

Enhance emotional resiliency through playing therapeutic games

The Auxilium Horizons poster session explores the interface between art and play therapy with the use of therapeutic communication games in both board and digital formats. The original games were developed in art and play therapy sessions with children and adolescents. They have been revised over the years with feedback from children, adolescents, parents and professionals. The current development has moved into the digital format. The original Blue Heron Games have been developed under Auxilium Horizons to be used as culturally safe therapeutic materials for the development of emotional self-awareness and resiliency with increased self esteem through enhancing communication and social skills. The games fall under several different categories: feeling games, anger games, social issues, values and beliefs and self-esteem. General objectives for the games are:

- To increase self-awareness and the ability to identify emotions

- To enhance self-esteem
- To increase personal story telling and sharing life experiences
- To practice creative problem solving
- To develop and enhance communication and social skills
- To develop empathy and support the development of emotional resilience.

The structure of games with an exchange of turns and movement through a whole spectrum of feelings allows for the problems a child feels and experiences to be expressed within a rainbow of other feelings and positive experiences. All feelings and experiences are accepted as expressed. There are no wrong answers and it is important that there be no negative or critical response. If for example, when a child lands on the “mean” square and they tell about a really mean thing that they did; they should be acknowledged for their courage in sharing. The use of digital formats function as a dis-inhibitor and catalyst for therapeutic work by providing an engaging form of storytelling through communication games.



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Auxilium Horizons, Kutenai Art Therapy Institute, Canada

The digital communication games can be used in hospitals, schools and a variety of therapeutic environments. Digital games are familiar to a child and can help reduce their anxiety because children often feel that there is something wrong with them if they are sent to counseling. Offering a game as a choice of activity is like offering a known element in an unknown environment. There is an opportunity for interaction, warmth, laughter and friendliness. Starting with one of the feeling games can provide an opportunity to reflect or normalize feelings of anxiety, nervousness or shyness in meeting someone new. The

use of these games can create a socially enhanced process utilizing the benefits of digital materials.

The poster session will demonstrate ways art and play therapy can move into the digital age and use culturally safe

therapeutic materials to support the development of emotional self-awareness, communication and social skills.

Biography

Monica Carpendale, founder and academic dean of the Kutenai Art Therapy Institute, Nelson, BC, is an art therapist, educator, supervisor, author, film producer, researcher

and designer of nine therapeutic games for use in educational, therapeutic and medical environments. She is an international presenter on art therapy research and supervision.

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