

USING THE FAMILY ART ASSESSMENT TO
CREATIVELY ENGAGE CHILDREN & THEIR
CAREGIVERS IN FAMILY SESSIONS

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WELCOME

We're glad you're here!





FAMILY ART ASSESSMENT

(Bratton, 2023; adapted from Landgarten, 1987, 1994)

FAMILY ART ASSESSMENT

Useful as a first session with entire family

Helps you understand and explore family dynamics, attachment, patterns of interaction

Helps identify goals for family counseling

Provides opportunity for systemic change

Developmentally sensitive to young children

Helps caregivers enter child's world



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- Families of all sizes
 - Ages - Adults and children 3 years+
 - Primarily in agency & private practice settings
 - Theory should guide implementation



APPROPRIATE USES

Presenting concern primarily related to family relationships or family functioning

Stress within parent-child and/or sibling relationships

Environmental/systemic changes support individual growth



INAPPROPRIATE USES

- Ongoing issues of domestic violence, abuse, or neglect
- Child's behavior is extreme
- Caregivers have limited emotional/relational resources

PREPARATION

- Let the family know ahead of time that you would like them to participate in an art activity during their next session.
- If possible, invite the entire family to participate.
- The primary goal is to help you understand the family better by providing them an opportunity to engage in a fun activity.



MATERIALS



- 2 large pieces of paper (approx. 4x6 feet) – taped to a wall with ample room for movement
- Markers - no two colors alike, one color per family member – avoid yellow and beige

STRUCTURE

- Be prepared but flexible
- Provide simple prompts & encourage freedom of expression
- Should be presented as game-like, fun
- Be observant and avoid interruptions, interpretations, or talking too much about the creation
- Manage time: introduction, prompt, create, & process

DEMONSTRATION



DISCUSSION

What did you observe?

INTRODUCTION

- "You're going to draw two pictures together as a family today. Before we start, each of you should choose one color marker and that will be the only color you use for today. Everyone should have a different color."

DIRECTIVE: DRAWING 1

- "For the first drawing, I would like you to draw a picture together on this sheet of paper, but there is one rule: there can be no talking, signaling, or writing notes to each other while you're working on your picture. When you're finished just stop and put the lid on your marker to let me know you're done. It's OK if everybody doesn't finish at the same time."
- After the drawing is completed, the counselor allows the family to talk and asks them to title their drawing and write the title on their paper.

DIRECTIVE: DRAWING 2

- "Now, I'd like you to draw another picture together, but this time you can talk about what you'd like to draw together. Remember to keep your same color marker."
- Again, once they are finished, the counselor instructs the family to decide on a title for their picture and write the title on their paper.

INITIAL PROCESSING QUESTIONS



"Tell me about your pictures."

"How did you decide on the title?"

"Which one was easier/harder to create?"

"How do you feel when you look at each one?"

PROCESSING TIPS

Carefully consider number
and types of questions
specific to each family

Don't interpret

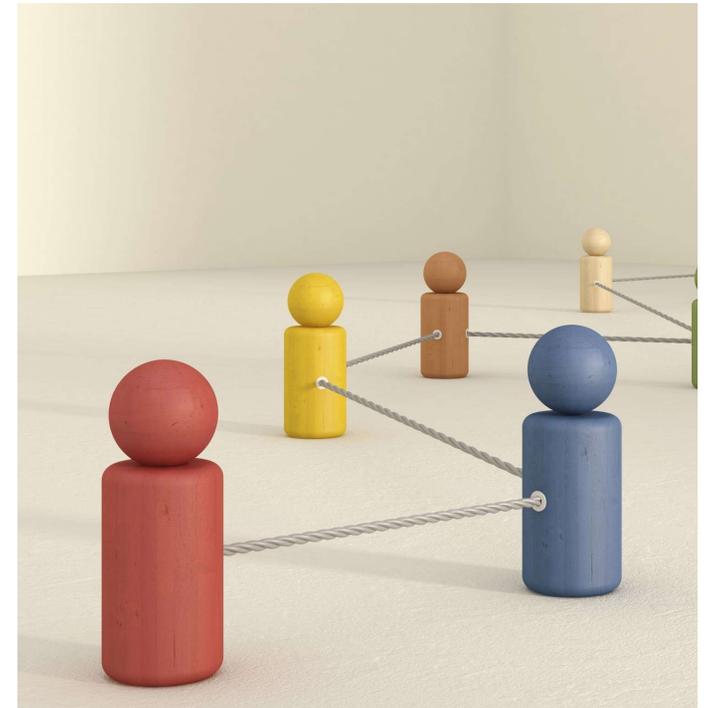
Allow time for each family
member to talk

Carefully point out
observations & patterns of
behavior

May ask children to leave,
talk with parents
individually

OBSERVATIONS

- Who initiates and ends artwork, order of participation?
- Whose suggestions were followed or ignored?
- What was each person's level of involvement?
- Who worked independently/dependently/collaboratively/in teams?
- How much space did each person occupy?
- Did a leader emerge?
- Was the environment or family interactions positive or hostile?
- Was the activity structured or chaotic?
- Who contributed the most or the least?
- What emotions were present?



DISCUSSION

Making-meaning and integrating the Family Art Assessment into the counseling process

QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!



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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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