

## Why choose a creative arts therapy for your family?

Creative arts therapies – art, music and dramatherapy – can be very helpful to help you and your family work through a wide range of emotional difficulties. This could include single life events such as a bereavement, family break up or school and friendships. It could also be a problem that is longer term, for example medical diagnosis, adoption and attachment or long term mental ill health.

Our therapists at Chroma use several techniques in their work, with the main areas being attachment theory, psychodynamic therapy and neuropsychology.

Attachment Theory was proposed in the 1960's by John Bowlby, a British therapist. Bowlby found patterns in the way children sought attention from their care givers, specifically when they are upset or scared. If the care giver responded most often in a caring and helpful way (physical contact, eye contact and soothing gestures), the child is more likely to develop a secure attachment style. When a parent is unable to attend to the physical and emotional needs of the child, and this could be due to be overwhelmed by their own challenges, they are less likely to respond to the child's needs in a helpful way. The child then develops ways of gaining the attention they need – withdrawal and aggressive behaviour often presenting at these times.

Creative arts therapists use attachment theory in their work by addressing the challenged attachment behaviours through consistency, being emotionally present for the child and supporting the child to feel safe and secure with them and with their families.

Psychodynamic Therapy uses the themes that the child and family bring to the session to explore their emotional experiences, the relationships within the family and how events have impacted upon them. Freud famously brought psychodynamic theories in

consciousness in the 1800's and theories have evolved slightly since then. In creative arts therapy, the therapist will use their feelings of what it is like to be in the room with the child and family (the Here and Now) to help them to think about how they relate to each other and what it means to another. There is not set plan or formula – the therapist helps the family to think what their interactions meant to them, personally. For example, in music therapy, a child may enjoy crashing and bashing on the drums. This could mean that the child is angry but it could also mean that the child is happy, lively and relaxed to exploring things. The therapist tries to understand the difference by using their empathy skills to recognise feelings and by reflecting back to the child either verbally or through the music. The key element of psychodynamic theory is that it helps the child and family feel heard and seen; having your problems thought about by another caring individual (the therapist) will help them to understand and either change or accept their behaviours and feelings.

Neuropsychology is a branch of psychology which looks at how the brain and the rest of the nervous system influence our cognition development and behaviours. Bruce Perry, an American psychologist, proposed a hierarchy theory where the brain has to pass through certain areas of development for it to function well enough. The first area that a child develops is the Brain Stem and the behaviours associated with this area are fight or flight, ie how should the infant deal with danger and not having their needs met. If a child has experienced early childhood trauma, the creative arts therapist will have this in mind during their work together. The child may present as having low self regulation, or become withdrawn when feeling anxious. The therapist will help the child by using repetitive movements or heavily rhythmic music to help regulate the child. Once this need has been met, the child will present with different behaviours according to where they are in their cognitive development. Using psychodynamic theory and attachment theory, together with neuropsychology, the therapist will help the child and family find balance and a positive way of being in the world.