

## **Group Activities for Children and Adolescents: An Activity Group Therapy Approach**

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*Historically, group psychotherapy has been successful with children and adolescents. In the 1930s Slavson introduced Activity Group Therapy (AGT) for children and adolescents. AGT provides children with opportunities to express normal and conflicted feelings in an extraordinarily free treatment environment, and to participate in games, crafts, and other activities of interest to these particular age groups. This paper presents an AGT guide for use with children and adolescents in inpatient, outpatient, and school settings.*

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**KEY WORDS:** activity group therapy; children; adolescents.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Group therapy is a proven and successful treatment intervention with child and adolescent populations. According to Slavson (1996), group therapy provides situations and experiences that help correct behavior, overcome faulty impressions of self and others, and remove psychological distortions. Peer group experience is critical for children's normative development, especially during latency (Schiffer, 1996).

In the early 1930s, S.R. Slavson introduced a systematic psychological group treatment approach designed for use with children. This treatment, called Activity Group Therapy (AGT), marked the second major revolution in therapy following individual treatment (Schiffer, 1996). AGT provides children with the opportunity to express normal and conflicted feelings in an extraordinarily free environment and to participate in games, crafts, and

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other activities of interest to these particular age groups. An accessible and permissive therapist, unconditionally accepts the children, even tolerating acting-out behavior that would be criticized, restrained, and punished by adults in other situations. The overall effect of AGT is to modify children's maladaptive behaviors and positively alter children's personality and character (Schiffer, 1996).

When working with emotionally and behaviorally conflicted children and adolescents' the application of AGT combined with other major group psychotherapy modalities will benefit children in both schools and hospital settings. This AGT guide was created to provide group leaders with planned activities designed to increase group cohesiveness and successfully treat emotional and behavioral problems in both children and adolescents.

### **CREATION OF THE GROUP**

According to Yalom (1995), when creating a therapeutic group, leaders must make several decisions concerning group structure. First, the setting needs to be determined. Almost any setting will suffice as long as there is privacy and freedom from distraction. The type of activity planned will help determine how and where members are seated.

Second, the duration and frequency of group meetings needs to be established. The length of each session will influence the number and types of activities feasible during the session. Time should be allocated for introductions, instructions, activities, and concluding comments and evaluation. For most children and adolescents an hour to an hour and a half will be sufficient. Depending on the setting (e.g., hospital, public school, etc.), the total number of meetings per week, month, or semester should be established before the first session. In private hospital settings groups meeting twice a week may be appropriate, while in the public schools once a week is more feasible.

Third, group leaders should consider group size. As with time, the group size influences the types of activities chosen. Some activities work better with smaller groups (less than ten) while others work better with larger groups.

Determining structure beforehand is essential to the overall success of the activities and group process. Predetermining the decisions will help establish the necessary group boundaries.

### **GROUP FUNCTIONING**

When deciding on the activities to use, the developmental level of the group must be assessed. For example, the level of language development

and degree of dependency on motoric expression will influence the choice of activities. If the group consists of children with low language development but high motor skills, then therapists should select activities that include a high percentage of fine and gross motor activities, while limiting verbal material. Conversely, drawing activities for children with physical disabilities will not result in a successful group experience.

Additionally, it is important to consider the relationship between group structure and the children's ego development. When ego development is low, group structure will need to be highly organized. Conversely, when ego development is high, less structure will be required to maintain the group. The age of group members should also facilitate the level of structure needed. Typically, the younger the children the less developed are their egos. When working with severely troubled and pathological children, however, ego development is usually impaired and more structure is required. Ego development may evolve during the group sessions, so structure may be lessened as ego development increases (Riester, 1993).

It is necessary to keep in mind the overall state of group members. In working with special populations such as children with attention deficit disorder, children of divorced parents, or emotionally disturbed children, it is important to consider their special needs and implement activities accordingly.

## GROUP STAGES

The developmental stage (Yalom, 1995) of the group should be considered when planning sessions. An activity that requires self-disclosure or some type of performance in an initial session will probably not be successful, and members may not want to return.

Yalom (1995) describes a series of developmental phases that most groups experience through the course of group therapy. They consist of the first meeting, three subsequent stages (Orientation, Conflict, Cohesion) and termination. Usually there are no clear lines of demarcation between one stage to the next, nonetheless most groups experience each of these developmental phases in some capacity.

The first meeting may consist of the leader introducing the purpose of the group and discussing expectations. Ground rules such as confidentiality, respect for others, and behavioral expectations should be established. The planned activity should consider the high levels of anxiety that group members may experience at the beginning of the group, and the level of structure necessary to decrease apprehension.

The initial stage of the group consists of orientation, hesitant participation, search for meaning, or dependency (Yalom, 1995). In this phase, members are

dependent on the leader and test the boundaries of the group. Most members participate in group activities on a personal and supportive basis and interact with each other and the leader without conflict. During the initial stage, members may search for rules for themselves and attempt to establish their niche within the group. Participants are likely to wonder whether the other members will accept them. The members will most likely look to the leader for structure, support, acceptance and encouragement. Communication between members in this stage may be stereotypical and restricted. For example, members may assume that one member views an issue a particular way because of her ethnicity. Furthermore, they will direct most communication toward the leader rather than to each other. Activities during this phase should encourage participation and allow members freedom to establish their respective roles.

The second stage consists of conflict, dominance, and rebellion (Yalom, 1995). In this stage, member's position and status becomes evident. The group's interest shifts from preoccupation with acceptance and approval to a struggle for dominance, control, and power. Conflicts arise between group members and/or between group members and the leader. Negative comments and criticism are more prevalent during this stage, and hostility and resentment may be expressed toward the leader. This can be a trying time for even the most experienced leaders and illuminating the underlying tension and conflict for the members is a monumental task. During this stage, activities should facilitate open communication about the group process and the successful resolution of group conflicts.

The development of group cohesiveness occurs during the third stage of group development. Following a period of conflict, the group gradually develops into a cohesive unit. Group norms are established and members work to support and encourage one another. Concurrently, there is an increase in morale, mutual trust, and selfdisclosure. If the group is functioning at a cohesive level, activities can be more intense, complex, and therapeutic.

Finally, the issue of termination must be handled carefully. The group must resolve any negative affect resulting from previous experiences of abandonment and learn healthy and appropriate ways to bring closure to a relationship. Termination can be handled in numerous ways but must be addressed for both members and the leader. Activities should focus on the dissolution of the group, what it means to say "good-bye," and appropriate ways to end a relationship.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE**

This activity group therapy guide is intended to provide a possible structure for group therapy with children and adolescents that can be used

in inpatient and outpatient settings as well as in public and private school systems. The guide is based upon the stages of group development discussed previously. Suggested activities correspond to those stages. Each session entry includes a description of the group stage, the goal for that session, a clinical illustration, and a list of suggested activities for achieving the goal. Many of the group activities were conducted at an inpatient setting by graduate students taking a course on Family and Group Psychotherapy Methods.

### **PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING**

The Southwest Mental Health Center is a placement for severely emotionally disturbed youth who are under the custody of the State of Texas. The fifty-five children and adolescent residents have been removed from their homes because of abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment. They generally stay at the facility for 9-12 months and then transition to group home placements. All the youth at this facility have a primary psychiatric diagnosis and most have a secondary learning disability. The mean age of the residents is 13 and their ages range from 5-17 years. Approximately 65% of the children are males and 35% are females. There are approximately 6 new admissions and discharges per month. The State of Texas has specific criteria that have to be met for admission to this facility because it is considered the highest and most costly level of care. In brief, the population consists of severely ego impaired youth with intense rage related to disturbed family relationships and a long history of rejection and abuse by primary care providers. The level of care provided by the Center includes 24 hour psychiatric nursing, and a staff to patient ratio of 1:5. Psychiatric services, psychotherapy, special education, specialized assessments, recreation therapy, and other related services are provided as needed.

### **PROPOSED ACTIVITY GROUP CURRICULUM**

#### **Session 1**

#### *Group Stage*

For the first session it is important for all the group members to feel comfortable and relaxed. The first session is usually a success if the anxiety of the initial encounter is decreased through nonconfrontive activities. Typically, the members are very focused and goal-directed during this session,

which is sometimes referred to as the 'honeymoon phase.' The group will try to rely on the leader for direction and structure as the members search for their place within the group and decide on their goals. Some members may be timid or shy, and the leader should encourage them to participate, but not force them into activities.

### *Goals*

Maintain a supportive and secure atmosphere. This environment will allow the members to relax and have fun through non-threatening activities. Members should also begin to learn about one another and form connections with one another.

### *Clinical Illustration*

At the Mental Health Center, the children worked together and appeared to have fun at the first meeting. The shy children were reluctant to participate at first, but after they saw the enjoyment of the other children, they soon joined in the activity. Furthermore, the students considered aggressive and negative participated with no problems, giving the impression that they were ideal children.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Question Search:** Members are given a list of questions they need to obtain answers for by asking other members. Example: Find two people with the letter "Y" in their name or who like chocolate ice cream. This is appropriate for all ages and any size group, as long as the questions are appropriate for the population.
2. **Bunco:** Members pair at tables of four. Then attempt to roll dice for "6s." Once they reach 21 as a team, they move to the next highest table and get a new partner. This game is great for all ages and groups of at least 12 people.
3. **Town Building:** The members form small groups of two or three members. They are given different art supplies and asked to construct a miniature building or home. Towards the end of the session all of the buildings are combined to form a "Group Town." This activity works for children or adolescent groups with several members.

## Session 2

### *Group Stage*

Typically, members are still in the orientation phase, so the group is rather harmonic. The group will probably have more free flowing conversation and interactions, but on a surface level. For example, they will probably discuss the first session, how much fun they had, and that they look forward to today's activity. Members need to learn to be more vulnerable, and yet find security in the group. The leader will need to continue providing structure and support for the group members. Members also need to feel they belong to the group and are not considered outsiders. The leader should encourage all members to participate and state the importance of each individual.

### *Goals*

Establish rapport among the members to promote a friendly and safe environment. Create structure to reduce anxiety. Include all members in activities and stress the importance of working as a group.

### *Clinical Illustration*

While at the Center, the children were ready and willing to participate. When the task began, they kept looking to the group leader to demonstrate what to do. After encouragement, the children became more creative and took more initiative in the activity. The group leader encouraged the hesitant members to participate by working with the leader.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. Charades: Allow a volunteer to begin. Whomever guesses correctly performs next. This activity allows the "performers" of the group to express themselves. Eventually, create teams of charade performers to teach cooperation and create bonds between group members. This activity will probably work better with children over 13 years old. The group should consist of at least seven members.
2. Group Olympics: Break the group into two or three teams of four or five members. Have them compete in light activities such as Tug-of-War or relays that encourage teams to work together to win. To win the Olympics, members must demonstrate cooperation and sup-

port within their team. Any age group can perform this activity as long as the teams are balanced in terms of age and number of team members.

3. Positive/Negative Words: Members form small groups where they are given an abstract word, such as “supportive.” The groups must define the word together and then demonstrate a positive and negative example of it. Any size group may do this activity. Members should be at least 6 years old and have some older members in their group.

### Session 3

#### *Group Stage*

In this session, the initial orientation stage is coming to an end. The group members are beginning to get acquainted and feel more secure with each other. They are finding their niche in the group and are looking for a connection to the group so they can feel free to verbalize their opinions and feelings.

#### *Goals*

Leaders should provide group interaction with structure that allows members to feel comfortable expressing themselves. Members should be moving away from superficial conversation towards more in depth group discussions. It is imperative that members begin to invest in the group at this point so they will remain committed during turbulent periods.

#### *Clinical Illustration*

The group leader tried to encourage discussion through a Question Cards activity. It was very successful because the members were ready to talk more intimately with each other. The leader allowed each child to read a question and lead the discussion on that topic. The members appeared to enjoy taking control of the activity.

#### *Suggested Activities*

1. Question Cards: Distribute note cards with discussion questions written on them such as “If I could change one thing about myself,



what would it be?” Each member should read their question aloud, answer it, and lead the other members in discussion. Topics should include emotions and life experiences. This activity is appropriate for adolescent populations.

2. **Sentence Completion Worksheet:** Have members finish open-ended sentences and discuss other members’ replies. This activity is appropriate for most ages.
3. **Group Symbol:** Have the group make something visual to represent the group (e.g., a mural, quilt, or mosaic). Each member should participate in making some part of the symbol. Discuss how each piece is vital for the completion of the whole, just as each member is necessary to the group. Display the project at subsequent group meetings. This activity is appropriate for all ages and group sizes.

#### Session 4

##### *Group Stage*

By this session, the orientation phase is complete and the group is moving toward the conflict stage. Leaders should realize that adolescent members are striving for individuation and may exhibit rebelliousness. Members may compete for the leader’s attention and group acceptance. Supportiveness will decrease as conflicts occur and members seek to dominate the group. The leader should recognize that transference issues will surface.

##### *Goals*

The leader must maintain balance among the members so one person does not completely dominate the group. Members need to recognize the “baggage” they bring to the group because of past experiences and relationships. The leader must be sensitive to transference issues as they arise in the group.

##### *Clinical Illustration*

The leader knew her group was entering the conflict stage when the members appeared to resist cooperating with one another; e.g., the group was sitting in a circle for a large group activity when the leader asked the members to pair up. A few members refused to participate because they

did not like any of the other group members. They also refused to work with the leader because she was being “bossy” and “pushy.”

### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Act and Guess:** Tape a piece of paper with a feeling written on it to each person’s back. Have members walk around the room and act out the feeling taped to other members’ backs. Each member should attempt to guess the feeling that is taped to his back without looking. When working with large groups have four or five members at a time participate in the center of a circle.
2. **Building Project:** Have the group build something together with limited materials. For example, construct a building using only straws. This activity should work with most age levels. Large groups should be divided into smaller groups.
3. **Commercials:** Divide the members into groups and have them create a commercial for a product. For younger groups, it may be necessary to provide ideas for products. This activity is appropriate for small and large groups.

## **Session 5**

### *Group Stage*

In this session, group members are now engulfed in the conflict stage. The group has already shifted from preoccupation with acceptance, approval, and commitment to preoccupation with dominance, control, and power. Conflict will arise among members or between members and the leader. During this stage, each member is trying to establish his or her identity, and struggle for control.

### *Goals*

The group leader should be prepared for power struggles that will emerge between members of the group. Leaders must maintain authority during these struggles and during instances when members try to “take-over” the group through hostility or rebellion against the group leader. Outbursts and negative reactions must be dealt with in positive and appropriate ways. Most importantly, resolution of members’ conflicts must strive for the establishment of group cohesion.

*Clinical Illustration*

One leader found a particular activity that worked well to de-emphasize competition and subvert power struggles. The activity was creating designs and symbols from sponges. The sponges were created to represent each individual's uniqueness. Each individual worked cooperatively by sharing craft supplies, and every member seemed to benefit from the activity. The members were then encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings about their designs while de-emphasizing competition. Many of the members commented that they enjoyed the activity because they could express their feelings through art.

*Suggested Activities*

1. **Magazine Collage:** This is an individual activity in which each member designs a collage from magazines to reflect who they are and what they are feeling. Competition is not stressed; therefore, members work alone during this activity. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.
2. **Sponge Designs:** This activity involves creating a sponge that symbolizes something about the members, uniqueness. Each member receives a piece of dried sponge to create his or her symbol. After the symbol has been drawn on the sponge, members can cut it out either to make a picture or save it for remembrance. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.
3. **Design-A-Shirt:** Members are instructed to design a T-shirt that represents their uniqueness. Each member is given a white or colored T-shirt and paints to use. Designs can range from lettering to pictures. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.

**Session 6***Group Stage*

At this time, group members are still involved in the conflict stage. Social conventions are abandoned, and members are uninhibited in criticizing others' behaviors and attitudes. Hostility towards the therapist becomes more evident, and members feel the therapist has disappointed them because of unrealistic expectations that have not been met. Members may become resistant to change and avoid it at all costs.

### *Goals*

The group leader should facilitate healthy resolution to conflicts that arise among members. Criticism and hostility against members and the leader must also be contained, and constructive criticism should be modeled. Expectations about the therapist must be reviewed and agreed upon by the members of the group. Most importantly, the leader should slowly promote change among the group members to create cohesion and growth.

### *Clinical Illustrations*

One group leader found the “Trust Walk” activity useful in diffusing power conflicts. Members were required to play the roles of ‘leader’ and ‘follower.’ When the activity was finished, the children discussed their feelings about the experience. It was interesting to see the individuals who were used to having power in the group become followers. Some individuals discovered what it was like to trust someone and to play an unfamiliar role.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Build-A-Story:** Groups should consist of at least five members. Each group is required to make up a story regarding a particular topic. To begin the story, one member writes or verbalizes the first paragraph. A paragraph is then added by each member until everyone has participated. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.
2. **Scavenger Hunt:** The group should be divided into three or more sub-groups. Each group is given a list of clues that need to be solved. The theme of the hunt can be related to different types of emotions such as happiness, sadness, or frustration. The groups must solve clues and find hidden objects related to the theme. This activity can be held indoors or outdoors depending on the number of members. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.
3. **Trust Walk:** This activity encourages members to trust one another despite their misgivings about each other. Members are grouped into teams of two in which one becomes the “leader,” and the other becomes the “follower.” The leader takes the follower, who is blindfolded, on a walk through an obstacle course, then members swap roles. After the activity, members are encouraged to discuss their

feelings regarding their roles as leader and follower. This activity is appropriate for most ages and group sizes.

### Session 7

#### *Group Stage*

By this stage, group members should have resolved most conflicts concerning roles, revolts against the leader, and struggles for power. Some conflict may still arise, but the group will be more capable of dealing with conflict and resolving issues as a cohesive unit. This means that when conflicts arise the leader will take less of a role in resolving conflicts and group members will take a more active role in confronting fellow group members and resolving conflicts within the group. This is the beginning of group cohesion. Group cohesion is marked by an increase in morale, mutual trust, and self-disclosure (Yalom, 1995). Intimacy and closeness are the major emphases of this group.

#### *Goals*

The goal of this session is to help members achieve greater intimacy and closeness through self-disclosure.

#### *Clinical Illustration*

Mark, an adolescent who had consistently struggled with angry feelings toward another member, finally expressed his anger verbally and directly without the threat of physical retaliation. Other members encouraged Mark to express his feelings and encouraged the offender to apologize and reconcile with Mark.

#### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Informal Discussion:** For some groups, little will have to be done in the way of formal group activities. Members may voice concerns that they want the groups help in resolving. Furthermore, members may share intimate details of problems they are having at home and at school.
2. **Team Drawing:** In this activity, split members into small groups of three or four and have them draw a picture as a team. This is a

nonverbal activity and no one should speak until after the activity. Each group should be provided with markers or crayons and given only the instruction that they are to create a picture with their group without speaking. Spend about 15-20 minutes in this activity, discuss reactions, feelings, and thoughts afterwards.

3. **Playdough Community:** This is another nonverbal activity. Split the group members into threes or fours and provide them with a can of playdough. They may mix with another color if they wish, but do not allow them to talk. Have each group work at a different table and explain that the table is their community and they are to use the playdough to make their home. After a few minutes let them observe other tables' communities and allow them to redesign their home if they wish. Spend about 30 minutes with this activity and discuss reactions, thoughts and feelings afterward.
4. **Choose an Issue:** Have members put a concern or issue they would like to discuss on a piece of paper. Collect all the pieces and place them in a hat. Draw an issue from the hat and discuss the issue as a group. If the members do not want to discuss that particular issue, draw another.

## **Session 8**

### *Group Stage*

Greater cohesiveness should be developing at this stage. As a result, there may be a tendency to restrict expression of negative affect. A strong unity may develop among the members and they may adopt an "us against the world" stance. Eventually, this glow should pale and conflict should emerge or the perceived unity will seem ritualistic. All affect, positive and negative, should be expressed and constructively worked through to achieve a mature working group. The earlier phases of group development reoccur in smaller, short-lived cycles. With each conflict and resolution the group will move closer to maturity. Finally, the topic of termination should be introduced and the members should be reminded that there are only a few sessions left.

### *Goals*

Tendencies to avoid conflict and focus only on the positives should be explored, and unresolved or underlying conflicts should be constructively resolved. The impending termination of the group should also be discussed.

Leaders should focus on the “here-and-now” and practice process commentary to explore avoidance of negative affect, encourage free expression of negative and positive affect, and help members constructively resolve conflict.

### *Clinical Illustration*

The openness and honesty of children at the Center impressed the group leader. For weeks now it seemed that all the members wanted to do was provoke and criticize one another. At this time, however, one member was expressing her disappointment at not being picked for a school team while the other members consoled her, even those who had previously had conflict with her.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Group Experience:** Have group members name two positive and one negative aspect of their group experience so far.
2. **Group Summary:** Have group members write a summary of their group experience thus far. Have they achieved their personal goals? Have they achieved the goals of the group? Reflect on the answers to these questions as a group.
3. **Saying Goodbye:** Discuss what it means to say “good-bye.” Explore the feelings of the group about the impending termination by having them write a good-bye letter and then sharing it with the group.

## **Session 9**

### *Group Stage*

By this time, the group has become cohesive, and communication is more direct, open, and constructive. There is less anxiety in dealing with here-and-now issues. Too often, though, a focus on “next,” or future, is avoided. Therefore, a termination ritual should be planned to help deal with any separation anxiety the members may be feeling. Dealing with the anxiety of termination should be a major goal in all therapy groups. Planning the termination activity along with a discussion about “next” should be on the agenda of every group.

### *Goals*

In preparing for the final session, the leader will facilitate a discussion on termination and plan a closing activity. Begin to discuss how to bring closure to a relationship and then proceed to focus on the future. Review both positive and negative aspects of the group experience.

### *Clinical Illustration*

The children at the Mental Health Center were manifesting some anxiety about the impending termination of the group. Some children withdrew from conversation with the leader and other members, while others discussed more superficial issues than those discussed in previous meetings. The group leaders decided to do an autograph book activity and it turned out to be a great success. The children enjoyed decorating their books, some using symbols from experiences in the group. The opportunity to get autographs from leaders and other members gave the children something tangible to signify the group experience and to say good-bye.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. **Autograph Books:** Fold two pieces of white construction paper in half, with one piece of colored construction paper on the outside as the cover. The covers can be decorated with markers, crayons, stickers, glitter, etc. Members can write something in each other's books that they would like the person to remember. Other examples include wishes for each other; fond memories of each other, etc. The autograph books can be used both in this session and the final session.
2. **Cards:** Members can make cards for each other, and save them to distribute in the final session. If this session takes place near a holiday, such as Halloween or Thanksgiving, cards can reflect this theme.
3. **Art:** Members can draw, color, and/or paint pictures of the group to share with each other at the final meeting.
4. **Friendship Bracelets:** Using embroidery thread or cross-stitch floss, members can make friendship bracelets by braiding different colors together. The bracelets can be used as souvenirs of the group or brought to the final meeting to be shared with each other.



## Session 10

### *Group Stage*

Termination is most appropriate when group and individual goals have been achieved. In addition, termination is appropriate when new behaviors or attitudes have been put into practice in everyday life away from the group. The group is also ready to terminate when the group has ceased to serve a meaningful purpose for the members. Caution should be observed because long-term continuation might create over dependency on the group and its members.

During the last session, regression to the conflict stage is common as members seek to deny the impending termination and resist closure. Confrontations that conceal separation anxiety and sadness may occur. The group leader should try to bring feelings of anxiety, disappointment, and anger into the group's consciousness and model how to say good-bye, stressing that there will be memories to cherish.

### *Goal*

The goal of the final session is to bring healthy closure to the group. It is also a time to reflect on what has been experienced and learned.

### *Clinical Illustration*

The previous week of autograph signing helped make the final meeting a smooth one. The children knew this was the last meeting and they wanted it to be as special as the leaders did. The leaders decided to make the final meeting a banquet celebrating their successful time with the members. Some members still tended to withdrawal, but most were expressive and some tears were shed.

### *Suggested Activities*

1. Consider a formal or semi-formal banquet or dinner to signify the end of the group.
2. Continue the autograph book signing begun the week before. Encourage the members to share positive thoughts and comments with one another.
3. Have each member's name written on a piece of paper, and placed in a hat. Each member draws a name out of the hat and thinks of

something positive to share about the person. Each member could begin with "I like the way (name) . . ." completing the sentence by sharing what he or she liked about the person. For instance, "I like the way Ruth looked at me and paid attention when it was my turn to talk. She made me feel important."

4. Purchase inexpensive "good-bye" cards for each member, including one for the leader. Pass the cards around. Each member is asked to write a message inside the card. The members can take the cards home to keep.

### CONCLUSION

This paper presents a curriculum for conducting Activity Group Therapy with children and adolescents. We hope that the stage structure and suggested activities will provide both inexperienced and experienced group leaders with alternative approaches to traditional group therapy.

### THE STARFISH STORY

As an old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a boy ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing so. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the old man. "How can your effort make any difference?"

The boy looked at the starfish in his hands and threw it to safety in the waves. He said, "It makes a difference to that one."—Anonymous.

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