

33. We are Family



Themes	Discrimination, Family, Gender
Complexity	Level 2
Age	8 – 10 years
Duration	60 minutes
Group size	8 – 30 children
Type of activity	Drawing, discussion
Overview	Using pictures and drawings, children discuss different concepts and structures of 'family'
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote diversity and tolerance towards difference • To make children think of different ways of being brought up and consider the definition of a family • To address discrimination against children with 'unusual' family compositions • To explore the link between family and human rights
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a set of illustrations / photos representing different family schemes for each small group (e.g. single parent, classical scheme, same sex couples, patchwork families, adopted children, big families including many generations).
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of all pictures for each small group of children

Instructions

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that this activity explores the many different ways that we identify and live with the people we consider our family. Emphasize that not all children live in the same kinds of families.
2. Ask each child to draw the family they live in (i.e. as opposed to family they may be separated from, wish they had, once had, etc.). Encourage them to include details about their family if they want to (e.g. name, age, sex of each person).
3. Ask the children to discuss other types of families they know about. Let them then present their drawings about their own family.
4. Together, brainstorm and list as many types of families as possible. Mention some that have not been spoken about already.
5. Divide the children into small groups of 4 or 5 and give each group a copy of the illustrations / photos you prepared earlier. Ask each group to discuss what the main differences are or what is 'unusual' about each family. Ask the groups to discuss their own family pictures too, and whether they are similar or different to any of the pictures they have been given.

Debriefing and evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking questions such as these:
 - a. What happened in this activity?
 - b. How easy or difficult was it to draw and present your family?
 - c. Were you surprised by other children's drawings? Why?
 - d. Were you surprised by any of the other pictures of families? Why?
 - e. What did you learn about families?



- f. How do you think children feel when their family is 'different'?
 - g. How could you support those children?
2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
- a. Do all children have the right to live in a family?
 - b. Is living in a family important? Why or why not?
 - c. Which children perhaps do not live in a family? Where do they live?
 - d. Who ensures that all rights of these children are respected?
 - e. Do you know any children like this? How can you support these children?

Suggestions for follow-up

- The activity 'WHO SHOULD DECIDE?', p. 198, addresses questions about how families live together and make decisions.
- Several activities also deal with stereotyped expectations: 'PICTURE GAMES', p. 130; 'WHO'S BEHIND ME?', p. 195; 'WORLD SUMMER CAMP', p. 205.

Ideas for action

- Set up a series of visits to a local orphanage or social care home and create discussion or friendship groups with the children there.
- If there are any 'Adopt a grandparent' or 'Adopt a parent' initiatives in the local community, some children in the group may like to get involved in their activities.
- Some children may like to start their own 'Adopt a brother or sister' initiative, which can be introduced in a local school or community.

Tips for the facilitator

- Make sure that the children feel comfortable and will not be teased for presenting family styles that are unusual or different. Throughout the exercise, emphasize tolerance, feelings and values which are related to what makes a family.
- It is important to know the family situations of the children in your group and to adapt the activity so as not to embarrass or make any of the children feel uncomfortable about their situation.
- Before running this exercise, read the background information on FAMILY AND ALTERNATIVE CARE, p.240. You can also find ideas here on different types of families or family structures that may be useful for this activity.

Adaptation

To shorten this activity, consider running it without using additional pictures of families. When dividing the children into smaller groups, you can ask them simply to discuss and reflect on their own family drawings without introducing any new ones. However, it remains important to discuss or refer to other types of families that may not be present in the group.

