

Art & Drama Therapy for Traumatized Children (war; loss and displacement)

Let's begin by talking about children and how they react to this type of trauma.

3-5 years old. This is the period when the brain works at full speed. This is even more so than an adult brain. It is very important that your Art & Drama Club is a healthy environment for the child to function in.

At this age, awareness of the world is developed. And these children have already experienced some terrible thoughts and memories of their world.

They like playing freely at this age, and don't need a lot of instruction to use their imagination.

Some common characteristics of a War traumatized young child

1. Cry and/or scream more than typical for the child
2. Feel under pressure or timid
3. Develop new fears, including anxiety when separated from a parent or caregiver
4. Experience nightmares
5. Wet the bed
6. Revert to using "baby talk"
7. Recreate the traumatic experience while playing
8. Ask questions about death
9. Display stunted developmental growth

Six - eleven The brain has already reached nearly 90% of the size of the adult brain but will continue to grow until adolescents. This is an age when play is very important. It is the time when the child learns, builds, creates social bonds, and develops thinking skills.

Older children tend to develop more friendships. It's also the age when they learn to express emotions such as frustration or jealousy. This is also when they learn to control their emotions. (When they are babies, the only way they know how to express anything, is to what? Cry. But as a child gets older, he learns to express and control emotions.)

There is a big difference between a 6 year old and a 11 year old in other areas of development. But with children of trauma, there are more similarities than you would think.

Some common characteristics of a War Traumatized older child

1. Feel shame or guilt
2. Feel fear or anxiety
3. Become clingy to adults they trust, like a parent or teacher
4. Have trouble sleeping
5. Have difficulty concentrating
6. Worry excessively about their own safety or the safety of others
7. Startle easily
8. Repeatedly tell people about the traumatic experience
9. Feel afraid that the traumatic experience will happen again
10. Feel upset by minor injuries like bumps or bruises

Art as therapy for the lay person (for children)

These art activities are designed to help children find a sense of calm and peace. The children can express their emotions through color and pictures.

For us, art is also a spiritual thing. Creativity is a spiritual thing. God created this world and everything in it, so creativity is spiritual.

People have been using colors and shapes to tell stories since the Stone Age.

Our spiritual focus in using art is to share God's love for the children. And the fact that He has a plan for their lives. It is also to provide encouragement and comfort to them.

Most of us are not therapists

Using Art & Drama is an attempt to get children to **express themselves**.

But we should never try to encourage them to over share, or to share deep personal things. Most of us are not trained or prepared to help them with that.

We are there to help them express themselves when words just don't come. Paints, pencils and clay can be their mouths.

In my country, we have a saying, "A picture is worth a 1,000 words." Do you have something like that in your country? It's an old saying because it's true.

Speaking of words... .. the more you are with a child, the more the child trusts you. He or she will start to feel more comfortable talking to you. This is the time in your Club that you look for **“conversation opportunities.”**

Don't push the conversation, let it happen organically. It might be a conversation over the next 2 months or 2 years. But once you have that opportunity you can shed some light into the child's life.

So the 2 main goals of even having an art club is to

1. Allow the children **to express themselves**

Art and the creative process serve as ways of expression. The child can express and release emotions and suffering. It is important for that to happen, so he might grow in his hope for the future.

2. Find **conversation opportunities**

The goal is not for the child to create a masterpiece nor for us to judge the work he has created.

- It's so he can build a healthy image of himself.
- It's so he can have a good perception of the world.
- It is also that he might allow God to move him towards positive change.

We can help children in many ways;

1. Problem-solving
2. The Ability to communicate
3. The Ability to observe
4. Morals and values
5. A sense of good and evil
6. Perception

Drama as Therapy for the lay person (children)

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is how people relate to other people. Social intelligence is outward. It is different than intellect or knowing information. It is how we understand people's feelings, thoughts and behaviors, and how we respond to them. It is the ability to get along with others, and get them to cooperate with you.

High social intelligence results in an effective life. The more people you can relate to and understand, the bigger your world becomes.

4 Ways to Increase Social Intelligence

1. Ask the children to recognize and keep track of how they feel and when. feel. Trauma often leads to numbness or avoiding feel. (Charts and journals)
2. Ask them to approach others with openness; this takes a certain degree of trust. Trauma often makes you closed off or want to hide from others, so push yourself.
3. Ask then to try to feel what others feel. This is called empathy. Trauma often makes you feel alone, but when you empathize you realize you are not alone.
4. Teach them to interpret none-verbal behaviors. Non-verbal behaviors are facial expressions and body language.

Emotional Intelligence

This is the ability, to be aware of your emotions. Emotional intelligence is inward.

4 Traits of emotional intelligence

1. Self-awareness - The knowing of your own character and feelings.
2. Empathy- We learned earlier that this is to understand and feel what others feel.
3. Motivation- Reasons for your actions and behaviors. Why we do what we do.
4. Self-Management- This is the ability to manage your feelings, behaviors, actions and emotions.

Drama and art help develop these skills in children.

8 Benefits of having a KIDZARK Art and Drama Club

1. It brings everyone together and builds community
2. It increases self-esteem and confidence
3. It gives kids a chance to learn and practice new skills
4. It encourages creative problem solving
5. It improves emotional expression
6. It helps Kids recognize tone and body language.
7. Drama encourages teamwork.
8. Drama turns strangers into friends.

The 14 goals in playing drama games

1. Express their feelings
2. Tell their story
3. Act out/work out problems
4. Relieve their stress and anxiety
5. Achieve emotional and physical balance
6. Experience a type of cleansing
7. Boost their sense of play
8. Drama helps boost self-confidence and improves self-esteem
9. Develops trust
10. Work out relationship issues
11. Improve their social skills
12. Helps Strengthen their role in life
13. Increase their mental and emotional flexibility
14. Have Fun!!