look back on the notebook to reflect on the flow of life over time.

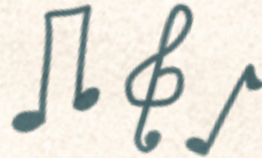
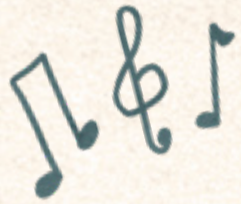
For example:



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Olden Days Rhythm and Rhyme



Follow the Leader

One follows the other one. Can you walk in synch? Can you hop together? Can you walk as though you are both on a tight rope? Can you breathe in synch with your slow steps? Breathe in as you lift your left foot and out as you lift your right foot. Can you walk backwards together? Can you jump together? Can you side-step together? Can you swoop together? Can you make arm actions and sounds together like you are a train? What's it like swapping who is the leader?

3 Legged Races

Stand beside one another and tie your inside legs together with a cut up length of fabric. Practise moving together. Time yourselves over a distance. See how quick you can get.

Old Fashioned Skipping Songs

Skip together while you are reciting these rhymes. You could skip using jump ropes if you have them.

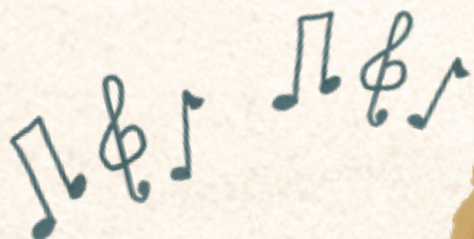
Andy Pandy, sugar and candy,
French, almond, raisin, rock.
Bread and butter for your supper,
All that we have got.

Mrs White got a fright
In the middle of the night.
Saw a ghost,
Eating toast,
Halfway up a lamp post.

Two, four, six, eight,
(Insert child's name) at the cottage gate,
Eating cherries off a plate,
Two, four, six, eight.



Olden Days Rhythm and Rhyme



Hand Clapping Games

Face one another and follow the rhymes with the accompanying hand movements.

Miss Mary Mac

Rhyme:

Miss Mary Mac, Mac, Mac
All dressed in black, black, black,
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,
All down her back, back, back.
She asked her mother, mother, mother,
For fifteen cents, cents, cents,
To see the elephant, elephant, elephant,
Jump over the fence, fence, fence.
He jumped so high, high, high,
He reached the sky, sky, sky,
And didn't come back, back, back,
Till the Fourth of July, ly, ly.

Actions:

Miss - cross arms and slap own shoulders
Mary - uncross arms and slap thighs
clap own hands
Mac - clap right hand with partner
(pause) - clap own hands
Mac - clap left hand with partner
(pause) - clap own hands
Mac - clap partner's hands
Continue the sequence for remaining verses.

Double This

Rhyme:

Double, double this this
Double, double that that
Double this
Double that
Double, double this that.

Actions:

Double - hands fistted, touch knuckles
this - partners claps palms
that - partners clap back of hands.



My Dream Place

If you imagine your own dream place drawing that could be anywhere and have anything in it, what might you design?

In this place you can experience feelings like happiness, fun, calmness, peacefulness, safety and joy. This place is entirely yours to create. You have complete control.

What are some things you might need or want in this place? It can be anything you like!

This place can be underground, underwater or in the sky. It can be inside or outside, in the jungle or at the beach, in the trees or in a garden. It can be in your favourite country or city, in another universe or even in your own bedroom. It can be in a music studio, video game, sports arena, castle or house.

Start creating when you feel ready. You could draw, paint or write to bring the place alive. It might be a bird's-eye view, a side on picture or a description.

After Creating consider ...

- Are you depicted somewhere in the place? If not, include yourself in the space somehow.
- This Dream Place is available to you when you need it.
- You might like to explore the place by involving the 5 senses. What does it smell like in your place? What do you like to look at the most there? What would certain things feel like to touch? Would you hear any sounds in this place?
- Who (if anyone) would you invite to visit you in your Dream Place - people or animals?
- How do you feel when you are in your Dream Place?

Plan a time to re-visit your Dream Place in your mind. You might visit for 3 minutes as you lie down to go to sleep each night, or every morning when you first wake up.

Hand to Hand Attunement

Let's work together to hold an object up between our hands or fingers and *not let it fall.*

We will need to synchronise our movements and attune to one another. What object feels right to hold between us? A big gym ball? A sports ball? A cushion? A balloon? A pencil? Let's try moving the object around. What is that like for you? As you move together, notice if one person is leading or if the movement initiation is swapping between you. Play around with this. When you become accomplished, add another object so you are using both of your hands to hold up two objects between you. What does it feel like to be in synch with another person?



The COLOURS of my heart



Colours have long been linked with feelings. This activity is about colouring in a heart shape with colours that represent the feelings in your heart right now.

You might like to draw a heart outline on a piece of paper or get someone to draw a heart for you. Use whatever drawing/painting implements are available to you and feel right to colour in your heart.

How will you apply the colours? Will you use dots, stripes, squiggles, smudges, block colouring or blend the colours? Will there be spaces without colour in your heart?

After

Stand back and look at your colouring in. What did this activity feel like? I wonder what colours you used and what they might mean to you about your feelings?

I wonder if the way you applied the colours in or around your heart shape means something to you right now?

I wonder if the colours of your heart might change over time?

And then

- This activity could promote exploration of how we link feelings with experiences, and how we express feelings. How could someone else know what we are feeling in our hearts?
- You could explore certain situations/experiences and what feelings dominate, recede or may be missing. It can be used as a springboard for exploring calming strategies if fear, anger, worry etc. are dominating.
- You might like to revisit this activity at different times as a non-verbal expressive tool that offers a chance to know more about your shifting feelings.

This activity emerged from the practice of Katherine Gentle, a Child Psychologist based in Bermagui, Australia. She participated in ACF's Graduate Certificate in Developmental Trauma. Thanks, Katherine, for generously sharing it with ACF and our wider online community



The Most Beautiful Thing

Stop.

Put down what you are doing.

It is time for a break.

Look up and around.

Stretch out.

Look for the most beautiful thing around you.

Take it in.

Let it lift you.

Let your face soften.

Take a big breath.

Sigh it out.

Repeat often.



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Finding our Rhythm

Many drumming traditions begin songs with a rhythm known as a drum 'call and response'. Drum calls are short little rhythms that introduce the songs- like a signature. After there is the drum call, there is always a similarly short rhythmic response to this call made by other drummers. These two rhythms go together. You can't have one without the other. They are perfect companions.

What if we were to make up our own rhythmic call and response. Let's sit together and have a go at tapping out our own short rhythmic signatures that go together. We could do this on our laps, or on a table-top, for example. Then let's practise it so we don't forget. We can tap out our rhythm together when we get in the car, as you leave for pre-school or school, at home sitting on the couch or before bed. Together we can practise.

We can take our rhythm with us into times that feel hard. No-one else needs to know that we have our rhythm. We can hold hands and tap out our rhythm with our fingers into each other's palms. We can sit beside each other and tap out our rhythm on each other's backs. When you are on your own and feel like you need me there, tap out our rhythm and part of me will be there with you.



Cooking for Connection



Traditional Lemon or Wattle Seed Cookies

This activity was developed by the Aboriginal workers in the Foundation's OurSPACE Program in NSW.

Preparing, cooking and sharing food is a foundational experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. It creates opportunities for healing and connection when there is a safe adult to share the experience with.

Through food preparation, children come to experience their identity in relationship to the elders and family in community.

Cooking and preparing food is an activity that supports connection and promotes positive self-worth.

Children learn about their culture by cooking with ingredients found in nature that are connected to the histories of their families and communities.

Aboriginal people sharing this experience can support children to extend their learning by decorating the cookies with their totems, symbols and art from nature.

What you will need

- 250g Sugar
- 250g Butter
- 500g Sifted self-raising flour
- 4 eggs or 1/3 Emu egg
- 25g Ground lemon myrtle or Wattle Seeds

What to do

- Mix sugar and butter together with a beater
- Add the emu egg or eggs to the mixture one at a time
- Fold in flour and myrtle or wattle seeds until combined
- Roll into small balls and put on baking tray
- Flour a fork and use it to press the balls down a bit
- Bake in oven 180 -190c for 15 minutes

What you might say and do

- Who will we bake these cookies for?
- What will those people like about them?
- What will they say when they are given the cookies?
- How will it feel to give the cookies to these special people?
- How important is food to feeling like you belong to a family or mob?



A Message for My Inner Child



Introduction

For this activity you will need a set of Babushka dolls, also known as Nesting dolls, Russian dolls or Matryoshka dolls. A set of nesting dolls consists of a wooden figure, which can be opened up to reveal a smaller figure inside, which has, in turn, another figure inside of it, and so on. Two-dollar shops and art supply shops often stock versions of blank nesting dolls for reasonable prices.

Activity

What if this set of nesting dolls were to represent you at different points across your life since you were a child.

Arrange the individual dolls from smallest to largest. The largest doll represents you now. The smaller dolls represent your younger selves.

Can you give an age to each of the dolls representing your younger selves?

Choose a younger self doll. Pick the doll up. What was life like for your younger self? What was important then? What did your younger self need? What did your younger self like to do? What were your younger self's relationships like?

Do you have any messages for your younger self? Is there anything that you would like your younger self to know? You might like to write it on a post-it note and tuck it inside the little doll.

Does your younger self have any messages or questions for the largest doll, your present self? Write it on a post-it note and tuck it inside the largest doll.



FAMILY SUITCASES



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How Families Carry around Love and Care

Did you know that every family has a special suitcase for their most precious things? This is a suitcase that can never be left behind because everyone carries it with them. **Every family's suitcase is unique.**

Here are some of the things that could be in the suitcase:

- Memories of times the family shared love
- The stories behind how family members got their names
- Postcards of favourite places the family has been
- Jokes that have been shared
- Special family toys
- Favourite family recipes
- Funny stories about family members
- Songs that family members played over and over
- Snapshots of family celebrations
- Conversations with family members that helped people to feel cared about

Everyone keeps adding to their family suitcase across their lives. People can dip into their suitcase in a quiet moment and take out things to have a look. Sometimes it can feel joyful to think about things in the suitcase, other times it can feel a bit sad or hard.

The things we keep in our family suitcases are always meaningful and important.

I wonder what things you have in yours?

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This resource was designed using the metaphor of a suitcase as a vessel we store and carry things in that are important to keep and take with us. It is for professionals to use with children and families, and it encourages individuals to think about the messages, artefacts and 'knowings' we learn in our families that we take with us through our lives.

The Team Around Me My Healing Team



Ideas for Introductory Questions

Who is your favourite sports team? Have you ever been a part of a sports team? What if you got to assemble your own team around you? It is this team's job to help you to heal from the tough experiences that you have been through.

Team Assembly

You might like to choose those who help you feel better, support you, have your back, give you a voice, listen to you and help you through your challenges. These people are safe, reliable and predictable.

Your team might include a combination of people you know and care for you, along with role models and/or mentors. You also might like to consider fictional characters from movies, TV, books or video games.

- Who do you choose to have on your team?

Your Home Ground

When a team plays on their home ground they have a 'home ground' advantage. They know the ground and are used to playing there. Players often make higher scores when playing on their home ground.

Your home ground might be at home, school or a different place where you feel the most safe and comfortable to gather with your team. It is okay for your home ground to change. Teams shift home grounds depending on circumstances all the time.

- In thinking about gathering with your care team, where is your home ground?
- Who do you choose to have on your team?



The Team Around Me

My Healing Team

Tackling Obstacles

Can you think of any difficult challenges you have faced in your life, or you have faced in the past, that have left emotional marks? You don't have to face these obstacles on your own anymore. You have your team, and it's the team's job to support you with these challenges.

- Can you think of two or three challenges in your life that are priorities for you to consider with your team?
- What are some of the obstacles you and your team face together?

Celebrating Wins

How might your team work together to score winning points/achieve goals? (Remembering that even if the team doesn't quite score the points hoped for, there will always be another opportunity.)

- What are your goals and your team's goals over the next 3-6 months?
- Could your team create a victory dance, move or handshake, etc. to do when a win is achieved? (Like sports players do when they score in a game.)
- How might your team help you acknowledge success? (For example: with your favourite food, an outing or a reward, etc.)

*Before information gathered through this resource is shared with a broader care team, you should check that the child/young person is happy for this to happen.



You and Me on a TREASURE HUNT

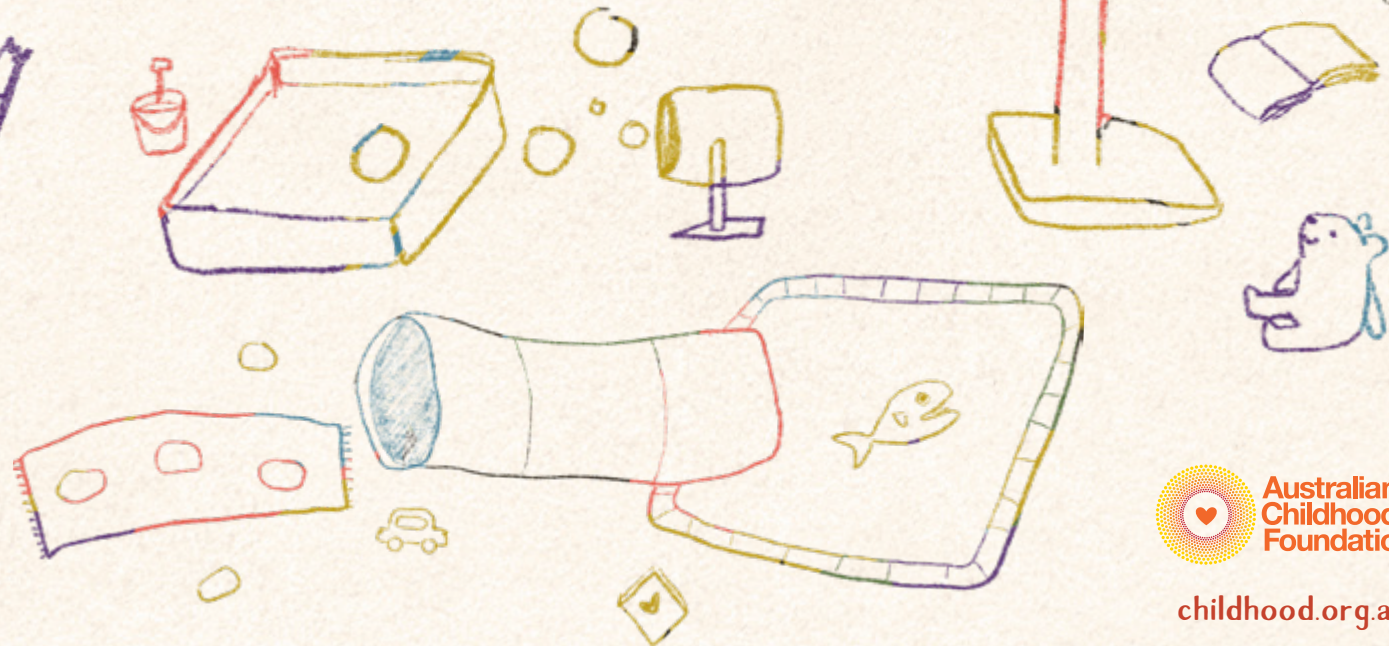
Welcome to Treasure Island!

Expect adventure on this island of volcanoes, lakes, mountains and hidden treasure.

You will need to work together if you are to ever find the island's precious treasure.

You might face dangerous obstacles along the way, like wobbly mountains, lava, a mysterious cave, a deep blue lake and fierce animals.

Beware of the high winds, jungle vines and sleepy bubbles as you help each other towards the treasure buried in the beach on the other side of the island.



Identity Clouds

When we begin working with young people, we usually spend some time connecting with those who know them best to begin building a picture that will be added to as we go. What if, at this time, we composed an actual picture of words for our young people based on the contributions of those who know them best. Word pictures or clouds are images composed of words based on particular subjects. The size of each word in the display indicates its frequency or importance.

What if we asked those in a young person's support team to contribute five positive descriptive words about the young person to help us better understand more about them. It would be good for these people to be aware that their words will contribute to a word picture that the young person will see.

Once we have collected these words, they can be entered into a free online word cloud generator. There are many available, including this one: <https://www.wordclouds.com/>

The resulting word cloud could be printed out or electronically shared with the young person as you engage with them. It could be a place to start considering 'identity' together. This could be an activity that allows conversations about the picture others have of us compared with our own internal conception. Who we think we are, what we believe others think of us, and who we are becoming can feel increasingly important as we move through adolescence.



Group Count

This game helps groups drop into connection with one another and promotes listening.

It is good for groups of five or more people. Collect into a circle so everyone can see one another. Then someone begins counting by saying 'one'. Without going around the circle, or there being any pattern emerging, people should continue to add a number each - 'two', then 'three' and so on. Should more than one person say a number at the same time, the group count must begin again. Every member of the group should have a turn before someone gets another go. Notice how the number you achieve together gets larger the more you play the game.

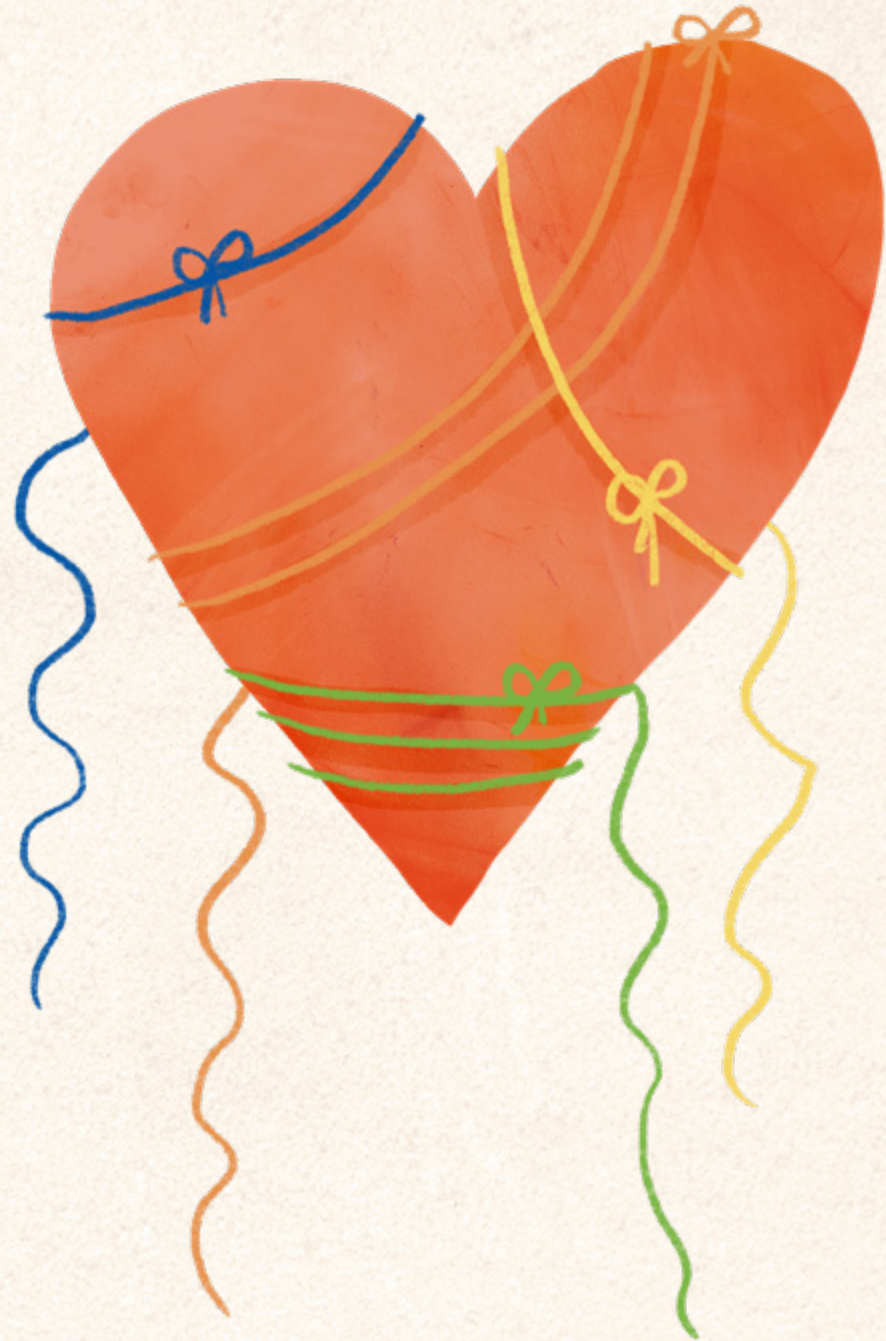


Heart Strings

In old anatomy textbooks, 'Heart Strings' were known as the tendons or nerves believed to make our physical heart stronger. Now, when we say someone is pulling on our Heart Strings, we feel closer and closer in that relationship.

Our Heart Strings connect our feeling heart with the people in the world who are most important to us. It is like we use these invisible strings to bond us together.

Who is attached to your heart strings that support your heart through all of life's ups and downs? How do others know what pulls on your heart strings? How do our heart strings help us to know what our heart needs?



Relationship Snakes and Ladders



Welcome to ACF's version of Snakes and Ladders. By playing this game together, it is hoped you might find out more about each other and learn more about your relationship together.

You will need a dice and a couple of coins or objects to act as counters.

As you play the game you need to respond to the questions in the spaces that you land on.

After the game


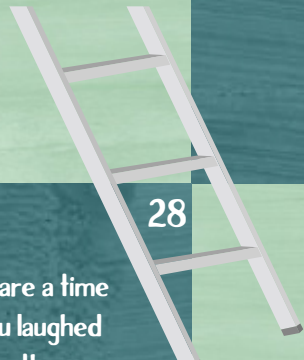
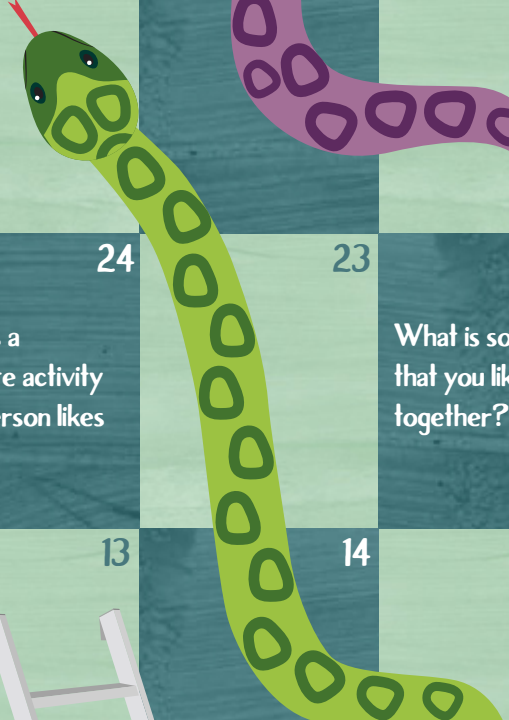
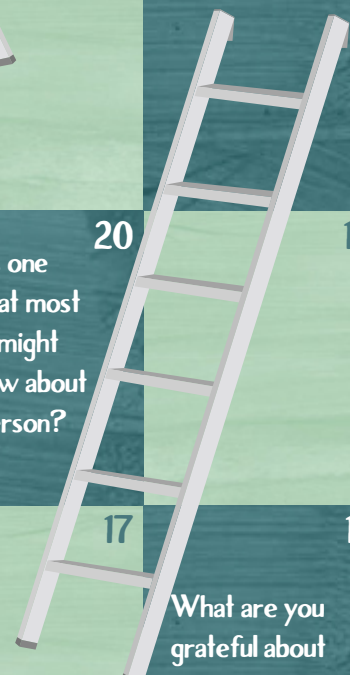

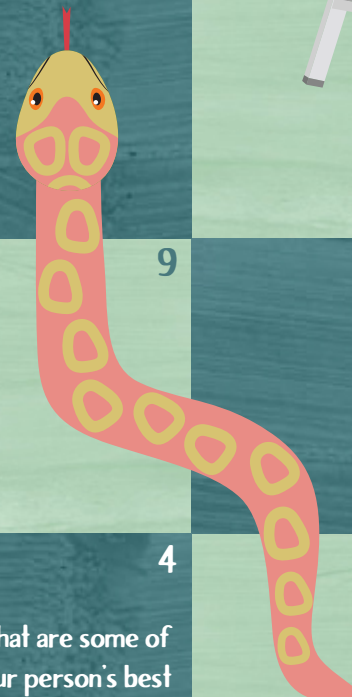
When you finish the game, you might like to talk about the snakes (ups) and ladders (downs) you have experienced in your relationship together.

A ladder represents a time when you felt supported or lifted-up in your relationship. Could you share a time when it felt like this?

A snake represents a time when it felt hard in your relationship. Could you share a time when it felt like this?

A key idea that could be taken from this game is that there are some snakes and some ladders in the course of all relationships. That is just the way they are.

Relationship Snakes and Ladders

36 FINISH	35 	34 Where would you like to go on holiday together?	33 	32 Is there a TV show you like to watch with your person?	31
25 	26	27	28 Share a time you laughed together	29	30 
24 What is a favourite activity your person likes to do?	23	22 What is something that you like doing together?	21	20 What is one thing that most people might not know about your person?	19
13 	14	15	16 	17 What are you grateful about when it comes to your person?	18
12	11	10 What is your person's favourite thing to eat?	9	8	7 Share a time you did something fun with your person
1 START	2	3 Does your person have a secret talent?	4 What are some of your person's best qualities?	5	6 What is your person's favourite colour?