**Hidden Heart**

    The things that we keep hidden inside are our hurts, emotional pain, scars, and anger. Some people work extra hard to hide these feelings and eventually may physically hurt themselves or others if they don't share their feelings with others.
    This activity gives people the opportunity to share their pain and the anger they have hidden inside. When people start to deal with these feelings of anger before becoming destructive they can experience happiness in their lives once again.

**Objective**For people to recognize and understand that the anger they keep on the inside affects how they live their lives. To help people recognize the good things that they have in their hearts and to encourage them to share this part of themselves with others.

**Who**People who are angry about their own lives and who show this anger easily to others. People who are angry on the inside and keep the anger buried deep down which leads them to have many negative feelings towards themselves or towards others.

**Group Size**1 or more

**Materials**Paper
Pens or pencils
Scissors
Thin pieces of ribbon
One small, and one large balloon for each person (not inflated)
Permanent colored markers

**Description**    Give each person a small balloon, piece of ribbon, paper, scissors and a pen or pencil. Explain to them that this balloon represents their heart and all of the pain, hurt and anger that can be found inside of it. Instruct them to cut slips of paper that are small enough to fit into the balloon, to write down their hurts and anger on these, and to then put the papers into the balloon and tie the balloon closed with the ribbon (do not blow up the balloon). These papers do not have to be shown to anyone.
    Give each person one of the larger balloons and ask each person to put their "heart" (the smaller balloon) into the larger balloon. Instruct each person to blow up the large balloon and tie it shut. Tell them that they are to write on the outside of the balloon how they present themselves to others on the outside so that nobody can see the things that are hidden on the inside. Some people use humor to hide the pain; others always act confident even though they feel insecure and lonely. These are the types of things people should write on the outside of their balloon.
    Once all of the balloons are written on, gather the group together and discuss what is written on the outside of the balloons. Challenge the members of the group to each share at least one thing they have written down on the outside of their balloon. Then ask each person to state if it is a good thing to cover up what is on the inside or if they would like people to know more about what's going on in their life and if so to think of a way that this can happen. After this discussion, allow them to pop their balloons as a symbolic way of getting rid of all the walls and devices that they use to hide their pain.
    After the balloons are popped, the hearts with the ribbons tied around them should remain. Challenge each person in the group to find someone in the next week's time whom they trust enough to give their heart to. They should explain to that person what the balloon represents and why they want to give it to them; they should then let that person untie the ribbon to see what is inside. If possible bring the group back together a week later for a follow up group to find out who was able to find someone to give their heart to. Or simply challenge the group to read what they had in their "heart" to the group.
**Discussion Prompts**1.  How are you affected by the feelings and emotions that you keep inside of you?
2.  What things inside of you makes you feel angry?
3.  How can your life change if you get rid of the negative things and leave only the positive in your heart?
4.  How can you get rid of the negative things in your life?
5.  Do you trust anyone with your heart? Why or why not?
6.  How can it help you to find someone to trust with your feelings and emotions?

**Variation**Simply place a piece of paper with your name on it inside a balloon to represent you as a person and then write down the things that you do to keep people from getting to know the "real" you on the outside and share these with the group.

(From the book 104 Activities That Build:)

**The Board Game Challenge**

Not every competitive game is physically active. These games can be every bit as intense and frustrating as physical games. With these activities the group gets a chance to practice its anger management in another kind of realistic situation.

**Objective**For people to show good sportsmanship towards teammates and towards an opponent in a competitive situation. For people to practice using appropriate anger control skills when becoming frustrated, agitated or angry in a competitive activity.

**Who**People who have difficulty controlling their anger in competitive situations.

**Group Size**3 or more

**Materials**· Play money
· A variety of board games that played by taking turns
· Some suggestions are Operation, Stay Alive, Simon, Jenga

**Description**The idea of the game is to finish with the most money. Money is earned by accomplishing different tasks from different games. For example if you are using the game Operation, pass the game around. Give each person a turn to pick out a piece without getting buzzed to earn a set amount of money.
This type of competition may be done with many different games. Use your imagination and resources to give away money using different board games. Money creates a competitive environment that seems to bring out intense feelings. Also a prize may be offered for the one with the most money at the end to increase the incentive and make the games a bit more competitive.

**Discussion Topics**1. If you lost, how did you feel?
2. Why did you want to win?
3. Do you ever get angry or disappointed when playing a game? If so, how do you handle it?
4. Do you feel competition is good or bad? Why?
5. Would you have had the same desire to win if money had not been a factor? Why or why not?

**Variations**· Hold an auction at the end of the game so that the group members can spend the money they won.
· Give away money for acts of good sportsmanship. Take away money for acts of poor sportsmanship.

It is our job to help our kids learn how to handle BIG emotions. The more out of control a child gets, the more he relies on us to demonstrate calm and soothing behaviour. When our behaviour starts to mimic that of the child who is on an emotional rollercoaster, there is double-trouble.

1. First, we have missed a golden opportunity to help our child learn how to self-regulate and manage over the top feelings.

2. We have just reinforced that behavior by providing an emotional fireworks display of our own.

Remember that a child who is drunk on emotion is not going out of his way to inconvenience you, but rather, is asking you for assistance. Don't personalize!

So what's a parent to do? How can a parent rein in their own emotions when their child is pushing all of their buttons? The secret is changing what you think. When you change how you think, you change how you feel. And that makes all the difference. For your child and for you!

Rather than telling yourself things that sabotage your child and you, such as, "Here we go again!", "I can't stand this!", and "This is going to be the death of me!", try replacing those thoughts with a new mantra, "I can handle this!", "This kid needs me to model calm!", "Here's my chance to help him deal with big emotions".

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Anger Gage

Anger management can be difficult for many children. Engaging students in a hands-on activity is a great way to redirect their focus. Coloring and cutting out the following Anger Gage is a productive diversion that allows the child to validate how they are feeling, as well as determine the intensity of their anger.

Free Anger Management PrintableTypically, I try to give children as many choices as possible, but for this activity I have the students color the “pie” sections according to the color shown on each “pie”. They can color the outer rim and pointer any color they wish. This results in a traffic light, with the addition of orange ;), and lends its self to the analogy of a traffic signal.

Asking students, “What would it take to move from orange to yellow?” encourages children to come up with their own anger management strategies. I have found that students are able to come up with more strategies when dealing with a generalized question than when they are confronted with a specific situation.

\*I should add that students on the ASD spectrum will have more difficulty when dealing with abstract concepts and should be provided with specific social situations.

When I use the Anger Gage in small groups, I have the students write/draw their answers. I then have them take turns sharing their answers. As they share the answers, I have them check their own lists for similar strategies and write down any new ideas.

If students have the same strategy, I have each of them “star” their strategy (because it’s a SUPER STAR STRATEGY!). Strategies that are not repeated by someone else gets a smiley face (So they can kiss their brains!). Supporting repeated and novel ideas helps take the competitiveness out of the activity and builds group cohesion.

