

# USING ART

## Pastoral Care of Children

### Benefits of using art with children:

- Children may not have the words to express what is happening to them. Art allows them to identify, name and express those feelings. It's a form of self-expression that doesn't depend on words and verbal skills.
- Participating in an art project produces less anxiety in children than talking to an adult.
- It's a pleasurable activity for children; something they do naturally. It can be self-soothing, comforting.
- It's doesn't require an special talent or skill.
- Provides a sense of mastery over something (the art materials) and over the objects and situations being represented in drawings.
- Provides information about: 1) how the child is observing and perceiving the external world (particularly the problem events), 2) how the child is interpreting these events, and 3) how the child is responding internally to these events. Lester, 99
- Promotes the development of both right and left brain development
- An art project is a tangible expression of what's happening and thus assists in objectifying the experience.
- Helpful for the kinesthetic, "hands-on" learner to find a comfortable mode of self-expression.

### Guidelines for using art with children:

- Treat the child's artwork with respect and care.
- Focus not only on the finished piece of artwork but on the process of the creation of the art piece itself.
- Observe whether the child's artwork is a reasonable match for their developmental stage or indicates regression or advanced progress.
- A depressed child may use only a pencil and display minimal effort or enthusiasm for the project.
- Children with ADHD often use heavy scribbling or portray themselves as very small in a classroom or on a playground.
- Consider inviting family members to join the drawing/art project. Talk about the results together.
- Use art as a way of structuring a conversation or visit. Lester, 100
- Use art as an icebreaker to create a relaxed and safe atmosphere. Lester, 100
- Assign art work as homework. Lester, 100-101
- Participate in the art project yourself. This gives the child permission to be involved and not feel awkward about being watched.
- Be comfortable with silence as the art activity progresses. Lester, 102
- Keep an art kit in your desk and car. Lester, 102
- Avoid letting children see their artwork in the trash bin.
- Ask for permission to display a child's artwork if appropriate.
- Consider putting a date on the art piece. Notice progress or regression over a period of time.
- Be curious about many parts of the artwork. This helps the child share more information and feelings.

### Art Projects:

- Put on some music that seems to fit the situation. Preferably one with no words. While listening, paint or draw how the music makes you feel. Explore and compare the emotions of melody and rhythm reflected in the child's (and your) art.
- Cut out various pictures from a magazine or newspaper. Paste them on paper and tell a story about the pictures. Or use magazine pictures to create a self-portrait or family portrait.
- Begin scribbling on a piece of paper and do not let the pen leave the paper until 3 minutes are up. Discuss what the child sees in the drawing.
- Make a portfolio of the child's art work or a book of feelings/memories.
- Free drawing (with or without instructions about a direction for the drawing). Lester, 103
- Draw a feeling and "The Five Faces Technique." Lester, 104-105
- Picture the problem or "what happened". Lester, 106

- Picture memories. Lester, 107
- Draw the future. Lester, 108
- Draw a word. Lester, 110
- Create a title for a drawing. Lester 112
- Draw a picture of something you just learned how to do. Think of something you couldn't do last year that you can do this year.
- Draw a picture answering the question: What do I want others to know about me?
- Responding to a disaster or traumatic experience. For example: Draw a protest poster against hurricanes. Draw the scariest event that occurs during a hurricane. Draw or paint a picture of anything that makes you feel happy after a hurricane.
- When you cannot sleep at night, draw or paint a picture of what you would like your mom or dad to do to help you.
- When you cannot concentrate at school, draw or paint a picture of what you would like your teacher to do to help you.
- If you are angry with God because of hurricanes draw or paint a picture and illustrate why.
- Draw or paint a picture of the person and /or place you think about that helps you feel calm and safe when you are upset.
- Draw or paint a picture of the people and/or pets you need. Illustrate how you help and support them.
- When adults fight, illustrate what you do to make yourself feel safe.
- Make a line time of what life was like before, during, and after your parents divorced (or whatever the traumatic event/crisis is).
- Use play dough, clay, Legos or blocks to express something important to you right now.

#### **Conversation Extenders:**

- Tell me what is happening in your picture
- Explain to me the different parts of the picture.
- What were you thinking about while you were drawing?
- Why is the dog barking? Why does the girl look sad? (other similar questions)
- Why did you choose the color red (or whatever color) for this part of the picture?
- Tell me how you decided on that title for your picture.
- Tell me what you did not include in your picture.