



## Crisis State

- ☞ A temporary state of upset and disorganization, characterized chiefly by an individual's inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem solving, and by the potential for a radically positive or negative outcome.

“Art can be said to be--and can be used as--the externalized map of our interior self.”

*Peter London*

“Art is the meeting ground of the world inside and the world outside.”

*Elinor Ulman*

## Potential Crisis Situations

- ☞ Nationwide Crises
  - ☞ 9/11
  - ☞ War
- ☞ Community-wide Crises
  - ☞ Natural disaster
  - ☞ Acts of terrorism
  - ☞ Violent acts such as gang-related activities
- ☞ School-wide Crises
  - ☞ Death of a well-known student or faculty member
  - ☞ School Shooting
- ☞ Classroom Specific Crises
  - ☞ Teacher death or event
  - ☞ Suicide of friend, family member, or school staff
- ☞ Individual Crises
  - ☞ Death of a family member or relative
  - ☞ Divorce
  - ☞ Being a victim of bullying

## What is Art Therapy?

- ☞ Art therapy is based on the ideas that the creative process of art making is healing and life enhancing and is a form of nonverbal communication of thoughts and feelings.  
*American Art Therapy Association, 1996*
- ☞ It is a modality that can help individuals of all ages create meaning and achieve insight, find relief from overwhelming emotions or trauma, resolve conflicts and problems, enrich daily life, and achieve an increased sense of well-being.  
*Malchiodi, 1998*

## Previous Uses of Art Therapy in Crisis Intervention

- ☞ 9/11
- ☞ Hurricane Katrina
- ☞ Sri Lanka Tsunami




## Examples of Art Therapy

- Art Therapy and 9/11
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) web pages: Disaster Connection Kids to Kids:
  - <http://www.fema.gov/kids/k2k.htm>
  - <http://www.fema.gov/kids/>
- Art Therapy Curriculum
- Examples of Student Art

## Hurricane Katrina

- Art Through the Eyes of Children
  - Began October 2005
  - Recognized emotional needs not met
  - Worked from FEMA trailers in Baker, LA.
  - Structure
    - Unstructured activities
    - 40-70 Children/session

9/11



Katrina



"The tree is cut down and got safe. It got moved to somewhere else to be safe. This is a scary, haunted hurricane. It tried to come and destroy the town. They moved to someplace so not to get killed. Mom had to go real fast."

Created by a five-year-old boy.

## Hurricane Katrina (cont.)

- Outcome
  - Allowed children to express emotions about lost pets
  - Returned eight times
  - Created website
    - <http://www.katrinaexhibit.org/index.htm>

## Sri Lanka Tsunami

- Rebekah Chilcote, Art Therapy Graduate Student
- Rebekah's Art Therapy Program
  - Who attended
    - All girls
    - Private school
  - Size and number of groups
  - Identification of students
- Length of time
  - 4 weeks

## A Day You'll Never Forget



One girl, who could not swim, watched her entire family wash away. With nothing to grab onto, she was swept away, only to be sucked into a car that saved her life.

## Sri Lanka Tsunami (cont.)

- Format
  - Art materials
    - Variety of media
  - Simple directions
- Questions
  - What are some of your favorite things?
  - Draw a day you will never forget
  - Draw what makes you feel comfortable and not afraid
- Opportunity to share with others

## Safe Places and Memories

One child spent a long time coloring a huge black boulder that dominated the page. On the top of the page is where her family had fled for safety. By representing a strong, powerful, indestructible rock, she seemed to regain emotional control of the safety that was shattered by the tsunami.



## Sri Lanka Tsunami (cont.)

- Outcome
  - Through simple tasks, students were able to share their traumatic experiences and pain that they were not able to share prior to the art intervention
  - The student's artwork expressed grief over the loss of loved one
  - Importance of family and community
  - Individual traumatic experiences
  - Future dreams and hope

## Trauma and Recovery

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word unspeakable. Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried... Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of the individual victims.

## How is Trauma Processed?

- ☞ Trauma reactions are both psychological and physiological experiences.
- ☞ Simultaneous needs:
  - ☞ to articulate the unspeakable
  - ☞ an inability to verbally express or describe what has occurred
- ☞ Intervention must employ techniques that focus on the sensory impact of trauma
- ☞ The trauma must be expressed for it to be positively transformed.

## More research...

- ☞ Expression and processing of sensory memories of the traumatic event are necessary to successful intervention and resolution.
- ☞ Action-oriented activities help bridge implicit and explicit memories.



## What is The Role of Memories?

- ☞ Explicit Memory
  - ☞ Conscious memory: facts, concepts, and ideas
  - ☞ Access to language to describe what one is thinking and feeling
- ☞ Implicit Memory
  - ☞ Sensory, emotional and related to the body's learned memories
  - ☞ No language--the senses are the memory

## Sensory Interventions

Allows the children to "make us witnesses to their experiences, to present us with their iconic representations and to give us the opportunity to see what they are now seeing as they look at themselves" following exposure to a traumatic event.



## What the Research is Telling Us

- ☞ Language is not generally accessible to trauma survivors
- ☞ The process of relief and recovery is dependent upon the ability to externalize the traumatic memories
- ☞ Externalization through visual means may help shift traumatic experiences from the present to the past
- ☞ Art therapy supports externalizing trauma memories through the creation or construction of an image

## When to Use Art Therapy

- ☞ After a traumatic event...
- ☞ With students who are emotionally stabilized
- ☞ As a tool for identifying students who may need additional follow-up and support

## Art Therapy Took Kit

- ☞ Most control
  - ☞ Lead, colored pencils, small sheets of paper
- ☞ Less control
  - ☞ Wet clay, watercolor paints, large pieces of paper or murals
- ☞ Tactile materials
  - ☞ Clay, collage, finger paints

## How does it help

**"Art is a way of knowing what we actually believe."  
Pat Allen**

- ☞ Offers a unique way to express traumatic images--bringing them to consciousness in a less threatening way
- ☞ Helps student gain control of a situation that was out of their control

## Art Therapy Took Kit

- ☞ Students from Multiple cultures
  - ☞ Pieces of material, yarn, beads, feathers, sequins, string
- ☞ Students with Learning Disabilities
  - ☞ Black paper and white crayon

## The Next Step

- ☞ Follow up for At-Risk Students
  - ☞ Be aware of the students who had intense physical proximity, if the event was personally threatening, or leave out important elements when recounting event
- ☞ Be careful not to over pathologize

## Art Therapy Took Kit (cont.)

- ☞ Pre-selected Questions
  - ☞ Can you draw me a picture of...
    - ☞ What you remember seeing, hearing or touching?
    - ☞ What your hurt looks like?
    - ☞ Where did you feel the hurt most in your body?
    - ☞ What scares you the most now?
    - ☞ What your experience was like that you could tell me a story about?
- ☞ Include other non-art activities for students to complete

## Making Use of This Information

- ☞ Size/Nature of crisis will determine School Psych availability
- ☞ Ideal situation will include a School Psychologist in each classroom in needed

## Sharing Information with Teachers

- ☞ Teachers or other professionals involved in the crisis response must work in tandem with school psychologists
- ☞ What teachers and others should expect from students after a crisis event (very generally)
  - ☞ Emotional numbing
  - ☞ Lack of desire or ability to speak about event
  - ☞ Avoidance
  - ☞ Anger

## Concluding Comments

- ☞ Our goal was to provide a presentation that provided information to be used at your school site as needed, with little additional preparation.
- ☞ Keep in mind that ...
  - ☞ Art Therapy as we've presented it is designed to be a screening tool for those who may need further intervention: a "tool" for the tool box of possible crisis interventions.

## Sharing Information with Teachers (cont.)

- ☞ What you want to be made aware of (generally)
  - ☞ Extreme responses--crying that doesn't stop, anger that is dangerous to the individual or others
  - ☞ Duration of emotional response

## Concluding Comments (cont.)

- ☞ Art therapy has been used in various real life contexts successfully (9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and Sri Lanka Tsunami). These events can serve as models for our interventions.
- ☞ Additionally, it is useful for those students who, for a variety of reasons, may be unable to express their feelings verbally.

## Notes About Crisis Events

- ☞ We think of the "extreme" events, like Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 that affect large numbers of people, but there may be students at your site right now who are being bullied on an on-going basis, who have had a close relative die unexpectedly, or who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. These events can also be traumatic.

## Concluding Comments (cont.)

- ☞ Some children will not be comfortable participating. Those who do not wish to participate should not. Recognize that it takes time before some students are ready to process the emotions related to the crisis event. This time may vary from a few days to months.

## Concluding Comments (cont.)

☞ Response to trauma is not just psychological, but physiological as well. Hence, the appropriateness for Art Therapy as a potential intervention: it allows children the outlet for emotional expression that is needed to address the physiological component of trauma.

## Websites

- ☞ Cedars-Sinai program:  
☞ <http://www.ptcweb.org/>
- ☞ Hurricane Katrina website:  
☞ <http://www.katrinaexhibit.org/index.htm>
- ☞ National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children:  
☞ <http://www.tlcinst.org/tlc.html>
- ☞ American Art Therapy Association,  
☞ <http://www.arttherapy.org>

## Concluding Comments (cont.)

☞ Lastly, caution should be used with interpretation: the bottom line is the meaning of the art work comes from the child him or herself.



## Copies of This Presentation

May be retrieved from:  
<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/b/brocks/>

## Final Thought

Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes; and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.

*Garrison Keillor*

What are Your Questions?



Thank You  
For Attending Our Workshop

If you would like additional information,  
please contact us:

Natalie Zehnder: [zgnatz@yahoo.com](mailto:zgnatz@yahoo.com)  
Kathy Gatten: [kathygatten@comcast.net](mailto:kathygatten@comcast.net)  
Elizabeth Crain: [elizabethvcrain@yahoo.com](mailto:elizabethvcrain@yahoo.com)