Feelings Hot Potato
Source: Caron Harbour Wedeking

**Recommended Age Range:** Ages 5 and up

**Treatment Modality:** Small group, family

**Goals**
- Verbally express feelings
- Increase awareness of personal feelings

**Materials**
- Two to four squishy stress balls (palm size works best)

**Advance Preparation**
Wash the balls so they become sticky.

**Description**
Prepare the group/family by having everyone sit in a circle on the floor. Explain that the game is played by pressing all the balls together into one bigger ball, then gently tossing the balls from person to person (in a circle or randomly) until one of the balls comes apart from the others. The person holding the balls is then given a feeling (either by the therapist or by the person who last tossed the balls) to talk about.

**Discussion**
This activity is an engaging and non-threatening way for children and families to discuss difficult events that have occurred, and to process the feelings associated with these events. The activity acts as a catalyst for conversation about topics that are otherwise difficult to address. It is easily understood and accomplished, allowing participants to feel competent and relaxed.

The activity can be modified to participants' physical abilities (i.e. sitting in chairs, around a table, sitting in a wheelchair, etc.). The speed of the game can also be modified to accommodate various physical abilities.

The activity is useful for facilitating sharing of feelings as everyone gets an equal turn, and there is no winning or losing to distract from the purpose and enjoyment of the activity.

**About The Author**
Caron Harbour Wedeking, LISW is an independently licensed social worker, a member of The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and a member of the Association for Play Therapy (APT). She is currently a clinical therapist working with
children ages 0-18 and their families at Orchard Place Child Guidance Center, Iowa's only accredited mental health center for children. She also has a background in accounting, business, and management.

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