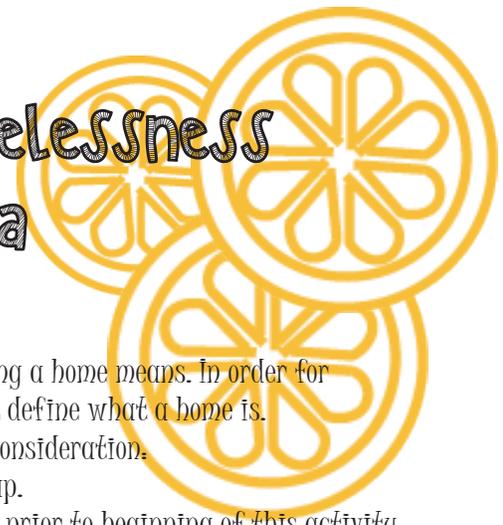




Understanding homelessness

Activity 2-a



The following activities all relate to teaching children of all ages about what having a home means. In order for them to begin to understand what it means to be without a home, they must first define what a home is.

If you are doing this activity as a group, you will need to take the following into consideration:

- It is important to be sensitive to the varying definitions of home within the group.
- It is important to know the home situations of each of the participating children prior to beginning of this activity.
- Do you have a child who is or has been homeless? Do you have a child in the group who has lost a home to a fire?
- Don't assume that having a child with this reality is a reason not to teach this activity. Instead, a child who has been through the experience of not having a home can be a wonderful asset to teaching other children about what this experience is like.

Desired Outcomes:

- Children will understand how cause and effect relate to one another.
- Children will begin to contemplate and talk about the many types of people who are without homes and the many reasons people can lose their homes.

Preparation Time:

15 minutes

Class Time:

one hour

Materials Needed:

- Large piece of chart paper
- A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams

Basic Objective:

Children listen to a story about a child whose apartment burns down and then discuss it.

Background:

A Chair for My Mother is an award-winning children's book that deals beautifully with a little girl's (and her family's) loss of a home. Early in the story, Rosa, her mother and her grandmother lose their home when their apartment burns down. Fortunately the community pitches in by providing furniture for the family and even a stuffed animal for Rosa. Throughout the story, though, Rosa wants to buy her mother a big chair so she can relax when she returns from a hard day of waiting tables at a restaurant. In the end, the family buys the chair with the change they collect in a jar.

Discussion:

1. Talk about the many types of people who are homeless. For example, there are moms, dads, children, and people of different gender and ethnicity. Talk briefly about ways that people can lose their homes.
2. Read A Chair for my Mother by Vera B. Williams. Talk about the child and her mother whose apartment building burned down.
Note: This is a scary idea, and you will need to handle this delicately. While we want children to understand that homelessness can happen to many people, we do not want them to fear it as probable.
3. On a large piece of chart paper, record the thoughts that come from your discussion. Examples might include: how Rosa feels in the story, and how having a goal - like buying the chair - was helpful.

Source: <http://www.unitedwayla.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Facing-Homelessness-Curriculum.pdf>



Pathways of Hope

Rebuilding Lives of the Hungry and Homeless