

TOOLKIT

Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years

A Contribution to the Protection
of Children from Violence and the
Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being

BOOKLET III

Activities for Children

CONSORTIUM

on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood
for the Prevention of Violence

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for the Prevention of Violence



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Booklet III

Activities for Children

Booklet III provides guidance for parents and caregivers who wish to conduct activities with their children, as well as for educators and other community members who work directly with children, to nurture children's innate spiritual capacities.

It comprises two sets of activities:

1. Daily interactions for a parent/caregiver and child which can be intentionally integrated into the daily routine.
2. Guided activities with step-by-step instructions for use with children of different ages: 0-3, 3-5 and 5-8 years old. Some of these activities require some extra planning and preparation. For some activities there are resources available to support its implementation gathered in the Resource Pack.

All of the activities can be customized to the family context and done with materials found in the local environment. Most of all, they are designed to be engaging and fun! Be sure to enjoy the learning journey together with the children!

This booklet is part of a series of 7 Booklets that together form the Toolkit "Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years – A Contribution to the Protection of Children from Violence and the Promotion of Their Holistic Well-Being."

Make sure to refer to the Conceptual Framework in Booklet I, as it contains important information that will strengthen your understanding of the topics.

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Introduction

The suggested activities for children in this booklet are designed for you — as a parent or caregiver — to do with your child. If you have more than one child, we encourage you to do them separately with each child.

In some contexts, these activities may also be used by educators working with children in a group setting, and specific tips are provided for that within the instructions.

All of the activities are designed to strengthen children's spiritual well-being and help them develop and thrive. As you have seen at the end of Module 3 of the Learning Program for Adults, this Toolkit lists ten spiritual capacities. These are explained in more detail below. They are basic and lifelong, and they need to be nurtured for children to further develop and enjoy overall well-being.

Doing these activities will help you to build an even more loving, secure relationship with your child. As you develop a greater understanding of spiritual development, it will help you interact with your child in ways that support their spiritual capacities.

The aims of the activities are to:

1. Support children as they develop their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others and with nature.
2. Give children opportunities to connect with God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality.
3. Foster children's confidence that they can do things well and help them make responsible choices with care and empathy for others.
4. Help develop children's sense of belonging, meaning and purpose as they explore the world around them.

Be sure to choose a place for doing the activities where you are able to give your child your full attention and focus. Turn off your mobile phone and television, and minimize noise and distractions as much as possible. This shows your child that it is just you and them, and nurtures the intimate bonds you have with one another.

These activities are designed to help you strengthen your relationship with your child. They make it easy to discuss big ideas in simple ways and to connect more deeply with one another. They help your child to explore their spirituality.

We encourage you to start each activity by inviting your child to play with you, requesting them to join you. Make sure to go along on the learning journey with your child, instead of acting like the adult who knows more. Together, you can review and reflect on the activities you do and talk about how they went. For example, depending on your child's age, you could both choose a word or sentence to describe what you learned together, and share it with each other.

There are two types of activities in this booklet — daily interactions and guided activities:

- The 16 daily interactions outline brief interactions that you can add into your routine at home on a regular basis. These can be done with children from 0-8 years old, but there is a special note about how to do them with younger children aged 0-3 years old.
- The 22 guided activities are meant to be done by setting aside a special time for the activity. There are specific instructions for doing them with children of different ages: 0-3, 3-5 and 5-8. All of them can be done with materials you find in your own environment. For some activities there are resources available to support its implementation gathered in the Resource Pack.

Both types of activities will help you to nurture your child's innate spiritual capacities (see more details below). Note that these do not develop all at once. Instead, you can purposely nurture them by helping your child have (1) positive relationships, (2) caring and respectful environments, and (3) empowering experiences.

The activities are based on wisdom from religious and spiritual traditions as well as the best scientific knowledge. They were selected to include the many different ways people understand spirituality. Of course, we invite you to choose the ones that fit your family best.

The table below lists the ten innate spiritual capacities. They are organized into four categories — heart knowing, relational consciousness, full awareness and transcendent knowing — but some may fit into more than one category. They all help strengthen a child's relationship with themselves, others, with nature, and with God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. Remember: every person is born with these capacities, but they need to be nurtured for the person to thrive, develop ethical values, and be a positive part of society later in life.

INNATE SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	GUIDED ACTIVITIES	DAILY INTERACTIONS
HEART KNOWING		
<p>Self-awareness. Children are innately aware of their own inner voice or wisdom, which guides them to respond to situations and to others, to find truth and meaning, and to express their moral and ethical judgment. Even in very young children, the self reacts to social and environmental cues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Diversity Cards › Free Drawing › Meditation › My House › This Is Me › Tree of Me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Celebrating Religion Daily › Fostering Self-Awareness › Solving Conflicts Peacefully
<p>Wisdom. Children have an inner sense of what is true or right. They express their views genuinely and through the heart. Children have an inner guidance that brings together heart, mind, and spirit and allows them to perceive interconnectedness and recognize interdependence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Family Calendar › My Community › My House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Being Authentic › Building Trust › Serving Someone Else › Showing That You Care

INNATE SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	GUIDED ACTIVITIES	DAILY INTERACTIONS
RELATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS		
<p>Compassion. Children have an innate sense of caring relationship with all other living beings. They feel concern over the suffering of others and can sense other people's joy and calmness, as well as their stress and sadness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Amending Hearts › Bird Feeders › Diversity Cards › Family Calendar › Loving Attachments › Stone Soup › We Are Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appreciating Diversity › Being Authentic › Being Grateful › Fostering Self-Awareness › Modeling Kindness › Serving Someone Else › Showing That You Care
<p>Empathy. Children are born with a sense of oneness with others. They are acutely aware of their interconnectedness with other people and can enter into and share the suffering of others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Amending Hearts › Diversity Cards › Family Calendar › I Am You, You Are Me › Loving Attachments › Stone Soup › We Are Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appreciating Diversity › Fostering Self-Awareness › Serving Someone Else › Showing That You Care › Solving Conflicts Peacefully
<p>Love. Children have an innate capacity to love regardless of a person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. Love is a capacity that children express in their relations with others. They find joy in giving and receiving, and delight in interacting with others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Amending Hearts › I Am You, You Are Me › Loving Attachments › This is Me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Being Authentic › Being Grateful › Building Trust › Creating Family Rituals › Nurturing Loving Relationships › Serving Someone Else › Showing That You Care
FULL AWARENESS		
<p>Awe and wonder. Children have the innate capacity to experience moments of awe and wonder. These moments involve the whole self, connecting the body, senses and mind. Awe and wonder lead to joy, preserve excitement and enthusiasm, and feed energy and hope.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A Starry Night › Balloon Play › Bird Feeders › Musical Shakers › Nature Walk › Seed Pots › Stone Stacking › Touch and Feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Nurturing Children's Playful Spirit › Playing and Listening to Music
<p>Mindfulness. Children have the innate capacity to be present in the here and now. They can be fully absorbed in the moment with a sense of timelessness and are fully alert to life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Free Drawing › Meditation › Musical Shakers › Seed Pots › Stone Stacking › Touch and Feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Celebrating Religion Daily › Nurturing Children's Playful Spirit › Playing and Listening to Music › Praying/Contemplating Together

INNATE SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	GUIDED ACTIVITIES	DAILY INTERACTIONS
TRANSCENDENT KNOWING		
<p>Curiosity. Children have an innate capacity to seek what can expand their knowledge and uncover mysteries. Their natural curiosity moves them to ask questions and openly imagine alternative possibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A Starry Night › Balloon Play › Diversity Cards › Imaginative Play › My Community › Nature Walk › Seed Pots › Touch and Feel › We Are Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appreciating Diversity › Playing and Listening to Music › Nurturing Children’s Playful Spirit › Storytelling
<p>Imagination: Children rely on their innate capacity to imagine in order to create meaning and make sense of the present moment. To process their reality, children use transcendent thinking and dreaming. For them, these are developed and fully realized ways of knowing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Amending Hearts › Balloon Play › Free Drawing › I Am You, You Are Me › Imaginative Play › My Community › We Are Connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Building Trust › Nurturing Children’s Playful Spirit › Playing and Listening to Music › Storytelling
<p>Wondering. Children are born with an innate capacity that drives them to want to know more and ask why. This allows them to create meaning as they discover new things and helps them make sense of their environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A Starry Night › Balloon Play › Bird Feeders › Diversity Cards › Nature Walk › Seed Pots › Stone Stacking › Touch and Feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appreciating Diversity › Praying/Contemplating Together › Storytelling

General Recommendations

Recommendations for Educators to Integrate the Activities with Children into Already Existing Education Settings

In your religious class, preschool, daycare center, play group, or early primary school classroom, you may already be offering lessons that support children’s social, emotional and spiritual development. The activities in this booklet are specifically designed to help nurture children’s innate spiritual capacities. You can integrate these activities into your regular classroom activities or daily routines. The activities can be adapted for the age of the children you are working with. The instructions are written for one adult interacting with one child. However, suggestions are provided within each guided activity for adapting the instructions when working with groups of children.

Recommendations for Educators and Other Facilitators Working with Groups of Children

This guidance is for educators and other facilitators who will implement the activities with groups of children directly.

In some situations, activities with children may be done in parallel sessions held to train parents and caregivers. When both parents/caregivers and children are attending for this purpose, make sure to start out the session together and explain to everyone what each of the two groups will do. At the end of the session, bring everyone together again and invite children to share something they have done or learned with the whole group. They can do this by showing something they made (drawings, paintings, the materials used), or saying what they learned, reading a poem, singing a song, or playing a game together. Let the children choose what they want to share and allow them to lead their presentations as much as possible. Create a moment for the parents/caregivers and the child/children from each family to be together more privately, to hear about what each other did during their separate sessions, to ask questions, and to express gratitude for being there in each other's lives.

Materials and inclusion

The activities are written for the scenario of one parent/caregiver interacting with one child. When engaging with a group of children, you will need to multiply the materials and create more spaces to welcome and engage the children (see examples below). When working in a group, make sure that there is an opportunity for every child in the group to take part in the activity physically. For example, in the activity Balloon Play, make sure everyone has a balloon. If any of the children have mobility challenges, let them give some instructions. This ensures that all children feel included equally.

Welcome circle to start the activities

Begin the welcome circle with a moment of silence or prayer (be sensitive to the religious diversity present) with the children to focus their attention on the day and on the moment. Then, organize a fun, interactive activity — a song, short animated video, story, or poem — with a spiritual meaning connected to the topic you will be exploring. You may like to start with some ice-breaker activities that allow the children to feel comfortable. You could start with a name game — roll a ball around the circle and say your name. Then you could start to play a short game to get everyone moving — play some music, and when the music stops, everyone must freeze!

Free play time

Free play gives children self-directed learning time in which they become the decision-maker in their own play. It provides a break from activities and allows them to explore independently. For free play time, bring toys and objects for children to play with that are age appropriate. Have clear guidelines on when these toys can be played with and when they should be put aside to do an activity together. Examples may include:

- Paper and crayons or drawing materials so children can draw
- A book box with stories, picture books or age-appropriate magazines
- Balls or physical games
- Game sets: puzzles, tabletop games



Designing your schedule

When creating a schedule based around the activities outlined in the Toolkit, consider the types of activities as well as the time frame. If you are doing sessions for children in parallel with sessions for parents and caregivers, make sure to make the duration of their activities the same. Try to select a mix of activities: some that are more play-based, others that involve drawing or going outside. This provides variety and will help keep the children engaged. Ensure that there is enough time for snacks and plenty of time for children to play together.

Depending upon the size of the group you are working with and how many adults are supporting as facilitators, you could combine activities into one session and conduct them simultaneously. For example, My House, Touch and Feel, and Bird Feeder all work best with a maximum of 2-4 children per group. If you have a group of 15 children, consider organizing them into 4 groups with 1 adult per activity, and rotating the groups from one activity to another. Each child will then have the opportunity to do three activities.

Recommendations on Adapting the Activities for Children with Disabilities

Make sure to adapt the activities for any children who have disabilities and their specific needs, encouraging them to participate according to their capacity. Focus on what they can do. Be inclusive and find ways to make sure they are actively involved in the activity. Be sure that, like any other child, they receive your warmth, attention, and one-on-one interaction. Remember that all children have extraordinary gifts and talents and all need to be empowered to reach their fullest capacity: “Children with disabilities are not without abilities!”¹

¹ For an example on how to adapt activities for young children with special needs, please see: Catholic Relief Services. (2016). Module 5. Resource Guide. Young Children with Special Needs. Training for Early Childhood Caregivers and Teachers. <https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/crs-files/module-five-resource-guide.pdf>

Here are several ideas for adapting activities to children's diverse needs:

- For a child with a hearing impairment, you can rely more on showing, pointing and drawing the activity. For physical activities, you can demonstrate how to do the activity with your actions and work on it together the first time, so that they can then try doing it on their own and be able to fully participate.
- For a child with a sight impairment, you can read as they listen or make sure to have materials in braille, when available. Go through the activity with them and support their active engagement.
- For a child with a physical disability, activities must be adapted to their specific needs. For instance, if the activity involves throwing a ball in a group setting, they could go first in the activity and the adult can encourage peers to roll the ball to them. If the activity involves spinning or rapid movements, you can ask children if they would like to give the instructions or guide the game; if appropriate, you can help them move, being careful not to hurt them.
- For a child with an intellectual disability, engage and play with them in the activity at a level matching their capacity. The most important thing is that they feel included, so give them your full support and encouragement to get involved in ways that are appropriate for them. You can use simpler words, and even if they cannot engage in speaking back to you, you can still explain the messages, give them simple instructions about things they can do, or do things with them the first time as an example, so that they may be able to try doing it on their own.

Heart – Mind – Hands – Feet

The activities treat children and their learning and development holistically. Children are constantly asking questions and are interested in exploring and creating meaning (mind); they need social interactions with others and are learning to navigate their emotions (heart); they are able to do things and are eager to touch, explore, and experience (hands); and they are developing their confidence to do things well and to make decisions, that are rooted in their own reality (feet).

The activities support you as you seek to create spaces and experiences that nurture children's hearts and minds. They encourage you to consider their reasoning mind, their ability to do and to engage driven by their curiosity and motivation. They help children develop a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging to their community.

Gender Sensitivities During Play

All children deserve the same love and nurturing attention from the earliest of ages, regardless of their gender. "Gender" is not the same concept as a person's "sex." A person's "sex" is defined by biological differences (male or female body parts). "Gender," on the other hand, refers to characteristics attributed to women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as social expectations about relationships between people of different genders.¹

Parents and caregivers may transfer their own gender biases to their children. For instance, from a young age, girls may be treated as fragile or praised for their looks, while boys may be encouraged to always be strong and earn praise for their physical strength. Girls might be told that they are more suited to take care of children and do chores at home than boys and men. Boys and men might be told that “men do not cry,” which can impact their mental health in ways that, in extreme cases, may even lead later to suicide.² Through such biases, children are gradually taught to behave according to culturally “accepted” norms for their gender, and this can be harmful to their social and emotional development.

It is important to identify harmful stereotypes and to challenge existing unhealthy norms so that children grow up with access to the same opportunities as one another. Remember that children learn from what they see; you are a role model to your child. Be aware of the language that you use, the toys that you select, and the amount of time you allocate to each child during playtime.³



Challenging gender stereotypes while doing these activities can include:

- When role-playing, explore whichever type of pretend play your child is interested in. Allow and encourage boys to play with cooking toys and girls to play with building blocks, if they want to.
- If comments such as “that’s for girls!” or “that’s for boys!” arise during playtime, gently challenge and address the gender stereotype.

Daily Interactions with Children

This section has 16 simple ideas for daily interactions you can do with your child. These will help you nurture the ten innate spiritual capacities that every child has, which are outlined in the Introduction above. These daily interactions can help you naturally build an even more positive relationship with your child, and they can make it easier to have special moments together. These are not meant to be done just once. Instead, they are meant to fit into your routine and schedule at home, so you can do them over and over again, on a regular basis. They are intended to be done with children 0-8 years old (or older too!), and special tips are provided for using them with younger children aged 0-3 years old.

1: Building Trust



Believe in your child, listen to what their dreams and aspirations are, encourage them to imagine and pursue their dreams from an early age, whether it is climbing a tree or building a rocket. Reassure them that you will always be there for them.

Trust that they can do it, irrespective of the result. Be with them, support them to build the rocket or climb the tree. Trust and believe when they share their feelings, ideas, frustrations, and achievements. Celebrate together.

What it tells your child: I trust you and you can trust me too. I'll be here for you unconditionally.

How you can do it: Create spaces for your child to imagine and build or do something unique or bold—it can be building a shelter for birds, or simply reaching an object for a younger child. Listen to their ideas or invite them to think of something they would like to build or do. Let them take the lead. Trust in their ideas.

With younger children: Be responsive when they cry or show challenging behaviors, listen to their needs, give them comfort, speak to them softly and respectfully, and show your understanding during difficult moments.

2: Serving Someone Else



Make time in your daily schedule and routine to serve someone else. Various religious and spiritual traditions place great emphasis on service. For example, during Ramadan, Muslims give to those in need by donating to charity and helping one another. In Sikhism, the langar community meal is served to everyone, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, economic status, etc. Serving someone else is an important form of worship in many religious and spiritual traditions, and it demonstrates compassion and kindness to others.

What it tells your child: We are all equal in the eyes of God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. It is important that we take care of one another and support those in need.

How you can do it: Provide opportunities for your child to serve someone else or see you or others doing so. Empower your child to play an active role in serving, allowing them to take action and develop prosocial skills and values. Listen to your child's ideas about how you can serve others in your community, plan an activity together, and then do it. Allow your child to volunteer within the community with your supervision and guidance if they wish to.

With younger children: Explain to your child the importance of giving to and serving other people. Read books and religious stories together that show this. Work together to cook a meal for someone in need and allow your young child to carry and present it to the person you made it for.



3: Being Authentic

Be yourself, and share about the good things that happen in your life as well as some of the challenges that you experience. For instance, "I had a hard day today because I couldn't get something important done at work..." Children learn from your examples as a parent or caregiver. By sharing this, you are modeling for them that having a hard time failing and succeeding are both part of life. This, in turn, will help them to nurture their resilience. Use your voice to show honesty and to share your experiences — this will nurture their spiritual growth.

What it tells your child: I sometimes have hard days, and if you have them too, it is okay. You are OK even when you have a hard day or time, and I am OK when I have it, too. We don't always succeed and at times we make mistakes. It happens to everybody.

How you can do it: Tell them a story of when you tried hard to do something but couldn't do it. Share a story from your childhood, and one from your adult years, as well. Share your daily struggles, as appropriate and being sensitive to their age. The idea here is not to try to seek support from your child for your daily life challenges, but rather to model how we can all show strength even in tough times by talking about what's really going on inside. Invite them to share a story of their own about their day, sharing what went well and what was difficult. Listen carefully. Be kind and understanding, show empathy for what they went through.

With younger children: It is normal for them to feel frustrated when they do not achieve something that they wanted to do. Reassure them with gestures, a soft and comforting tone of voice and body language that shows it is okay. Take deep breaths when you are frustrated and say sorry to them if you reacted harshly.



4: Celebrating Religion Daily

Throughout childhood, children learn about and experience the special traditions, events and holy days of their family's religious or spiritual tradition. Some go through rites of passage, celebrate religious festivals and rituals, learn religious or spiritual teachings, wear special clothing, collect and give offerings, create symbolic gifts, and more. The celebration of religious and

spiritual traditions extends beyond prayer and meditation into actions that declare the deep reverence that we hold for God, the Divine, the Transcendent or Ultimate Reality. This celebration of religious and spiritual traditions can support children with understanding who they are and strengthen their sense of belonging and purpose. Note: Some cultural traditions can actually be harmful to children, so ensure that any experience children go through affirms their dignity and does not injure them physically or emotionally.

What it tells your child: Religion is an important part of our spiritual growth and helps us know who we are and what we are here for. It shows us that we are all connected to something bigger than ourselves. Celebrating our religion reminds us that we are cared for and loved and makes us stronger in times of hardship. Shared family times make us feel that we belong and connect us more strongly to our religion and family.

How you can do it: Share the important traditions from your religious or spiritual heritage with your child. Discuss stories from religious scriptures and the wider meaning of these stories to explore rituals around life events such as birth, marriage, and the passing of loved ones. Sing religious songs, play music, and dance to the music together. Create symbolic gifts during your religion's main festivals and rituals, wear traditional clothing and play traditional games together. Cook traditional foods together and share with your loved ones. Celebrate all that defines the essence of your religion and explore questions your child might have with an open heart and mind.

For younger children: In the first few years of life, many religions hold special ceremonies as rites of passage for children. Discuss the religious meaning behind these acts in a simple way and share your own experiences as a child with them. Comfort your child with religion-based stories, songs and music at home.



5: Showing That You Care

Show by example what it means to care. It can be through simple actions and engagement in your community, or in the home by discussing a situation that affects other people and communities and acting to support those in need. Doing this shows the role adults play in providing spaces to share with others and model behaviors such as compassion and care for others and nature.

What it tells your child: We all have the power and responsibility to care for one another, as well as for animals and nature. We hold the lives of others in our hands, and what we do or not has an impact on others. We are not islands. We must learn to live together with others and in solidarity with one another.

How you can do it: Carefully listen to what someone is saying, act when you see something is unfair, speak up, support and share with those in need, care for the community you live in. If you see someone crying, sad or lonely, find ways to support them, listen to them and help them as you can.

With younger children: Encourage your child to do the same, according to their age and developmental capabilities, at school, preschool or nursery with those they know. Ask them how we can care for others, including those in need, and act on their responses together in a sensitive way. Take care of plants, animals and your house. They are all part of our shared world.

6: Nurturing Loving Relationships



Show your child that you love them unconditionally. Love can be shown in simple gestures. When children feel loved, they are reassured, feel safe, encouraged, confident and happy. When you express love, you are nurturing their resilience. Love is a golden thread that must always be present and shown every day. And it needs to be consistent. Connect with your child and meet them where they are, show love and nurture the bond you have.

What it tells your child: I love you. No matter what happens, good or bad, easy or difficult, I will always be here with you, and you can always count on me. I am here for you unconditionally and my love for you does not change.

How you can do it: You nurture a loving relationship with your child when you hug them, when you hold them tight, when you look into their eyes with tenderness, when you nurse them, smile at them and sing for them, when you listen carefully to what they have to say, when you talk about their lives with them, when you observe them with attention when they are doing something and given them specific praise, when you play and laugh together, when you drop what you are doing to talk with them, and when you are there for them unconditionally.

With younger children: Show your unconditional love to your child as they grow through experiences that challenge them. They may feel frustrated, struggle to control their emotions and have outbursts directed at you, caused by something you deem small (but is important to them). Sit with them as they learn to regulate their emotions and find calm. Reassure them that you aren't going anywhere, ask them if they need a hug to help them feel calm or if there is something you can do to support them.

7: Storytelling



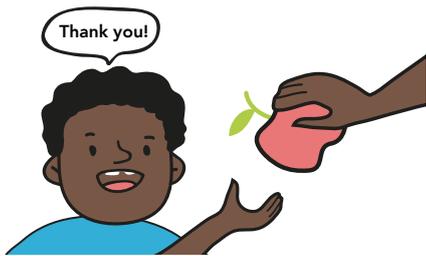
Stories are passed on from generation to generation. We get to know God, the Divine, the Transcendent or Ultimate Reality through stories and sayings that echo down the years from old traditions, through what we have heard, and through what our elders have told us. These stories often survive in written texts, but they also live in memory and retain authority. This authority guides the new generation and is accepted as a kind of truth. With stories, the meaning is not thrust upon us, but hinted at or vaguely defined — we get to make our own meaning as we listen.

Storytelling takes place in the real world, but the story itself is not necessarily about the real world. Stories can be about a different kind of world, allowing us to explore and imagine something different. Children love stories, and stories bring the family and community together to listen. The love of storytelling is a part of being human. In the Jewish tradition, it is said that the human being is not alone in appreciating storytelling. The question is asked, "Why did God create man?" and the answer is given, "Because God loves to listen to a good story."

What it tells your child: You are part of a timeless network that connects you to your ancestors and to the future. You are interconnected with others, with God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality, and nature. You belong here and this timeless connection is part of who you are.

How you can do it: Tell or read your child stories from your religious or spiritual tradition that you remember being told as a child. Talk about the moral of the story and what we can learn from them. Connect your stories to the past, so they have meaning for the future. Encourage your child to tell their story. As your child gets older, encourage them to begin telling popular religious or spiritual stories themselves.

For younger children: Begin by telling short stories that your child can easily understand. You could read or share stories with them before bedtime or make time in the day to sit and listen to a story together.



8: Being Grateful

Create spaces for children to see that our lives depend on each other and that we are who we are only in relation to each other. Reflect about how we are all connected, and all living creatures depend on each other, to develop respect and gratitude for all beings, including all of nature.

What it tells your child: We don't live in isolation. We are all connected, and we need each other. We live in a shared world where every person and all of nature support who we are, our well-being and safety. It is important to respect and be grateful for each other's presence and support.

How you can do it: Through moments of pause, reflect on the experiences you go through and what you are grateful for. You can draw a gratitude tree and note what you are grateful for and why: family, friends, home, food, nature, etc. Make time to connect with nature. Go outside, maybe to the park, breathe and appreciate the sounds, what you see, hear and touch — name them. Thank the people in your life and tell them why you are grateful for them, including your child or children. Thank God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality for all parts of life and all living beings. Prioritize "presence" over "presents," so children learn to be grateful for the most important things about life: being alive, being together, being healthy and happy.

With younger children: You can model being grateful by thanking all those who take care of you and of your child and encouraging your child to express thanks, too. Talk with them about the different people we are thankful for. If you visit the supermarket together, say thank you to those that help you. Ask your child why you thanked the worker in the supermarket, and then explain more about why you thanked them. Ask your child who they say thank you to, and if they can tell you who, ask them. Encourage them to think about all those they are connected with and why they are grateful for them.



9: Appreciating Diversity

Create opportunities for children to explore and connect with the community and wider world, and to experience cultural, ethnic, social, and religious differences and similarities with others. This can be through the relationships you have with people — friends, family, community members, work colleagues — who come from diverse backgrounds and by interacting in spaces where diversity is present.

What it tells your child: We live in a diverse world with many different kinds of people, and it is important to learn about, appreciate, respect and value people, traditions, and communities who are different than us, and to relate to them in respectful ways.

How you can do it: Learn about different festivals from diverse spiritual and religious traditions; go to a festival if you can. Talk in respectful ways about (and with) diverse groups of people, encourage your child to make friendships with all children, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, race, religious or spiritual beliefs, cultural background, abilities, socioeconomic background, or nationality. Watch films and listen to music that showcase diversity. Look at religious scriptures that speak about diversity and respect for others; you can share a story from your religious or spiritual tradition that encourages embracing and respecting others. Let your child pose questions and be curious to learn more about the diversity in the world. Encourage it.

With younger children: Talk with your child about your social, cultural, religious norms. Talk with your child about your own childhood, including sharing the games and stories that you played or were told as a young child. As they get older, you can share stories from other cultures and religions so they can learn about different ways of living. Read or show simple books that encourage diversity and appreciation of other people, answer your child's questions on social, cultural and religious norms with kindness, and model caring for other people



10: Fostering Self-Awareness

Create spaces for children to become more aware of themselves, their thoughts, and their feelings, and to see how their actions impact their relationships at home and in school. This helps children learn to identify and self-regulate their own emotions and respond to their own and others' emotions in a positive, respectful and empathetic way.

What it tells your child: Emotions and thoughts flow through us every day and all the time! Things that happen to us, friends, people, animals we care for, nature, and things we see or hear, all give us different feelings throughout the day. Some emotions and thoughts are difficult; some others are joyful. It is important to take care of our heart and mind, to listen to both and find peaceful and kind ways to deal with those emotions and thoughts that are more challenging.

How you can do it: Drawing is an activity that many children enjoy and from which there is much to learn. Drawing not only supports children to focus and relax, but is also a safe way to express emotions, thoughts and concerns.

Create or draw an emotion tree — a tree that shows several emotions and thoughts that you can have permanently in your home. At the end of each day, share together your emotions and thoughts, and reflect on some of the questions below:

- An emotion/thought you are strongly feeling these days.
- Something that made you feel sad/happy/angry, and why.
- Something joyful you felt or thought that caught your attention or something that worried you.
- Did you feel any fear, something that scared you these days? If yes, what.
- Something that calmed you.

Talk to children about ways to deal with difficult thoughts and emotions such as breathing, counting, going to a place that calms them and talking to someone they trust. Share how you deal with your own difficult thoughts and emotions.

With younger children: You first support children’s self-awareness by identifying and naming the emotions they go through. At first, it may be easier to name the emotions for your child: “I can see you feel sad. Can you share with me why you feel sad?” As they grow, they will learn to name their own emotions, as well as how to handle them.

For babies, you can cradle them, hold them and care for them in ways that can calm them. You could use common resources that fit with your culture, like playing a nursery rhyme or calming music, telling a peaceful story, giving a massage, singing a song for them, or holding them close to you as you share calming words.

11: Solving Conflicts Peacefully



Children do not live in an ideal world. From an early age, they must deal with frustrations, conflicts in their relations with peers in nursery, preschool and school, and with parents and caregivers at home. Unfortunately, bullying, discriminatory practices, and abuse can also start taking place in the early years, and so it is important for children to learn to say, “Stop it!” and to find support, and also to stand up for others when they are being bullied. Parents and caregivers can help children to identify ways to solve problems and conflicts peacefully.

What it tells your child: Disagreements and conflicts happen often. We need to learn how to see a situation from different angles — from the perspective of your friend, peer, teacher, or parent/caregiver. It helps if we remain focused and calm so we can respond to these situations in ways that are assertive — positive, respectful and peaceful.

How you can do it: You can invite the child to take some time to go to a space that helps them feel calm or simply to find calm by breathing or calmly singing a song. You can invite them to talk to you about what they are feeling and thinking about a situation involving another adult or peer/friend. Let them know it is important to take a breath and find calm so we see the situation differently. Ask questions to assist your child to see the situation from different perspectives: “What happened? What do you think about it? Why? Why do you think they did/said that? Could it be that your friend was nervous/sad/irritated because of something else? What can you do to solve this in a way that no one gets hurt and the issue is solved? How can I help you?” Remain calm and never use or encourage the use of violence or punishment to solve the conflict. Help your child to come up with ideas by talking them through it and helping them to put themselves in another’s shoes, in order to nurture their reasoning mind and kind heart.

You can also use this breathing technique to help regulate emotions:

- **Step 1 - Breathe and stop.** Stop the situation and invite the children/people involved to take some deep breaths. Instead of reacting immediately, ask everyone to focus on their body’s breathing and on what is going on inside them.

- **Step 2 - Ask questions.** Ask each child/person to think and then allow them to speak without interruptions: Why did that happen? What did you all do? Why do you think the other child/person did that? What could be happening inside of them for this to happen?
- **Step 3 - Engage in dialogue Invite the children/people to engage in dialogue:** Can we solve this differently, in a way that no one gets hurt? Do we need to apologize? How can we do it?
- **Step 4 - Acknowledge the effort.** Acknowledge the effort and encourage the child or children to try to solve the problem.

With younger children: Children from early ages will learn from what you model and copy it, so it is important that you show how conflicts can be solved in peaceful ways. Some young children will naturally struggle to explain what happened or how to resolve a situation. If this is the case, you can describe the problem or conflict that has taken place and ask them, “What do you think you/we can do to fix this?” If they struggle finding an alternative, suggest some age-appropriate options. Allow the child to listen to the two options you gave and give them the opportunity to solve the problem themselves, with your guidance.



12: Playing and Listening to Music

In some religious and spiritual traditions, music is a part of rituals that deepen the connection with oneself, others, and God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. Singing or playing a musical instrument can be a source of strength, show devotion and praise, or help to ease pain during difficult moments. Music is important to many religious communities because it draws members of the community together into communal worship, which in turn strengthens the sense of belonging and purpose.

What it tells your child: You can express your religion through songs and music. Playing and listening to music can be a form of worship that brings you closer to oneself, others and God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality.

How you can do it: Play, sing and listen to religious songs or music with your child. Take them to a local religious musical performance in your community and encourage them to move their bodies and sing to the music. Talk about how music makes them feel. Give them the opportunity to try playing different instruments.

With younger children: In the first few years of life, a child is experiencing and learning how to navigate the world through their senses. Allow them to explore movement and sound by playing and listening to music. Enjoy it with them! Watch and move along to the music too. As they fall asleep, sing them a song to calm them.

13: Praying/Contemplating Together



Early childhood is when children are introduced to their families' religious beliefs and practices, and when immense care, love, and attention is given to nurturing their religiosity and spirituality. Prayer and contemplation can happen in diverse ways according to each tradition. Nurturing spirituality through prayer and contemplation helps children to be grounded in their sense of self and helps them connect to God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality in intimate ways. Prayer and contemplation can strengthen children's gratitude, improve focus and self-reflection, and make children less reactive to negative emotions and less angry. Doing

it together strengthens the bond between parent/caregiver and child and teaches the child the importance of religion and hope.

What it tells your child: It is important to create spaces and time for us to connect with ourselves and with God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality; to find reverence for the universe and all that has been created, to pause, to find wisdom within ourselves, and to find calm.

How you can do it: You can start each morning, or each week, with a moment for the child and parent/caregiver to connect with themselves and prepare their minds for the day or week. You might also want to set aside a time during or at the end of the day for a meditation, prayer or a moment of silence. You can use poems, stories, and songs from your religious and spiritual traditions and when appropriate, interreligious prayers.

With younger children: You can sing, pray and tell stories that are culturally and religiously relevant. Infants and toddlers may not be able to sing along, but they may enjoy the rhythm and like moving along with songs. You can also just be in silence together, as they will absorb and feel the calmness you transmit. By doing this, you will nurture their connection with you as their caregiver and, with it, their spiritual development.



14: Modeling Kindness

Children learn by example. Provide a good example by doing your best to be kind to all beings — people, animals, and nature. Kindness is expressed in small daily gestures.

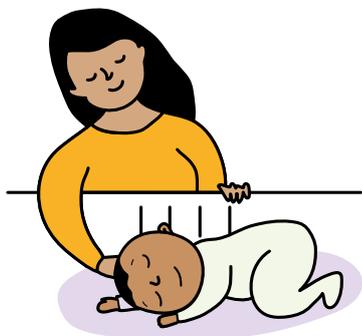
What it tells your child: We are all interconnected and interdependent. Sometimes a smile, or just saying "good morning" or "thank you," can change someone's day. When I am kind, I show that I care about and respect others.

How you can do it: Model gestures that show kindness. For instance, in the community you can help your neighbors, spending time talking with them and listening to what they need or their stories. You can model kindness by smiling at a stranger, caring for others, giving time to those in need, and sharing love. You can also be kind to animals and nature. Show that you care and that you want to live up to your responsibility to care and protect. Use spiritual language daily and embrace relationships with all other living beings.

With younger children: Children will watch you and your behaviors from an early age; even though they may not express it, these kind actions will stay with them. They learn by observing those who are closest to them and then

re-enact what they see. That's why your role as a parent or caregiver is so important in demonstrating kindness. You are your child's role model. As children speak in concrete terms in the early years, you can try to use, on a daily basis, simple language that speaks genuinely about interconnectedness with others to nurture their own spiritual growth. For instance, you can say things like: "Oh, that person was so kind! I am so happy when I hear the birds! I am so thankful for the person who helped us today."

15: Creating Family Rituals



Children enjoy rituals and spiritual practices, such as religious and spiritual prayers and ceremonies, or rituals that celebrate the sanctity of the family, friendship and community. Rituals allow children's spirituality to grow, as they provide a foundation for spiritual development by connecting the child with a sense of purpose and belonging, as well as with others, nature and God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. Rituals provide children with a routine, allowing them to feel safe, secure and to predict what is going to happen. This allows them to build confidence and self-esteem.

What it tells your child: Our religion and spirituality are an important part of our lives. Through rituals, we connect with something bigger than ourselves and connect more with each other. Rituals help us feel safe, as we get used to them and they help us to feel confident and loved.

How you can do it: Celebrate your religious or spiritual holidays and teach your child about their importance to you and your traditions. Sing religious songs during the holidays. Plan birthdays and meals together. Have a set time during the day to pray together or to sit and share something about your day. Wake your child up gently in the morning with a song every day or read a book to them as they fall asleep every night. Hug one another before you or your child leaves home. There are many ways to personalize your rituals!

For younger children: Nurture the loving, safe and secure attachment between you and your young child by singing nursery rhymes to help them sleep or gently massaging them to wake up. Say your prayer aloud for your child to hear and observe your religious rituals. Enjoy family time together at the same time every day or week and use this time to be close to one another.

16: Nurturing Children's Playful Spirit



Play is the essence of childhood and is part of a child's nature. Children have an innate playful spirit that allows them to go to unimagined places, give life to ideas and dreams, and connects them with their innermost capacity to enjoy the simplicity of life. Playfulness is perhaps one of the highest expressions of the human spirit, whereby joy, hope, appreciation of the present moment, freedom to wonder, and giving of oneself come together, at times unconsciously, in a delight in life and sense of wholeness.

The development of a child's playful spirit is key for them to learn to solve conflicts and build resilience, which in turn helps them to cope with stress, experiences of failure, and disconnection. It is also essential for self-regulation, as children learn to follow norms while experiencing feelings such as anticipation or frustration.

What it tells your child: Play is a big part of growth and joy. We will create spaces and opportunities for you to play freely and for us to play together. Play connects us with ourselves and others and helps us develop our imagination.

How you can do it: Create moments and spaces during the day/week for free play — you can simply have a ball, or paper and crayons, or make your own toys to play with and let your child play freely. You can also play with them: hide & seek, playing with a ball, jump rope, doing puzzles, cooking together, role-playing. You could play or create music together or build something together using things around the house (boxes, toilet roll tubes, straws, or cups).

For younger children: Infants enjoy visual stimulation with colors, especially in their first year. Try reading soft books together or playing with block-colored toys. You can also provide opportunities for infants and toddlers to be stimulated through other senses, such as touch — touching water, sand, trees, and other natural objects. Allow children to explore their environment indoors and outdoors with your guidance and support.

Guided Activities with Children

This section is full of guided activities you can do with your child. They are each simple and easy to do, but they may require a little time and planning.

You get to define the amount of time you spend on each activity. You can refer to the suggested time when deciding. We encourage you to be flexible and let the activity take the time it needs; keep going until you feel you have reached the goal you prepared for. The most important part is not exactly how much time it takes, but the process you go through together with your child.

If you have more than one child in the same age group — 0-3, 3-5 or 5-8 — you can do the activities with all children in that age group at once, with very few changes needed. Overall, follow the pace of all the children and make sure they all get a chance to share and engage fully in the activities. As an example, if you are building the Bird Feeder, do it together, each contributing to the several steps. Use some of the guidelines provided above for educators (see page 9) for specific tips on how you can do activities with more than one child at once.

These activities can be done in any order. You can select any you find appropriate for your child. There is a Resource Pack that you can use with some of the activities, containing stories, images and cards. You can find these resources at the end of this booklet in Annex II.

Adapt the activities — the stories, music, or any other resource or material — to your own context, traditions, and to the age of your child. You may notice that many of the activities can be done with just paper and pencils/crayons. You can use a plain A4 notebook for your activities as a way to track what you've been doing and keep them altogether. This will become a kind of "journal" where the drawings and words you make with your child will reflect your innermost feelings. Looking back on it can be a great way to practice mindfulness and self-awareness. Above all, have fun and enjoy! There is no right or wrong way to do these activities!

**SPIRITUAL CAPACITY**

Self-awareness

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**

- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons or pencils

**SUGGESTED TIME**

10-20 minutes

**RECOMMENDED AGES**

3-5 & 5-8 years old

**WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?**

Self-awareness helps children to tell others what they want or like, to share how they feel, and to understand what their strengths and limitations are. By understanding who they are, where they have come from, and what they want to be like, children can understand where they belong in the world. This sense of belonging gives life meaning and purpose, and it impacts connectedness with other people, nature, and God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality.

**HOW YOU CAN DO IT**FOR AGES 3-5:

1. Go outside and point at or look at a tree. Talk about the different parts of the tree and let your child touch the leaves, branches, trunk and roots:
 - Do you see its leaves and branches?
 - Do you see its trunk? (Point to the trunk)
 - Do you see its roots? (Point to the roots)
 - Let's go and touch the tree!
2. Take your paper or notebook and crayons along and invite children to draw a tree. Invite them to think of things from their life that they would like to have around the tree, for example: their family, friends, or favorite toy.

You can also do it yourself. Give time to sit in silence and draw together. Support your child so they feel good about drawing their own tree, regardless of how it may look.

3. As you are drawing, consider asking some of the questions below. Give time and space for your child to think about the questions, and also to share your tree. See what is the same and different about your trees. When your child responds, listen to the answers that they share. As you get more comfortable, try to encourage more open-ended answers, instead of looking for one right answer. You want the child to do the talking. You want them to explain to you the story of their tree in their own words!

- Who did you draw on your tree?
 - Which of your favorite toys did you draw?
 - Which of your friends did you draw?
4. Celebrate the effort your child made in producing their “Tree of Me.” You can also use this as an opportunity to tell your child more about where they have come from, what they were like when they were younger, and about family members or ancestors that came before them.

FOR AGES 5-8:

1. Share with your child how you are both going to create a “Tree of Me.” Go outside or look out of the window and name the parts of a tree that you can see (leaves, branches, trunk, roots).
2. Take your paper or notebook and pencils out and begin drawing a tree, one for each of you. Explain that around the tree, we can draw and write things about ourselves. Let the child draw and write freely in quietness. When they finish, note something special about the drawing. For example, you could draw and write:
 - Family, friends and loved ones
 - The place where you live or used to live
 - School
 - Something that makes you happy/sad
 - Something that you like to do
3. Ask your child questions about their “Tree of Me.” You can also share your tree and compare the different things you drew and wrote. Below are some suggestions; use only a few depending on your child’s attention span and as you see fit. As you get more comfortable, try to encourage more open-ended answers, instead of looking for one right answer. You want the child to do the talking. You want them to explain to you the story of their tree in their own words!
 - Wonderful! Who did you draw/write about around your tree?
 - What did you draw that makes you happy/sad?
 - What did you add that you like to do?
4. This can also be a time when you can talk a little bit more about where the child came from, according to your belief system. You can share the feelings that you had about your child, prayers you made, or experiences that happened while the child was still in the womb, if this is relevant.

You can also share about your hopes and dreams for your child as they grow bigger. If you share your ideas, make sure to build on the child’s ideas, not overriding or overruling them.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

If it is safe to do so, go outside as a group and sit around a tree. Talk about what you can see and invite the children to come and touch the parts of the tree. Ask the children about the parts of the tree and how they relates to their body and growth. If possible, stay outside while each child draw's their "Tree of Me." You may ask them to show-and-tell their drawing to the rest of the group if time allows.

ACTIVITY 2

A Starry Night



-  **SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES** Awe and wonder, curiosity, wondering

-  **PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**
 - Find a location that is safe at night, where there are no noises, distractions, or lights. It can be a balcony or window.
 - Resource 3: The Milky Way in the Resource Pack

-  **SUGGESTED TIME** 10-20 minutes

-  **RECOMMENDED AGES** 0-3, 3-5 & 5-8 years old

 **WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?** Children are captivated by nature and are attuned to the nature that surrounds them — *they meet nature as they find it* — while adults are often distracted by the demands of the day.⁴ Allowing your child to engage with nature helps to foster their sense of awe and wonder at the natural environment, and to watch how nature grows and changes. It helps them explore how they understand themselves in relation to all that is bigger than them. Looking at the night sky can give them a chance to be enchanted and immersed in all the world has to offer, and to find comfort in it, too.

 **HOW YOU CAN DO IT**

FOR AGES 0-3:

1. At night-time, take our child to a safe, very quiet location where there are no distractions or lights. Look at the sky together and point up at the stars. You could ask your child:
 - Look! What do you see?
 - What do they look like?
 - Can you touch them?

2. Pretend to reach up for a star and grab it. Slowly bring it to the child.

As you experience the moment with your child, let yourselves enjoy the moment while watching the sky together. Avoid too much conversation. Stay as long as the child is interested.

FOR AGES 3-5:

1. When it is dark outside, take your child to a safe, quiet location where there are no distractions or lights. If you cannot leave home, you can go to the garden, balcony or window.
2. Hold hands with your child and point up at the stars. Take a moment to pause and reflect on what you see in the sky.

Below are some suggested questions and things to say. When the child answers, do not correct them, or convey a lot of information to them, but allow them to explore and observe the sky.

- Look! Look! Those are stars! Stars as far as the eye can see!
 - Can you reach them? Can you touch them?
 - What do you see?
 - Can you see any shapes that the stars make?
 - Let's try to catch a star! (Pretend to catch a star and bring it to the child).
 - What do you think could be out there in the sky next to the stars?
3. Avoid too much conversation. Stay as long as the child is interested and finish by asking: "What did you enjoy the most about this time together?"

FOR AGES 5-8:

1. Before doing this activity with your child, study the Milky Way (Resource 3 in the resource pack). Look at where the Milky Way and major constellations can be seen in your area.
2. Take the child out to see the night sky in a location far from lights. Ask your child to look up into the sky.

You can ask your child some questions and, when they answer, try not to correct them or convey a lot of information. Instead, follow their comments and ask more questions. You can use a few like those below, depending on their attention span and as you see fit.

- What do you see?
- Did you know that there are more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on the whole earth? Can you imagine how many stars that is?!
- What shapes do you see that connect the stars? (Point out some familiar constellations in your area).

- Do you see the Milky Way galaxy stretching across the sky? (Point to the wide band of stars that stretches across the night sky, looking a little lighter and brighter than the rest of the sky. If it is not visible, you can share that it is too bright where you are to see it and ask the child to imagine where it must be, by drawing it across the sky with your finger).
 - Where do you think all those stars came from? How did they get there?
3. Look up at the sky together with your child while talking. Continue this conversation, stay as long as the child is interested, and finish by asking: "What did you enjoy the most about this time together?"



KEEP IN MIND

If it is not safe in your area to be outside at night, you can encourage the child to explore and to practice awe and wonder in the daytime. Encourage your child to touch a tree, stroke a flower's stalk, notice the smell of the air,⁵ or observe an insect up close. Instead of the stars in the night sky, you could talk about the clouds in the daytime sky and wonder together about the shapes the clouds make.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

It might be logistically difficult to plan an evening or nighttime activity with children if you are at a school or daycare center. Instead, you can ask the children to imagine it was a night sky. Prepare the group to go outside, and find a space for you all to lie down in a circle. Ask the children to look up at the sky and talk about what they imagine they would see in the sky if it was night. You can use some of the questions proposed above, depending on their age level.

ACTIVITY 3

Loving Attachments



	SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	Compassion, empathy, love
	PREPARATION AND MATERIALS	<input type="checkbox"/> Paper, pencils/crayons
	SUGGESTED TIME	Not specified
	RECOMMENDED AGES	0-3, 3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Showing love and affection to your child is essential for their healthy development. Children who have a safe, secure, loving relationship with their parents and caregivers feel better about themselves, feel more confident, and cope with stress better. For newborn babies, it is important to take every opportunity to show love to them, so that you can create this kind of loving attachment, which is so critical to your baby's future.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 0-3:

Here are a few examples you can try to nurture the loving attachment between you and your child.⁶ Many of these might last only a minute or a few seconds. Therefore, feel free to try as many as you like, choosing those that feel more natural and comfortable to you.

1. As you breastfeed or they drink from the bottle, hold the baby close. Cradle the baby's body with your arms. Look into the baby's eyes during feeding time.
2. Kiss and hug the baby.
3. "Nuzzle" the baby, by putting your nose and face right near and into the baby's neck and shoulder, and affectionately caressing the baby with your face. Let the baby touch and hold your face while you do so.
4. Give the baby a massage, warmly and gently caressing the baby's body.
5. Put the baby's skin directly against your skin. This could be on your chest, your neck or your torso.
6. Get your baby to smile. Be silly. Wiggle your eyebrows. Stick out your tongue. Make all kinds of funny faces, finding the thing that your baby likes best that brings out the baby's smile.
7. Do something loving to your partner. Whether you realize it or not, your baby is picking up on the bond his parents/caregivers share, and absorbing the way that they interact. Children learn from what you do, and they learn from the bond you share. Strengthen your connection with your partner. Your child will then imitate this kind of loving connection, as they grow older.
8. When your baby looks at you, smile back. When the baby coos or makes sounds, talk back to the baby.

A lot of these suggestions also work great with toddlers up through age 3, or even older!

FOR AGES 3-5:

Create a warm, quiet and relaxing atmosphere — it can be in the garden, living room or any other space where you enjoy being together.

1. Tell your child that you will read/tell a story about love. It can be from a book, a religious or spiritual text, or from your childhood. Or you can show a short, child-friendly animated video or a film. Once the story/film is done, ask the child what the story was about, who the characters were, and what they liked the most.
2. Invite your child to make a drawing of what love means to them. Let the child tell you about their drawing and further explore with them: When do you feel love? How do you show love?
3. Hold hands with the child. Speak to them in a soft tone, get down to their eye-level when you speak or play with them.
4. Lie down next to your child to speak or play with them. Young children feel emotionally and physically safe when you are near, nurture this sense of security.
5. Finish by expressing how much you love them.

FOR AGES 5-8:

The same as for 3-5 year olds, create a warm, quiet and relaxing atmosphere in a space where you feel comfortable.

1. Talk with your child about what love means and let them communicate in their own words.
 - When you hear the word love what do you think of/imagine?
 - When do you feel love? How do you show love?
 - Acknowledge what they say by looking at them, nodding your head or smiling.
 - Ask questions about what they say so they can develop their opinions more deeply.
2. Share your own understanding of what love is, when you feel love, and who or what helps you feel love/loved.
3. Share or look together at what your spiritual tradition/religion says about love.
4. Think of a special way to show love to each other daily.
5. Encourage your child to share a love message or drawing with someone.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Begin by sitting in a circle, and spend some time talking with the group about love. You could find a heart-shaped toy or drawing and pass it around the circle, asking each child to name something or someone that they love. Talk about how you can show love to people in your classroom and to your teacher.

Instead of drawing what love means to you, if you have access to clay or homemade playdough (there are many recipes online to make your own and you could even do this with the children) invite them to create something for someone they love.

ACTIVITY 4

Family Calendar



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Compassion, empathy, wisdom



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Resource 4: Family Calendar Template in the Resource Pack **Or** A big piece of cardboard or paper (minimum size of 35cm x 25cm)
- Crayons or pencils
- A ruler



SUGGESTED TIME

30-45 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Creating a family calendar demonstrates to your child that individuals and groups of people can plan together to do good things. As an adult, in this activity you will role-model what it means to plan ways to bring about positive change, whether in your home or community. Compassion and empathy, which are emphasized in this activity, allow children to have meaningful connections with others and to express our love and care through actions. It is important to allow your child to think of the daily actions themselves, as age-appropriate, and to be guided by their inner wisdom about how to help and serve others.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Draw a one-month calendar with a blank box (approximately 5cm x 5cm, but the bigger the better) for each day of the month. Or use the calendar template from Resource 4.
2. Discuss with your child how you are going to create a family calendar together, saying, "For every day of the week, we will do something together to show our love and gratitude to others. In each box, we will draw or write what we plan to do." Here are some examples:

- Reach out to a neighbor you don't usually talk with much
 - Pray together for the people and children in the world that are suffering because of poverty, violence, loneliness
 - Help someone in need: it can be a family member or a neighbor, and you can do it together with your whole family
 - Build a love tree where you can leave positive notes to each other every day
 - Think of something you are grateful for today
 - Connect with nature: Go to the park, breathe and appreciate the sounds, what you see, hear and touch and how you feel; thank nature for all it gives you
 - Thank three people — family, friends, adults — who you are grateful for and tell them why
 - Play together
 - Respond with love and kindness to everyone you interact with, and to ourselves, too
 - Do two acts of kindness today to help others
 - Dance together
 - Share a talent that you have with someone — it can be something simple like being a good listener, playing a certain game, cooking, drawing, helping, always seeing the bright side even during difficult times, etc.
 - Hug each other and share how you are feeling
 - Tell something about yourself that your family may not know yet
3. Check the calendar every day and add a checkmark for each action you completed together on the day after the action is done.
 4. At the end of the month, sit together, reflect on what you did, what happened, and how you felt, and think about how small actions can change you, your family and the world! Don't worry if you missed some days and every box is not checked; just be grateful for all the positive things you could do together!



**HOW TO CUSTOMIZE
THIS ACTIVITY FOR A
GROUP SETTING**

1. Prepare a jar, squares of paper, the calendar template from Resource 4 and some pencils.
2. While sitting in a circle, explain that you are going to create a kindness calendar together. On it, explain that you will do something kind every day. You can ask the group why they think this is important.
3. Ask the children to think of something kind they can do for someone else in our group. This might include hugging a friend, helping an adult with something, or cleaning the tables after an activity. Ask them to write or draw this on a piece of paper and place it in the jar. Make sure you understand what each child wrote, as you will have to read it out later. If the children are unable to write or draw themselves, you could prepare some squares with pictures already on them, and they can tell you what action each one depicts.
4. Once everyone has finished, explain that this is your kindness jar. Each day, someone will choose something kind from the jar, and they will do it. Once it is done, place an X on the calendar. Repeat this for however many days necessary, until everyone has had a turn.

ACTIVITY 5

I Am You, You Are Me



 SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	Empathy, imagination
 PREPARATION AND MATERIALS	<input type="checkbox"/> A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons or pencils Or <input type="checkbox"/> A large roll of paper (big enough to lie down on and to draw around an adult and child's body) <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons or pencils
 SUGGESTED TIME	15-30 minutes
 RECOMMENDED AGES	5-8 years old

 **WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?** Developing empathy in children is important as it helps them to relate to others emotionally and respond appropriately to situations. It supports them with understanding how other people are feeling, what might have upset someone, and how better they can support them. By putting themselves in another's shoes, children can imagine how life is for others, and this helps them to act with compassion.

 **HOW YOU CAN DO IT**

FOR AGES 5-8:

1. Draw your child's hand on paper or the outline of their body on larger paper. Draw your own hand or body on a separate piece of paper. Together, draw or write on each finger of the hand or on each part of the body:
 - Heart: A moment with me when you felt loved, cared for, protected, happy or confident.
 - Head: Something that happened with me where you felt hurt or sad.
 - Stomach: Something you really needed to say and never had courage to.
 - Hands: One thing that you enjoy doing together with me.
 - Legs: Something you have discovered about that you didn't know before.
2. Once you have finished, you can share what was drawn with each other.
3. Now lie down in each other's silhouettes or put your hand in each other's hand on the paper. Close your eyes, if you are comfortable, and imagine that you are the other person.
4. Talk to one another about how you feel and how the activity went. Finish the activity by talking about how important it is to try to understand each other's experiences without judging, just listening and understanding.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

To adapt this session in a group, you can ask children to work in pairs and to draw around each other's hands. Within each finger, draw or write responses, but base these around different prompts. For example:

Finger 1: Share a moment with your partner when you felt happy.

Finger 2: Share a moment with your partner when you felt sad.

Finger 3: Share something with your partner that is scary for you.

Finger 4: Share something with your partner that you like to do.

Finger 5: Share something with your partner that you'd like to try doing.

Then ask the children to swap hands, this could even be swapping with other children in the group, not only their partner. As a group, spend some time talking about the answers to their questions.

ACTIVITY 6

Seed Pots



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, curiosity, mindfulness, wondering



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- 1 jar or a pot — a suitable planter
- Space in the garden or on a window ledge for your pot
- A few different kinds of plant seeds
- Soil
- Small jug or spray bottle of water



SUGGESTED TIME

15-20 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

A sense of care for all living things is a part of spirituality, and children are born with this assumed relationship.⁷ Planting a seed and caring for it nurtures children's awe and wonder at the life that exists outside of them, strengthens their relationship with nature, and roots them in their sense of belonging in the universe. Through giving the seed what it needs, children learn about what other living things need to survive and thrive, and this encourages conversation around what we need as humans. This dialogue supports children's sense of gratitude by providing opportunities for them to think about what we and other living beings need to live. Furthermore, experiencing nature is calming for children and reduces levels of stress, which, in turn, helps them to cope with difficult moments and/or emotions throughout their lives.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. With your child, prepare all the materials required for the activity. Talk about the kind of seeds you will plant and what kind of flower/fruit might grow.

2. Invite your child to fill the jar or pot 3/4 of the way with soil and pat it down gently. Plant the seed. Cover it with soil. Water it and leave it in a place either outside or on a windowsill, where there will be sunlight.
3. Encourage your child to check on the plant every day and notice the differences. Observe together. Have a conversation about what you think might be happening inside, how it looks and any animals that may have come to visit the growing plant.

For younger children, you could ask:

- How long has it taken to see the seed grow?
- What did the plant need to grow?
- What might happen if we don't care for the plant?
- How do you feel, seeing the new shoot coming out of the soil?

For older children, you can create space for the child to think about the interconnectedness and interdependence of life, as well as our responsibility to take care of nature. You could also ask:

- What do both plants and people need to grow?
- Are there places where plants do not or cannot grow? Why?
- How can we help more plants to grow? Can we take more responsibility for helping them to grow?

4. As time passes and together you observe the plant grow, consider recording in your notebook or on paper, either by drawing or writing, the changes you see and how you feel about these changes.



KEEP IN MIND

This activity is easily adapted for children of different ages, including under the age of 3. While an infant may not be able to actively participate, they are absorbing the adult's attitude of care and love for the plant. The conversation that follows, though one-sided, exposes the child to vocabulary around emotions, values or respect, empathy and gratitude.

As they get older, even from when they are toddlers, the child can be an active participant. The adult can model how to care for a plant and show the child how and when to water it, how to work with soil, clean the leaves, etc.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Prepare for this activity in advance by gathering materials for each child (or pairs of children). Share that together you will grow seeds, but first you need to find out what a plant needs to grow. Take a walk outside, watch a video about nature, or invite a gardener (a caretaker or someone who can share basic details about plants) to share their knowledge with the group. Discuss what plants need to grow, and if age-appropriate, the growth cycle of a plant. Create a list together of how to grow a seed.

In pairs or individually, depending on the size of the group, enjoy planting seeds together. This could be done outside. If the children will take the plants home, it

is better that they each have one. Once they are planted, you can talk about what they expect to happen to the plant and how looking after a plant is like looking after ourselves.

ACTIVITY 7

My House



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Self-awareness, wisdom



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons or pencils



SUGGESTED TIME

20-45 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Children need safe, violence-free environments and loving relationships to ensure their well-being. This activity is designed to bring out their awareness and inner wisdom about what they are experiencing in their space within the home or wider community, as well as about the people around them. It aims to provide a secure space for children to share their innermost feelings. As children learn to speak about how they see the world, the people around them, and their relationships with them, their capacity to think from different points of view, to question and reflect grows. They become more able to recognize power dynamics and point out injustices that may be taking place in their lives.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Find a calm, quiet and distraction-free environment to be together one-on-one with your child. On paper or in your notebook, draw your house with them. If the child is older, invite them to draw their own house.
2. In the drawing, ask the child to draw or write the following places/persons/situations or activities in their house. If, for example, they share that they feel happy when with their sister, invite them to draw their sister. If they share that being wrapped in a blanket helps them feel safe, invite them to draw their favorite blanket.
 - What/Who helps you feel happy/loved/secure?
 - What/Who brings up scary/nervous feelings?
 - What do you enjoy playing and creating?

- What/Who helps you feel really relaxed or calm?
 - What/Who do you enjoy spending time with the most?
3. Ask your child to keep the drawings of the people who help them feel happy, loved and secure and put it up on the living room wall, in their bedroom or the kitchen.
 4. End the conversation by sharing how you can do more of the positive things/ moments and activities and how to address the ones that are more difficult.



CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION

This activity may involve difficult conversations around child abuse and violence. If the child has brought up something or someone around which they do not feel safe, secure, loved or calm, try to ask further questions to understand why. Reassure the child that they are safe sharing with you and that you will do whatever is necessary to support them.

If the conversation brings up suspicions of physical or sexual abuse, it is important to seek support from the local children's social services, and to take immediate steps to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of the child.

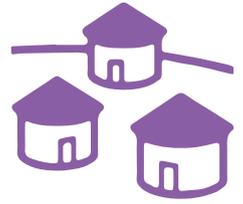


HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Before introducing this activity, it is best to have already established a strong, trusting relationship with each child, and between children, in your group. Previous sessions together are beneficial and are recommended due to the nature of the conversation. You can invite the children to do this activity on their own and then ask them either to share with you privately, or with the group if they are comfortable.

ACTIVITY 8

My Community

**SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES**

Imagination, curiosity, wisdom

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**

- 3 small objects (1 yellow, 1 red, 1 green)
- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons or pencils

Or

A collection of small things from around the house, for example:

- Bottle tops and straws
- Small stones
- Nuts and bolts
- Pencils
- Shells
- Toilet roll tubes
- Large buttons
- Anything else that is small and can be easily moved to create a picture

**SUGGESTED TIME**

30 minutes – 1 hour

**RECOMMENDED AGES**

3-5 & 5-8 years old

**WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?**

Allowing children to intentionally explore their neighborhood nurtures their sense of belonging by relating who they are with the wider world around them. Children have an acute sense of fairness that guides their reality, particularly when playing with peers — this is their wisdom. Children question unfairness and all that they see which helps them to make sense of the world. It enables children to understand fairness and equality, to nurture their ethical and moral development, and to recognize and imagine the role they can play in positively affecting other people's lives.

**HOW YOU CAN DO IT****FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:**

1. With your child, take a walk around where you live with a curious eye. Pay attention to all you see and all that is happening — people, buildings, situations, objects. Create time and space to explore what your child can see, touch, hear, taste and smell.
2. Once you arrive home, find a quiet comfortable space for your child to represent their neighborhood as they imagine it. You can do this with your child. You could do this in two ways: by drawing with pencil and paper, or by creating a picture on a flat surface with the small objects collected in the materials section. Some questions to guide your creation:

- What kind of buildings did we walk past? What shape are they?
- Did you see anything interesting or new?
- What is something you like/don't like about this area? Why?

If you are doing this activity with a child aged 5-8 years old, continue with step 3. If you are with a child aged 3-5 years old, skip step 3 and continue with step 4.

3. When you have finished creating your neighborhood, use the 3 colored objects (1 green, 1 yellow, 1 red) for the discussion below. When asking these questions, ask your child to place the colored objects on their creation or drawing. These represent the answers to the questions. For example, if they feel safe at home, ask them to place the green object on the picture of their home in the community.

Green: Where do you feel safe? Who helps you feel safe? Why?

Red: What are the types of violence and things that are not fair (for example, when people are not treated properly, when people don't have enough food or a home, etc.) in your community? Why do you think it happens?

Yellow: Which places help you feel calm/happy? Why?

As you see fit, you may discuss the invisible things in your community: conflicts, situations or injustices that divide people and that sometimes are present in communities, or even in the home.

4. Discuss and reflect on what kind of community you would like to live in and what kind of changes your child would like to see in their communities.

For younger children, you could ask:

- What kind of things do you want our community to have?
- What things can make people happier?

For older children, you could ask:

- What would you like to see change in our community?
- What do you think could make people happier, calmer or safer?
- How do you think we could help?



CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Depending upon your context, take precautions as necessary regarding the places that you walk. Asking your child about violence and who makes them feel safe/unsafe may begin difficult conversations around abuse and violence. Participate in these conversations as an active listener and be open-minded to all that your child has to share. This is an opportunity for them to explore their community, and for you to open your heart to hear their perspective.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Prepare to go for a walk around your local area with the group, and be sure to have enough adults with you to properly supervise the children. Also make sure to have enough materials for the group. If you are working with a group of older children, you could create one large mural of the community. After, sit together to discuss where to place the **green**, **red** and **yellow** objects. Each child could have their own 3 objects.



	SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	Compassion, curiosity, empathy, self-awareness, wondering
	PREPARATION AND MATERIALS	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource 5: Diversity Cards (a set of pictures) <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors (1 adult pair, 1 child pair)
	SUGGESTED TIME	20-30 minutes
	RECOMMENDED AGES	3-5 & 5-8 years old

	WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?	<p>This activity helps children reflect about the wider world, people's different ways of life, and our interconnectedness and interdependence with others. As your child gets older, this activity will help them to understand similarities with others as well as appreciate differences. It helps them think about the things that human beings have in common, as well as the things which are special about each person. The activity nurtures respect for other people, helps to foster a sense of unity and belonging, and develops a sense of empathy and compassion, as children learn to understand the lives of other people with a kind, curious and open heart.</p>
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HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Use the set of pictures (Resource 5: Diversity Cards in the resource pack) and make a copy for you to cut. If this is not possible, you could create your own. Find a space to sit with your child and explain that you are going to learn about children from different places. Using the scissors, together you can both cut along the edge of the cards and lay them out to look at.
2. From the set of pictures, ask your child to choose a card and look at it together. Share what you see and follow the natural flow of the discussion. There are captions on the back of each picture that include details.
3. Have a conversation about where the photos are from, what the picture is about, and how people in these places might live. Compare the different pictures with the child's context. Below are some questions to guide the conversation that can be adapted according to the child's age:
 - What foods do you see here? Do we all eat the same kind of food?
 - Do we all live in the same kind of home/wear the same kind of clothes/play the same kind of games/pray in the same way? How are we different?
 - What kind of games do you see here? What games do you like to play? Why do you think children are happy when they play?
4. Let the child look at the photos for as long as they like.



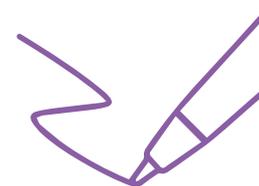
HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Make an enlarged copy of the set of cards (Resource 5) in the resource pack or create your own. Encourage each child to choose a card and discuss them as a group.

If you are working with a diverse group of children, instead ask and encourage them to share experiences of their culture and religious and spiritual traditions. If you have the time, invite parents/caregivers to come to talk to the group about their religious or spiritual traditions. Celebrate the diversity of the group by inviting children to show the group the food used in religious activities, teach games and share how they pray. Have a World Traditions Day and invite all children to wear their traditional clothes or bring something that is traditional from their culture, ethnic group or religious or spiritual tradition!

ACTIVITY 10

Free Drawing



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Imagination, self-awareness



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons, pencils or paint



SUGGESTED TIME

15 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

It is important to create spaces and opportunities for children to be fully immersed in the present moment, to be focused and calm their minds. During days, times, and situations of anxiety and uncertainty, it is particularly important to help children imagine new realities, express difficult emotions, and find joy and positivity. Drawing provides children with a way to channel their emotions and allows their imaginations to run free as they explore possibilities and create something that is truly their own. Share this freedom and moment of calm by peacefully joining them.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Find a quiet space in the house to draw, where there will be no interruptions or noise. You can do it indoors or in an outside space such as a garden or park so your child is in contact with nature.
2. Invite your child to create a drawing of whatever they want to. Give them and yourself ample time for the drawing or painting. This is free drawing.

3. Once you have finished, spend some time together showing the drawings to each other and talking about them. You could ask:
 - What did you draw/paint? Why did you choose to draw that?
 - How does it make you feel? Do you feel calm? Why?
 - What do you think my drawing is about? I enjoyed drawing with you because I felt _____.

Let there always be time and space for activities like this so children learn how to connect with themselves and how to calm themselves in difficult situations.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Ensure the group has time and space to draw freely with adequate resources in a quiet environment. You could create a “Gallery” on the wall of your classroom or room. Explain that a gallery is a place where drawings, paintings and other creations are placed for other people to look at and enjoy. Invite children to create artwork for the gallery whenever they’d like to. Once they’ve finished drawing or painting, ask them to put their picture in the gallery.

ACTIVITY 11

This is Me



SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

Self-awareness



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons, pencils or paint
- A mirror or front-facing “selfie” camera



SUGGESTED TIME

15-45 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

This activity is designed to help the child nurture their relationship with themselves by affirming what makes them special. The role of the parent/caregiver is to support the child in identifying what makes them unique and celebrating them as an individual. This nurtures a child’s self-awareness in seeing what their strengths are and becoming aware of how they perceive themselves. By establishing a kind, loving relationship with themselves, children are better equipped to build positive relations with others and to make responsible decisions.

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Find a quiet, calm environment to sit with your child. Take the mirror (or front-facing “selfie” camera) and look at yourselves in it. Smile and talk freely about what you can see in the mirror together.
2. Now, explain to your child that you are going to draw a picture of what you see in the mirror. Describe your hair, your eyes, mouth and face, in as much detail as appropriate for the age of the child. Take your time and immerse yourselves in each other’s portraits. As you are drawing, you could ask your younger child:
 - I have a freckle here. Do you?
 - My eyes are blue! Are your eyes blue?
 - What is the same/different on my face compared to yours?

For older children, you could ask:

- How do you look the same/different compared to me?
 - What is special about the way you/I look?
 - Do you know anyone else that looks the same as/different from you?
3. Once you have finished drawing, pick up the mirror again. Now talk about what you cannot see in the mirror that you love about yourself or makes you special. Speak 1 or 2 things about yourself as an example. For younger children, you could encourage them to discover things like these:
 - I love that I can help my sister/brother/whomever.
 - I love myself because I am caring.
 - I love that I can run fast.

For older children, you could encourage them to discover things like these:

- I love that I am kind and compassionate. I am kind when I share my toys with my siblings.
 - I love that I am helpful. I am helpful when I feed our dog breakfast!
 - I am good at taking care of my siblings.
4. Celebrate what is special about your child together. Share with each other why you are special to one another!

**HOW TO CUSTOMIZE
THIS ACTIVITY FOR A
GROUP SETTING**

As a group, sit in a circle and take turns looking in the mirror. Talk about what you can see. Now encourage the children to look at the person sitting next to them. Invite them to discuss what is the same or different about their faces. Stay in the circle and draw your self-portraits sitting or lying down. Celebrate what makes each of them special!

If you don’t have access to a mirror, invite the children to draw each other. Encourage them to look carefully at their partner’s face and to talk about what makes each other special.



	SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES	Compassion, empathy, imagination, love
	PREPARATION AND MATERIALS	<input type="checkbox"/> A4 paper <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons, pencils or paint <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors (1 adult pair, 1 child pair)
	SUGGESTED TIME	15-20 minutes
	RECOMMENDED AGES	3-5 & 5-8 years old

	WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?	<p>It is important to create opportunities for children to understand the impact that their words and actions have on others and on themselves, as well as spaces where they can learn to forgive and reconcile with others. Children can learn to do this by approaching difficult situations with an empathetic, compassionate and loving attitude. This helps them to solve conflicts peacefully with others and to imagine alternative, non-violent ways of solving conflict. You can relate this activity to a relevant religious scripture from your context about the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness.</p>
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HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. In a quiet environment, sit with your child and invite them to draw a heart and decorate it. Join your child in the full activity and draw a heart, too. When done, cut out the hearts from the page.
2. Once you have decorated your hearts and cut them out, each of you think of someone — it can be a person, or a pet — that they hold in their hearts. Someone that you love. Share who this person/pet is and why.
3. Now give a clear instruction to scrunch up the heart you each just made. Once you have scrunched it up, ask your child to try to put the paper back to how it was before. Give some time for you each to try to flatten out the paper as it was.
4. Once you have tried to flatten the paper, you can share the following:

When we hurt someone, it is like when we just scrunched up the heart. It can be difficult to fix the situation and smooth out the hurt. Sometimes it is difficult to say sorry. Sometimes it is hard to get things to go back to exactly the way they were before the hurt happened, but it is very important that we try. Everybody naturally wants to feel safe and close, and many times we can heal hurts if we pray and take action.

You can also discuss the following questions. Some may need to be adapted according to your child's age:

- Can we put the heart back exactly how it was before? Why?
- What can we do to smooth things out with people whom we have hurt or that have hurt us?
- Why should we say sorry when we hurt someone, either on purpose or not? What can we do to make the other person feel better? How can we feel better?
- Have you been hurt by someone before? What happened and how did you feel? Did you find a way to resolve it?



KEEP IN MIND

Some children or adults may start to feel emotionally overwhelmed by going through this activity. It may be particularly difficult for the child if they have drawn the parents and caregivers in their hearts. Reassure them that this is okay, that this is a safe place, that you are not feeling hurt by that. Even without intention, hurts may happen one day to you and your child. But no matter what, the love you have for each other will never change, and so love, forgiveness, and reconciliation will always be part of your relationship.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Talk about saying sorry with the group. Ask them when they say sorry or if they have ever said sorry. Now, invite each child to draw their own heart and to decorate it. Follow the above steps in a group and gather into a group discussion for the final questions.

ACTIVITY 13

Balloon Play



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, curiosity, imagination, wondering



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- An empty balloon each
- Music (optional)



SUGGESTED TIME

15 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

From a young age, children are amazed by balloons — that seem to be half in the sky and half on the ground. This activity introduces the inner self as part of being a person, as a real part of us that, although we cannot see it, lives inside each person. The activity encourages your child to think about the mysteries of life and nature. It nurtures their curiosity and imagination about living in the world, while preparing them for challenges that we all face in life, including even someday losing loved ones.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Find a space together that is easy for you both to move around in. It could be outdoors. Take one empty balloon each and explain to your child that the balloon is like your body. The balloon has nothing inside, but what is inside our body? You can talk about physical parts of the body first, like the heart, the lungs, and so on.
2. Now ask your child what we need to fill the balloon (air). You can use the following dialogue and questions to begin talking about the parts of us that we cannot see. This can be adapted according to the child's age and to your context and beliefs:

Can we see air? No. In the same way, there are parts of us that we cannot see. Which are the parts of us that we cannot see? Together with our hearts, and lungs, and so on, we also have a spirit, soul, inner self. This is a very real part of us that lives on the inside. It helps us to be helpful, to be thankful, to be kind, etc.

- Do you feel the invisible part of ourselves when we are in contact with nature? How?
 - Do you feel it when we are playing with our friends? How?
 - Do you feel it when you pray? How?
3. Once you have finished discussing, blow your balloons up, but don't tie them. Just hold the end of the balloon so the air doesn't escape. Now talk about how the balloon is full — it has grown-up like an adult! Inside the balloon is still the part of us that we cannot see... but what happens to these parts when we let the balloon go? Then: Let the balloon go!

If you feel that it is appropriate, this is a good time to talk about, according to your religious tradition, what happens to the part of us that we do not see — soul, spirit, inner self, etc. — once it has left the body. You may like to include religious rituals related to remembering ancestors here. Or you may want to talk about how, even if you are not physically together as a family (for example, if the child has lost someone important), you will always be together spiritually.

4. Once you have caught your balloon, try blowing it up again and tying the end in a knot. Play some music and enjoy spending time playing with the balloons together.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Discuss what the balloons represent and the questions above before giving a balloon to each child. Once you have done, ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak and share their answers to the questions. At the end of the activity, have a “balloon party” with music. Allow children to play freely with one another and the balloons, with the music. You will see how they enjoy awe and wonder!

ACTIVITY 14

We Are Connected



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Compassion, curiosity



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

For 3-5 years old:

- Approximately 60cm of string
- Toilet roll rubes cut width-ways (to create hoops) or beads

For 5-8 years old:

- Plain A4 paper
- Crayons/colored pencils
- Scissors
- Glue or tape



SUGGESTED TIME

20-30 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

This activity is a practical example of interconnectedness — the close connection we all have to other people, nature, and to that which people refer to as God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. The activity nurtures children’s sense of belonging not only within their families, but also within the wider community. Children think about who supports them in their life, from parents/caregivers to doctors and shopworkers, and imagine how to show compassion and gratitude for these people. This activity also shows how we are all connected through equal relations.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5:

1. Prepare the materials above on a table or on the floor, with space for you and your child to sit together. Explain that you are going to create a chain of all the people in your child’s life who help them to live and grow.
2. Take one toilet-roll hoop and tell your child that “this is me” (the caregiver). On the string, place the hoop and tie it, so the hoop doesn’t fall off the end.

3. Now, encourage your child to take a hoop and to say “this is me.” As you add hoops to the chain, you can ask:
 - This is me, daddy/mommy. This is you, (child’s name). Who is this? (Holding another hoop)
 - Grandma (for example) helps you eat dinner. Can you add Grandma? (Add another hoop to the string.)
 - Who else helps you? Does the dentist/bus driver/your teacher help you?
4. Once you have finished, talk about how the people on the chain help us and how we are all connected. We all need each other to live happily and well. You can use the chain for decoration or your child might like to wear it as a necklace!

FOR AGES 5-8:

1. Prepare the materials above on a table or on the floor, with space for you and your child to sit together. Explain that you are going to create a paper chain of all the people in your child’s life who help them to live well and grow.
2. Take the A4 paper and decorate it however you wish. Remind your child that this paper will be cut into strips so there is no need to create a drawing, just decorate with colors and patterns. Once you have finished, use the scissors to cut the paper width-ways into strips roughly 3-4cm wide.
3. With one strip, create a hoop and glue/tape the two ends together. You have your first hoop! Tell your child that this is them; now they need to add all other people in their life. With the next strip of paper, thread it inside the first hoop and then glue the ends together. Now you have two hoops together! Each hoop represents a person, and they can write the name on the hoop. Use the following questions to guide your child:
 - Apart from your family, who else helps you to live well?
 - Where do you get your food from? Where does the market get food from?
 - Who makes sure your body is growing strong and healthy?
4. When you have finished threading the hoops together and your paper chain is done, you can name again all of the people that help you in your life. We all need each other to live happily and well. You can use the chain for decoration or your child might like to wear it as a necklace!



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Before starting the activity, sit together in a circle on the floor and talk about all of the people that help you in your lives. You can start by talking about close family members, and then try to include other members of the community, such as shopworkers and teachers. Encourage the children to think about why these people help them, what they do, and how they can show that they are grateful.

While doing the activity, some children may feel shy or lack the confidence to complete some steps. Encourage them and show how to do it, without doing it for them, so that they feel capable and confident with their creations.

**SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES**

Imagination, curiosity

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**

Whichever materials/toys your child is interested in. These could include:

- Building blocks
- Soft toys
- Cups, bottles, straws, plastic plates
- Cardboard boxes

**SUGGESTED TIME**

15-30 minutes

**RECOMMENDED AGES**

3-5 & 5-8 years old

**WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?**

Imaginative play, often called “make believe,” allows children to explore areas of their reality that interest them. It is important because it allows children to make sense of what they have experienced and to develop skills such as problem solving, creative thinking and working in a team. From the youngest of ages, a child’s imagination allows them to visit places and explore possibilities as they practice how to navigate situations. Children gain confidence in their own actions when adults empower them in play by allowing them to take the lead and make their own choices.

**HOW YOU CAN DO IT**FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Put time aside to have a focused playtime with your child in whatever imaginative way they would like or are interested in. This activity may be better conducted any time you see your child playing “make believe.” However, here are some suggestions to initiate or encourage imaginative play:
 - Pretending to be animals by playing outdoors
 - Creating a castle or house using building blocks
 - Pretending to be a doctor or vet by taking care of a soft toy
 - Pretending to cook and host a lunch with friends
2. As you immerse yourself in imaginative play with your child, allow them to lead the play. Refrain from making statements as they play or asking too many questions so you allow their imaginative thoughts to flow naturally.
3. Try to remember some noticeable or interesting choices that your child made during play. Once it has finished, you can ask them about the choices they made:
 - Why did you decide to ____?
 - Would you do the same next time? Why/why not?
 - What else could we build/create/make/do next time?



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

If you have a room in which groups of children play for extended periods of time, consider creating spaces in the room with objects for pretend or imaginative play. For example, in a box you could have paper plates, plastic cutlery and cups for children to host lunch parties. You could also have a collection of recycled materials such as bottles or boxes for children to create structures from.

ACTIVITY 16

Touch and Feel



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, curiosity, mindfulness, wondering



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Large shallow tray or bowl
 - Sand or soil
 - Small plastic cups, recycled yogurt pots or small containers
 - Spoon
- Or**
- Large shallow tray or bowl filled half with water
 - Small buckets or plastic cups
 - Sieve
 - Spoon



SUGGESTED TIME

20 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Playing with objects and toys that invoke a child's sense of touch, taste, smell, sight and sound allows the child to explore, discover and be curious about the world around them. This activity helps children to develop their imagination by exploring what is possible and what is not, and provides them with the opportunity to problem-solve. Toys and activities that use the senses are especially good for calming and de-stressing children, especially those with autism,⁸ and therefore are a great way to develop self-regulation.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5:

1. Take the box or tray and place it on the floor. As this activity may get messy, you could place a mat underneath the tray to keep the floor clean or it could be done outside.

2. In the tray, place sand or soil, the cups and small container objects. Invite your child to come and play! If your tray is very large, some children might enjoy sitting inside it to feel the sand or soil on their skin. Some questions to guide the play:
 - How does the sand/soil feel on your fingers?
 - How does the sand/soil smell/look?
 - Can you fill the cup to the top with sand/soil?
3. Allow your child to play for as long as they wish and enjoy playing with them. Let them enjoy their different sensations. Once you have finished playing, encourage your child to clean up with you. You can ask them: "What did you enjoy about playing together today?"

FOR AGES 5-8:

1. Take the box or tray and place it on the floor and fill it with water. This should not be too deep for safety reasons, so a large shallow tray is preferred for this activity. As this activity involves getting wet, it may be better to do it outside.
2. Once your tray is filled with water, find objects from around the house that allow your child to pour, measure and move the water. Place them inside the tray. Invite your child to come and play!
3. Allow them to feel the water with their fingers, see it pour, maybe even get themselves wet and feel the water on their skin. You could even add some ice cubes and ask your child to see how they feel compared to the water! You could ask your child:
 - How does the water feel on your fingers/toes/lips?
 - What does the water taste/smell/sound like?
 - What can we do with water?
 - Why is water so important to us? Where can we find water in nature?
4. Allow your child to play for as long as they wish and enjoy playing with them. Once you have finished playing, encourage your child to clean up with you. Reflect afterwards by asking your child: "Why is water so important to us? Why is water important for our planet?"



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Depending upon the size of the group, you could divide the group into smaller groups and have different trays available for children to enjoy playing with.

**SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES**

Mindfulness, awe and wonder, wondering

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**
 A collection of fairly small flat rocks or stones
**SUGGESTED TIME**

10 minutes or more

**RECOMMENDED AGES**

3-5 & 5-8 years old

**WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?**

Stone stacking fosters mindfulness by keeping children in the present moment and holding their attention for a good amount of time. The act of balancing stones on top of one another requires patience and determination to succeed. By developing the readiness to try again with renewed energy (if the stones fall over), a child gets practice with overcoming setbacks. This can support them in life's challenging times by helping them to cope with stress, disappointment and feelings of disconnection.

**HOW YOU CAN DO IT****FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:**

1. Go outside and walk in nature with your child. Absorbing all that the senses have to offer through the senses — smell, sight, taste, touch, hearing. Find a collection of flat rocks or stones and gather them in one place. Be careful of the animals you may disturb!
2. Once you have collected 7-8 flat rocks, explain that you are going to build something with the stones. Begin by choosing rocks for yourself and balance them together. Encourage your child to try too. Encourage them to keep trying, even if it falls!
3. Finish the stone-stacking by discussing your stack and your child's. Notice the differences between the two. Some questions you could ask are:
 - What do you notice about your stone stack and my stone stack?
 - How are they similar/different?
 - What was easy/difficult about balancing the stones?
 - How do you feel after stone stacking?
4. Make sure you put the stones back where you found them. Use this as an opportunity to discuss why it is important to reduce the human footprint in natural spaces (to protect plants, animal habitats, to show respect for other beings, etc.)



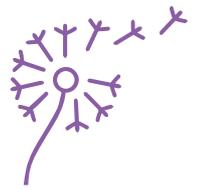
HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Prepare to go for a walk together outside to an area where it is possible for children to sit and collect stones to stack. Sit together and enjoy a meditation moment in nature before you begin the activity.

If you don't have access to enough stones for a group of children to do this, bring in recycled objects, such as cereal/shoe boxes, plastic bottles or egg boxes, to use instead. You could ask the children to bring in recycled objects from home too. Use the recycled objects to practice creating a stack.

ACTIVITY 18

Nature Walk



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, curiosity, wondering



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- A4 paper or your plain A4 notebook
- Crayons, pencils or paint



SUGGESTED TIME

30 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Going on a walk in nature encourages children to intentionally discover and explore the world around them by asking questions and checking things out. They learn about their place within nature and the environment, and they can see the impact that humans have upon plants and animals. Children's spiritual capacity for awe and wonder about the natural world, their thankfulness for the beauty around them, and their curiosity about nature develops their responsibility to care for the planet. By observing nature intentionally, children learn to respect the natural world and all of the beings that live in it.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Explain to your child that you are going on a nature walk to see what you can find together.
2. First, you need to create a checklist to mark down what you see. With your paper, draw or write (depending upon the child's abilities) between 5-10 nature items that you think you might see on the walk. You could create a list together or one each. Some ideas might include:

- Green leaves
- Soil
- Tall trees
- Sun
- Water
- Sky
- Animals
- Grass

3. Once you have finished, get ready for your walk. Enjoy the walk together, marking off the items as you see them. You can take note of interesting items you did not predict, like a butterfly. Allow your child to explore what they see around them, ask and answer each other's questions, and immerse yourself in the natural environment. According to the child's abilities, you could also ask:

- What part of nature do you find interesting/amazing?
- We are all part of nature; how can we take care of it?
- Is there anywhere that you see nature damaged? Where?

4. Once you return home, you can talk about what you saw and what you didn't see. Thank your child for showing you how wonderful nature can be, but how at times it can also be damaged. Ask questions like these:

What can we do when nature is damaged? Why does it get damaged? What can we do to protect nature? As we are all part of nature, we all have a part to play to protect it.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Prepare the group to go for a walk and make sure you have enough adults to supervise the group of children. Before going out, sit together in a circle and create a list with the children as above. Give each child a post-it note to draw or write (or both!) something they think they will see on the walk. Add the post-it notes to a big piece of paper to look at and discuss when you get back. After the walk, count how many objects on the post-it notes you saw, and add any new ones that weren't there before!

**SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES**

Empathy, compassion

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**

- Large pot
- Large jug of drinking water
- 5-7 different vegetables
- Clean stone
- Large cooking spoon
- Sharp knife for the adult to use
- Resource 2: The Story of Stone Soup in the resource pack

**SUGGESTED TIME**

30 minutes or more

**RECOMMENDED AGES**

3-5 & 5-8 years old

**WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?**

The Story of Stone Soup is common in many cultures across the world, although how the story is told varies slightly with the context. What the story shares, regardless of where it is told, is the value of empathy, sharing and compassion for others. This activity is designed to bring together an adult and child to work for a common goal: sharing a meal. It nurtures the sense of connection between ourselves and other people, particularly if we share the soup we make with people in need. It demonstrates our empathy and compassion toward others and clearly shows children how we can help others.

**HOW YOU CAN DO IT****FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8**

1. Prepare and cut the vegetables into large pieces and place next to the pot and jug of water.
2. Next, read The Story of Stone Soup with your child. As you read the story, begin to make the soup as the traveler does with your "magic" stone. Add the ingredients as the villagers do, mixing as you go.
3. Either during or after reading the story, ask your child:
 - At the start of the story, what do you think the traveler could do with the stone?
 - What should we do if someone turned up at our door asking for food because they were hungry?
 - What did the villagers share with the traveler?
 - What happened after the villagers shared their food with the traveler? How did they feel?
 - In the end, why were the villagers grateful to the traveler?
 - Who could we share our soup with?

4. Enjoy cooking your soup together! Be careful of using a hot stove and always supervise your child.

Finally, share your soup with people in your community; this could be a neighbor, family member or someone in need. Refer to religious or spiritual texts or scriptures that are relevant for your context which speak about being hospitable to others. You can also emphasize the importance of sharing with those in need to your child.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Before conducting this activity, ask each child to prepare and bring in one of their favorite vegetables to add to a soup the group will make. If this is not possible, you will need to collect the vegetables and prepare them to add to the pot. Make sure there is one vegetable per child, so they each have something to add to the pot. If there is an older child who is confident about reading, you could ask them to read the story.

ACTIVITY 20

Bird Feeders¹¹



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, compassion, wondering



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Empty plastic bottle (1.5 liters or bigger)
- Scissors (for the adult)
- Bird food: small seeds or grains such as sunflower seeds, millet, rice, cracked corn or peanuts
- 1 meter of string or rope
- Somewhere to hang your bird feeder outside, ideally on a tree
- A stick approximately 30cm long (big enough to go through the width of the bottle and extend out either side)
- Plastic bowl
- Tablespoon



SUGGESTED TIME

30 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old

¹¹ To see a photo of this activity, visit <http://teachmama.com/happy-holidays-backyard-birds/>. This activity was inspired by *Milk Carton Bird Feeder for Backyard Birds* by Amy Mascott (Teach Mama).



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Creating a bird feeder with your child encourages them to care for animals and allows for you both to reflect upon the need to protect and care for all sorts of living creatures. It nurtures the child's sense of compassion and respect for animals by providing the birds with an essential element needed to survive — food. This activity encourages your child to think more broadly about what both animals and humans need to survive and sparks their curiosity by giving them an opportunity to think about natural processes. Your child may feel awe and wonder watching the birds enjoy the food that you left for them. Observe and share the joy with your child.

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Talk with your child about why and how we can protect and care for nature and animals, especially birds, and explain that together you will create a bird feeder.
2. Take the plastic bottle, and as the adult, cut a rectangle from the side of the bottle, about 1/3 of the way up. This should be approximately 3cm wide. Do the same for the other side. Now, you should be able to see through the two windows of the bottle.
3. In a plastic bowl, ask your child to measure the different seeds for the birds to eat. They can count out 10 large tablespoons full. The adult can now make two small incisions about 2cm below the windows. Together, take the stick and push it through one hole and out of the hole on the opposite side of the bottle. This is where the birds will sit to eat!
4. Ask your child to fill the bottom of the bottle with the bird food. Tie string around the top of the bottle securely. Find a space outside in a tree for the bird feeder to hang. Once you have hung your bird feeder, sit and observe the feeder, waiting for the birds (come back the next day if you don't see any birds right away), and reflect upon the following questions:
 - What do animals need to survive? Do we need the same things? Do all animals need the same things?
 - Why is it important to take care of animals?
 - How can we protect animals?



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

Depending upon the size of the group, the materials will need to be adapted. For example, prepare 1 set of materials to create 1 bird feeder for a group of 4 children. Or, if you have 8 children, prepare 2 sets of materials to create 2 bird feeders for 2 groups of 4 children. This can be adapted as you see fit but make sure that there is something for each child to take responsibility for.

You could further divide the small groups into teams of 2. Two people decorate the bottle, and two people mix the bird seeds.



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES Self-awareness, mindfulness



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Darkened room
- Calm, peaceful music



SUGGESTED TIME 10 minutes or more



RECOMMENDED AGES 3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

A meditation moment, or quiet time, allows children to disconnect from the day and connect and be with themselves. It can help them clear their minds to better process what has happened and what they have learned that day. It roots them in the present moment and provides them with the chance to practice self-awareness by exploring their own thoughts and attending to how they are feeling, which also helps them cope with stressful or upsetting situations.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Before inviting your child to have a meditation moment, be aware of the environment. Are you in a quiet, distraction-free area? Is the area cozy and inviting? Prepare the area with a soft toy or pillow, close the blinds and be sure no one is going to interrupt. Invite your child to lie or sit down with you, and explain that you are going to have a relaxing moment together.
2. Lie or sit down in a comfortable position. Encourage your child to close their eyes; you can close yours to show them. Play calm and peaceful music quietly. Try to choose a song that lasts 7-10 minutes so that you don't have to change the song or have an interruption.
3. Enjoy the moment together for as long as your child wishes to be there. This may be 5 minutes; it may be 20 minutes. Take this meditation moment as a break from the day and a way to recharge before starting the next activity or job.
4. Ask your child how they felt, if they enjoyed the calm moment together or if they have a favorite toy they'd like to cuddle next time.



KEEP IN MIND

This activity works best after children have been busy outside playing or running around, and are ready to have a quiet moment. It is important that you role-model this moment of meditation by fully participating yourself. Use this as a moment to be together in the calm of the present moment. Some young children may fall asleep. Some older children may find it challenging and not wish to close their eyes, but this is okay, encourage peacefulness.



HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ACTIVITY FOR A GROUP SETTING

A meditation moment is best implemented after outdoor play or as you see the group becoming restless. Sit in a large circle and encourage children to lie down in their own space and to listen to the music. Invite all the adults in the room to participate too, so the children don't feel like they are being observed.

ACTIVITY 22

Musical Shakers



SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES

Awe and wonder, mindfulness



PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Toilet roll holders
- 1 sheet A4 paper
- Tape
- Scissors
- Colored pens/crayons
- Small stones, rice or beads to go inside the shaker



SUGGESTED TIME

20-45 minutes



RECOMMENDED AGES

3-5 & 5-8 years old



WHY IS THIS ACTIVITY IMPORTANT?

Children learn, discover and experience the world through their senses. Music and sound are important tools for children to do this. Musical play allows children to express themselves creatively, as with drawing and painting, and helps to alleviate stress. As children experiment with sound, their capacity for awe and wonder about natural sounds grows, and they also gain an opportunity to connect with the present moment.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

FOR AGES 3-5 & 5-8:

1. Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit with your child. Take out the materials needed for the activity and explain that you are going to make musical shakers together.
2. First, decorate your shakers together. Spend some time using the pens or crayons to color the toilet roll holders. Try to encourage your child to do their own decorating.
3. Now, use paper and tape to cover one end of the toilet roll tube so it is closed. Invite your child to fill the tube with some very small stones, rice or beads (any small object that makes a sound when it bumps together). Repeat the first process: cover the other end of the toilet roll with paper and tape so the beads cannot come out.

4. Try moving your music shaker to hear the sound! You can ask your child:
- Do you like to listen to music and move your body?
 - What did we make today? What could we use it for?
 - Is there any sound in the world that sounds like your music shaker? What is it?
 - What kinds of sounds do animals make?



**HOW TO CUSTOMIZE
THIS ACTIVITY FOR A
GROUP SETTING**

Make sure that there are enough materials for each child to make one shaker. Plan plenty of time in advance. You can ask each child to bring their own toilet roll holder. Spend some time together once you have made the shakers making your own music together, and then try shaking along to a song!

Annex I. Background Notes on the Activities for Children

This annex provides some additional background information on how the activities for children promote the spiritual development of children. It may be useful for parents/caregivers, facilitators and educators — anyone working directly with children who would like to know more about spiritual development and the spiritual capacities.

Activity 1: The Tree of Me

This activity primarily targets the innate spiritual capacity of self-awareness. Developing self-awareness means being able to express personal preferences, feelings, thoughts, and abilities. Just after they are born, infants go through phases quickly, figuring out the boundaries between what their body is, who their caregiver is, and what their environment is. This very early concrete self-awareness sets the stage for the later abstract, spiritual aspects of self-awareness.

At age 0-3 the child may:

- Respond to self in mirror
- Notice effects of own physical actions
- Use comfort of familiar experiences to explore new activities and experiences
- Repeat a familiar activity until they become comfortable and gain confidence
- Express ownership of objects and people

At age 4-8 they may:

- Distinguish aspects of self, in comparison to others
- Identify likes & dislikes, needs & wants
- Try new activities and experiences with support from adults
- Return to activities where they previously failed

You can do activities that help a child develop their concept of themselves as well as a concept of where they come from, and where they are going. This early practice helps to build the foundations of later spiritual pursuits, like exploring meaning and purpose in life.

Activity 2: A Starry Night

Under a starry night sky, children come into contact with the wonders of the universe. The spiritual capacity of awe and wonder¹⁰ means being open to the beauty and mysteries of life. It is appreciation for what is precious and inspiring. It means taking time to appreciate the wonder of nature. It means reflecting on the amazing things that happen when we are open to God's grace or the universe's calling.

Practicing awe and wonder could also mean:

- Spending time in the beauty of nature
- Being inspired by life's mysteries
- Being fully present in the moment
- Believing that life is meaningful
- Having a daily practice of prayer and reflection

Activity 3: Loving Attachments

During the earliest moments in a child's life, it is very important for the baby to feel close to the parent/caregiver. When a baby develops a strong attachment, this serves as a positive foundation for all the rest of the outcomes in their life. The first two or three years of life are especially important for shaping a secure attachment, but attachment continues to develop throughout the human lifespan.

Love is a core concept in most of the world's religions, and it is an innate spiritual capacity that children have. This can include many kinds of love, including love from human to human, or love between humans and what people refer to as God, Divine, the Transcendent or Ultimate Reality. This activity proposes concrete ways to nurture love in children: first, in receiving love as an infant; second, in basic ways to express love as a toddler; third, in recognizing all the ways that humans show love to one another in early childhood. These serve as the foundation for understanding more abstract kinds of love later in life. Feel free to integrate into the activities your ways of expressing love for God, the Divine, the Transcendent or Ultimate Reality, according to your context and religious perspective.

Activities 6 & 20: Seed Pot & Bird Feeder

The contact with nature in these activities offers children the very real experience of the effort that goes into caring for another living thing. It offers the possibility of having a conversation about how living things grow or change over time, and how nobody makes it happen, but that it happens independent of human action — this could open a conversation about the existence of a higher power. This can be a very simple conversation where the idea is introduced and left for children to make what they want of it. The experience they have will contribute to a deeper introspection when the time is right.

Children have a chance to think about their own growth and the things happening within them — how the life they lead affects their growth. (This may not be something you speak about overtly, but these activities can support this thought process).

Activity 7: My House

Spiritual development is an integral part of responsive caregiving; it is critical to create safe environments for children, to foster secure attachment, and create opportunities for early learning. Protection from violence is a prerequisite for healthy spiritual development. Creating safe, violence-free environments is paramount in building positive relationships between caregivers and children. Safe environments enable parents and caregivers to create empowering experiences for children, and they act as a preventive factor against violence and as a mechanism for the protection of children.

It is important to bring an open mind to the discussion initiated in this activity. It is relevant to consider what the child is saying from the perspective of gender. Most research has found that girls are likely to experience higher levels of sexual violence than boys, often perpetrated by someone they are close to,¹¹ but that boys experience higher levels of violent discipline by caregivers than girls.¹² By entering the conversation with an open heart, you, as the adult, are creating a space in which spiritual capacities can be nurtured within a safe environment. Be sure to put safety and well-being of the child first.

Activity 9: Diversity Cards

We live in a diverse world of many different people and cultures. Children should be encouraged to explore the diversity of the world in which we live while learning about and appreciating cultural, ethnic, social, and religious differences and similarities. It is when we encounter other people that we find chances to challenge stereotypes and prejudices about others and learn to respect those who are different and live in different ways.

Activities 10 & 11: Free Drawing & This is Me

Drawing and painting are powerful tools that allow children to express themselves and explore their imagination, but they also allow children to improve their physical development. Fine motor skills are essential to the development of small muscles in the hand, which enable children to gain physical life skills, such as buttoning up a shirt or screwing on a bottle lid. By improving physical abilities, children are able to exercise greater independence, and that, in turn, influences their confidence, self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Activity 13: Balloon Play

This activity exposes your child to a tangible difference between the body and the spirit. By providing a concrete example of the spirit, your child's sense of self-awareness and gratitude

for life are nurtured as they come to see their existence in relation to others, and how we all follow a journey of growth, life and death.

Blowing up balloons is a great way for children to exercise the muscles they use to speak, therefore improving pronunciation, and to increase their lung capacity, which has been proven to help children with asthma.¹³ Not only does balloon blowing increase respiratory functioning; playing with the balloons also improves hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness. These are important gross motor skills children need in order to have long-lasting health and physical well-being.

Activity 16: Touch and Feel

Touch and feel brings together a collection of objects that allow children to explore using their senses in an open-ended way. Also known as sensory play or sensory bins, Touch and Feel builds a child's sense of awe and wonder about different elements — how they feel/look, how objects interact and the noises that they make. While it builds their sense of exploration and investigation, it allows them to play freely in whatever capacity they decide. Pouring water or measuring cups of sand allows the child to creatively explore the materials in front of them and the ways that different materials interact with one another.

Touch and Feel encourages the development of the imagination in a relaxed atmosphere where the child can feel/smell/see/hear how materials move around one another. The child learns to explore with their senses at their own pace, generating an awareness of objects that exist around them. By developing sensory awareness, the child learns how to handle different objects with respect and care, thus grounding them in their environment.

Children with disabilities

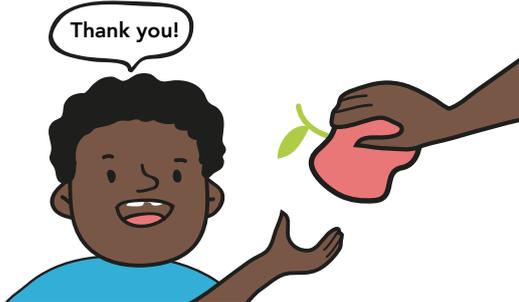
Some children have sensory sensitivities which means that their senses can be easily overloaded. This makes playing with some materials an experience that can overwhelm a child. If this is the case, use very few objects in a small box to begin with. For example, you could have 3 different colored ribbons in a plastic container, later adding more, or a few squidgy balls.

Activity 17: Stone Stacking

Stone stacking can be traced back to thousands of years ago as an ancient art form. Some cultures have used stone stacking to mark a place on the land or to create structures to protect and house resources. It can also be used to create and find balance in nature. By finding balance, we can alleviate stress and find peace. Stone stacking allows the child to be mindful of where they are and what they are feeling, and it can also provide a time to process difficult or challenging situations/emotions. By equipping children with tools to manage stress and find peace, we build their resilience and empower them to stay calm in moments of adversity.

Annex II. Resource Pack

Resource 1. Daily Interactions

<p>Building Trust</p> 	<p>Being Authentic</p> 
<p>Celebrating Religion Daily</p> 	<p>Showing That You Care</p> 
<p>Nurturing Loving Relationships</p> 	<p>Being Grateful</p> 
<p>Appreciating Diversity</p> 	<p>Fostering Self-Awareness</p> 

Solving Conflicts Peacefully



Praying/Contemplating Together



Modelling Kindness



Creating Family Rituals



Storytelling



Playing and Listening to Music



Nurturing Children's Playful Spirit



Serving Someone Else



Resource 2. The Story of Stone Soup¹⁴

A hungry traveler had been roaming the countryside for a long time, and he hadn't eaten a good meal in quite a while. One day the traveler spotted a lovely village off in the distance. The hungry traveler became very excited and said to himself, "I'm bound to find someone in the village who will share a meal with me."

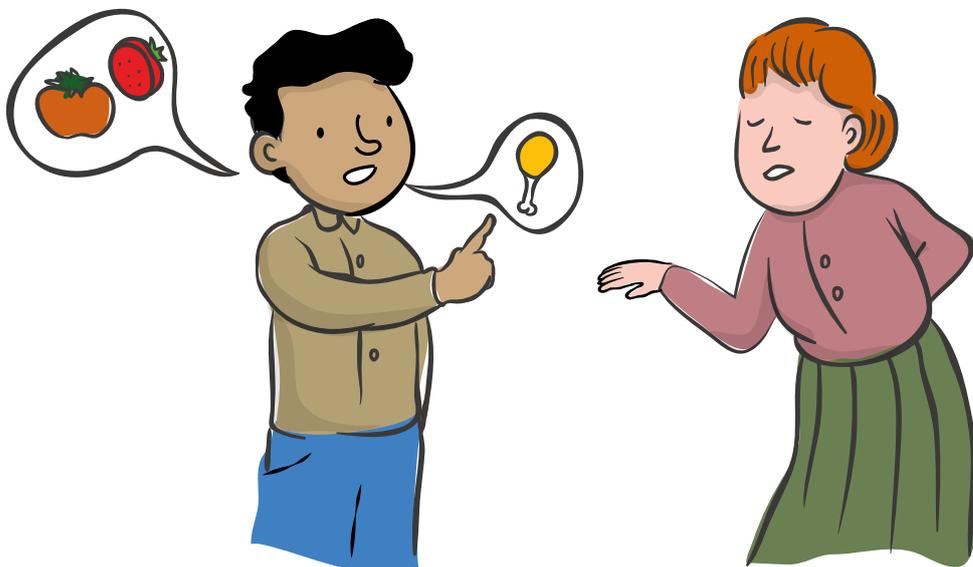
As the traveler hurried to the town, he tripped over a stone in the road. The stone was not like any that the traveler had ever seen before. It was perfectly smooth and oval in shape. The traveler looked at the stone carefully and decided he would keep it. "You never know when a stone like this might come in handy," he said.

Then the traveler happily headed to the village. His empty stomach grumbled as he walked.

When the traveler arrived in the village, things did not go as well as he had hoped. He stopped at a few houses with no luck finding a meal. No one had any food to share.

One house the traveler came to was very quiet. All the doors and windows were closed, and the shades were drawn. The traveler began to think that no one was home.

Finally a maid appeared in the doorway. "Can you spare some food?" the traveler asked her. "I have been traveling for days and am very hungry." "I'm sorry, but I have only a few potatoes," the maid said. "There's not enough to spare or share. Why don't you try my neighbor next door?"



"I already have," said the traveler, "but he was very grumpy and just slammed the door. It looks like finding some food in this village will be more difficult than I thought." Still the hungry traveler refused to give up.

The traveler visited every house in the village, but no one had enough food to spare or share. At one house there was only cabbage, the next had only carrots, and a third had only salt and pepper.

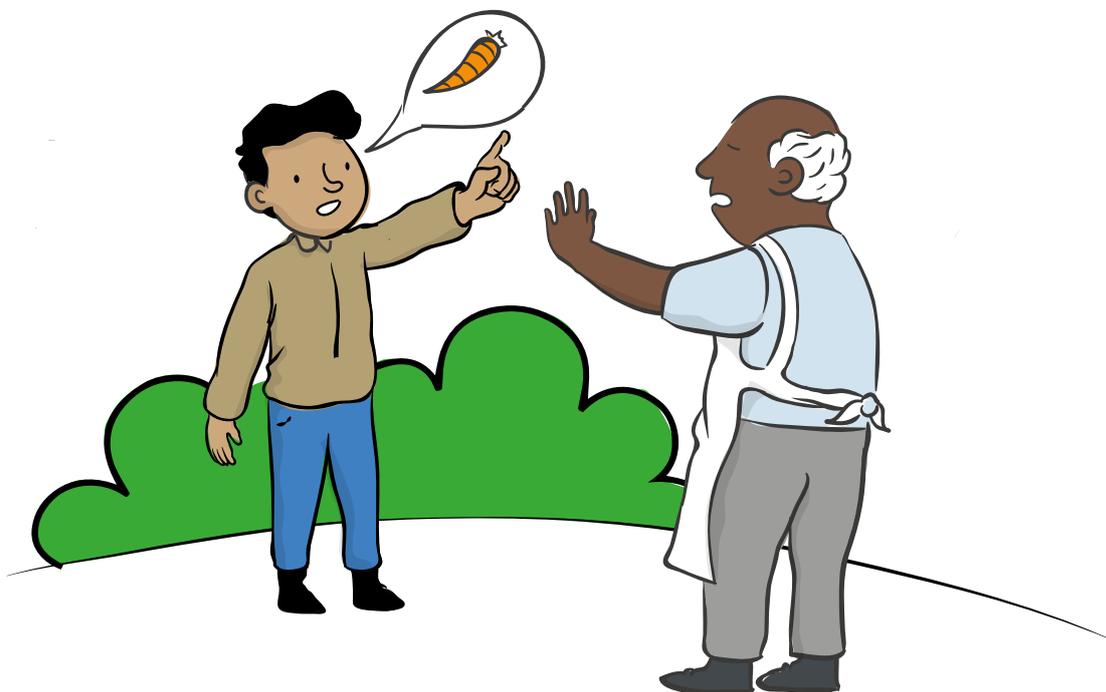
Because there was no food for the hungry traveler, he decided to move on. Before he got very far, the traveler began to feel tired. He decided to get some rest in the cool shade of a tree just outside the village.

As he sat under the tree, the traveler looked back at the quiet little town. "It's a shame," he thought, "such a nice village and such a beautiful day, but nobody is outdoors talking or playing."

Then the traveler reached into his bag and took out the smooth, oval stone that he found earlier in the day. As he sat admiring the stone, the traveler suddenly had a brilliant idea! The traveler ran back to the village and shouted, "Come out of your houses, everybody! We will have plenty to eat, and there will even be enough to spare and share!"

"I have a magic stone, and it will give us enough food for a wonderful meal for everyone in town." One by one, the curious villagers peeked out of their doors and windows.

The grumpy villager who slammed the door on the traveler earlier looked out of his window and shouted, "What's all the racket about?"



"Come help me make a pot of delicious stone soup," said the traveler. The maid stepped out of her house as two excited children ran up to the traveler. "Is that your stomach I hear growling?" one child asked.

"Yes," the other replied, "I am very hungry."

"Does anybody have a large soup kettle to get us started?" the traveler asked.

"I've got one that you can use," said the big, grumpy villager, "but I don't think it will do any good. I don't think your magic stone will really work."

Most of the villagers were excited, but some felt the same way as the grumpy villager. "Do you really believe he can make soup from a stone?" asked one young lady.

"I guess we'll find out soon," said another. "I certainly hope he can. I haven't had good soup in a long time. "The grumpy villager brought out his large kettle and placed it on a pile of sticks for the fire. "Here you go," he said. "Now let's see if that magic stone of yours can really make enough soup for all of us."

"Don't worry," said the traveler. "There will be plenty."

The traveler placed the smooth, oval stone into the kettle of water and began to stir. After a little while he tasted the soup. "Not bad," the traveler said, "but I think it could use a little salt and pepper."

"I've got some," said one of the young ladies, "I'll run home and get it."

"Perhaps the soup would taste even better if I shared my potatoes," the maid suggested.



"Yes, that's a great idea," said the traveler. "Why don't you get them, and we'll add them right away." The young lady returned and sprinkled her salt and pepper into the kettle. Then the maid came back and dropped in her potatoes. Once again, the traveler stirred the stone soup. When he tasted it for the second time, all the villagers watched him with anticipation.

"This is very good, but it would taste even better with some carrots and cabbage," said the traveler. Then a young boy ran home to get some carrots, and a little girl ran home to get her cabbage.

By now, everyone was having so much fun that they forgot how hungry they were. Even the big, grumpy villager was no longer grumpy. "Let's make this meal a party!" he shouted. The girl returned with the cabbage, and the boy soon followed with his carrots. "Just think, a huge kettle of soup made from a magic stone," said the boy. "I can't wait to try it!"

"Neither can I," said the girl. Finally, the traveler announced that the stone soup was ready to eat. He filled all the bowls, and the villagers began to eat. Afterward there was plenty of soup left over. "There's enough to spare and share!" said the young lady.

The villagers were so happy after dinner that they didn't want the evening to end. They started playing music together and dancing with one another. At last the village was alive with chatter and laughter.

"I didn't know you could play the banjo," the maid said to the big villager.

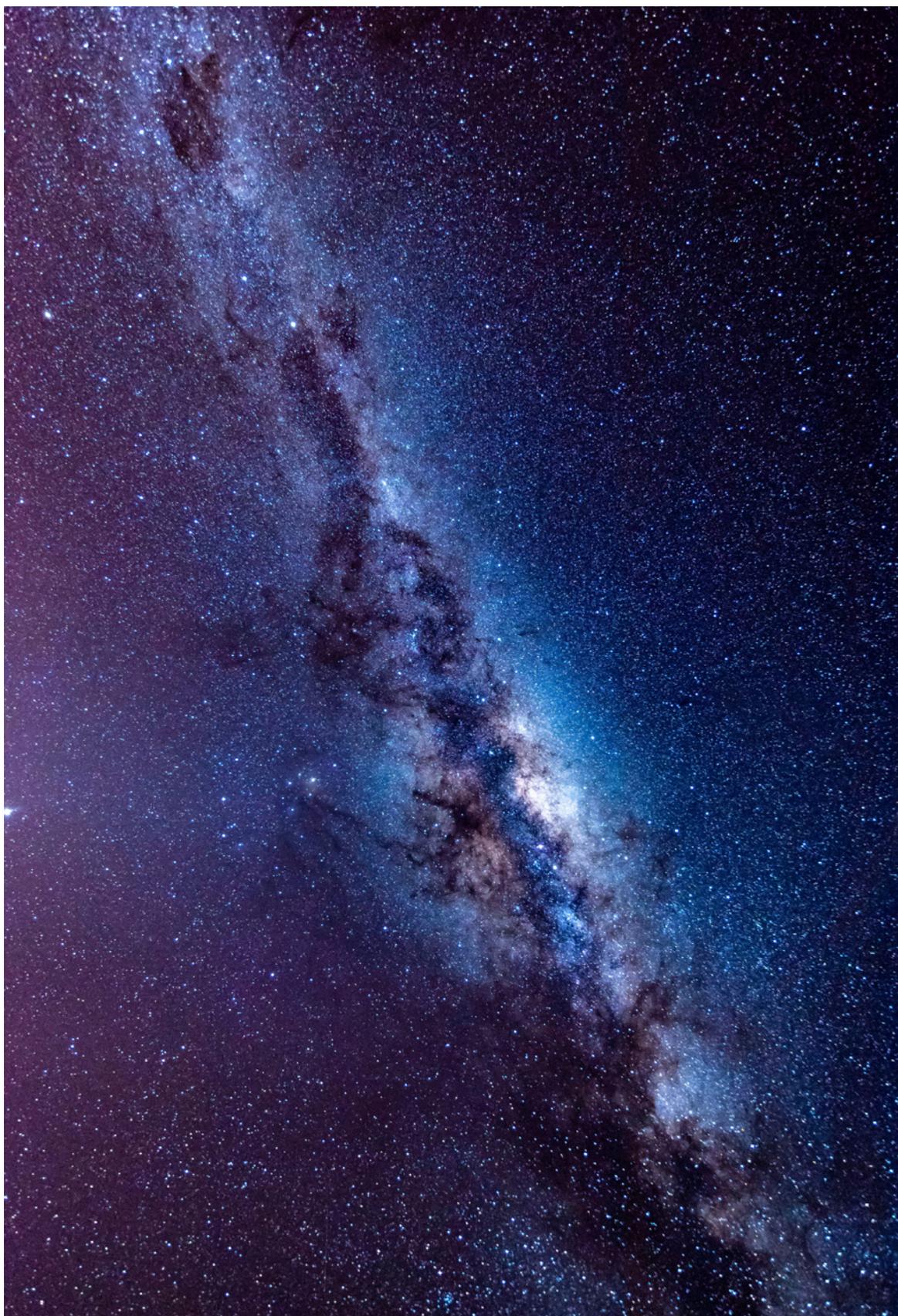
"And I didn't know you could play the washboard," he responded.

"I think there was a lot we didn't know until the traveler came along," said the maid.

The next morning, the traveler said good-bye to his new friends in the village. It was time for him to leave. "I want you to have this," the traveler said as he handed the smooth, oval stone to the villagers. "Now you will always be able to make stone soup together, and you will never be hungry or sad or grumpy again." Each of the villagers hugged the traveler and told him to come back and visit some time. They were all very grateful and hoped to see the traveler again.

As the traveler headed out of the lovely little village, he stumbled over another stone in the road. He picked it up at once and admired its dark, jagged edges. The traveler looked at the stone carefully and finally decided to keep it. "You never know when a stone like this might come in handy," he said to himself as he placed it in his bag.

Resource 3. The Milky Way¹⁵



Resource 4. Family Calendar Template

Resource 5. Diversity Cards

Note: These cards should be printed double-sided, so that the matching written descriptions are on the back of each card when they are cut out.



A Sikh child is wearing a traditional turban. A turban helps keep hair clean. A special community of Sikhs, called the Khalsa, don't cut their hair, as a symbol of listening to God's will.



These children are training to be Buddhist monks. They live in a monastery where everyone has their head shaved and wears the same clothes. This is because they believe that differences in clothes and hair can distract people from the more important things of life.



This Christian child is receiving some bread from the priest during first communion. This represents the last meal Jesus ate with his apostles, or closest followers, before he died, and is seen as a way of becoming united with Jesus.¹⁶



Three girls are feeding a cow. In Hinduism, cows are seen as sacred and treated with special care.



After Hindus worship the Hindu gods, they are given a tilak. This is a red mark on the forehead made of red powder or sandalwood paste. It helps the person to focus on their goals for the day.



During Passover, one of the biggest Jewish festivals, this young child eats a special bread called matzoh. This is to remind of when the Jewish slaves left Egypt for freedom in a hurry and their bread didn't have time to rise in the oven.



The Qur'an teaches Muslims only to eat certain foods. They don't eat pork or drink alcohol, for example. When they want to buy meat, they go to a special butcher called a halal butcher.¹⁷



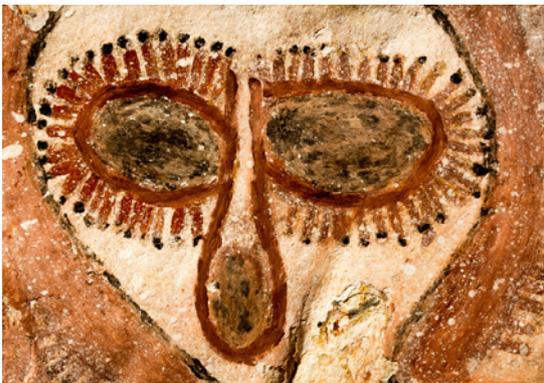
This family is at a Buddhist temple. They are praying to Buddha. As they pray, they light incense sticks.



This young Sikh child is performing seva — helping to take care of those who need it by handing out food at a community meal.



A family say a prayer on Christmas Day, a day in which Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, to say thanks. In the evening, there is a special dinner with lots of good food, including gingerbread cookies.¹⁸



This is an Australian aboriginal painting. It shows Wandjina, a powerful Rain Maker spirit that brought aboriginal people their culture, language and laws. The eyes of Wandjina represent thunderstorms.¹⁹



These children are from the Samburu tribe in Kenya, Africa. The Samburu people wear many colorful beaded earrings, bracelets, necklaces and anklets



A family is playing a game using a dreidel. When they spin the dreidel, it lands on a different word of the phrase: "Ness Gadol Haya Po," which means "There was here a great miracle." Depending on where the dreidel falls, you can win chocolate money!



These girls are wearing special Muslim clothing. Some girls wear a scarf over their heads, like these girls, and the boys wear a small cap on their heads.



In some African spiritual traditions, masks are used for religious rituals for occasions such as when a child is born or when someone dies. They are usually made from wood and then painted in different colors.



These children in China are wearing traditional Taoist clothing. They are playing the guzheng musical instrument.

Endnotes

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- ⁴ Miller, L. (2015). *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*. St. Martin's Press. 124.
- ⁵ Adapted from Miller, L. (2015). *The Spiritual Child*.
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- ¹⁰ The Virtues Project (2021). *What Are Virtues?* <https://virtuesproject.com/virtues-definitions-1>
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- ¹² UNICEF (2011). *Child Disciplinary Practices at Home: Evidence from a Range of Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-disciplinary-practices-at-home-evidence-from-a-range-of-low-and-middle-income-countries/>
- ¹³ Sumartini, S., Somantri, B., Suparto, T., Andriyani, S., & Salasa, S. (2020). *The Effect of Playing Blowing Balloon Therapy to Changes in Lung Function in Preschool Children (3-5 Years Old) with Asthma*. [Conference presentation]. 4th International Conference on Sport Science, Health, and Physical Education 2019. Indonesia. <http://icsshpe.event.upi.edu/2019>
- ¹⁴ Short Stories for [Kids.net](https://kids.net) (no date). Stone Soup. <https://shortstoriesforkids.net/moral-stories/stone-soup/>
- ¹⁵ The corresponding image was taken by William Zhang on Unsplash <https://exoplanets.nasa.gov/milky-way-overlay/>
- ¹⁶ The corresponding image was taken from [Freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com).
- ¹⁷ The corresponding image was taken by [rawpixel.com](https://www.rawpixel.com) on Freepik.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ The corresponding image was taken by Robyn Jay, (photoslearnscope14623115) on [Flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com).

About the International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence

The Consortium, convened by Arigatou International, brings together civil society and faith-based organizations, religious communities, multilateral organizations, academia and individual experts to foster collaboration, share good practises and develop evidence-based and innovative approaches to integrate values-based education and spirituality in early childhood for the protection of children from violence and the promotion of their holistic well-being.

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