

## **Activity Three: Build a House**

### **Materials:**

- All materials for this activity can be found in recycling bins or around the house.
  
- Make 4 copies of “personal quality cards” with words such as smart/wise, generous/giving, honest/truthful, hardworking, brave, interesting, fun, etc. that will be handed out later in the activity.

Pack up 4 dark colored trash bags with materials as described below.

- Bag One (most/best resources): The highest quality and most abundant building supplies will be in this bag. Items such as sturdy mid to large size cardboard, strong tape such as duct tape, a variety of colored construction paper, pieces of fabric, good markers, etc.
  - Bag Two (medium/average resources): Items such as less sturdy smaller cardboard, scotch tape, less colored construction paper, a small piece of fabric, crayons, etc.
  - Bags Three and Four (least/very few resources): Items such as cereal boxes for cardboard, a stick of glue, a few odds and ends.
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- On 2 pieces of paper draw 1 dollar sign (\$). On 1 piece of paper draw 2 dollar signs (\$\$). On 1 piece of paper draw 3 dollar signs (\$\$\$).

### **Instructions:**

1. Hang up the Big 8+ poster or refer to it as a handout. For this activity, it is best to wait to review the poster at the end of the activity.
  
2. Randomly divide the participants into four groups. Give each group a bag of building supplies and instruct them to work as a team to build a house with the materials they have in their bag. They can't use the bag as part of the house. Give everyone a specific amount of time to build their house. Generally 15-20 minutes works well. The groups should be spread out around the room so that they have room to build, yet can easily see the other groups. Ask one of the low resources groups to move to another room or in the hallway to build their house so they have enough room (having enough room is the excuse you give to move one low resource group to the hall).

3. While the groups are building their houses, facilitators can observe the process for discussion at the end. Here are some trends you might notice:
  - o Group 1 (the most resources) tends to get along well; they usually appear to be having a good time. Each person will often have an individual project such as making curtains or drawing pictures for the house. Materials are abundant and tend to be wasted such as tape being wrapped around the house. This group does not tend to notice what is going on in the other groups.
  
  - o Group 2 (average amount of resources) tends to get along well. They diligently work together. They tend to notice the groups with more and less materials and are content to be in the middle. The group tends to build a sturdy home without a lot of extras.
  - o Group 3 (the least resources) stays in the room with the other groups. They usually are disappointed and a bit frustrated to have less materials than the other groups. They are not as creative and seem to give up easily.
  
  - o Group 4 (the least resources) who left the room tend to get along well and have fun. They usually use all of their supplies efficiently and constructively. They are not concerned with the other groups, although they are curious as to why they are asked to leave the room.
  
4. Once the allotted time is over, invite group 4 back into the room to share their houses. All participants will sit in a circle with houses in the middle. Facilitators ask the participants about the process of building their houses. What did it feel like to have more or less? How did the group in the hall feel when they walked in and others had more. Give them time to discuss.
  
5. Hand out the dollar signs that have been drawn on pieces of paper. Give the paper with one dollar sign (\$) to the two low resource groups, give the paper with two dollar signs (\$\$) to the middle resource group, give the paper with three dollar signs (\$\$\$) to the high resource group. This represents the money they have for food, housing, education, bills, etc. Ask the group to reflect on how it can be difficult to get by on less money. How does it feel to have a bigger or smaller bundle?
  
6. Facilitate a discussion about one's characteristics based on their money and resources. Next, bring out the personal quality cards one at a time and ask which house has people living in it that are the most hardworking. After some discussion, give all 4 house groups a hardworking word to show that money and what we have doesn't tell us anything about the kind of person you are. Continue this for all the other words that describe

people's character saying things such as, “TV and magazines might make us think that only people with a lot of money are interesting because that is who is on the cover but all people are interesting. Although we can’t make it so all people have the same amount of money, we can recognize the struggle of some more than others financially. Most importantly, we must not assume that we know the character of people from the amount of money that they have.”