
WHAT'S ON MY MIND?

Age range: 2nd through 6th grade

Materials:

- ➔ What's on My Mind Activity Sheet #3
- ➔ Colored pencils and markers
- ➔ Magazine pictures, glue, child-safe scissors, lamp or spotlight, and large white paper (optional—see below)

Often children who have been traumatized have a lot on their minds. Some report that they just can't shut off their heads or that there are intrusive thoughts or worries that keep them pre-occupied. Others may say that they don't think about anything since the trauma, that they try to keep from thinking because it is just too painful. Josh's story (in previous activity) is a good example and demonstrates how trauma can literally change the cognitive functioning of a child or adolescent. Terror, fear, and threat inhibit learning and cognitive performance; Josh clearly told me this, saying, "thinking hurts my head."

You can direct this activity to a specific trauma; for example, since _____ happened, what do you find yourself thinking about most? Activity Sheet #3 provides an example of one way to present this activity.

You can make this activity personal and even more effective by creating an actual "silhouette" of the child. Tack a large piece of paper up on a wall and have the child sit or stand in front of it in profile. Shine a bright reading lamp or other light so that a shadow or silhouette of the child's head and shoulders is created on the paper; using a dark pencil or marking pen trace the outside. This image can be filled in with drawings or collage materials to show "what's on my mind."

