



Activity & Idea Book

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**National
Center for
Youth Issues**

Practical Guidance Resources
Educators Can Trust



Introduction

Although clinical depression is often thought of as an adult disease, it can affect children as well. Unfortunately, children may not have the maturity to understand what is happening to them, or they may feel powerless to change their situation, so they don't speak up about what they are going through. It is up to adults to be on the lookout for signs of trouble and to recognize when a child needs help.

What to Watch For – Potential Warning Signs of Depression in Children:

Sadness, hopelessness, loss of pleasure or interest, anxiety, turmoil (anger outbursts)

Difficulty organizing thoughts (concentrating), extreme negativity, worthlessness and guilt, helplessness, feelings of isolation, thoughts of suicide

Changes in appetite or weight, sleep disturbances, sluggishness, agitation

Avoidance and withdrawal, clingy and demanding behavior, excessive activity, restlessness, self-harm

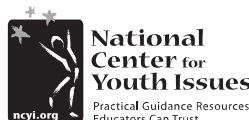
What to do:

- Don't minimize your child's feelings. Reassure your child that depression is not something to be ashamed about – Some people have a hard time recovering from being sad.
- Work hard to cultivate trust and communication with your child and be aware of the impact your own responses in life are having on your child. You are your child's coping instructor.
- Allow your child the right to feel depressed and teach him/her that asking for help is ok – If he/she thinks depression is bad or not ok, he/she may try to hide his/her feelings from you.
- Tell your child the truth and give him/her time to grieve. By being honest, you are allowing your child to work through the pain.
- Pay attention to the length of your child's symptoms. If the symptoms linger for an extended period of time, or if you see severe changes in your child's personality, seek professional help.
- Although suicide in children is rare, it does happen. Take it very seriously if your child says or acts like he wants to die.

If your child is experiencing frequent signs of depression that last for extended periods of time, it is crucial that you seek professional help. Children who are experiencing signs of depression do not automatically need medication. Many children will respond to therapy alone. If you are uncertain where to seek help, contact your child's school counselor or your family physician for a referral.

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Summary: A supplementary teacher's guide for *Blueloon*.
Full of discussion questions and exercises to share with students.

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Stress Charades

Objectives

- Identify things that make you feel stressed out.
- Visualize stressors by acting them out.
- Recognize that others experience stress.
- Learn alternative coping strategies for handling stress.

Materials

- Paper
- Paper Strips (5 per Student)
- Large container

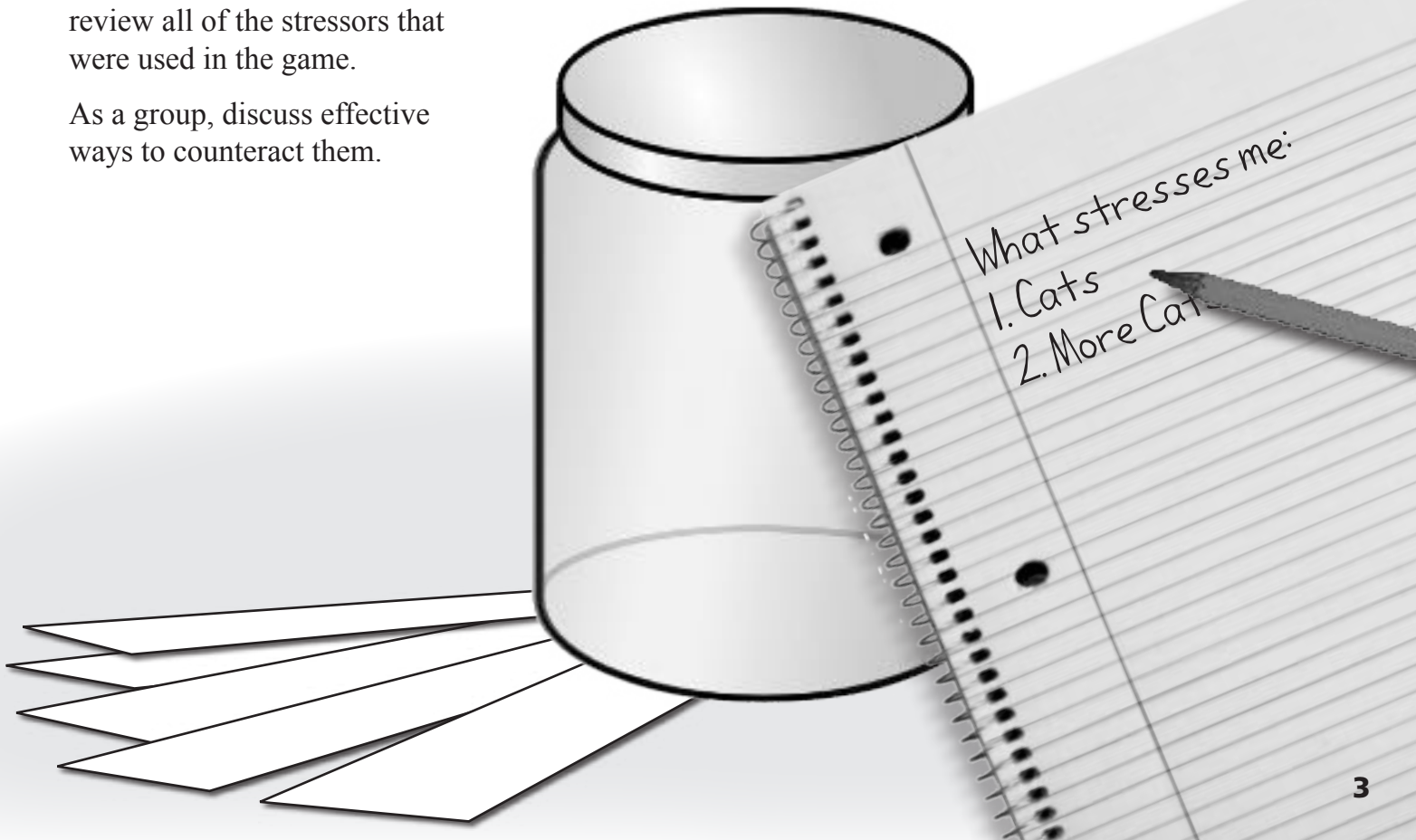
Directions

1. Make a list of all of the things that stress you out on a sheet of paper.
2. Select your top five stressors from the list and circle them.
3. Copy each of your five stressors onto strips of paper and fold them up.
4. Place your folded strips into a jar or container along with everyone else's and mix up.

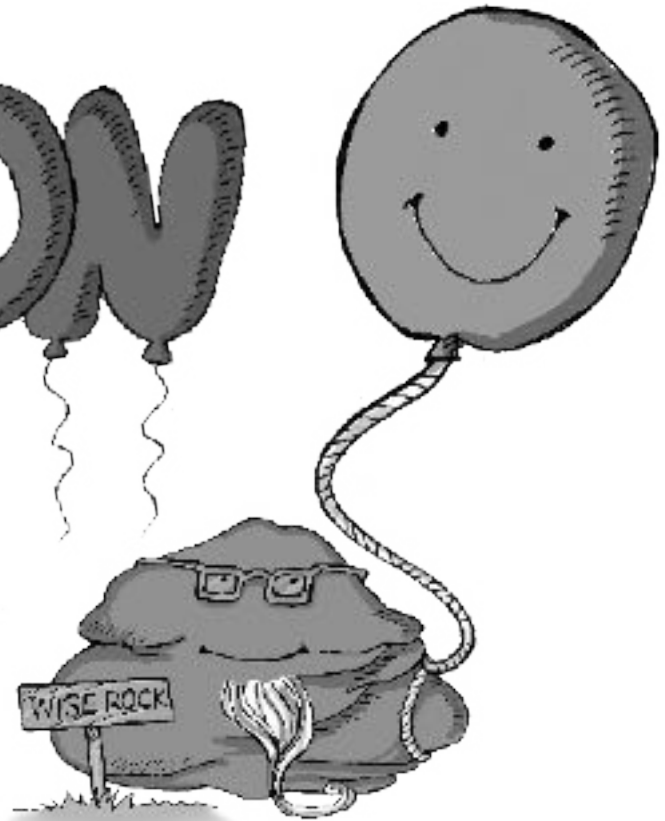
Divide your group into two teams. Have the first member of Team One draw a strip from the jar and act out that stressor for his/her team. If a teammate guesses the stressor, then Team One gets the point. If after 90 seconds, Team One has not guessed correctly, Team Two can gather together, discuss an answer and make one guess. If they get it correct, then Team Two gets a point. Write the stressor that was drawn on the board for all to see. Next have Team Two draw a strip and repeat the process. The first team to five points wins.

Once a winner is determined, review all of the stressors that were used in the game.

As a group, discuss effective ways to counteract them.



My Own



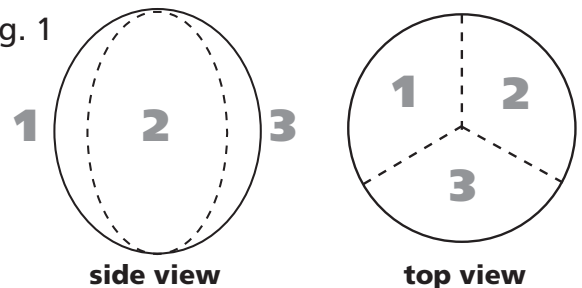
Objective

Use a balloon to re-enact, identify and connect with the Blueloon storybook.

Directions

1. Blow up balloons and close them with a twisty tie. (This will make it possible to let air out and blow more air in.)
2. Tie a string to each balloon.
3. Divide the balloon into thirds as shown (Fig. 1). Draw 3 faces on each balloon (sad face, happy face, and neutral face.)
4. Play with the balloon as you act out and discuss the Blueloon storybook.

Fig. 1



Materials

- One round balloon for each person
- One wire baggie tie for each balloon
- One piece of string for each balloon
- Black Magic Marker



The Goal Chain

Objective

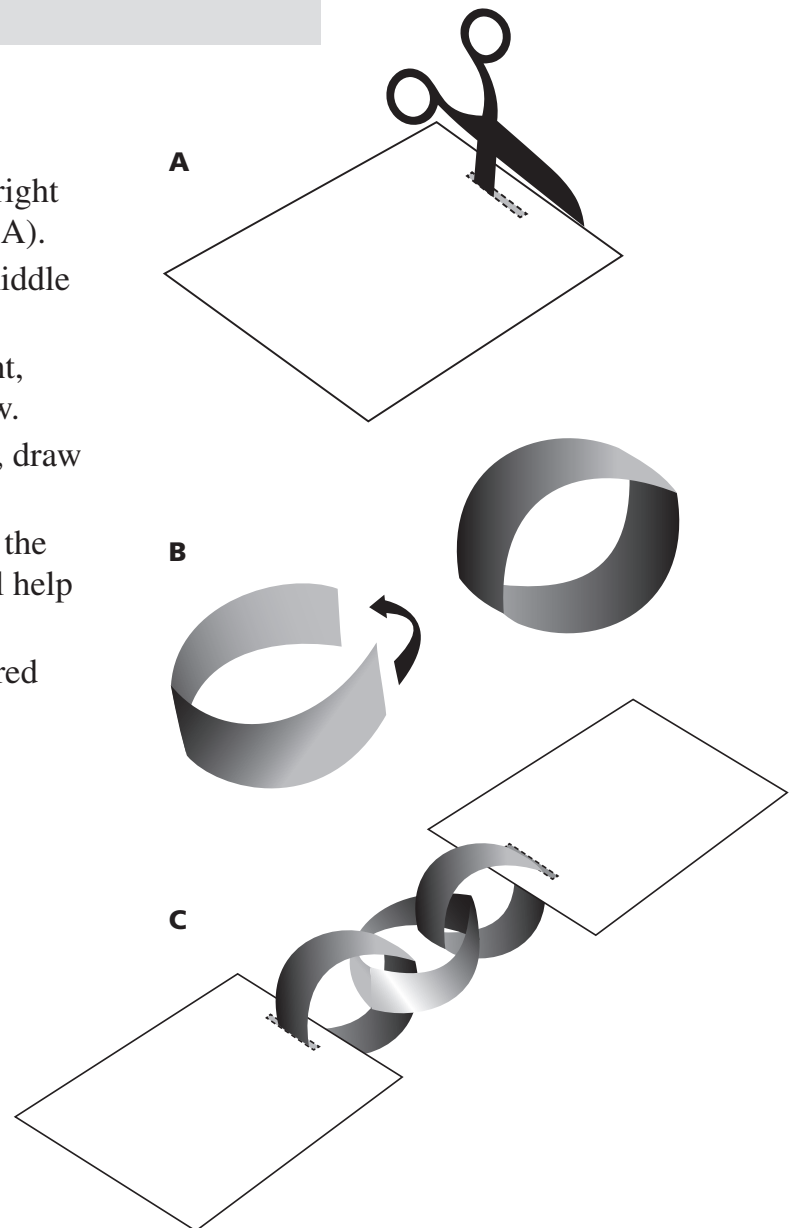
Develop a realization that setting small, related, attainable goals is significant when trying to reach bigger goals. When reaching the bigger goal seems overwhelming, break it up into smaller parts.

Materials

- (2) 5" x 8" index cards per person
- Sheet of paper
- Pencils or markers
- Multi-colored paper strips 3/4" wide and 6 inches long.
- Scissors or an Exacto knife
- Stapler or glue

Directions

1. Make a 1" x 1/8" slit in the middle of the right edge of one of the 5" x 8" cards as shown (A).
2. Repeat with the other 5" x 8" card in the middle of the left side.
3. On the 5" x 8" card with the slit on the right, draw a picture of where you are in life now.
4. On the 5" x 8" card with the slit on the left, draw a picture of where you would like to be.
5. On the sheet of paper, make a list of all of the things you need to do/accomplish that will help you get where you want to be.
6. Write down each thing on a different colored strip of paper.
7. Connect the first strip to the 5" x 8" card (through the slit) and glue or staple the ends together (B).
8. Attach the other strips to the first strip, attaching the final strip to the 5" x 8" card with the slit on the left (C).
9. You now have a visual for what it takes to get from where you are to where you want to be!
10. Discuss how each link in the chain is important and necessary.



Goal Pizza Pie

Materials

- Pencil
- Markers
- Scissors
- White Paper

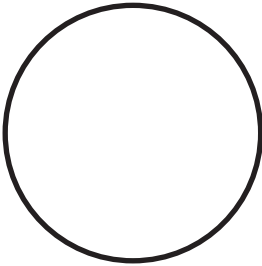
Objective

Help people avoid the “whole pie” syndrome.
Identify small steps for success.

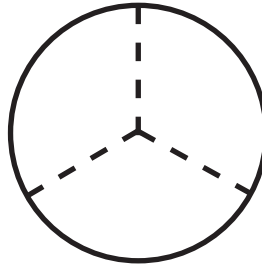
Directions

1. Draw three circles using a separate sheet of paper for each. The first circle will be whole (A), the second divided in thirds (B) and the third circle divided by sixths (C). Cut out the whole circle and the parts to each of the other two circles. Set aside.

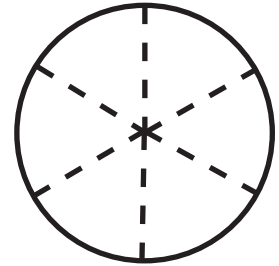
A.
Whole
circle



B.
Divided
into thirds



C.
Divided
into sixths



2. Write down an achievable ultimate goal that you would like to achieve in the top box of the flow chart below (A).
3. Write down three medium-sized goals that will help you accomplish your ultimate achievable goal in the next three boxes (B).
4. Write down two small goals that will help you accomplish each of your three medium-sized goals in the boxes (C).

A.					
B.		B.		B.	
C.	C.	C.	C.	C.	C.

5. Draw a picture of your ultimate achievable goal and label it on the whole circle paper.
6. Draw pictures of each of the 3 medium-sized goals and label them on the 1/3 circle pieces.
7. Draw pictures of each of the small goals and label them on the 1/6 circle pieces.

Use this pizza model to visualize that your big goals are easiest to achieve and accomplish if you can break them down into smaller goals. Just like pizza...it's hard to eat the whole thing in one sitting. Eating one small piece at a time makes it much easier!