

7 Love-Builders

*Build Christian care in your group
with these no-fail activities*

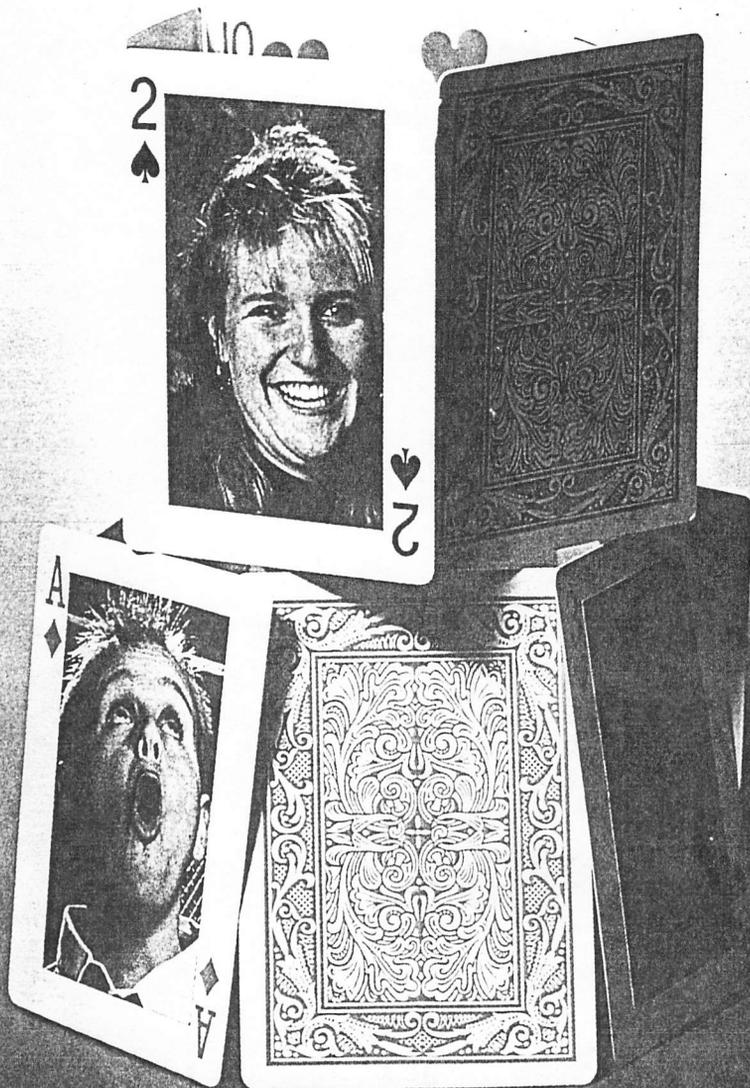
BY DAVID ADAMS

“Love means . . .”

Ask junior highers to complete that sentence and you'll get an interesting array of answers. Love can be a difficult subject to explain to junior highers. They'll readily tell you what they think love is, but their concept of love is based on what they see and hear from the secular media. And the media focus more on physical attraction than the kind of love a group is built on.

The following seven activities will challenge your group members to love and support one another in constructive ways.

1. Card House—This community-builder is relatively simple. Give each group member a card. If you have fewer than 10 kids, give each person two cards. Have kids work together to build a house of cards on a flat surface. All participants must use their cards; the house isn't finished until all the cards are used. Hint: Unless someone takes charge of the operation, it



can be difficult. Expect kids to make at least two attempts.

Talk about how building this house represents how your group works together.

• Ask: Why does loving each other take work and cooperation?

Emphasize that everyone depends on each other, and with teamwork your group can create something that can stand on its own.

Then pull out one of the bottom cards as you talk about what happens when kids don't work together or if they give up too soon.

2. Big Old Hunka Love—Form groups of three or four. Tell groups they're going to participate in an unusual art project.

Give groups each a hunk of clay. Have groups each take a couple of minutes to mold something with the clay that symbolizes a way to love others in the youth group. For example, an ear for listening, a heart for caring or a plate of cookies for sharing. Encourage kids to be creative.

After all groups are finished, have groups each explain what their creation represents.

• Then ask: What does 'love' mean? Discuss kids' answers.

Place the clay creations on a sheet of posterboard titled "LOVE IS," and set it on a table. Keep the sculptures in your meeting area as a reminder for kids to love one another.

3. Lovin' Spoonfuls—This activity has two options. The first is a relay. Form two teams, and have each team form pairs. Give partners each a teaspoon. Place a baseball or tennis ball at the other end of the room. Have the first set of partners run to the ball, pick it up with their teaspoons and carry it back to the next pair in line. Have that pair take it from them, without letting the ball touch the floor or anybody's hands, and run it to the other end of the room. Keep it up until one team wins.

The second option is to give each group member a teaspoon, and have the entire group work together to move objects about 20 feet across the floor. All spoons must be in contact with an object while it moves from one spot to the other. If an object

touches the floor while in transit, the group must start over. The objects can be just about anything, but large, light objects such as volleyballs and pillows work best.

After the game, have kids talk about how their partners or teammates exhibited love and respect.

4. Stress Points—With masking tape, make two parallel lines on the floor, about 2 feet apart. Make the lines long enough for half your group to stand comfortably along each line. Form two teams. Have teams each stand behind their line, facing the other team.

Tell teams they're going to play a variation of Tug of War. Teams will each "invite" the opposing team members to join their team by dragging them across the first line. When a team gets an opposing team member on its side, that person becomes a supportive member of the new team and helps pull other people across the line. Teams can try anything to resist having team members pulled across the line, but when a person's foot crosses the first line, that person has to join the other team. Have teams stay close to their lines.

Encourage teams to let their team members know how cherished and valuable they are by grabbing onto them and saving them from being pulled away. Caution kids not to hurt each other.

Let the game continue until everyone is on the same team. Then talk about the importance of overlooking prejudices and joining together as one team.

Call time if the game appears to drag on or if kids get too enthusiastic about pulling new members into their team.

5. Bag of Hugs—Write the following hugging exercises on pieces of paper, and put them in a bag. Then pull them out and use them during a meeting.

• **Cinnamon Hug**—Stand in a line and hold hands. The person at one end of the line must roll in toward the next person. Continue rolling until everyone is wrapped up like a cinnamon roll. Then squeeze. Unroll the cinnamon roll by having the person at the other end of the line roll away from the group while the others follow.

• **Reverse Hug**—Form pairs and stand back to back. Carefully put your arms

around each other and hug.

• **Number Hug**—When you hear a number, get in groups of that size and have a group hug.

• **Line Hug**—Form two equal, parallel lines. Then one by one, kids at the head of each line walk between the lines. Kids across from each other in line move in and hug the person as he or she passes. When the person reaches the end, he or she gets in line, and the next person goes. Repeat the process until everyone is hugged.

6. Reverse Tag—Get the group together in a large open space where kids can run. Select someone to be "It." Tell kids they're going to play an unusual game of Freeze Tag. When they're tagged, they must stand still until tagged by someone other than "It."

But Reverse Tag is slightly backward. Talk about how sacrifice is part of love, and in this game kids will have the opportunity to "sacrifice" for others. Kids will sacrifice themselves to keep others from getting tagged. The one who is least sacrificial is the one who is tagged, or frozen, last. That person loses.

Tell kids they can't just run up and touch "It" to be tagged; they must actually be tagged.

Kids may need to think about this game for a few seconds before they catch on. Play Reverse Tag more than once for kids to play well.

7. Love Boat—Form groups of three or four. Tell kids to imagine your youth group is on a cruise and the boat is sinking. Each group has access to a lifeboat, but it won't hold everyone. One person in each group must choose to be left behind to save the rest of the group. Encourage kids to each convince their group why they should be left behind to save the others.

After five minutes, have a rescue helicopter fly in and save them all.

• Then ask: How did you feel if you were the person who stayed behind? How did you feel if you got to leave in the lifeboat? How is Jesus like the person who stayed behind?

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