

Why Organized Play Is Vital

— By Charity Graff

He was wild. He ran around the room stopping just to touch, throw, drop, or bang the toys set so nicely on the shelves. He could be distracted for a few moments only to tear away from the touch of his assigned caregiver. It was as though her hands were hot and he raced around the room, no one able to lay a hand on him. If he was held or restrained, he screamed. At first glance, it was the restraint he was fighting. But eyes of experience saw the fear and panic in his behavior. Children who have never attached, are terrified of being loved and touch actually hurts them.

Slowly, the trained caregiver provided boundaries. Not too many at first, but enough to allow the child to stop pushing. Boundaries give security and this child had never experienced a place of safety. He had learned to spend his energy pushing to find a line he could not cross. So lines were put up- visible and clear- so that he knew, throwing toys was not allowed. They would be taken away. Blocks were quickly brought out- brightly colored blocks and the caregiver built a tower, then a house, and the little boy could not resist being enticed to sit on the floor and build his own tower, bigger than the caregivers. He was praised and he smiled, surprised at how nice the words felt.

Blocks were put away after ten minutes and small cars were brought out. The caregiver zoomed the red car across the floor. The boy took the blue one. Did he like the green car with the black stripe? He shook his head. He liked blue. A few races were won and suddenly the cars were put away and in their place were marbles. The little boy was settling now, sitting quietly on the floor, the caregiver across from him. Marbles required skill and he had to focus. This game lasted longer than the others. Slowly, the caregiver pulled out coloring books and crayons. She sat next to him, her arm just touching his arm. They colored for more than 20 minutes. The little boy was able to show his knowledge of animals as they colored pictures of jungle animals. They finished and the pictures were hung up on the wall. She took his hand but he did not pull away. A snack was next and then they would look at picture books, she said. Surprised at the excitement he felt, he squeezed her hand and smiled. The caregiver smiled back. She knew she had won.

In the context of a residential care facility that houses 100 children, organized play on every level is crucial. Catering to children who have experienced trauma on many levels means helping them to adjust their behavior and being able to organize the chaos they feel inside. From the moment of intake, the children

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IN FOCUS



Organized Play: A Prescription for Healing

*An excerpt from an article in
Hutchison's Atlas of Paediatric:
A Prescription for Play*

— By Rosemary Sabatino, Director

This year's Barnabas is addressing the CCTI Curriculum strategy of intervention; the STOP Model. In past issues we highlighted 1. S =

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Why Organized Play Is Vital...continued

need boundaries and structure; the caregiver in total control of each activity. The child, unknowingly, begins to trust as security is provided and his world of swirling emotions begins to take shape within the confines of organized activities. The caregiver is the catalyst for this and slowly, over time, the child will learn to take control of his time and space and be able to self-regulate his physical behavior. He will learn to play within the limits he has been taught as he experiences the peace and freedom that comes with structure in his daily play and interaction with others. ■

About the Author

Charity and Evan Graff are directors of Gentle Hands in Manila, Philippines. As a child and youth welfare agency it is meant to be on the front lines of rescue and rehabilitation of at-risk children and youth through the love of Jesus and family centered care. Contact Charity at <http://gentlehandsinc.org>



IN FOCUS

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Structure, 2. T = Talking and Time and this month we will focus on the third prong of the Model; **O = Organized Play.**

Children need time to open up and share their pain. They also need a trusted person who will listen. Play provides for both of these needs. A bond of trust between a caregiver and a child can be developed through interest and involvement in a child's play at his or her level. Once the child has established a safe relationship with the caregiver, the child will begin to go directly to his or her area of pain and concern through play. Therefore, play can be used to help a children "talk" about their traumatic experiences with someone they trust.

Talking helps children process their trauma produced feelings and re-enter their developmental cycles that were interrupted by what they experienced. The sooner the child can appropriate the effects of a play environment the sooner hope reenters the child's world of experience. Research has shown that if children play well, they will adjust well as adults.

In summary, play gives children the opportunity to share their stories through their natural means of communication. Play activities enable children to express what is going on inside of them: their fears and anxieties about their traumatic experiences and allows them to work through the grief process with a trusted adult. Therefore, Organized Play is vital to the children's healing process, where the goal is to see **children in crisis become children in Christ!** ■

O = Organized Play

— By Marnie Sims

Caring for emotionally damaged children can seem overwhelming. Where does one begin?

A child's way of communicating is play. Entering into this form of "talking" does not need special training but creativity and organization. The goal is to help children work through trauma by gaining insight as they play. Organized play is purposeful and guided. Observe what the child acts out and share how Jesus redeems experiences and makes their future different.

In my work with elementary-age children who live with their mothers in transitional housing, I have found the arts and creativity key in helping them express their feelings. Our kids have been through the trauma of being homeless, often due to domestic violence, substance abuse, neglect, divorce or abandonment by the father figure. The children are hurting, often angry and acting out, sometimes sad and withdrawn, sometimes attempting to carry adult responsibilities. To help them heal and experience the love of God, the children do a workbook entitled "My Journey." Each page has a topic like "This is my whole name" or "Draw what I do when I'm scared." They write or draw their response, and the page concludes with a Bible verse. They make a cover and take it home. Their story, contained in 20 pages, is a springboard for conversation with me and their mothers, and is healing for both of them as it brings out many feelings.

I give the children an indoor houseplant, and they learn what it needs to thrive. We study the parable of the vine and the branches, helping them understand what is needed to grow and flourish. We discuss what they need to feel safe, grow and be healthy.

One of the most challenging children I met was a six-year-old I will call Jordan. He was three when he and his mom came to America. They lived with her sister and the sister's boyfriend. The boyfriend sexually abused Jordan. After two years he told his mother. The mother confronted her sister, who called Jordan a liar and kicked them out.

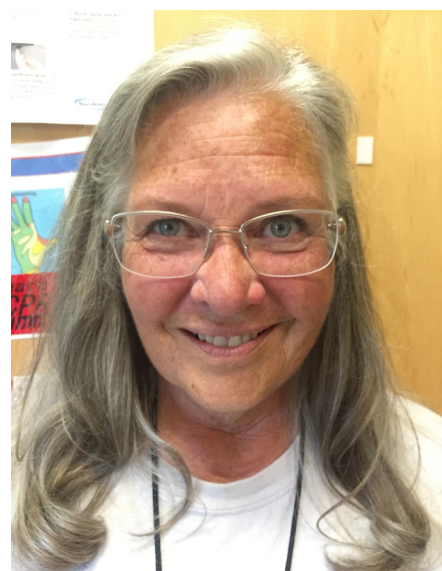
They lived on the streets before coming to our mission. Jordan was angry and prone to smacking people on their backsides. He had been suspended from the school bus for pulling down other children's pants. I showed Jordan the blank book. We read Psalm 139:13, and I took his picture for his book. I told him how much God loved him—his eyes, smile, dimples—and how God knew every day of Jordan's life. He grabbed the book and said, "Let me see that!" He ran to his mother yelling, "God made me, and likes me, and knows everything about me! He says I am amazing!"

We used puppets to act out the school bus problem. Jordan's puppet asked mine to sit by him. My puppet refused, saying she was afraid. His puppet promised to be good. My puppet asked how I could believe him. His puppet replied, "Because I will sit on my hands!" Jordan, through play, had come up with his own solution!

Through making up songs, drawing, role play, or games, the children will tell us what they feel. God, out of His love, will tell us how to respond, rebuild trust, share hope, and point the children to Him. ■

About the Author

I have served as a hospital chaplain for almost 7 years, and then 'retired' when my husband and I started our family of 5 children. Since 2004 I have served as the Youth and Family pastor at Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities. In the school year I work in our transitional housing with children pre-Kinder-garden through 6th grade, and with their mothers. In the summer I teach Bible and gardening at our mission's camp (in the suburbs of St. Paul, but to an inner city child it is like the wilderness!!). My deepest desire is to see people set free to be who Jesus created them to be.



OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES



Dedicated to children who hear their Father's voice

Children On Mission

—By Marissa Phelps

Hundreds of excited children and parents were waiting outside the convention center in Chihuahua, Mexico. Even though the line was long, these families were willing to wait their turn to enter the “Aventura Misionera.” In 2012 we were humbled and grateful to host one of the many stations designed especially for children to learn and explore missions around the world. Our CCTI station had over 1,000 children passing through, stopping to spend about 20 minutes in prayer for children in crisis before “traveling” on to the next.

The Aventura Misionera (Missionary Adventure) started with a small group of children from the local Methodist church. Through the years it has grown to become an event that involves hundreds of volunteers who participate through prayer, designing, painting and building the creative, interactive workshops that teach these kids about unreached countries, people groups, and mission organizations that serve around the world. Each station is prepared with great attention to detail and creativity that helps the children connect with the reality of serving Christ in these countries.

Sinuhe Navarro (founder and director of Aventura Misionera) shared his vision with the church of raising a mission-minded generation that will make Christ's name known to the nations. This vision has now reached more than 40,000 children through 80 Aventuras Misioneras

throughout Latin America. Sinuhe and his family have been committed to this work and have trained people in more than 28 cities in Mexico and also in other countries such as Puerto Rico, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Argentina and the U.S. His desire is to see an army of children praying and giving themselves to God's work among the nations.

We were humbled by the prayers and the heart these children had for unreached people groups. We were also touched by their prayers on behalf of children in crisis. It was our desire that, through CCTI's booth along with the others, God would give these children a heart for the needy and the poor. At the end of the event, all of us—children, parents and volunteers—celebrated and praised God for the great things He will do through this generation of children. ■

For more information about the Aventura Misionera, check:

www.aventuramisionera.com

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About the Author

Marissa Phelps, originally from Mexico, graduated from Asbury Seminary with a degree in Education and a Masters Degree in Missions. She has been serving children in crisis for more than 15 years; first with Go International as their Children's Ministries Coordinator, and since 2010, with CCTI as Children's Prayer Coordinator and Director of Latino ministries. Marissa resides in Artesia, New Mexico with Her husband Dan, who serves as a pastor, and three children; Abriel, Haley and Benjamin.

Music Therapy for the Emotionally Damaged Child

Republished from Barnabas Volume 3 Number 3

—By Maria Kodde

Do you know any child who doesn't like music? Even a child who doesn't like to sing may like to play percussion or listen to the music of his favorite band. Emotionally damaged children need a chance to enjoy music, also.

Music is more than fun and enjoyment, however. In this article I want to give an idea of how music activities can be used to help resolve social and emotional problems of children in a children's home. Of course having fun together in music can be very therapeutic. But besides fun, music offers the possibility of exercising skills important for healthy social and emotional development. In the next paragraphs I'll explain why skills like concentration, expression, taking initiative and adapting to others are relevant for emotionally damaged children. I will also describe how these skills can be practiced in music activities.

Concentration: As a result of traumatic experiences some children deal with concentration problems. They find it hard to focus on what they want to (or have to) do. Concentration is necessary to achievement, especially in school situations. Music offers playful and/or competitive exercises in which children learn to fix their minds on the sounds they hear. These exercises can be purely musical (repeating a demonstrated rhythm on an instrument) or made into a game (Who remembers most of the sounds he heard?)

Expression: Children who are emotionally damaged deal with their

feelings in various manners. Some of them are extrovert; they show rebellious behavior and/or anger toward other people. Other children are very timid; they don't dare to talk at all and keep their feelings inside. For both of these groups it is important to find a right way to express their emotions. Musical improvisation offers children a way to create something of themselves and express underlying emotions. The child can also be invited to join (listen, play along or dance) certain music that represents an atmosphere or feeling. In this indirect way they can express emotions.

Taking Initiative: I don't have to explain that traumatic experiences have a negative effect on children's self-image and self-esteem. Playing music is a way to let others hear that you are there. For children with very low self-esteem, just making sounds on an instrument while someone else listens can be scary. These children need experiences of success while playing an instrument in a group or solo. They have to learn to trust their own (musical) ideas. A child gains self-esteem especially when his or her musical ideas are followed by someone else who plays along. Musical improvisation offers a lot of possibilities to practice this leading and following (soft-loud; fast-soft, etc.).

Adapting to others: Many traumatized children do not trust other children or adults. They show unpredictable behavior and are very disobedient. These children have to learn to deal with authority and be

open toward peers. When playing in a group, a child needs to listen to what others play and adapt his music to what he hears. In musical improvisation the child follows the music leader in movement, rhythm or other musical aspects (soft-loud, fast-slow, etc.). This exercise will bring the child positive experiences of following and adapting to others.

Remaining Issues: Although in this article I cannot describe the full potential of music therapy with emotionally damaged children, following are some of its important issues:

- The role of the therapist/teacher
- The role of Jesus, healer of emotional wounds, in therapy
- The setting and sequence of activities
- An approach focused on processing trauma. ■

Music therapy offers many benefits to the emotionally damaged child.

About the Author

Maria Kodde is a Dutch music therapist. In 2005 she did an internship with children in Casa Bernabé (Guatemala) orphanage and school, working with the school's music teacher, Vivian Douglas. Maria's thesis "A mi le toca" was officially published in June 2006. For the complete thesis in English send an e-mail to mlkodde@hotmail.com

...use art as a venue to process their feelings, hurts and losses.





My Precious Mango Seed

—By *Fanny Basta*

When I was around seven I learned for the first time the wonders of agriculture. The teacher explained it was necessary that a seed be planted in order to give birth to a tree and to enjoy its precious fruits.

I decided to try it! I was eating a delicious mango . . . and what a huge seed I had in my hand! I used some sticks to dig a hole and I deposited my mango seed. Then I proceeded to cover it with ground.

For the next week, I visited my mango seed every day. I watered the area and, with typical childish impatience, I sat down to look carefully all around, waiting for some sign of life springing out of it. Unfortunately, there was no evidence of what was going on beneath the ground. Finally, I could not wait any longer. I again took some sticks, this time to uncover my seed. What a precious sight I beheld! Just on top of the seed, a little plant was growing! Foolishly, I proceeded to cover it again, not understanding that

giving the plant air and sun before it was ready could kill it. My plant never sprang up, because of my impatience.

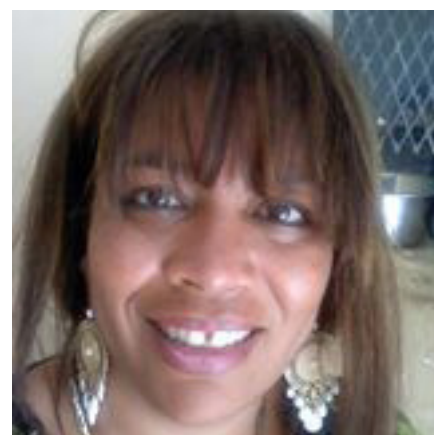
Working with children is similar to the farmer's work. Those who work with children plant seeds in little hearts. These seeds are precious—love, the Word of God, teaching, advice, prayer. However, just as my mango seed, the results in children's lives can go unseen for a long time. Discouragement and impatience can tempt us to stop investing altogether.

When I was five, my grandmother gave me an illustrated Bible. It was in that Bible that I discovered the God I didn't know. I read for the first time the wonderful stories about our origins. Because of what I read, unknown to the whole world but heard by God, I prayed: "God, I want that the God of Moses becomes my God."

I never told anyone about my prayer, and I had to wait 12 years to hear the gospel clearly explained. A gift, given to a child, changed that child's life forever. That little seed produced fruit, and many have heard the gospel in two continents because of it. The seed did bring fruit, but it took time.

So let's keep waiting and sowing abundantly in children's hearts. Trust the One who is more than able to keep that little seed alive. You will see the fruit if you don't lose heart. ■

"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains." James 5:7



About the Author

Fanny Basta has a Ph.D. in Managerial Economics and has served, with her husband Gianni, for more than 25 years planting churches in Italy.

Recently, she led the Church Relations Department of WEC International, helping churches in the USA and Latin America to develop mission strategies and projects.

She is the author of "The One Who Breaks Through", an autobiography.

Currently Fanny and Gianni are the WEC Sending Base Directors for Latin America.

Fanny and Gianni live at the WEC Headquarters in Fort Washington, PA along with their children; Francesco, Melissa and Jonathan.

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