



# BIG *h*ART

Workshop Activities

GAMES

4

# BIG *h*ART

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TASMANIA

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John Bakes and Scott Rankin, June 1996.

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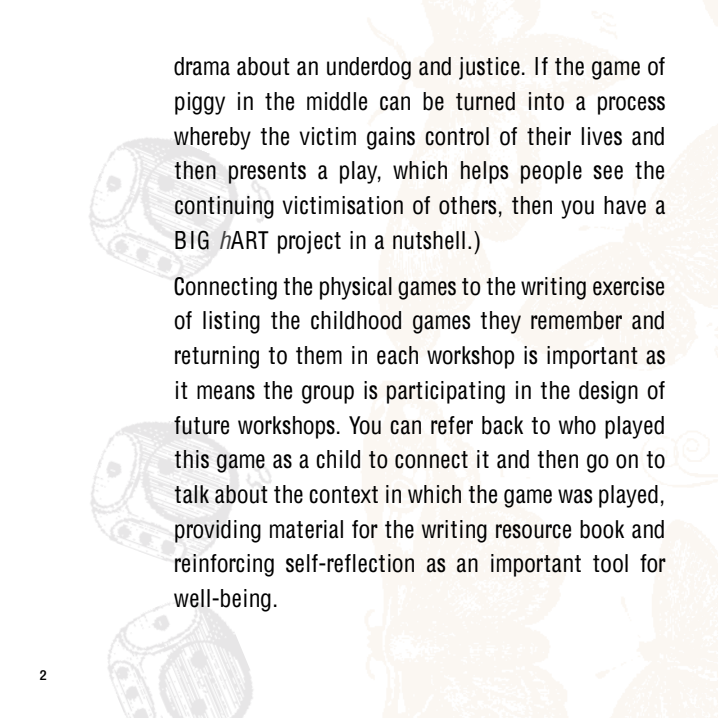
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The BIG *h*ART MODEL has been successfully piloted and independently  
evaluated on the North West Coast of Tasmania. All care has gone into  
the preparation of this BIG *h*ART manual however BIG *h*ART Inc accepts  
no responsibility for the conduct and ability of workers, volunteers, or  
participants using this manual in future projects.

## INTRODUCTION

Games are useful as a starting point for many workshop activities. Physically, they lift the energy levels: they break down inhibitions and, even though they may feel childish when suggested, are hard to resist once they are happening. The connection to childhood is very valuable, and because creativity and ideas are connected to play, games are useful in the slow process of re-awakening these skills.

Joining in a game is hard to resist because it touches basic human needs and experiences. In a primitive way, games are linked to societal rituals. Victim games, games playing with death and fear etc, are infectious as release valves for repression. (If there is a ball in a room it doesn't take long for piggy in the middle to develop. Piggy in the middle dressed-up, becomes a

The background features a faint, stylized illustration of a child's face in profile, looking towards the right. The child's hands are visible, holding a board game with several pieces. The illustration is rendered in a light, sketchy style with soft colors, primarily in shades of orange and yellow, creating a warm and nostalgic atmosphere.

drama about an underdog and justice. If the game of piggy in the middle can be turned into a process whereby the victim gains control of their lives and then presents a play, which helps people see the continuing victimisation of others, then you have a BIG *hART* project in a nutshell.)

Connecting the physical games to the writing exercise of listing the childhood games they remember and returning to them in each workshop is important as it means the group is participating in the design of future workshops. You can refer back to who played this game as a child to connect it and then go on to talk about the context in which the game was played, providing material for the writing resource book and reinforcing self-reflection as an important tool for well-being.

Later in workshops games may be useful for exploring specific physical performance skills. Initially, however, their role is more basic – cooperation, release of inhibition, energy levels, touching and social space etc.

These are only examples and there are many other games that can be used in this way. Many of them are universal and they are restated here for convenience. (Some “trust” games have been avoided because they tend to be stigmatised for this target group through overuse.)

Whatever games you choose to use, remember that the main purpose is not to encourage acting skills. The exercises have a primary purpose of weaving together a group life, opening individual pathways, and creating a new language which does not rely on unrealistic levels of skill.

## PHYSICAL GAMES/EXERCISES

### STARTERS

Very physical games, half remembered from childhood can be useful at the beginning of almost any workshop. Certain games can take on a role as a ritual themselves and be used again and again travelling with the group on tour and at times when you need a connection to past work you've done together.

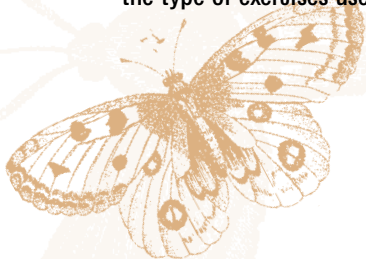
These games have an edge of competitiveness and cooperation built into the rules – which is useful. The rules themselves, in a similar way to sport, provide a holiday of predictability, which can relieve tension during more threatening introspective work.

The games are roughly chronological, although group life will determine this.

**NOTE:**

The activities in all these books are designed to be mixed and matched for any one workshop (eg games, writing, physical etc).

The temperament and physical ability of the target group for each project will obviously determine the type of exercises used in these workshops.

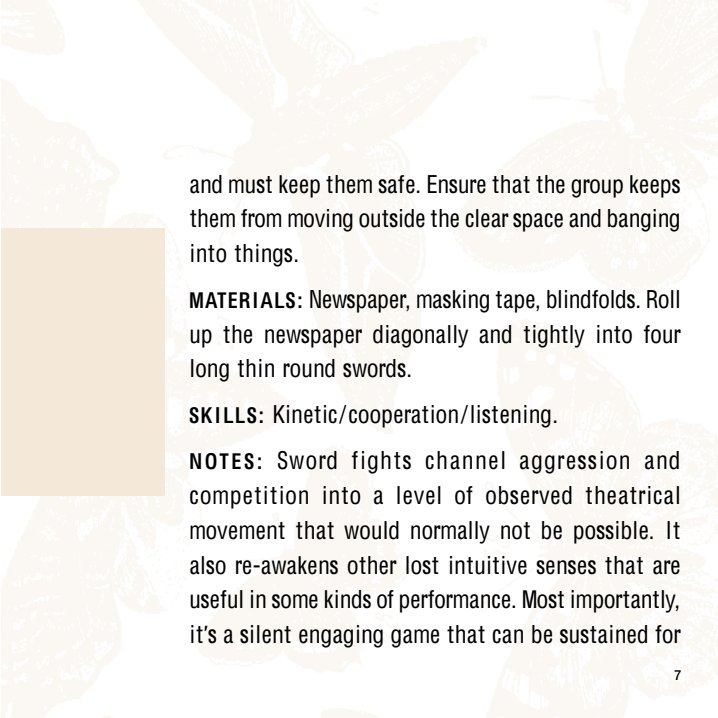


## **SWORD FIGHTS (15 OR MORE)**

**FORMAT:** Using as much floor space as possible in a large quiet room, have the group stand around the outside of the room equally spaced. Choose two group members of similar “pecking order status” and blindfold them. Give each person a sword and ask two people to take them to opposite ends of the space and spin them around.

The object of the game is to sense where the other person is, focusing on sound and sensed movement, and to hit them with the sword between the knee and the shoulder. They can be as cunning as they like – making false sounds on the floor with the sword and moving away, standing still etc. You are the referee



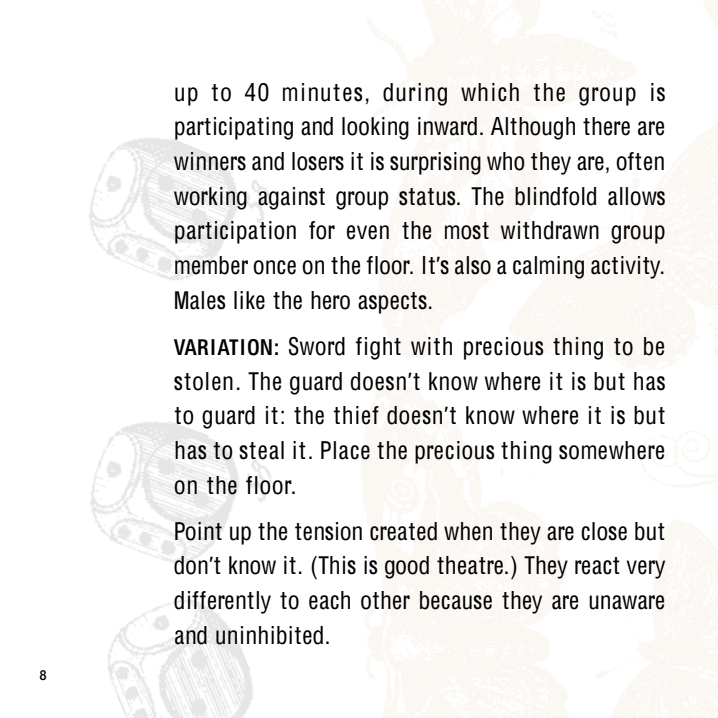


and must keep them safe. Ensure that the group keeps them from moving outside the clear space and banging into things.

**MATERIALS:** Newspaper, masking tape, blindfolds. Roll up the newspaper diagonally and tightly into four long thin round swords.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/listening.

**NOTES:** Sword fights channel aggression and competition into a level of observed theatrical movement that would normally not be possible. It also re-awakens other lost intuitive senses that are useful in some kinds of performance. Most importantly, it's a silent engaging game that can be sustained for



up to 40 minutes, during which the group is participating and looking inward. Although there are winners and losers it is surprising who they are, often working against group status. The blindfold allows participation for even the most withdrawn group member once on the floor. It's also a calming activity. Males like the hero aspects.

**VARIATION:** Sword fight with precious thing to be stolen. The guard doesn't know where it is but has to guard it: the thief doesn't know where it is but has to steal it. Place the precious thing somewhere on the floor.

Point up the tension created when they are close but don't know it. (This is good theatre.) They react very differently to each other because they are unaware and uninhibited.

## PAPER CHASE

**FORMAT:** Basically a game of chasings where everybody is chasing each other. A thin strip of paper is tucked down the back of the clothes at the waist and left with about 15 cm exposed. The object is to try and grab anybody else's paper without losing your own. Once your paper is gone you sit out.

Encourage players to gang up against others and form teams. Encourage them to be untrustworthy and lure their partners into a false sense of security and then turn on them.

The playing space should not be too big. (Average hall.)

**MATERIALS:** Paper torn into strips.



**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/energy.

**PERFORMANCE:** In the debrief you may be able to point out the theatricality of the game, with its broken allegiances, tension etc.

**NOTES:** You can debrief the exercise if the atmosphere is right and ask how it felt to be betrayed etc.

You can, if you are concerned about the last two players' reaction to winning and losing, choose to stop the game before the final winner.

## CHASING AND DYING OR EXPLODING OR YELLING

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**VARIATION:** The same game as paper chase except the leader watches the game, and when someone has their paper taken, that person must die dramatically or explode or say, “I love you. Please, I don’t want to die,” and get hysterical. This is hard to initiate and has to be immediate before exposure becomes too great. “Dying” yourself, as an example, can help. Others having to chant “die, die, die” will decrease the exposure.

**NOTE:** These variations involve a high level of anxiety and is useful later in the workshops.

## RAFTS

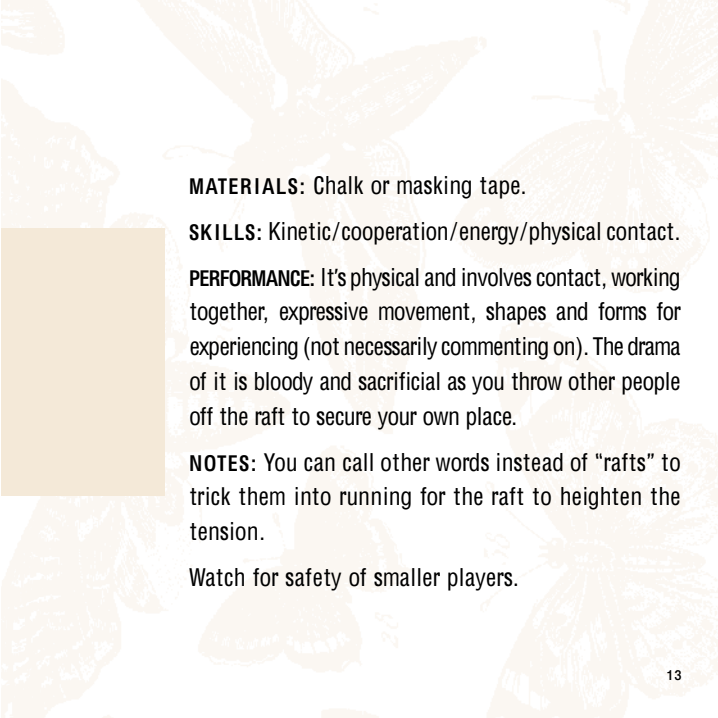
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**FORMAT:** Draw two or three squares of various sizes on the ground with chalk, (or use masking tape on carpet). (The combined space should be about the same area as needed by the group to stand close together.)

The group runs around the perimeter of the room in one direction. When you yell “rafts” they have to run and stand in a square with no part of their feet outside the line.

Anyone hanging over the line sits down and the group continues running.

While the group is running, decrease the size of the squares so that each time not everyone can fit in. Occasionally, you can create another single square.



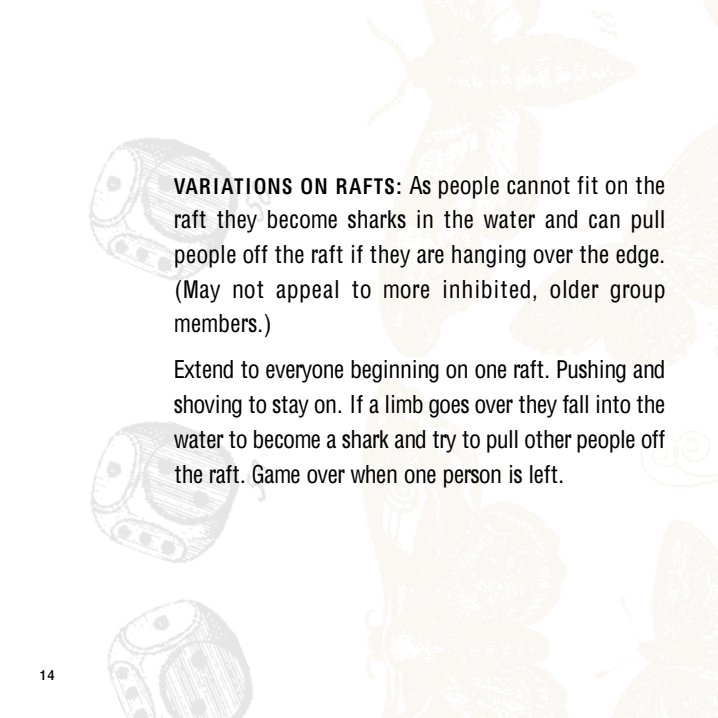
**MATERIALS:** Chalk or masking tape.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/energy/physical contact.

**PERFORMANCE:** It's physical and involves contact, working together, expressive movement, shapes and forms for experiencing (not necessarily commenting on). The drama of it is bloody and sacrificial as you throw other people off the raft to secure your own place.

**NOTES:** You can call other words instead of "rafts" to trick them into running for the raft to heighten the tension.

Watch for safety of smaller players.



**VARIATIONS ON RAFTS:** As people cannot fit on the raft they become sharks in the water and can pull people off the raft if they are hanging over the edge. (May not appeal to more inhibited, older group members.)

Extend to everyone beginning on one raft. Pushing and shoving to stay on. If a limb goes over they fall into the water to become a shark and try to pull other people off the raft. Game over when one person is left.



## WHAT'S THE TIME MR WOLF?

**FORMAT:** The group walks around the room following the “wolf”. They ask the question, “What’s the time Mr Wolf”, to which he answers “One o’clock, two o’clock (etc).” Whenever he wishes the wolf says “supper time” and chases them, trying to grab his supper before they get to the safety of the wall.

**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/reaction.

**PERFORMANCE:** The game is basically a thriller. Can be used to show how simply the group will be able to create something.

## STUCK IN THE MUD

**FORMAT:** Variation on chasing. One person is “in” and tries to “tip” others. Once tipped they must stand where they are with their legs apart until someone else crawls through their legs and releases them.

**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/cardiovascular/self-esteem.

**PERFORMANCE:** If the game moves towards most people being stuck and one or two rescuing, everyone is watching this one person and they have their hopes pinned on their survival and are grateful when rescued. In this way, it's good to be in the limelight.

**NOTES:** In the debrief, draw out what is dramatic from the game. Link it to a writing exercise by making up a story on the spot with a victim/rescuer plot.



## STREETS AND LANES

**FORMAT:** The group stands in as many straight lines of equal length as possible. They stand an arm length apart from each other, so that with arms out fingers touch. The lines are the same distance apart from each other. Two people are picked out, one to chase and one to catch. Starting these two at opposite ends of the room, the group hold their arms up, fingertips touching. When “streets” is called they face down the line, when “lanes” is called they turn ninety degrees to face across the line. The leader calls these two words hindering or enhancing the progress of the two people running. When caught the victim becomes the chaser.



**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/reaction/cooperation.

**PERFORMANCE:** Two people performing energetically without scrutiny.

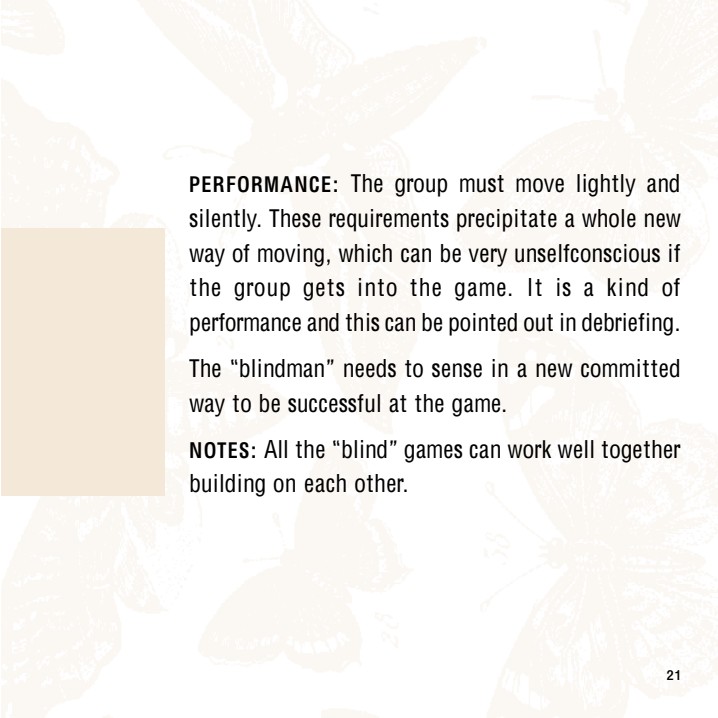
**NOTES:** A good game for larger workshops.

## **BLINDMAN'S BLUFF**

**FORMAT:** Person "A" is blindfolded. The rest of the group moves around the space. "A" must try and sense where people are and point to them on hearing a noise. If "A" points directly at someone they sit out and observe. "A" is free to move around and the rest must avoid him/her.

**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/concentration/perception.

The background of the page features several faint, light-colored silhouettes of butterflies of various sizes and patterns. On the left side, there is a solid tan-colored rectangular block. The text is positioned to the right of this block.

**PERFORMANCE:** The group must move lightly and silently. These requirements precipitate a whole new way of moving, which can be very unselfconscious if the group gets into the game. It is a kind of performance and this can be pointed out in debriefing.

The “blindman” needs to sense in a new committed way to be successful at the game.

**NOTES:** All the “blind” games can work well together building on each other.

## GRANDMOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS

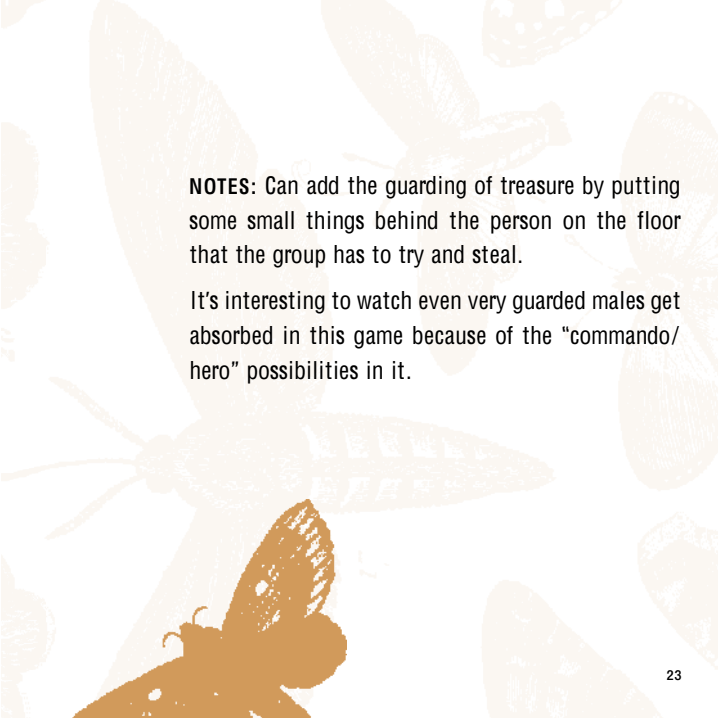
**FORMAT:** One person stands facing the wall. The rest of the group has to creep from the other end of the space and try and tap the person on the shoulder. At unexpected intervals the person turns and looks quickly. The others must stop any movement. If they see movement that person sits out.

**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Reaction/concentration/kinetic.

**PERFORMANCE:** Frees up unusual movement. Forces a kind of choreography on the group.





**NOTES:** Can add the guarding of treasure by putting some small things behind the person on the floor that the group has to try and steal.

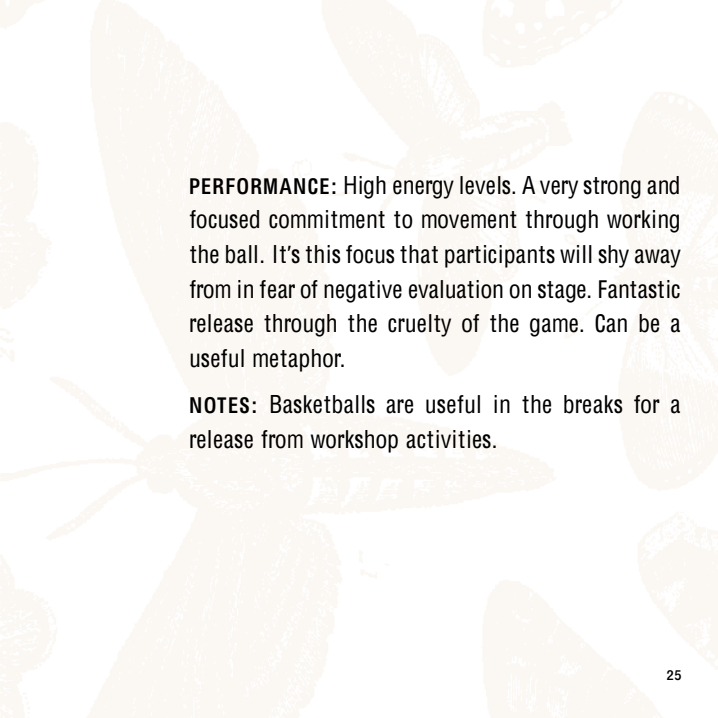
It's interesting to watch even very guarded males get absorbed in this game because of the "commando/hero" possibilities in it.

## PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE

**FORMAT:** The basic format of “piggy in the middle”, with two people ganging up on one to prevent them getting a ball, can be used in a number of ways: dividing into threes and playing, then swapping around; dividing into two teams; having one lot of three with one in the middle and then adding another in the middle to help; continuing to add to each side while others observe.

**MATERIALS:** Ball.

**SKILLS:** Hand eye coordination/kinetic/cooperation.



**PERFORMANCE:** High energy levels. A very strong and focused commitment to movement through working the ball. It's this focus that participants will shy away from in fear of negative evaluation on stage. Fantastic release through the cruelty of the game. Can be a useful metaphor.

**NOTES:** Basketballs are useful in the breaks for a release from workshop activities.

## **VISUAL MEMORY GAME**

**FORMAT:** A tray of small objects is collected and shown to the group, allowing for time to memorise what's on it. The tray is taken away and everyone has to verbally, or in writing, remember what was there.

**MATERIALS:** Tray, objects, pencils and paper.

**SKILLS:** Memory/visualisation/confidence.

**PERFORMANCE:** Useful primarily for building memory skills.



**NOTES:** Can be effective for calming the group down.

An activity that combines well with, “When I Go To Hobart”, and the use of lists. The objects could be found objects or they could be objects that each person has on them. These could be held up and the person asked for an associated object as a basis for forming a list poem. (Refer to the writing exercises.) They could be precious objects that each person could be asked about afterwards.

## BRANDINGS

**FORMAT:** The group divides in two and stands opposite each other in a line, about twenty feet apart. With a large ball (no heavier than a basketball), each group throws the ball at the other trying to hit below the knee. If a person is hit they sit out.

**MATERIALS:** Large ball.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/coordination.

**PERFORMANCE:** Very physical drama, usually with uninhibited screaming and being thrown together.

**NOTES:** Can be combined well with mimed ball games to bring the energy back down.

**COCKY LAURA (BRITISH BULLDOGS)**

**FORMAT:** With one person standing in the middle of the space, all the other participants gather up one end of the space and have to run to the other end without being caught. If they are caught by the person in the middle they have to be lifted off the ground long enough to say “Cocky Laura! One, two, three.”

**MATERIALS:** Nil.

**SKILLS:** Kinetic/cooperation/energy.

**PERFORMANCE:** Implicit group movement together.

## TUG-OF-WAR

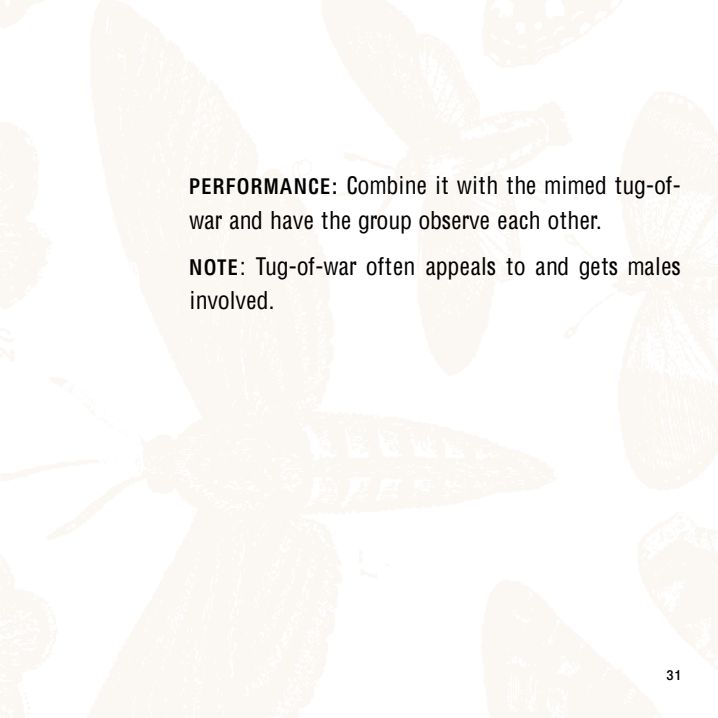
**FORMAT:** The universal version of the game. This can work well with the mimed version. (See BOOK 5, Exercise 9.)

Divide into two teams of equal strength. Ask each team to choose an anchor to take up the end of the rope. Attach a rag or marker in the centre of the rope and place two marks an equal distance from the centre on the floor. When each team is ready they take the strain and pull. The team that drags the rag towards them over the floor marker wins.

**MATERIALS:** Thick rope (at least 2.5cm). A rag. Chalk or floor marker.

**SKILLS:** Team work/gets the blood pumping.





**PERFORMANCE:** Combine it with the mimed tug-of-war and have the group observe each other.

**NOTE:** Tug-of-war often appeals to and gets males involved.

**MUSICAL CHAIRS**

**FORMAT:** Two rows of chairs are placed back to back in a line. There is one less chair than group members. Music is played and the group walks around the chairs. When the music stops they have to find a seat. The person who misses the chair sits out. The number of chairs is reduced by one each time.

**MATERIALS:** Chairs, music.

**SKILLS:** Coordination/kinetic.

**PERFORMANCE:** Speed of reactions. Involves responding to music.

**NOTES:** Similar to rafts. They can be linked together.

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**BIG *h* ART**

**BOOK 4**