

BUTTERFLIES IN MY STOMACH

Theme: Assessment

Recommended Age Range: 7-12

Treatment Modality: Individual, Group

Goals

1. Assess presenting problems and concerns
2. Facilitate awareness regarding how the body reacts to stress
3. Assess and promote problem solving abilities
4. Enable the verbalization of feelings

Materials

- Butterfly outlines (included)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Banner paper

Advance Preparation

Photocopy the sheet with the butterfly outlines, ensuring the child has a number of butterflies of various sizes. Cut out the butterflies.

Description

The therapist introduces the activity by pointing out that everyone has problems and worries. The therapist outlines the different ways the body reacts to stress; for example, when a person is scared, his heart might pound faster, or when a person is sad and about to cry, he might feel like he has a lump in his throat. The therapist then asks the client if he has ever heard of the expression, "I have butterflies in my stomach." If the client is unfamiliar with the expression, the therapist can offer an explanation, such as, "When you are worried or nervous about something, your stomach might feel funny or jittery, as if you have butterflies in your stomach. You don't really have butterflies in your stomach, it just feels like you do." Next, spread the banner paper on the floor. The child lies down on it, while the therapist outlines the child's body. Then the therapist gives the child the paper butterfly outlines, on which he writes his worries. Bigger worries are written on the larger butterflies, smaller worries on the smaller ones. The butterflies are then glued onto the child's body outline, inside the stomach. As the child identifies each worry, the therapist can facilitate further discussion by asking open-ended questions, such as, "Tell me more about this worry." The client's problem-solving abilities can be assessed and encouraged by asking, "What could you do about this worry to help yourself feel better?" To assess the client's available support network, the therapist can inquire, "Is there anyone who can help you with this worry?" At the end of the exercise, the child can decorate the body outline.

Discussion

This activity facilitates self-awareness, open communication, problem solving, and catharsis of negative or overwhelming feelings. It is a useful assessment tool that can be applied to a wide

variety of client populations. During the exercise, the therapist can observe and assess the child. The therapist can note whether the child is open and expressive or cautious and avoidant. This is a particularly useful activity with children who have a multitude of presenting problems, as it enables them to communicate to the therapist which problems are most pressing and need priority in treatment. The completed exercise forms a part of the client's assessment, and serves as a blueprint for developing the client's treatment plan.

BUTTERFLY OUTLINES

