

# The Dolls: tool of the approach

Representing diverse children:

- Life like, cloth
- 70cm tall
- Culturally authentic
- Abilities and disabilities
- Care to avoid stereotypes
- The Doll comes to visit and brings stories of her/his life
- Dolls are self made or ordered from rural income generation projects



# Persona Doll approach

- The approach provides a practical tool for psychosocial support, inclusion and diversity training
- Used by ECD, Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers, childcare workers, social workers and other human service practitioners
- The large life like Dolls, their life experiences in stories and discussion is a practical tool to challenge oppression, develop self esteem, empathy and 'unlearn' prejudice.



# Develop a 'persona' or identity

Each Doll is given:

- Unique personality
- Cultural background
- Language/s
- Age, gender, name
- Abilities and disabilities
- Home and family set up
- Likes and dislikes: food, sport, TV, work etc.
- Fears
- Recent history



# Derman Sparks: 4 Anti-bias goals: a conceptual framework for the study

- Identity and self esteem: demonstrate self awareness, positive group identity and confidence,
- Empathy and diversity: express comfort with diversity, language for human difference, just & caring interactions with diverse backgrounds
- Unlearning prejudice: identify, care and challenge, describe unfairness and understand the hurt
- Problem solving: activist approach: empowerment and skills to act against prejudice



## Aims of Stories and discussion scenarios for adults and children:

- Build self esteem
- Developing emotional intelligence, literacy and language
- Listen to children's voices
- Develop empathy
- Respect diversity
- Collectivise issues: Feeling 'not alone'
- 'Unlearn' prejudice
- Problem posing: an activist approach
- Support 'victims' e.g abuse, bullying, xenophobic attacks



# Isibindi and Persona doll stories

Can be used across:

- Child protection
- ECD
- Disability

# Isibindi and Persona Dolls

- Teaching life skills – relationship building, problem solving, conflict resolution, dealing with stress
- Children and families – dealing with health, trauma, child protection
- Knowledge and skills - HIV/AIDS awareness, safety
- Difficult situations of conflict, crisis, stress and grief

# Some research findings: children's responses to the dolls

- Children were excited, loved the Doll and identified with the Doll.
- Children were talkative, wider vocabulary, participative, curious and asked questions.
- The atmosphere became more relaxed, with more child participation.
- Children wanted to touch and hug the Doll.
- Children showed empathy, compassion, caring, 'softening'.



# Children's behavior changed

- Empathy increased.
- Listening, concentration and attention improved.
- Children expressed feelings, became more confident.
- There was more sharing, respect for others: children wanted to help.

# Interacting with the Dolls



# A childcare worker and home visitors in training



## Using stories helps to :

- Talk about difficult issues
- Children now trust adults more
- Children open up and are more spontaneous
- Be more sympathetic towards the children
- Deal with difficult issues for example: HIV and Aids stigma, abuse, and racism
- Create an 'open' atmosphere to talk- no right or wrong answers
- Feel more relaxed with parents/ carers

# What our research shows that children talk about

- Bullying, name calling
- Empathy, diversity, feelings
- Violence issues: stranger danger, parents fighting, gang fights, crime, fighting, abuse, safety
- HIV and Aids
- Family issues: single parents; parents not there, neglect, alcohol and drug abuse, divorce, gay parents, unemployment
- Racism and xenophobia
- Poverty issues
- Sexism and gender were not raised as priority issues
- Sexual abuse was raised, children talk about abuse and disclose

# PDT SA offers:

- Training for trainers & senior mentors
- Training for childcare workers and ECD practitioners & teachers
- Materials and manuals
- Persona Dolls
- Ubuntu play dolls (anatomically correct)
- Support for organisations wanting to use the Persona Doll approach





## References

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