

**ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT ACTIVITIES
FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND FAMILIES
VOLUME THREE:
PRACTITIONERS SHARE THEIR MOST
EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES**

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**Section One:
Engagement and Assessment**

Funny Faces

Source: Lauren Snailham

Theme: Engagement and Assessment

Recommended Age Range: Three to Ten

Treatment Modality: Individual

Goals

- Establish a positive therapeutic atmosphere
- Collect information regarding the child's level of cooperation, willingness to try something new, ability to maintain eye contact, self-control, ability to use humor, tolerance, and acceptance of being able to make mistakes

Materials

- Two pieces of paper
- Two pencils

Description

Introduce the activity by saying, "We are going to try and draw each other but the rules are we have to look at each other and can't look at our drawings until our drawings are finished." As the drawing begins, the child usually tries to peek at his/her drawing and this usually creates a lot of laughter as the practitioner keeps reminding the child of the no peeking rule. When the practitioner and child are both done, they look at what they have drawn and this usually creates more laughter. The practitioner can then enquire about:

1. How the child felt about doing the activity.
2. What he/she enjoyed.
3. What he/she may not have enjoyed.

Discussion

Children are often quite anxious at the start of the therapeutic process as they are not sure what to expect. This activity helps diffuse the tension they are feeling and allows the practitioner and child to begin to feel comfortable with each other. The child is also able to see that being silly is acceptable in a constructive way. The therapy process should seem less threatening so the issues at hand can start to be addressed.

This activity also allows the practitioner to assess the child's level of cooperation, willingness to try something new, ability to maintain eye contact and self-control, and ability to use humor, tolerance and acceptance of being able to make mistakes. These are all qualities that will assist the child in improving his/her social skills.

About The Author

Lauren Snailham, MA Clinical Psychology, is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. She provides assessment and treatment services to children, adolescents, and adults with a variety of psychological difficulties. She incorporates play therapy, psychotherapy, and parenting interventions in her clinical work. She has authored a set of therapeutic story books that focus on issues such as feelings, bullying, abuse, divorce, trauma, anxiety, anger, alcohol abuse, and loss. These books are used by therapists, parents, and teachers.

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Google It!

Source: Brenda Sousa

Theme: Engagement and Assessment
Recommended Age Range: Nine and Up
Modality: Individual

Goals

- Establish a positive and open therapeutic environment
- Gather information about the client
- Expand therapeutic dialogue about the issues that matter most to the client

Materials

- Computer
- Internet access
- Computer printer
- Google It! Questions (included)
- Scrapbook or stapler

Description

Introduce the activity to the client as follows:

“Let’s play Google It! You and I will sit at the computer together and go on the Google search engine site. I will ask you lots of different questions, all about you, and you get thirty seconds to answer each question. You can only answer the question by using the search box at Google. You can type in as many words as needed to find what you are looking for. You can even click on the Google image icon to get pictures. You can search for words, symbols or pictures to help you answer the question. After you Google your answer, we can print off the pictures or articles, and make a book about you. If you take longer than thirty seconds to answer the question, then we will move on to the next question, or you can pass if you want. Let’s see how many questions you are able to answer. Okay, let’s play!”

Possible discussion questions include:

1. Tell me about the picture/object you have chosen?
2. What emotions do you feel when looking at the picture/object?
3. Was it easy or difficult to answer this question? How come?
4. What title would you like to give your scrapbook?

Discussion

In the rapport-building stage of therapy, it is important to get to know the client and to help him/her explore the reasons that brought him/her to therapy. Some clients are uncomfortable verbally communicating information about themselves

and may find it difficult to articulate or express themselves using worksheet based activities or arts and crafts. This activity promotes the creative exploration of current and past issues while enabling the client to communicate using words, symbols, and pictures through the use of modern technology. This assessment method may be used as a formative evaluation strategy when working with a new client or as a tool to better understand the client's self, struggles, and experiences. The practitioner is encouraged to tailor the Google questions to meet the needs of the client and to obtain required assessment data.

In addition to enjoying the use of the computer, many clients will also enjoy the process of making a scrapbook.

About The Author

Brenda Sousa, CYW, is a counselor at the Women's Rural Resource Centre in Strathroy, Ontario. The agency is devoted to helping children, youth, and women heal from the effects of woman abuse. She also works in a Children's Mental Health agency and is currently working on becoming a Certified Play Therapist through the Canadian Association for Child and Play Therapy.

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Google It!

Questions

Google your favorite movie

Google your favorite celebrity

Google your favorite snack

Google what you like to do for fun

Google something that you are good at

Google something that makes you laugh

Google something that you dislike

Google a worry that you have

Google something that makes you feel sad

Google something that makes you feel scared

Google an object that reminds you of a bad memory

Google something that is special to you

Google a hurt in your life

Google something that reminds you of home

Google an object that reminds you of a happy memory

Google a wish you have

Google something you do to make yourself feel better

Google a safe place

Google something that reminds you of a big change in your life

Google something that reminds you of school

Google a weather scene that reminds you of your family

Google what you want your future to be like

Google something you want me to know

Hand of Support

Source: Josephine Downs

Theme: Engagement and Assessment

Recommended Age Range: Eight to Sixteen

Modality: Individual

Goals

- Assess support network
- Gather information regarding presenting problems

Materials

- Paper
- Crayons
- Pens

Description

Trace an outline of the client's hand in the center of the paper. Then have the client identify people he/she trusts and write each name on a different finger on the hand.

Next, have the client write three problems or worries at the top left corner of the page. Have the client assign a different color to each problem or worry. Then ask the client to identify who on his/her hand of trust might be able to help with that problem or worry and have the client circle the person's name using the corresponding color. See the example below:

Problem: I feel overwhelmed by all my homework

Color: Blue

Person who can help me with this: My teacher (circled in blue)

Process by asking the following questions:

1. Describe each person on your hand: What three words best describe each person? What do you like best about each person? What do you wish was different about each person?
2. Why do you trust/not trust this person?
3. Point to the people on your hand who you could talk to when you feel angry, worried, or upset.
4. Point to the people on your hand who show you love or who take care of you. Tell about how they show their love or what they do to take care of you.
5. Point to the people on your hand with whom you have fun. Tell about some fun things you have done with them.

If the client is not able to identify anyone who can help him/her with his/her problems, make a normalizing comment, such as, "Lots of kids feel they have nobody who can help them with their problems and worries. Our sessions together will explore how to find help."

Discussion

This activity helps the client identify his/her supports. If the client is unable to identify any supports, or if he/she can only identify one or two, then this is important assessment information.

The activity can be repeated in later sessions to track the client's strengthened support network and problem-solving skills. The activity also helps the client identify and express feelings.

About The Author

Josephine Downs, BA Psy., MAIPC, AdipVaft, is a Play Therapist in Australia who has worked in the field since 2004. She has published articles in the area of play therapy, including "Australian Bush Fires," which was published in the *Play Therapy Magazine*. She has presented at early childhood conferences and at the Australasia Pacific Play Therapy Association (APPTA) 2009 conference. She is the current president of the APPTA.

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I Didn't Know That!

Source: Sally A. Loughrin

Theme: Engagement and Assessment

Recommended Age Range: Six and Up

Modality: Group, Family

Goals

- Establish a positive and open therapeutic environment
- Increase open communication
- Gather information about the client

Materials

- One die
- Scissors
- "I Didn't Know That!" Question Cards (included)
- Basket or Container

Advance Preparation

Copy each question from the "I Didn't Know That!" question cards onto separate strips of paper, or photocopy the question cards and cut out each question. Fold each question strip, and place the strips in a basket or container.

Description

Pass around the basket and ask each participant to take one of the folded papers. To determine who will begin, roll the die, and the one with the highest number goes first. The first person rolls the die, and if it is an even number, that player reads and responds to the question. If it is an odd number, that player will read the question and can choose to respond or can ask another player to respond to the question. If the players learned something new after a response is given, they will say, "I didn't know that!"

The game continues in this manner until all of the folded papers are read.

Discussion

This activity facilitates open communication and sharing of information. Family and group members usually enjoy the game format. If used with bereaved families, this game provides an opportunity for the family to talk about the deceased loved one as well as to share information and personal experiences. The questions can be adapted for use with a variety of treatment populations.

About The Author

Sally A. Loughrin, LMSW, MA, is a Licensed Social Worker and is completing the requirements to become a Certified Play Therapist. She works as a Bereavement

Social Worker with children and teenagers at Angela Hospice in Livonia, Michigan. For many years she was a Social Worker in the Livonia Public Schools. She developed techniques that were included in the book *Assessment and Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families: Practitioners Share Their Most Effective Techniques*, edited by Liana Lowenstein. In addition, she has authored the following articles that were published in Bereavement Magazine: "Books as a Resource for Children," "Story Writing: A Technique," and "The Kids Need to Know."

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I Didn't Know That!

Question Cards: General Version

One of my favorite things to do is...

My favorite color is...

One of my favorite flavors of ice cream is...

If I'm feeling sad, someone/something that comforts me is...

One of my favorite restaurants is...

One of my favorite sports is...

One of my favorite holidays is...

One of my favorite vegetables is...

My parent (my child) and I often argue about...

You can tell when I'm angry because I...

I Didn't Know That!

Question Cards: General Version

One thing I do very well is...

One thing I'm not very good at doing is...

Something that really bugs me is when...

One food that I really hate is...

One of the things you can't tell by looking at me is...

One of my proudest moments was when I...

If I could change my name I would want to be named...

If I could be any animal I would want to be a...

If I had a wish that could come true I would wish for...

One of the best things I ever did was when...

I Didn't Know That!

Question Cards: Bereavement Version

What did ___ like to do for fun?

The one thing I will miss most about ___ is...

What was ___'s favorite color?

If ___ ordered ice cream, what flavor would he/she get?

If ___ was feeling sad, who/what would comfort him/her?

What was ___'s favorite restaurant?

What was ___'s favorite sport?

What was ___'s favorite holiday?

What was ___'s favorite vegetable?

What was ___'s favorite game?

What was ___'s favorite food for breakfast?