

# We are Family

*Every family has a story to tell*



Complexity



7-13 years



60 minutes



4-30



Discrimination



Family and  
Alternative Care



Gender Equality

## Type of activity

Drawing, discussion

## Overview

Using pictures and drawings, children discuss concepts of family and different family structures.

## Objectives

- To encourage thinking about different ways of raising children and different notions of 'family'
- To address discrimination against children with non-typical family compositions
- To explore the link between family and human rights

## Preparation

Prepare a set of illustrations / photos representing different family schemes for each small group (e.g. single-parent, 'classical family', 'patchwork families', same-sex couples, adopted children, big families including various generations).

## Materials

- Copies of all pictures for each small group of children

## Instructions

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that this activity explores the many different ways that we identify the people we consider our family. Emphasise that not all children live in the same kinds of families.
2. Ask each child to draw the family they live in (i.e. as opposed to the family they may be separated from, or once had). Encourage them to include details about their family if they want to (e.g. name, age, sex of each person).
3. Ask the children to discuss types of families that they know about. Ask them to present their drawings of their own family.
4. Together, brainstorm and list as many types of families as possible. Mention some that have not been spoken about already.
5. Divide the children into small groups of four or five, and give each group a copy of the illustrations / photos you prepared earlier. Ask each group to discuss what they see in each picture, including any differences between the images they drew of their own families.

## Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Discuss the activity using questions such as these:
  - Did you enjoy this activity?
  - How easy or difficult was it to draw and represent your family?

- Were you surprised by other children's drawings? Why?
  - What did you learn about families?
  - What is a 'family'?
2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the right for children to live with their parents and the right to a family. Why is this right so important?
  - Are there children who do not live in a family? Where do they live?
  - Who ensures that the rights of children who do not live in a family are respected?
  - Can families also violate their children's rights?

## Suggestions for follow-up

The activity 'Who Should Decide?' addresses questions about how families live together and make decisions. Several activities also deal with stereotyped expectations: 'Picture Games' and 'World Summer Camp'.

## Ideas for action

If possible, with older children, arrange a visit to a local orphanage or care home and create discussion or friendship groups with the children there.

If there are any 'Adopt a grandparent' or 'Adopt a parent' initiatives in the local community, some children in the group may like to get involved in their activities.

Some children may like to start their own 'Adopt a brother or sister' initiative, which can be introduced in a local school or community.

## Tips for the facilitator

Make sure that the children feel comfortable and will not be teased for presenting family styles that are unusual or different. Throughout the exercise, emphasise tolerance, empathy, and other values which are related to what makes a family.

It is important to be aware of the family backgrounds of the children in your group and to adapt the activity so as not to embarrass them, or make any of them feel uncomfortable. No child should feel pressured to disclose details of their family life.

Before running this exercise, read the background information on Family and Alternative Care. You will find information in this chapter which may be useful for this activity – for example, about different types of families or family structures.

## Adaptations

To shorten this activity, consider running it without using the pictures of families. When dividing the children into smaller groups, you could ask them simply to discuss and reflect on their own family. However, it is still important in the debriefing to discuss or refer to other types of families that may not be present in the groups.

You could also do the activity as a whole group. Put a large piece of paper on the floor and ask the children to sit down around it. Write 'Families' in the middle of the paper, and then do steps 1 to 4 using the sheet of paper for their drawings. At step 5, show them the pictures you have collected, and add them to the large sheet of paper, while discussing them. At the end, you will have a picture representing all possible kinds of family structure.