Art therapy in social work with families and children

• Lolita Vilka

Abstract

Children’s health in great extent depends on quality of family life and friendly environment for child’s growth and development. In Latvia there are several centres of crises and family consulting centres, in which inter-professional intervention is applied in order to render psycho-social support in cases of conflict situations in families, rehabilitation of the children having suffered from violence, as well as assistance and support to children with behavioural problems, etc. Children who attend these centres most commonly are with negative identity, communication difficulties, “scapegoats”, personalities without boundaries, or just opposite, suffering from violence, shy, secluded, depressive and deeply hurt personalities. Application of different art methods for their psycho-social rehabilitation is adopted by social workers. In the process of rehabilitation of “problem children” resistance to verbal communication often can be noticed. The main advantage of art therapy is use of imagination, possibilities of thought and self-expression, substitution of verbal communication by symbols. Means of art help the child to get rid of negative emotions and stress, different techniques of visual work are a good way of starting conversation with children, creating atmosphere of trust and rendering emotional support. Integration of art therapy in practical social work has become an innovation. In comparison to verbal methods, it has its own advantages in social rehabilitation of children, as well as in creating of “social intelligence”.

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