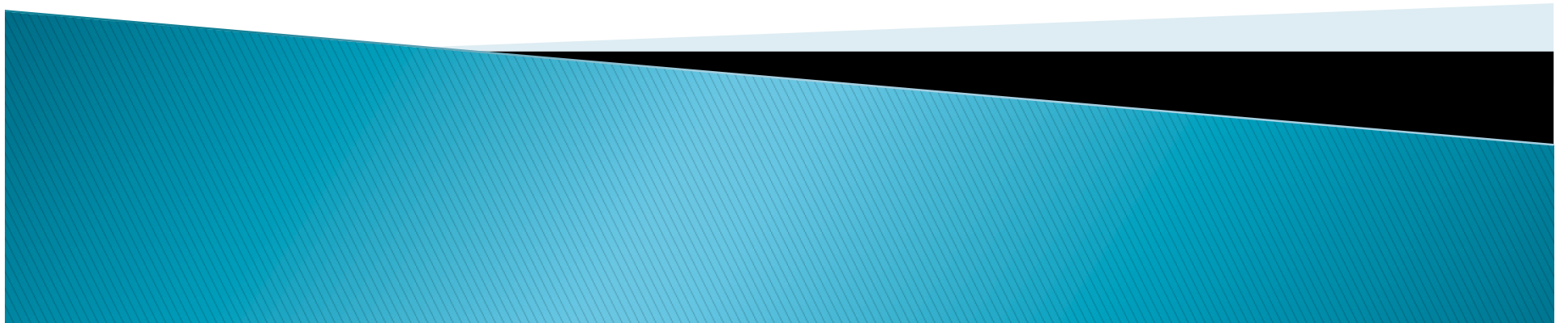


Strategic Interventions for Engaging Resistant Adolescents

Amanda Gregory, LPC, NCC

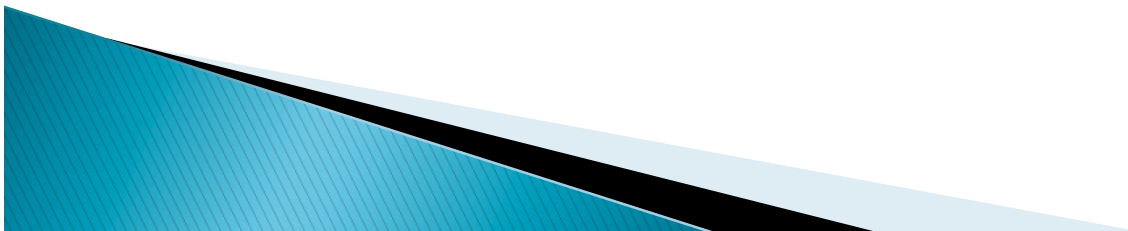
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Objectives

- ▶ Identify obstacles which hinder engagement
- ▶ Develop how to build and maintain a trusting relationship with an adolescent
- ▶ Practice and implement individualized experiential interventions designed to promote adolescent engagement



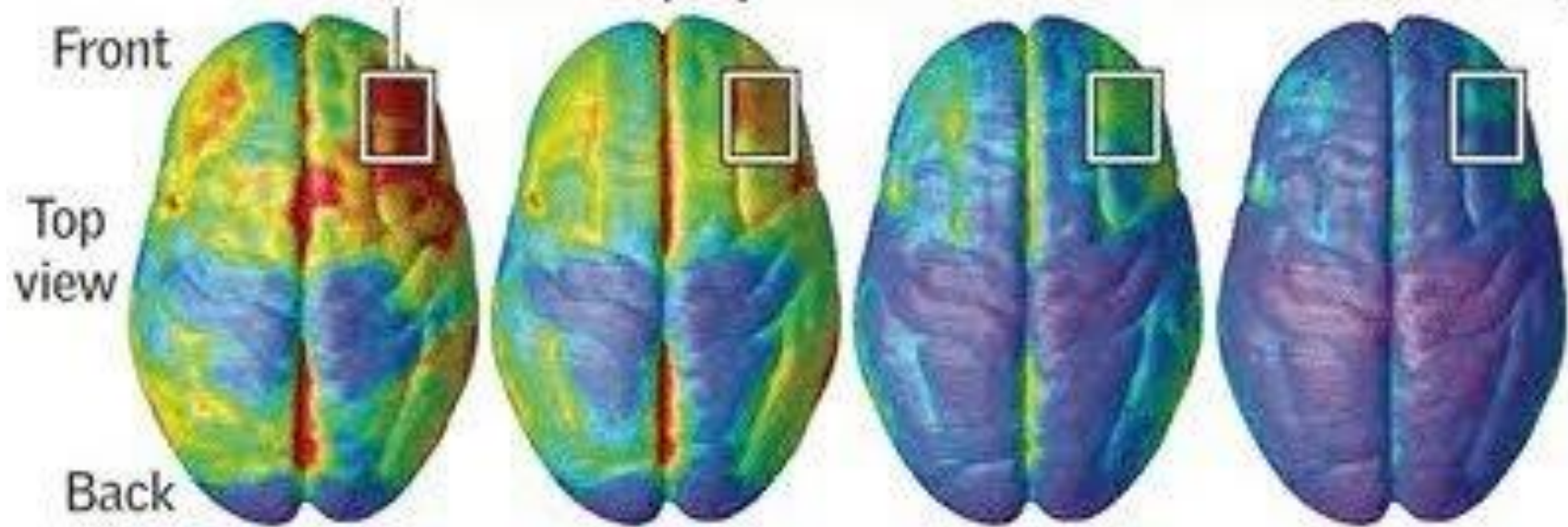
Engagement Obstacles

- ▶ Mandated Attendance
- ▶ Mandated Treatment Goals/Expectations
- ▶ Attention Issues
- ▶ Adolescent Brain Development
- ▶ Attachment Needs
- ▶ Family Dynamics
- ▶ School Participation/Scheduling
- ▶ Multiple Adults Involved
- ▶ Face to Face Interaction (not electronic)
- ▶ Confidentiality



5-year-old brain Preteen brain Teen brain 20-year-old brain

Dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex ("executive functions")



Red/yellow: Parts of brain less fully mature



Blue/purple: Parts of brain more fully matured

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

Drew & Emily

- ▶ Drew 16 yrs.
 - Removed from home due to neglect from biological mother
 - Placed in a foster home
 - Alcohol Use
 - Physical aggression
 - Property damage
 - Juvenile Office involved
 - Plans for detainment to a juvenile detention center
- ▶ Emily 15 yrs.
 - Rumor online that she had sex with a young teacher
 - Close relationship with this teacher
 - Refused to attend school
 - Social isolation
 - Defiance
 - Self harming
 - Hospitalization



Empathy

- ▶ Recognize that you have an adult lens
- ▶ Prefrontal Cortex is not fully developed. It is in fact, the end of the world
 - Breakups
 - Rumors
 - Failing a test
 - Schoolwork
 - Chores
 - Peer conflicts
 - Failure



Adult Equivalents

Adolescent	Adult
Lost Phone	Lost Car/Wallet/Purse
Bullied at school	Harassed at work
Failing a class	Losing a job/demotion
Going to stupid school everyday	Going to an unsatisfactory job everyday
Teacher does not you	Boss doesn't like you
Parents don't understand you	Not understanding your child
Going to therapy	Forced to go to the doctor regularly without need

Adult Equivalent: Emily

▶ Emily

- A rumor online that she had sex with a teacher
- “I’m never going to school again.”

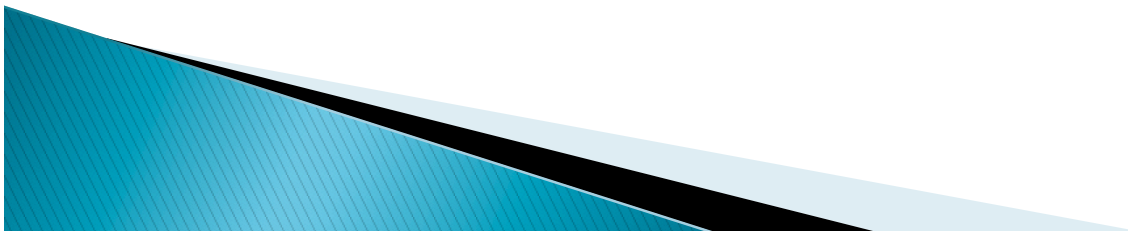
▶ Therapist

- Adult Equivalent = A rumor at work that I had sex with my boss
- “I’m never going back to work again.”
- More options (HR advocate, Boss, Quit)



Attunement

- ▶ “Bringing into harmony; a feeling of being ‘at one’ with another being.”
- ▶ Posture (laid back, ridged)
- ▶ Tone of voice (excited, lethargic)
- ▶ Energy (high, low)
- ▶ Language (choice of words, slang)

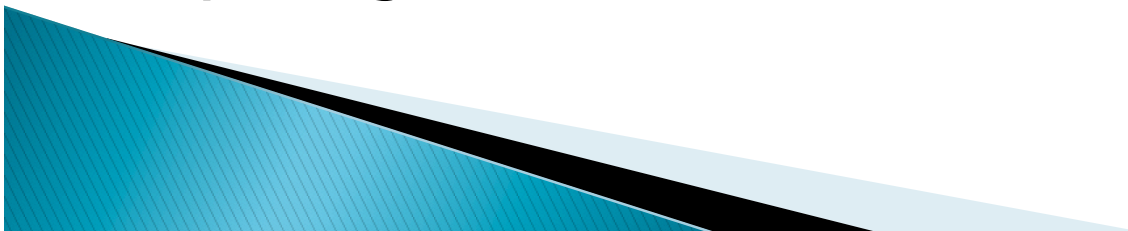


Attunement: Drew

	Drew	Therapist
Posture	Sits low in chair, feet on coffee table, arms crossed. Positions chair directly facing therapist.	Chair moved to the right (less confrontational), feet on coffee table, relaxed
Tone	Low irritable	Low curious tone
Energy	Low Energy – apathetic	Low Energy – Laid Back
Language	“This is stupid”	What’s the stupidest thing about being here.”

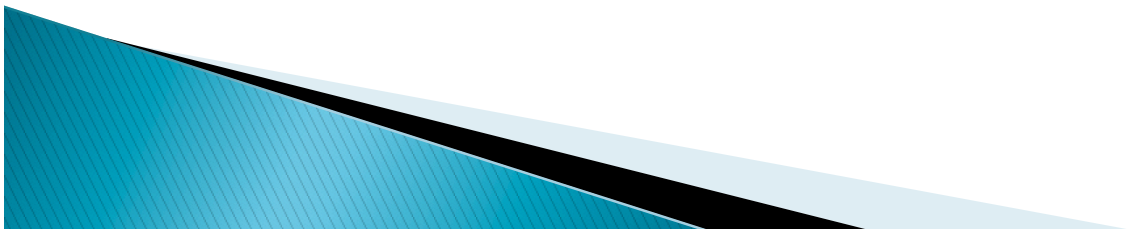
Playfulness

- ▶ Boredom is an adolescent's nemesis
- ▶ Playfulness doesn't imply immaturity
- ▶ Adolescents need permission to be playful
- ▶ What are they into?
 - Play their game with them on their phone/iPad
 - Ask to see their pictures/drawings/poetry
 - Listen to their music
 - Watch videos of sports/plays/performances
- ▶ Give permission to interact with typical younger child items in the office



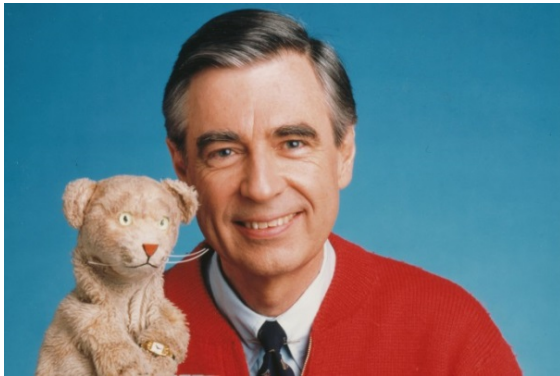
Playfulness: Emily

- ▶ Fearful that I would force her to attend school
- ▶ Played with puppets
 - Gave permission
 - “Do you want to see them?”
 - Therapist started playing first
 - Established Safety
 - Silly themes
 - Which puppet was in charge?
 - What do they do after hours?
 - Puppet proofing office



Safe Boundaries

- ▶ Establish and Maintain a Vertical Relationship



Horizontal
Peers



Vertical



Vertical Relationship

- ▶ Limits to Confidentiality
 - Must communicate all restrictions at first contact
 - Legal requirements (reporting abuse, court ordered)
 - Who has access to their information?
 - How and what will be shared?
 - Information stored on phones?
 - Create a plan with families regarding how information will be shared
- ▶ Are you acting as a peer (friend) or a safe adult?



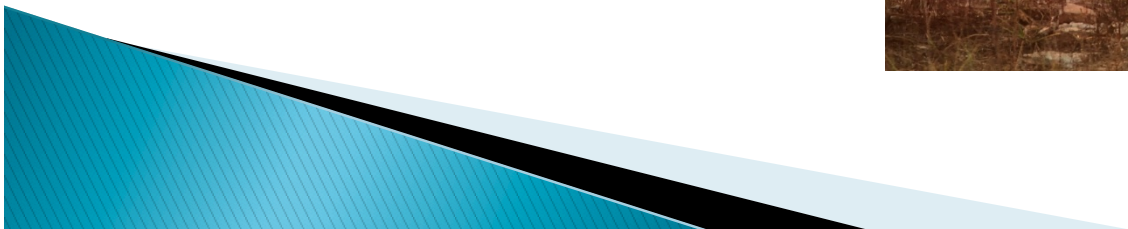
Vertical Relationship: Drew & Emily

“They told her everything, and she used it against me”

- Drew 16 yrs.

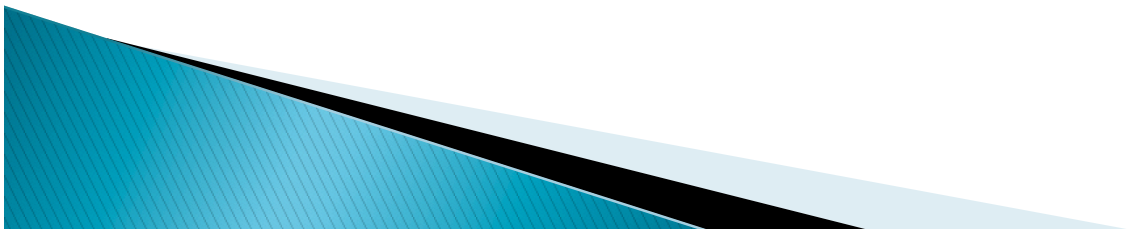
“Convince my mom to buy me a new phone and then I will go back to school.”

- Emily 15 yrs.



Empowerment

- ▶ Independence vs Resistance
- ▶ Encourage Involvement in Decision Making?
 - Scheduling Appointments
 - Treatment Goals
 - Treatment Planning/Services
 - Interventions
 - Give them options
 - Choose one, A or B
 - Which should we do first, A or B?
 - Encourage Positive Leadership
 - Place them in charge of a group
 - Put them in charge of a session “Therapist for a Day”



Empowerment: Drew

- ▶ Substance Use Peer Group
 - 6 groups, little engagement, negative comments, irritability, sleeping
- ▶ Lead an Alcohol Education Group
 - Coordinated with foster parents, Juvenile Officer, and group leader to determine their goals
 - Choice: Lead one group addressing specific goals and finish the requirement or repeat the cycle (12 groups)
 - Drew researched, organized, and led an Alcohol Quiz Game. He was successful, he decided to continue to attend groups.



Cultural Sensitivity: Adolescent Cultural Communication

- ▶ How Do They Communicate?
 - Plugged In: Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Phone (texting)
 - Facebook (declining) – but not Facebook messenger
 - Ask them what apps they use
 - Are they visual, auditory, kinesthetic?
 - How they cope? (Color Therapy App)
 - Interests
 - Safety Issues
- ▶ Language
 - Slang/Internet
 - Is ok to ask!

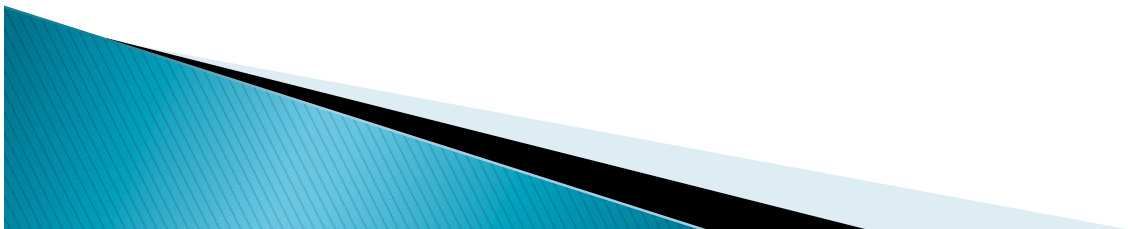


Text Slang



Verbal Slang


Phrase	Translation
Lit	Good/Great/Excited “lit on fire”
Bad	Good/Hot (sexy)
Ship	Relationship
Dime	The best (1-10)
Hangry	Hungry and Angry
Fleek	On point (body image)
Netflix and Chill	Sexual Encounter



Cultural Sensitivity: Emily

- ▶ Be aware of your own generational culture

Emily	Therapist
Peer Support: Texting, Apps	Peer Support: Note in class, Phone Calls

- ▶ Parents wanted to confiscate her phone to improve school attendance and decrease her exposure to online bullying.
 - ▶ Alternative: Increased online safety which decreased exposure to bullying. Limited time on phone when refused to attend school and only allowed to communicate with positive peers. She continued to have peer support and help motivate her to attend school.
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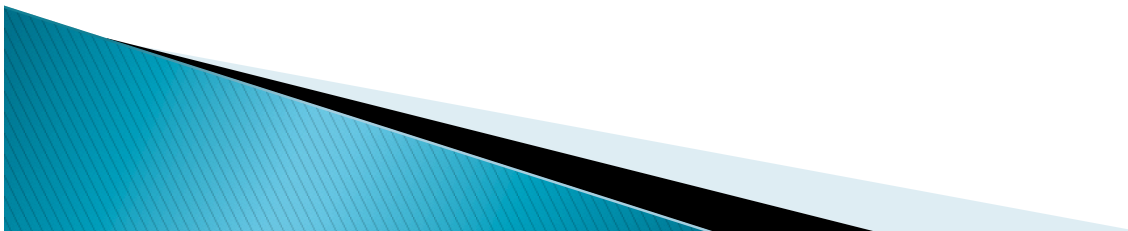
Experiential Interventions

- ▶ Focus on the experience
- ▶ Works with treatment savvy clients
- ▶ It's fun (avoid boredom)
- ▶ Counters Obstacles
 - Brain Development: Creates new neurological pathways without relying upon a developed prefrontal cortex
 - Attention Issues: Works well with short attention spans
 - Attachment Needs: Promotes attachment
 - Mandated Attendance: Focuses on their interests/ language



Which Interventions Should I Use?

- ▶ What do they like?
 - Art, Physical Activities, Music, Building
- ▶ How do they learn?/What's their language?
 - Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic
- ▶ What are they willing to do?
 - Provide Options
 - Do not force participation





Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
see	hear	grasp
look	tell	feel
bright	sound	hard
clear	resonate	unfeeling
picture	listen	concrete
foggy	silence	scrape
view	deaf	solid
clear	squeak	touch
focused	hush	get hold of
dawn	roar	catch on
reveal	melody	tap into
illuminate	make music	heated
imagine	harmonize	argument
hazy	tune in/out	pull some
an eyeful	rings a bell	strings
short	quiet as a	sharp as a
sighted	mouse	tack
sight for	voiced an	smooth
sore eyes	opinion	operator
take a peek	clear as a	make contact
tunnel vision	bell	throw out
bird's eye	give me	firm
view	your ear	foundation
naked eye	loud and	get a handle
paint a	clear	on
picture		

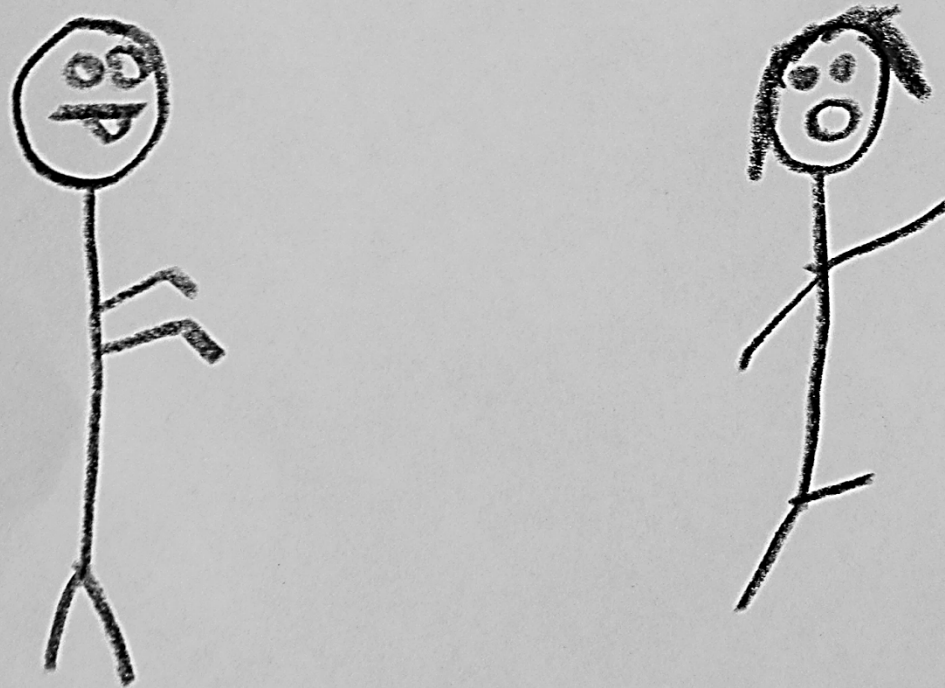
Visual

Visual stimuli, uses visual words

- ▶ Relationship Building
 - Doodle Switch
 - Draw/Paint (something from a category like music, movies, animals and then the other person guesses)
- ▶ Strategic
 - Draw/Paint/Sculpt/Write.....
 - Design (videogame, clothes, characters, floor plans)
 - Paint/Color on hands/arms
 - Picture Cards
- ▶ What does _____look like?



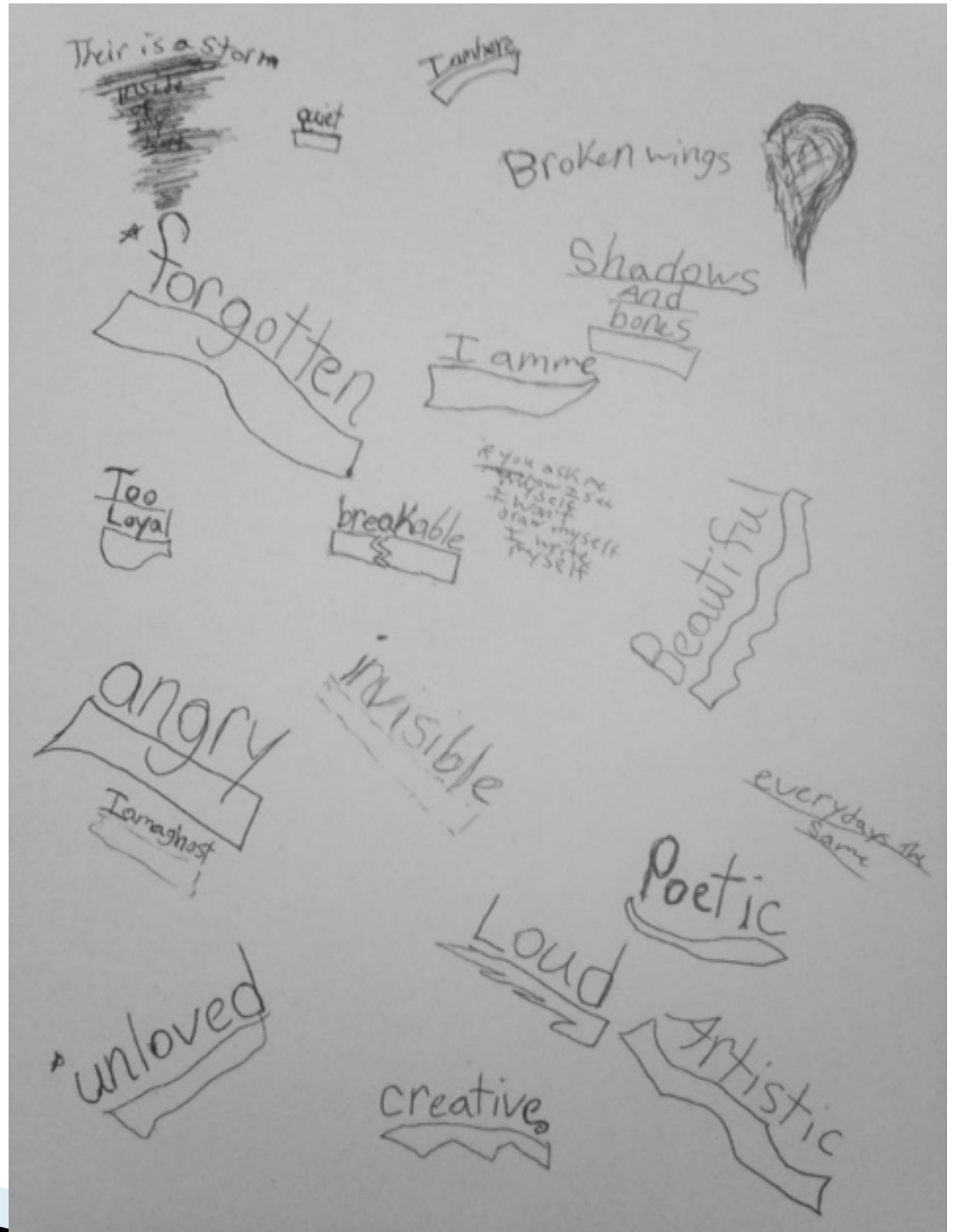
Draw our relationship



Draw a
feeling that
you don't
want people
to know
about



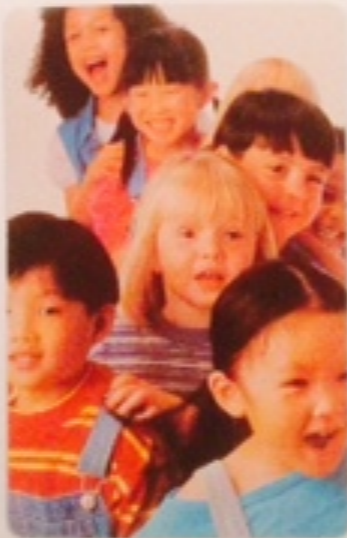
Draw a picture of how you see yourself



Paint the
mask as
others
see you



Drew's Story



Kinesthetic

Movement, fidget, shows you or needs to be shown

▶ Relationship Building

- Item in their hands
- Widgets/Puzzles
- Rhythm Games
- Walking/Exercises
- Safe Touch (Fist Bump, Thumb War, Arm Wrestle)

▶ Strategic

- Practice physical coping skills in session
- Physically express emotions (hitting targets)
- Physically act out conflicts (on a stage)
- Building/Creating with hands
- Therapy animals
- What does _____ feel like? (cold, hot, slick)



Auditory

Talk/Listen, music/sound, auditory language

▶ Relationship Building

- Listen to their music/Share your music
- Encourage them to play their instrument in session
- Create a beat together

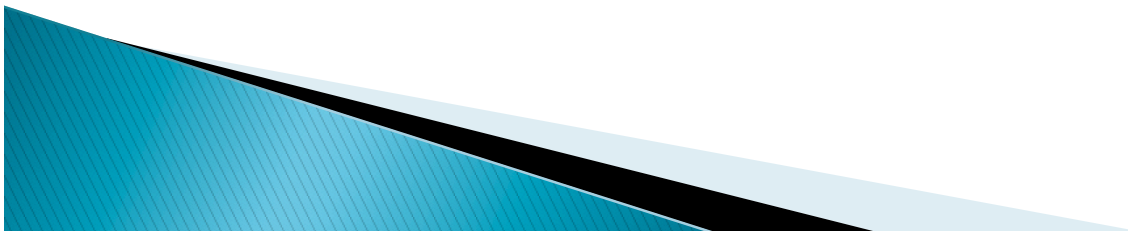
▶ Strategic

- Encourage to them to use sound when expressing/processing (emotions, conversations)
- Write a song that...
- Pick a song/noise that...
- What does _____ sound like?



Where are they now?

- ▶ Emily 18 yrs.
 - Changed her peer group. Improved attendance and graduated. No self harming 7 months since rumor started. Planning to attend college to major in advertising.
- ▶ Drew 19 yrs.
 - Participated in transition program with DFS and was released from Juvenile Office supervision after 8 months. Living Independently, works full time as a coach at a therapeutic residential treatment facility.



Questions?

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