



Resiliency Building Activities for Children

Positive Notes:

Place notes (post-it size or equivalent) around the house with funny, smiley faces on them. Children will appreciate them. It will create a good mood and a pleasant environment. You can either do this with your child or you can give them a stack of post-it type cards and let them write his or her strengths/positive affirmations on the notes. If you want to make the activity challenging, have children write notes for a sibling and have them go on a "positive note" scavenger hunt.

Josephine:

This exercise was posted to the Guide Mailing List by Susan Legault.

Create a girl from a large sheet of paper (or maybe a couple sheets taped together). The girl should be typical of the age group you are working with. "Dress" her with markers and/or crayons and give her a name. Take "Josephine" to the next meeting and sit her in a chair. Once the meeting begins, introduce "Josephine" to all the girls and say something nice about "Jo" and then something not bad, but not so nice about "Jo." The introduction could go something like this, "Girls, I want you to meet my friend Josephine. We really have a lot of fun together, except that sometimes she has REALLY BAD breath." When you say this, rip off a piece of "Jo" (don't make it a tiny piece). Then invite the rest of the girls to come up and do the same thing. The girls are to make negative comments about "Jo." They can be about her hair, her appearance, her clothing or about her personality. Each girl should rip off a piece of "Jo" as they make the negative comment (try to make sure they don't get too negative/nasty).

Once everyone has finished with his or her remarks, you can even invite them to do several, you will go on to the next part of the "plan." You say, "OK girls. Now that we've ripped Josephine apart, let's see if we can put her back together again." If the girls actually do put "Jo" back together again, you need to point out to them that "Jo" will never be the same. She now has "scars" that could last her a lifetime. It really gives a very powerful message to all who participate in it. It will show the girls how destructive their behavior can be. And, it should also create a bond (team building) amongst the girls. They should be able to see (you may have to facilitate a discussion about it) how their power, in this case a negative power, can be pulled together and that when channeled in a positive direction, they can accomplish anything!

http://dragon.sleepdeprived.ca/program/teambuilding/self_esteem.htm

Party Crackers:

Thanks very much to Michele Challis, who posted this idea to the Guiding Mailing List! She learned this activity from Valerie Bell, a White Oaks trainer.

This is an ideal exercise for a weekend camp. Each person makes a party cracker (e.g, the type commonly found at New Year's Eve celebrations that require two people to pull it apart and it snaps). Make the cracker using an empty toilet paper roll, some tissue paper and ribbon for the ends. Leave one end open and write each person's name on the outside. Then all weekend, whenever possible, everyone drops a kind thought or word into someone else's cracker. At the end of the camp, the crackers are sealed up and taken home. The idea is that when you really need a boost or a smile, you can open up your cracker and read all the wonderful thoughts about yourself written by other people.

This could be altered for a regular meeting by allowing everyone time to write nice thoughts for the crackers, seal them, and then open them the next week.

The only downside of this is that if a child doesn't have anything nice to say about someone, you'd hope that he or she wouldn't write anything bad. Perhaps screening might be helpful if that was an issue in your unit.

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Pat on the Back:

Thanks to Wendy Baker, who posted this idea to the Guiding Mailing List!

Paper plates are given to each person. Each person draws around his or her hand onto the plate and then the plate is taped to her back. Everyone in the group writes a positive comment about the person on the plate. The comments do not have to be signed. An alternative would be to make paper chains from all the positive comments written about each person and given to him or her to read.

http://dragon.sleepdeprived.ca/program/teambuilding/self_esteem.htm

Banana Scout:

This idea was submitted to the Guide Mailing List by Lori Purvis.

Pre-story prep: Take a not-too-ripe banana, using a long darning needle, pierce the skin at the side and push the needle through the fruit of the banana all the way to the skin...yes, this is hard to describe! Here is what you *want* to have happen. When you peel this banana, you want it to fall into many slices. All the way down the banana, about every half inch, push the needle through the peel, moving it from side to side in order to make a "slice." Try to keep the skin completely intact! Optional: put a smiling face on using a black marker.

Story: (this is just one version... you can modify it to use it in your circumstances)

I brought my friend Banana Scout with me to our campfire today. Doesn't he look nice? I really enjoy Banana Scout's company. Did you know he went to Scout Camp this year? Yes, but he didn't enjoy himself a lot. All the Scouts at camp made fun of him. They said nasty, hurtful things to him. Can you imagine what they might have said? (*Ask for suggestions of what was said, e.g., you have too many freckles! You're not a nice yellow color like me! You're too small!*)

Well, I can tell you that this did not make Banana Scout very happy. Look at his face. Doesn't he have a nice smile? He didn't let any of the Scouts know that they were hurting him. Did you know words could hurt? Has anyone ever hurt you with words? Banana Scout just kept smiling and tried not to feel hurt, but inside... well, he wants us to know how he felt inside. (*Begin to peel the banana.*)

Sometimes when we say things that are not nice, the people we say them to look just the same as they did before but inside they begin to feel like Banana Scout did. Can you see what the mean words did to Banana Scout? (*by the time you are half finished peeling, the banana will fall apart into many slices. Help the children to reflect on what hurtful words can do and what we can do to prevent our friends/fellow campers from feeling hurt inside.*)

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Activity Envelopes:

Have kids write different things they enjoy: such as going to the park, playing with the dog, a movie with the family (positive activities) and place each activity in separate envelopes. When your child has a hard day and needs a “pick me up,” they are allowed to pick an envelope and complete the surprise relaxing activity. (Note: make sure these are things that are relatively easy to do and things you usually have on hand. While an activity can be substituted for another activity, this can be discouraging if routinely exchanged and can cause further emotional defeat.)

Teaches: self care, take a break

High/Low:

Have your child tell you one of the best things that happened that day (or week) and one of the lows. This will encourage him or her to talk with both positive and negative emotions.

Teaches: emotional expression, positive view of self, self discovery

Good News:

When a local tragedy occurs it is often in multiple media arenas. Make sure you are turning the TV off when children are around if there is excessive coverage. However, having them read the paper and discuss an article of a good deed or a positive news article can be a great way to encourage resiliency.

Teaches: positive view of world, accepting change is part of life

Links of resiliency:

Cut strips of colored paper. Have children write one thing that they are good at doing, enjoy, or are grateful for. Glue the strips together in link form. Have child decorate his or her room with the chain.

Teaches: positive view of self

It WAS Something:

When you hear your child tell someone “it was nothing” or “it’s no big deal” after doing a good deed, make sure to talk about why it is a big deal and not let them discount a compliment. Every day extraordinary events need to be celebrated to instill good values as well as build self-esteem in children.

Mark-it:

Give child a desk-size calendar. Have them write down all the commitments they have in one week in blue (i.e., soccer, Tuesday and Thursday). Have them pencil in things they want to do (sleep over at Jenny’s Friday) in another color.

Teaches: daily scheduling

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