

# FLUSHING FEARS

Conclude a session on fear by distributing **felt markers** and several squares of **toilet paper** to each group member. Invite members to list their fears on their toilet paper. (Caution members about the felt-markers bleeding through the toilet paper onto surfaces below.)

When group members have finished listing their fears, move together into a nearby **bathroom** and gather around the toilet. Offer a brief prayer, for example:

- Dear God, we surrender our fears to you, knowing that you desire to flush our lives of fear as we're about to flush away these scraps of toilet paper.

Invite group members to throw their toilet-paper fear lists into the toilet. Ask a volunteer to ceremoniously flush the toilet. Say *Amen* in unison.

# FEAR FIGURES

Distribute **modeling clay** and invite members to sculpt images that symbolize things they fear, either concrete—like street violence, or abstract—like rejection. When they have finished, invite group members to show and explain their images to the group. Discuss:

- What are our greatest fears?
- When do our fears interfere with our lives? When do they help protect us?
- What can we do to deal with our fears?
  - How can each of the following help us deal with fears: family members? friends? counselors? God?
  - What step could you take today toward overcoming an annoying fear?

Ask group members to remold their clay images to represent the end of those particular fears. Show and explain the new sculptures to each other.

# Rejection

Write each letter of the word *rejection* on a separate piece of **construction paper**. Distribute these nine pieces of paper to individual group members. Distribute **felt markers**.

Ask each group member with a sheet of paper to enlist everyone's help to think of words that deal with rejection and begin with the letter on the paper. For example, "R" might include "rude" or "rough." Ask members to record suggested words on the pieces of construction paper.

Read aloud the "rejection" words, starting with "R" and concluding with "N." Discuss:

- Describe a situation in which you felt rejected at home or at school.
- How do you feel when rejected?
- What are some healthy ways to deal with rejection?
- What are some not-so-healthy ways to deal with rejection?
- What encouragement could we give to someone who feels rejected?

# FeAR RoLEPLaY

Before the session write a variety of roles on separate slips of paper, 1 per participant. Include roles both immediate for group members as well as roles drawn from world events, for example:

- 8th-grader at a big-city junior high school
- 10th-grader at a rural high school
- 12th-grader at a suburban high school
- unemployed, divorced parent with two teenage children
- 10-year-old child growing up in a war-torn European country
- homeless person living in downtown Chicago
- high-school student just diagnosed with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS)

- teenager in a Jewish family in rural America that has been targeted for hate crimes by a white supremacist group
- junior high student waiting for a liver transplant
- high school student whose father has just been diagnosed with cancer
- Central American priest who has been imprisoned for speaking out in defense of the country's poor

In the session, let group members choose slips of paper. Form random groups of three. Give groups these instructions:

- Play the part of the person on your slip.
- Describe all of your fears to the other members of your group.
- Discuss who has the most to fear.
- Discuss what can be done about your fears.

## SCaRY STORY

Invite group members to tell a scary story. Dim the lights and sit together in a circle. Offer these directions: I'm going to tell the first line of a scary story. The next person in the circle will add the next line. We will continue around the circle, completing the story, each of us adding a sentence. The title of the story is "Ultimate Fear." Let's see how many fears we can include in our scary story.

Begin the story with this sentence:

- Tamara and Dean were just your normal high school (or junior high or middle school) students, until one day at school when the impossible happened, the thing they'd always feared the most...

## FaLLiNG PaST FeAR

Ask group members to line up according to height, from shortest to tallest. Pair group members, matching people of about the same height with each other. Explain that fear can only be overcome with trust.

Ask a volunteer (again, one about your size) to help you demonstrate a trust fall. Position **pillows, cushions or gym mats** in front of you. Ask the volunteer to stand on the cushions several feet in front of you, facing away from you, with arms out as if on a cross. Invite the volunteer to fall backward, keeping legs and back straight and stiff. As the volunteer falls, slip your hands and arms under the volunteer's arms, catching the volunteer under the arms. Note that the riskiness of the fall can be minimized by placing the volunteer closer to you before he or she falls; at the same time, the amount of trust needed to let oneself fall increases the farther one stands from the catcher.

Ask pairs to practice trust falls with each other. Let them begin by having both partners stand fairly close to each other for initial catches, then slowly move apart as the "faller" comes to trust more in the "catcher." Assure safety when conducting this activity. Don't allow group members to take unnecessary risks.

# PYRAMID POEM

Provide **paper** and **pencils** and invite group members to compose pyramid poems on the subject of fear. *Directions:*

- At the top of your paper write the word *fear*. This is the first line—and the top—of your pyramid poem.
- For the second line of your pyramid poem write two words related to fear.
- For the third line of your pyramid poem, write *three* words related to fear.
- Write four words for the fourth line, five for the fifth, etc., all related to fear.
- Make your poem as long as you wish, always adding a word for each additional line.
- Don't worry about spelling, grammar or rhyming. Just let your poem freely express your thoughts and feelings about fear.

When group members have finished their poems, invite volunteers to read their poems to the group.

# EXAMINING FEAR

Divide participants into smaller groups of 3-4 members each. Ask the first question listed below. Give groups 2-3 minutes to discuss the question, then call time and ask the next question. Repeat for the remaining questions. Encourage groups to give all of their members time to share after each question.

*Questions:*

- What's the most afraid you've ever been?
- What types of things scare you the most? physical threats? emotional threats? social threats?
- What have you feared in the past that no longer scares you? Why has this changed?
- What is the root cause of most fears?
- What part does lack of control play in the things you fear?
  - How do you cope with fear? What are your options? Who helps you deal with fear?
  - When is fear healthy and normal?
  - When is fear unhealthy and harmful?

A few minutes after you have asked the final question, stop the group discussions and say:

- Take another few minutes to return to any previous question that you wanted to keep discussing when I stopped you.

# BEING AFRAID

Before the meeting, copy the list below onto chalkboard or newsprint.

- failure
- disappointing others
- making mistakes
- serious illness
- death
- being abandoned
- the future
- loneliness
- rejection
- hell
- not being liked
- God
- getting old
- name your own

Distribute **paper** and a **pencil** and invite everyone to look over the list and write down in order of priority which three items generate the most fear.

When everyone has finished, poll the group for each item on the list. For each group member, score a number 1 choice 3 points, a number 2 choice 2 points and a number 3 choice 1 point.

Total points for a final score, then list on chalkboard or newsprint the group's three biggest fears.

*Discuss:*

- What do all of these fears have in common?
- What makes the three fears we picked as our biggest fears the worst of all fears?