**Compassionate Choices**

This is a version from Family Pastimes, modified to fit these spiritual goals.

Read a moral dilemma from the Choices card set, and give players three choices, with the third one always being "other". Assign areas in the room that represent each choice. Players are to go to the area which they feel reflects the most moral, compassionate, spiritual choice.

Some examples to get you started.

"A friend says she hates God because her Dad died."

Choice 1: Don't pay any special attention to this.

Choice 2: Try to get her to love God.

Choice 3: Other

"Your group is planning an afternoon in the park. A raid on the neighbor's garden is suggested."

Choice 1: Join in, feeling it minor and harmless fun.

Choice 2: Decide to stay home.

Choice 3: Other

"A peer is always bossing everyone in your games."

Choice 1: You and others say you won't play until the bossing stops.

Choice 2: Try to talk the person into behaving differently.

Choice 3: Other

"During an argument, a little boy smaller and younger than you hits you."

Choice 1: Hit him back.

Choice 2: Hold his arms.

Choice 3: Other.

Some of the choices given above are not obvious and many players would choose "Other" for the answer, then come up with really good ideas that are wise, tactful, and moral. Players will be very eager to express their reasons for their choices and there can be a lot of interesting discussion.

You can also play this game (with different scenarios) when studying the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or if you are studying Life and Death, or it can be tied to any unit on virtues or on the role of Divine Messengers in educating humanity. God's Messengers strive to train us so that we make upright and wise choices. It is through our choices that we demonstrate the depth of our virtue development, the quality of our moral character.

For the unit on 'Abdu'l-Bahá, urge the players to make the choice they think 'Abdu'l-Bahá would make. In some of the situations, both Choice 1 and Choice 2 seem options 'Abdu'l-Bahá might choose -- one being an expression of mercy or compassion, the other fairness or justice. That can lead to some interesting discussions about using wisdom in the application of those virtue sin real life. For the unit on Life and Death, remind the players that the condition of their souls in the next world will be based on the choices they make during this earthly life. Life is full of choices which either exalt or debase us spiritually, and the goal is to always strive to make the choice which reflects our higher nature, and avoid those which stem from our lower natures.

**Cats and Mice**

Materials: Large "parachute"

*"... it is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassions, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature."*

*~'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p158

First share the above verse. Briefly discuss the meaning of mercy and compassion, and understand as well that we should not take scripture to the extreme, in that if an insect is biting you, you can swat it; etc.

Explain that this game is an example of showing compassion and mercy to the weaker animal, the mouse. Every player gets to be a cat and a mouse at least once. The parachute is placed on the ground. One mouse is chosen to go and drawl under the parachute, and one cat to crawl around on top of the chute. For larger groups, up to 3 mice can go under at once and 2 cats can stalk them. The rest of the players sit around the edge of the parachute, and try to protect the mice by shaking the parachute vigorously so that the cats cannot see the mice crawling around. If a cat comes upon a mouse the touch it and the mouse has to come out. Then a new cat and mouse are chosen. If there is more than one mouse, each round ends when there is only one mouse left under the chute. Sometimes the mouse was so clever that our arms wore out before the cat could find the mouse. At this point, I just called an end to the round saying that the mouse escaped. Mice who crawled around the edges of the parachute lasted the longest. It is important that players understand that both cat and mouse should be on all fours, crawling, and that they should move around a lot. Also, to avoid injury, cats should not pounce, but just paw (touch) the mouse when they find him or her.

The other two games for our lesson on kindness to animals were *Creature Capture* under Highly Active Games, and *Whale Rescue* (below) under Low Activity Games.

**Whale Rescue**

This game is based on a book called Humphrey The Lost Whale by Wendy Tokunda and Richard Hall. The book is a true story about how many people cooperating saved the life of a humpback whale that got lost and stuck in a river system on the West Coast.

Depending on the number of players, there can be 1 - 3 children who play the whales. The whale children are blindfolded. They are like Humphrey the lost whale who could not find his way through the river system to get back to the ocean. He was, in a sense, blind, because all his normal navigating cues were absent. These children are placed at the far end of a large playing area. The goal is to find their way back to the ocean, using the auditory cues of the human helpers. As in the real story, there are obstacles: Pairs of children form openings by standing a few feet apart. They can join hands, and when the whale gets near, they can raise them up to let him through. These pairs of players represent the bridge pylons Humphrey had to wiggle through. The blind children have to locate these pairs of children (who are distributed in various staggered locations throughout the playing area) and walk (swim) through each successive pair to the opposite side of the playing area, which represents the wide open ocean. The children who represent the pylons play a double role (unless you have plenty of extra players); They make whale sounds so the blind whale/s can locate them. In the real story, marine biologists lowered speakers into the river which emitted whale calls to lure Humphrey in the right direction.

There should be at least one or more escorts to make sure the blind whales do not collide with something dangerous. They can gently block the whale-children from walking (swimming) into a tree or whatever. If you use only one whale-child at a time, the teacher or another player can also help guide by whacking two wooden dowels or banging on a can to warn the whale-child that he is moving in the wrong direction or away from the pylon openings. This also mimics what the humans did in the real story of Humphrey -- they made unpleasant underwater noises by banging metal pipes together behind the whale to keep him from turning back and to guide him away from wrong turns. Because whale-players will not know who the abrasive sound is intended for, this aspect can only be used if there is one whale in the "river" at a time.

Some tips: To make sure the whale-children are truly blind, they should have a dark pillow case or bag over their head that allows breathing. On top of this they wear a standard blindfold. Without the case or bag, players can tilt their heads backwards and see blow. Without the blindfold, most bags are see-through. Also for players ages 7 - 10 years, the whale sounds should be very faint -- otherwise it is too easy for players to find their way. And you can make it even harder if you have all the pylon-children making sounds at the same time. This will make it more challenging for the whales to isolate their location. The first time we played the game, only the first group of pylon-children made whale sounds, then when the whale got through, they became silent and the second group made their sounds, and so on. But this proved too easy for the whales, so I asked the pylon-children to be more faint. The age level you have will determine how hard to make it. You can also have a time limit, which makes it more intense. Never insist a child be blindfolded who is not comfortable with it. They can just be pylons or escorts. Also, if there is an uneven number of players, then you won't have pairs of pylons for one whale to go through. In this situation, I asked one of the first pylon-children to pair with the last pylon-child after the whale had passed through the first pylon pair's opening.

Before playing, we gathered around my computer and listened to whale sounds so they could try to mimic them during the game. This also enriches the whole story. We heard humpback whale sounds from these 2 websites.

http://www.ibiblio.org/multimeida/sun-sounds/whales

http://www.compusult.nf.ca/ditt/hmpsound.htm