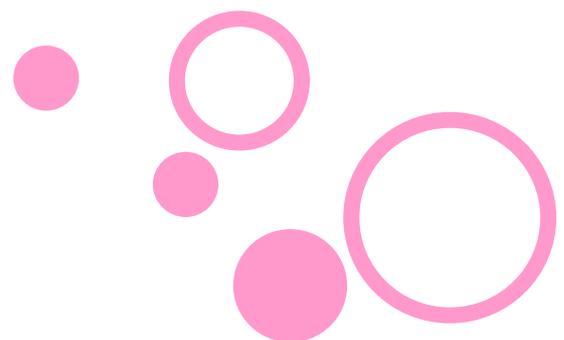




In the following pages you will find a series of games and activities that can be suggested to caregivers, foster parents and adopting parents for enhancing the time spent with their children. The suggested activities are meant to be hints for you, as adults, for facing different topics (identity issue, communication and relationship issues, development of specific competences and skills, attachment issue...) with your children.

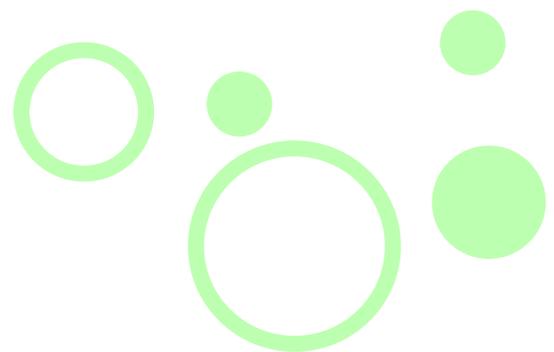
You will find information about the range of age of the children the activity is indicated for and practical information about how to implement the activity, with clear indications in order to support you in helping your children in self-reflection and identity construction.





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Activity 1

LET'S TELL A STORY

Age of the children

This activity can be done with children aged 5 or older, if they are already able to master language at a basic level (express concrete needs and actions).

Motivation

Children, especially the ones that had traumas in their lives, often experience difficulties in communication with adults and peers, both as language difficulties and as inability to focus on one's feelings and thoughts, and consequently to express them properly. But everyone has a lot to say and feel the urge to tell and share her or his story. Sharing a story is a powerful action of bonding, even if sometimes it is not easy to do. So, creating new stories together can at the same time be a powerful tool to help children express themselves, and to create stronger relationships.

Description

A story always has *protagonist*, that is, its main character. The protagonist acts, reacts and makes choices according to some *values*: bravery, love, friendship, money, power, safety, honour, etc. According to this values, the protagonist will face *conflicts and make choices*, that are one of the most important and appealing part of the story, the part where we ask ourself "What would I do in that situation?". In each story, the conflict starts with an inciting event, a fact that puts the whole story in motion. For Cinderella, this is the death of the mother and the arrival of the stepmother, for Jonah and the whale, this is God telling Jonah to go to Ninive.

How to proceed in creating a story together with your children? We suggest to start proposing them a *protagonist* (a main character) and an *inciting event* (an event that puts the protagonist in motion). Remember that a good story starts from a conflict or problem: something lost, an argument, a loss, or even having too much free time or money to spend.

Example: the beginning of the story

Hanna was a shy green caterpillar. She lived in a green green grass, where green plants grew, and only bright colored flowers could see the deep blue sky. Hanna was happy, although she thought that there was too much green. One day, Hanna saw a wonderful butterfly boy flying over the grass.



“Look!” said Clara, Hanna’s best friend “That is Remì, the most wonderful butterfly in this grass”

Hanna stood with open eyes, looking at the amazing butterfly that flew with extreme grace over the grass. But of course, she was green, and Remì didn’t even notice she was there.

After reading (or simply telling) the beginning of the story, there begins the interactive part. Your goal will be helping the child to “get into the story” and to move it ahead. You can ask questions like “What do you think Hanna feels like? What will she do?”.

Example: a sample story-writing dialogue

ADULT: So, you said Coconut has left to see new things, right?

CHILD: Yes, he left on a plane.

ADULT: Very well, and he went to visit skyscrapers, and the Everest, and a volcano...

CHILD: Yes, Coconut went to see all that.

ADULT: And what does he do next?

CHILD: He is happy, but now he goes home.

ADULT: OK, so here I write it: “After all this, Coconuts goes back home”. He flies with a helicopter, what do you think?

CHILD: Good idea! It is a *red* helicopter.

ADULT: OK! “... he flies back home on a red helicopter”

CHILD: And when he comes back he finds his friend the *owl* again (...)

The point is moving the protagonist along, until when she or he faces “the” challenge which will reveal who she or he really is. Another way of doing that is that each of you, in turn, creates a piece of the story. If the child can read and write, you can write the story, or you can simply work orally.

While just creating the story is already fun, it is even much better when a real audience is available: you can prepare a story for an evening with relatives, or just for little brothers and sisters, or just for mum to hear it after dinner.

Accompanying the story with a drawing of the story itself can also be a very good idea, to have a “tangible final product” that will remain as a treasure.

What is necessary?

- With little children concentration is difficult, and you will be able to work on very short stories for half an hour. With older ones, you can move up to an hour. Keep the story in a size manageable within the time you actually have, or plan to have more storytelling sessions.
- You can decide to use some pictures or toys to create the setting and animate the story, or you can just start from a drawing, or simply use imagination.
- This activity can be prepared by reading stories together, both from illustrated books or from fairy tales book, etc.



Variants

- If you do not know where to start from, pick the beginning of a story you know and your children don't.
- With older children, you can also propose a special topic for your story, one which is directly related to your child's experience. It can be a story about friendship, or about hatred and forgiveness, or loss and love. If you want to address such delicate topics, we suggest that you keep the story in a fictional world: this will reduce stress and allow creativity to flow more freely.
- If you have time, try and develop the full story (including protagonist and inciting event) with your child. Drawing the protagonist and discussion where he or she comes from can be a good start.
- If you are a technology freak, you can decide to record the narration of the story with your computer, and maybe add some music or sounds as a soundtrack. One step more, and you can add pictures and make a short movie!

What is important?

Creating a story helps developing imagination, and exploring possibilities by “getting into the shoes” of the characters. This is a good exercise to grow up!

Sharing stories creates bonds, is a natural way of establishing deep and caring relationships, and opens space for dialogue.

Any story you create, even if it is a fairy tale, is a story about yourself – and so is for children. Children naturally project themselves into their stories, even if they talk about dogs, elfins, dragons or racing cars. So, take time to listen! Through the story created together, the adult has a unique opportunity to explore the child's take. Never force the story, just help it come out and listen to the child's own voice.

References

Associazione seed, from Switzerland, developed a methodology based on digital storytelling. More information about this project and some training materials, including the digital storytelling handbook, are available on seed's blog at <http://seedlearn.org/tag/storytelling/>. Switzerland.



Activity 2

LULLABIES

Age of the children

This activity can be done with children from 0 to 5 or even older.

Motivation

Lullabies are music and literary works sung to make children sleep or to make them stop crying with a simple language and syllabic meter and with a melody. No matter where they are from, all lullabies have a quality that makes them easy to recognize. Additionally, lullabies are often songs that babies wish to hear and adults will be required to sing over and over again. Development Research shows that lullabies do much more than lulling a baby to sleep. They provide opportunities for children's growth and development as well as promoting a loving relationship between parent and child. In addition to instilling a love for music within the child, lullabies lay the foundation for future language growth because the child's environment can have its most profound impact before age four when intelligence is growing most rapidly (Howle 1989). Language development begins at birth. During the first 3 years of life, children form the main learning pathways in their brains (Bloom, 1964). At that point, the brain is very receptive to learning by sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, and doing (Dryden & Vos, 1997). If adults talk and sing with children, their ability to distinguish the sounds and rhythms of language will develop. Lullabies provide the child with an emotional safe and warm haven, and at the same time with the sounds and rhythms of their native language or indeed the introduction to the language of another culture. Moreover lullabies can become a daily "ceremony", an activity to be repeated and to which children get used to. This could help creating something stable, a stable activity to create connection and improve relationship between the adult and the child.

Description of the activity

- Choose lullabies that you like (remember if you were used to listen to lullabies when you were a child or learn a new one (if you don't know any lullaby or you want to know new ones, to the following link you can find a selection of lullabies in many European languages: <http://lullabies-of-europe.org/UK/UKLullabies.htm>)
- Make eye-contact with the children – try not to refer to a book/ song-sheet too much



- Breathe comfortably then choose a starting note which is comfortable for you so you can sing the whole lullaby confidently. But don't worry... it is not a song contest!! :)
- Children enjoy songs that are familiar so take the time to repeat new songs often
- Try to make this activity the more "ritual" as possible, as an example get into the habit of singing a lullaby each night when the child goes to bed.

What is necessary?

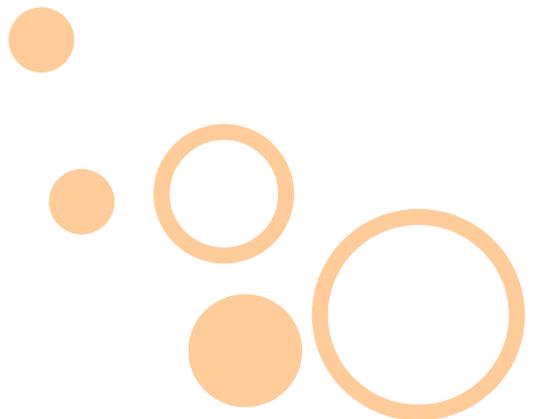
Just your voice and a quiet time!

References

Contents of the section *Motivation* were taken from the European Project: Lullabies from the Cradle (<http://www.lullabies-of-europe.org/>).

Suggestions of the section *Description of the activity* were taken from *Singalong with Chamber Tots*. Wigmore Hall, London. To read the whole article: <http://tinyurl.com/8aksgs7>.

A selection of lullabies (in English, Danish, Greek, Czech, Turkish, Italian and Romanian) is available at <http://lullabies-of-europe.org/UK/UKLullabies.htm>. Switzerland.





Activity 3

LET'S HAVE A CUP OF TEA / A GLASS OF JUICE

Age of the children

This activity can be conducted with children from the age of 5 or older.

Motivation

This good practice encourages the effective communication among the children as well as it enriches their relationship with the caregiver. It provides a useful update about the emotional state of the children as well as information about their everyday life. At the meeting can be discussed different topics that are important for the members of the group - problems and difficulties, plans for the future, upcoming events, new ideas regarding the leisure activities. During the meeting can be introduced topics important for the upbringing of the children (incl. sex education, the negative consequences of drugs and alcohol consumption).

Organising the event helps creating a pleasant atmosphere as well as an informal group, where every participant, the children and the caregiver, can not only share his/ her experience and point of view, but also has his/ her role that contributes to the group wellbeing.

This practice teaches the children to be responsible as well as some basic skills such as organising the meeting, setting the table, cleaning the dishes afterwards.

Description

This practice includes everyday 30 minutes meetings. The organisation of the meeting includes: gathering the children, preparing tea, setting the table. At the beginning of the meeting it is a good idea the caregiver to present the topics that are preliminary selected to be discussed. Depending on the needs of the group, the topics included in the "agenda" can be replaced by matters that are urgent or of a greater importance.

The topics, discussed during the meeting might be the following:

- the daily activities of each child;
- what happened during the day;
- what tasks do the children have for homework - do the children need additional help and guidance from the caregiver;
- preferred leisure activities after doing their homework;
- other.



After the end of the meeting the members of the group gather the dishes and wash them together. The table is set back to its ordinary state.

What is necessary?

A room with suitable interior for the activity (tables, chairs, free space)

Kitchen utensils, dishes (cups and glasses)

Writing board, writing materials

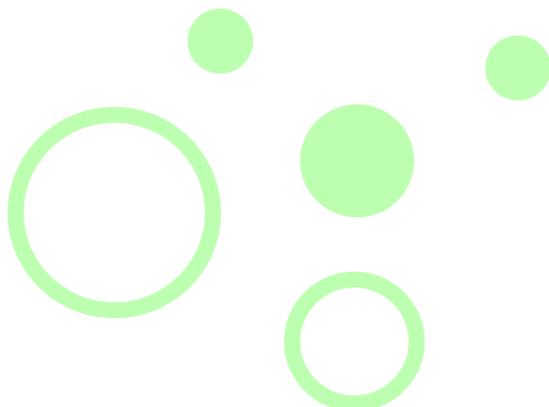
Variants

The activities can be conducted in a different surrounding- at the park, during a trip of vacation.

The topics discussed during the meeting can vary, depending on the needs of the working group.

Author

The activity has been suggested by Zvezditsa Peneva- Kovacheva, Manager at an institution for children deprived of parental care, in Ispereh, Bulgaria.





Activity 4

LIFEBOOK

Age of the children

This activity can be conducted with children from the age of 5 or older.

Motivation

The method focuses on the positive aspects and the happy events in the past of the children. The activities included in the Lifebook aim to teach the children how to develop resilience.

Children and young people who have had painful and difficult past are often ashamed of their background and the family they were born in. Their pain affects their self-esteem and their ability to define themselves as a person.

The main aim while working with the Lifebook is to help these children to realize and embrace all their positive qualities, to cherish the pleasant events of their past, remember the positive feelings while meeting new people as well as to give them the opportunity to get to know and experience their own strengths and potential. This provides them with new perspective about their own life story that can help them to become more confident in their future life.

The purpose of this practice is to help the children to perceive themselves and their lives as something valuable and unique, full of many positive moments. The Lifebook focuses on the positive moments in the children's life history that would point out their potential and encourage them to cope with different situations.

Description

The activities are conducted in small groups of 5 children and are divided into 5 modules, each of them lasts from 90 to 150 minutes / depending on the age / the level of development of the children in the group.

The modules are as follows:

- Module 1 "My life so far", "My best friends"
- Module 2 "My school", "My creative side"
- Module 3 "Animals", "My family", "My network of acquaintances"
- Module 4 "My deepest thoughts" and "My treasure"
- Module 5 "Places where I have lived", "My home", "My future".



Each session is conducted by an instructor specially trained for this method. The children receive their personal Lifebook and during the different sessions through various games and sharing techniques, they fill in certain part of the module. The instructor leads the attention of the children to their potential and positive qualities. The process and results have a tremendous impact on the ability for self-reflection of the children.

What is necessary?

Lifebook (a book divided into different chapters / modules)

A room with suitable interior for the activities (tables, chairs, free space)

Painting tools and materials, art supplies

Variants

The activities can be conducted in a different surrounding - at the park, during a trip of vacation.

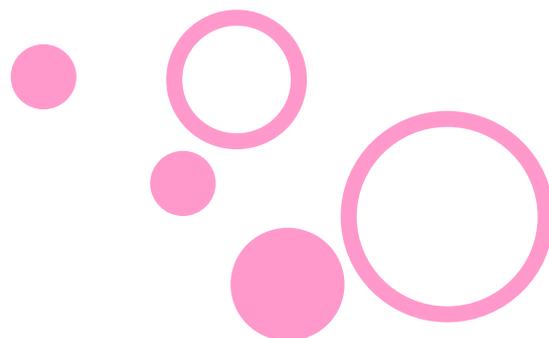
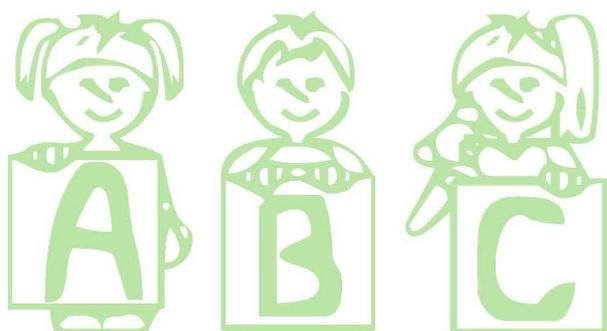
The modules might be divided in a different way, depending on the needs of the working group.

References

This practice is developed within a method developed by a Dutch foundation - „Life book” Foundation. It is available online, please follow the link <http://www.lifebookforyouth.com>.

Author

The activity has been suggested by Zvezditsa Peneva- Kovacheva, Manager at an institution for children deprived of parental care, in Isperih, Bulgaria.





Activity 5

WE DRAW A PICTURE TOGETHER

Age of the children

From 5 to 15.

Motivation

It is something to do together. You draw a drawing at the same piece of paper. You talk about the drawing, when you draw.

Description

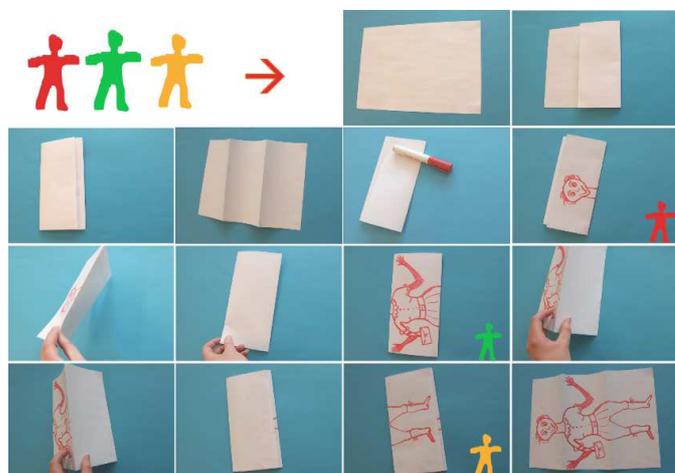
You are going to cooperate in drawing a person on a piece of A4 paper:

Before you start, you should fold the A4 paper sheet 2 times, so that it is divided in 3 parts. In the upper part of the paper you should draw the head of the person. In the middle part of the paper the body should be drawn, and on the lower part of the paper you should draw the legs and the feet. The persons who are drawing together are not allowed to see what the others are drawing – they are only allowed to see the part of the paper, which they are using themselves to draw their part: Person number 1 draws the head (using 1/3 of the paper – the upper part). Person number 2 draws the body in the middle of the paper. Person number 3 (or number one again) draws legs and feet (using the last 1/3 of the paper). Finally, the paper is unfolded and the whole figure can be seen by everybody – and it will look very strange and funny!

You can then talk about the various contributions to the drawings. Why does the woman look sad? Why is her stomach so big? Why does she not wear socks? etc.

Author

A family-game. We have spent many hours drawing these kind of persons. It brings out smiles and laughter. Denmark.





Activity 6

LITTLE WRITER

Age of the children

16 - 18-month old kids.

Motivation

Through this activity, the child can imitate the emotional expressions of the others, play interactive games with adults (Socio-emotional Development), draw and paint (Fine-motor muscle development), can point the pictures in the book when the names are called (Linguistic Development).

Description

First of all, the adult sits on a table face to face with the child. The adult puts the white cardboard and crayons on the table. By giving one of the crayons to the child, the adult says: "This is your crayon and that one is mine." Then, the adult helps the child draw by modelling him/her. By exchanging the cardboards, the kid is made to do some drawings. Then, some pieces of fabric are cut into equal pieces and the adult gets the kid to touch them. It is vital to choose different kinds of fabric to contribute to the kid's emotional development. After this, the photos of the kid are stuck on these pieces of fabric. It is also possible and useful to stick photos that show emotional expressions and the kid's drawings. All these pieces of fabric are turned into a book and the adult sits in front of the kid and they start to speak on the photos and the drawings. The adult then makes up a story during this session. While doing this, he/she shows the facial expressions when necessary and ensures that the kid repeats and imitates these expressions too.

Measurements of safety: Before the activity the hygiene of the materials should be controlled carefully.

Evaluation: After the activity, the achievement of the activity should be checked.

This activity develops the interaction between the adult and the child by providing interaction through game and touching various kinds of fabric, the sensorial development of the child is supported. Also, through drawing, the fine-motor muscle development of the kid is supported. Furthermore, the child can notice different kinds of facial and emotional expressions through experiencing and imitating.



What is necessary?

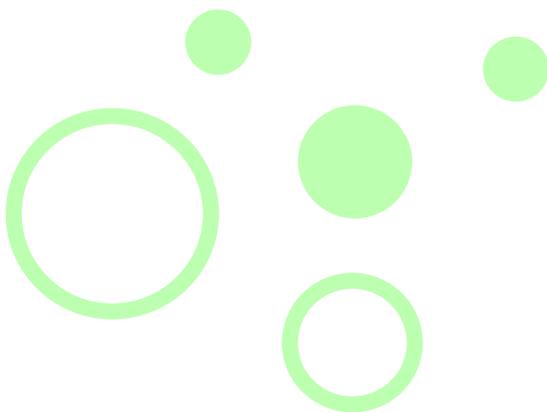
Pieces of fabric, photos, photos that show emotional expressions, crayons, white cardboard.

Variants

The book can be produced by the cardboards as well as pieces of fabric or the activity can be implemented with a present book. It is also possible to use cards that show facial expressions instead of imitating oneself.

Author

Dilek Kılıçkıran- Deputy manager of Directorate of Family and Social Policies- Psychologist.
Turkey.





Activity 7

A BOARD GAME "MY LIFE"

Age of the children

This activity can be conducted with children between 7 - 15 years old.

Motivation

The child can integrate and sort out his/her fortune/luck. With a help of adult person he/she can name his/her feelings/emotions. It's a game especially important for kids, who had a lot of chaos (confusion), changes, losses in their lives. It gives an opportunity to tell their own story.

Description

An adult and a child create a template of a board game, for example 100 boxes to move from Start to Meta.

Start is the day of birth. Meta is a moment, here and now, for example the day of making a game.

In the fields we write down a different events that took place in the child's life in the past, for example:

- *"Your younger sister is born. You have to share your room. You give your throwing dice to the another participant in the game",*
- *"You won a competition at school. You are very happy - jump forward five fields",*
- *"The secret room. Tell us an event you never said anyone – then you can get two extra throwing dice", etc...*

It is worth to write down in the fields the events that we know about from the child but also, for example from an interview with parents.

The winner is the child who reaches the finish line (Meta) first.

What is necessary?

A large sheet of paper, crayons and markers, dice, pawns.

Variants

The theme of game can be: "My life" but also, for example: "My house"



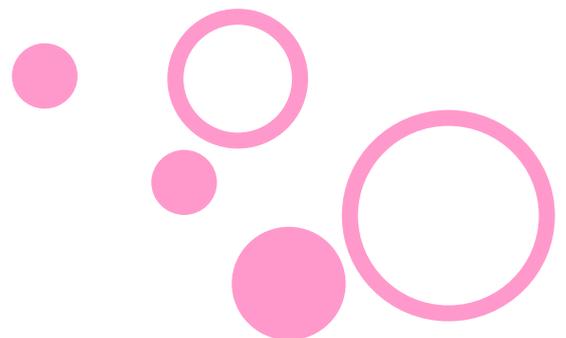
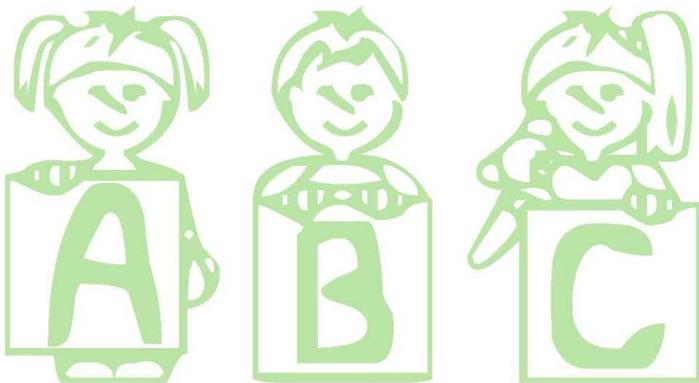
“My sickness”
“People who I know”

References

There’s no such a material.

Author

This is an original idea of therapists at the Psychotherapy Centre “Little Prince” in Kraków.
Authors: Sylwia Zaremba and Urszula Turyna. Poland.





Activity 8

THE FEELINGS TOWER JENGA

Age of the children

This activity can be conducted with children from the age of 6 or older.

Motivation

Learning how to name and recognize feelings. Developing empathy.

Description

Kid and adult play the game according to the rules of the Jenga Game using the wooden blocks from that game. On each block there is written one feeling.

The child is pulling block out of tower, read what feeling is written on it, and say to other kids when he/she felt like that. The adult while pulling out his block tells about his own experience or try to guess when the kid felt like that (it depends on the relationship between adults and kid). The blocks are drawn out from the tower in such way to not destroy the tower.

The game ends when the tower falls in even a minor way - in other words, any piece falls from the tower, other than the piece being knocked out to move to the top. The winner is the last person to successfully remove and place a block.

What is necessary?

Wooden blocks from Jenga Game with the various feelings name written on it. Each block has a different feeling.

Variants

Few kids can play this game in the same time. Everyone talk about his/her feelings. It can be also inverted – the kid guesses when another participants in the game felt like that. Different version is that a child tries to find out when members of his family felt like that.

References

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenga>

Author

The activity has been suggested by a Polish instructor. Poland.