

ACTIVITY 4:

OBSTACLES TO GOOD HEALTH

AIM: Children explore and identify some of the obstacles that keep children from accessing their right to the best possible health and begin to consider how weak health systems put children's rights at risk.

Preparation:

- Preview YouTube video
- Review and select breathing warm up exercise

Facilitator materials and resources:

- Activity 4 presentation
- YouTube video – [Mr. Brown's Best Moments](#)
- Prepare snakes and ladders board or materials for children to create one (table or active option)

Participant materials:

- Blank cards and marker

Tips for those working in Early Years settings:

- Create a 'health system' obstacle course or maze, helping children understand that obstacles are challenges we face that make it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to reach a goal.

This activity includes a reflection on medical obstacles that children or their families may have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and could potentially trigger upsetting memories and feelings for some children. Please be aware of this before starting the activity and be ready to support them as necessary.

Facilitator introduction

In the last activity we learned that the health system in our community is created to look after us and get us the care we need. But what happens if this system – or parts of it – don't work the way they're supposed to, or if there are obstacles preventing children from accessing this care?

In many places around the world, including in the UK, weak parts of health systems and other obstacles prevent children from having access to the care they need. This means that children's right to the best possible health is at risk.

In this activity we'll explore why health systems sometimes don't work the way they should, and how this puts children's rights and futures at risk.



PART 1: BREATHING EXERCISE WARM-UP

1. Ask children if they know what an obstacle is. Explain that in today's activities they'll be discussing obstacles, or things that get in the way and stop us from getting where we need to go or doing what we need to do. Ask: "Can you think of a time when you've faced an obstacle? What feelings have you had when you couldn't do something that you needed to do?" Share that frustration, and sometimes even anger, can be a very normal feeling to have when we have to face an obstacle.
2. To be prepared to talk about obstacles, begin by doing a quick warm-up breathing exercise. Breathing is an important way to help manage our mental health when we feel strong emotions like frustration and anger.
3. Introduce the group to a simple breathing exercise, like [Take 5 Breathing](#) or [4-7-8 Breathing](#). You can use a video to lead the exercise or teach the technique in class and ask a child to facilitate the exercise when it's repeated.

PART 2: RECOGNISING RISKS AND OBSTACLES

1. Share that, in the story of Paddington, we're introduced to Mr. Brown, the father of the family who finds Paddington at the train station. Show the group the video of Mr. Brown's Best Moments and explain that in the Paddington story, Mr. Brown is a risk analyst. This means his job is to think about everything that might go wrong and why. When Paddington first met the Browns, Mr. Brown was terribly worried about all the risks that could come of keeping a bear in his house with his family.

2. Ask: "What do you think were some of the risks (or potential for dangerous situations) that Mr. Brown worried about? What might have been the risks for Paddington if the Browns hadn't given him a home?" After thinking about all of the worries and risks, take a minute to repeat the breath exercise from the warm-up.

3. Building on this new understanding of risks and obstacles and bringing the conversation back to healthcare and health systems, invite the children to consider two questions.

1) What might be some risks to children if health systems aren't working? And

2) What are some of the obstacles that prevent children from getting the healthcare that they need (or accessing health systems). Invite the children to answer these two questions in small groups with some groups focused on the risks, and others focused on the obstacles.

Prompt the children with examples as needed to get them started. Some examples might include:

1) If health systems aren't working, people won't have any place to go when they're sick, children won't get their immunisations, a pandemic could cause another lockdown, people might die, people might not get the medicines they need, sick children won't be able to go to school. 2) Obstacles to getting healthcare might include clinics being closed, hospitals being full of COVID-19 patients so they can't take other patients, surgeries being cancelled, not enough healthcare workers, people not going to hospital because they are afraid of catching a virus, or medicines or vaccines not being available.

Encourage them to think beyond their own community and consider the obstacles that children in other places might face in accessing healthcare. For example – the war in the Ukraine is preventing children there from having access to doctors and healthcare, while in some places, for example in areas of sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, children might not have access to a clinic within walking distance of their own community, or medicines may not have been delivered as planes weren't flying as often to many places for almost two years.

4. Invite each group to share the risks and obstacles they identified. For each one of the risks and obstacles, ask the group if they could think of any action that could be taken to help overcome this challenge. Note these actions on a separate list. For example, if not having enough healthcare workers is a risk, more training might be an idea to overcome this problem. Encourage children to think creatively about a solution for each one of the obstacles, including actions that they could take which would strengthen health systems.

5. Finish the exercise by reminding the children that sometimes we have to look for the problems (risks and obstacles) so we know where to start to look for the solutions to make things better. You may also wish to finish the exercise with one more round of the breathing exercise.



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PART 3: CREATE YOUR OWN SNAKES AND LADDERS GAME

1. Using the lists created in part 2 of this activity (obstacles, risks, and solutions) invite the children into a creative time to make and play their own health systems version of a snakes and ladders game.

2. Give each small group a copy of the blank game board (you can print this from the resources). Instruct children to decorate and fill in their own game board, choosing some of the health system strengthening solutions to write at the bottom of the ladders, and choosing some of the obstacles and risks to place at the top of the snakes*.

3. Once the game board is complete, invite the children to play. If time permits, allow them to mix up groups, so they can play the game using a board with different obstacles and solutions highlighted.

4. Complete the activity with a quick debrief, allowing children to share what they learned about the ups and downs of the challenges towards reaching accessible health care for all (where all children's rights to healthcare are realised), and why efforts to strengthen health systems (the up ladders) are very important to help achieve this.

**Alternative active option: Invite children to create their own life-size 3D obstacle course that they physically move through, based on the same concept of health obstacles. For example, they may use large inflatable dice, or create some of their own giant dice from corrugated cardboard boxes.*