

**Free Activities for  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
By: Cheri J. Meiners**

**Activity 1: Making a Difference: Topics to Discuss**

**Directions:** Write each of the following questions on an index card. Draw and read the questions for discussion starters.

**Extension Activity:** Ask a question below and have children draw a picture. Then let children dictate to you what the picture is about. Attach the question and the child's response to the back of their picture.

1. What is something that makes you happy?
2. What do other children say they like about you?
3. What do you enjoy doing?
4. If you could improve something in the world, what would it be?
5. What do you like helping other people with?
6. What would you like to be?
7. What can you do to be you best?
8. What is something that comes naturally to you?
9. What is something you feel that you can give?
10. What are you interested in learning about?
11. What matters to you?

## Activity 2: People who have Made a Difference

**Directions:** Read about leaders and people who have made a difference throughout history. Talk about what these people did and how their contributions or example impacts others. Ask and discuss questions like  
What do you think this person did that really mattered?  
What is something important to you that you would like to do?

**Extension:** Have children draw a picture of something they admire in another person; whether accomplishments, relationships, or a brave attitude through difficulties. Have children talk about their picture and explain what the child can learn from this person, and what the child can try to do to live purposefully.

## Activity 3: Discovering a sense of Purpose through Traditions

**Materials:** 8 1/2 x 11" sheets of computer paper (13 sheets for each child); stapler or hole-punch and yarn; markers, crayons, pencils; (optional) copies of photographs of the children involved in some of the activities; scissors, glue

**Preparation:** Create a traditions calendar with a title page and one page for each month. You may choose to leave the papers blank or to copy a simple calendar on the lower portion of each page.

**Discussion:** The family is the primary place that children can feel accepted, and develop a sense of identity and purpose. Discuss traditions such as holidays, Sunday dinners, family gatherings, birthday celebrations, or anything the child looks forward to on a regular basis. Some sample discussion questions are:

- What are you celebrating?
- What do you typically do in your tradition?
- Who do you celebrate with?
- What is your favorite part of the occasion?

**Directions:** Help children mark these special days on the calendar, and paste in any copies of relevant photos. Let children draw a picture of a tradition or typical activity they enjoy in that month. Write or help the child write a caption explaining why this activity has meaning to the child. Through this activity children can look forward to time honored activities and find meaning and purpose in some of the relationships and events in their life.

**Extension:** Have a weekly time to let children share significant activities that they anticipate or have recently celebrated with their families.

## Activity 4: Discussion from the Wizard of Oz

**Discussion Ideas:** You may wish to read or tell a simplified version of the Wonderful Wizard of Oz to your children and talk about some of the characters.

Dorothy and her friends Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion may help children understand some of the ways that they develop a sense of purpose and learn ways they can make a difference. As the characters followed the yellow brick road to their goal of Emerald City, they had a purpose, which was tested along the way, which is similar our 'road' through life. Talk to the children about each character and how those attributes can make a difference in their own lives.

**Dorothy (who represents the child)** with her determination to get back home can represent children's desire to understand themselves, and their values and identity which are largely associated with loving family and supportive friends. Dorothy learned about herself on her journey. She also made friends and they helped each other. We will have help from others in our life journey, but we have to do some things on our own to find ways that we can contribute and make a difference.

**The Scarecrow: Achievement (Do Good)** The Scarecrow wanted a brain. He found as he made decisions that he already had a brain. Children can learn in school to develop their minds. Being involved in activities, games, events, family life and school functions are other ways that children become involved in learning and achieving. These skills enrich the life of the child and those around them.

**The Tin Man: Relationships (Be kind)** The Tin Man wanted a heart. He actually always had a heart, but as he cared for others on the road he showed his caring heart to them and himself. An important way to feel a sense of purpose and making a difference is by 'having a heart', and being kind to others through thoughtful acts of generosity and service.

**The Lion: Courage (Be positive/ or Feel hope)** The Lion wanted courage, and realized that he had it when he needed to help his friends. He made a difference to them as he overcame his fears, developed a positive attitude, and believed that he could help them. Children become more like the lion when they believe in themselves and what they can do, and take steps out of their comfort zones. It also takes courage and hope to face challenges when things are hard.

## Activity 5: Yellow Brick Road Game

### Materials:

- Sidewalk chalk or masking tape
- Several sheets of construction paper
- Index cards
- Marker
- Spinner or die

### Preparation:

- **Game board:** Construct a windy road with chalk on a sidewalk or play area, or by taping sheets of construction paper in a pathway on a hard indoor floor.
- **Character cards:** Make 2 or 3 cards of each of the 4 characters listed below by writing the name on each card. Put each card on a random square on the board.
- **Questions:** Make a list of a few questions for each character, such as those below. You will read a question to a child that correlates with the character on their landed square.

**Directions:** A child on the sidelines spins a spinner or rolls a die for children to move forward in the game. When children land on a square with a name card they will answer a question. When the child reaches the Emerald City, recreate the moment of Dorothy spinning around (and clicking her heels) as she thought of her guiding purpose--to go home. As you spin a child, let the child tell a goal, or something that gives them purpose.

### Game Questions:

#### Dorothy (She represents the child)

- What is something you like about yourself?
- What is something that you think makes you different and special?

### **Tinman-"Be kind"**

- Who is someone you respect?
- Who is someone in your family that you can help? • What can you do?

### **Scarecrow- "Do good"**

- What is something you want to learn?
- What are you good at?
- What is something you have done that you are proud of?

### **Lion- "Be positive"**

- When you have a problem, what is something that gives you courage to keep trying?
- What is something hard that you have overcome?
- What is something you feel positive about?

## **A Tip for Adults: "WHY?? What's the purpose?"**

Children are naturally curious. When you ask them to do something, they often ask "Why?" (which is to say, "What is the purpose of this?"). They will appreciate when you take time to briefly and adequately answer their questions.

Explain the purpose of your request as well as how you would like the job to be done. A nonresponse like "because I said so" can cause children to feel powerless, and to lack motivation to comply. On the other hand, when children feel a sense of purpose, they understand how something relates to them.