Aggression in Sessions: Strategies and Interventions

for School Counselors

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Abstract

School counselors are charged with meeting the academic and personal/social needs of all students. Aggression can have a significantly negative effect on both areas in the school environment. It is imperative that these aspects are addressed in culturally and developmentally appropriate ways. Creative approaches based in play and art can be effective and appropriate in addressing these concerns for a multitude of students. This article will present insights and theory-based creative interventions for working with aggression in elementary school counseling sessions.

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for School Counselors

School counselors are charged with myriad of duties during the school day.

Perhaps the most relevant and valuable responsibility is to provide much-needed

counseling services to youth people dealing with a variety of issues. Despite receiving

training in providing such counseling services, there are still areas of concerns for

school counselors. Paramount of these concerns is working with youth aggression in

counseling sessions (Ebrahim, Steen, & Paradise, 2012; Ray, Lee, Meany-Walen,

Calrson, Carnes-Holt, & Ware, 2013; Trice-Black, Bailey, & Riechel, 2013). Aggression

is defined as hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior often caused by frustration, which

can be collective or individual (Siever, 2008). While there is a variety of perspectives

regarding the role of aggression in counseling sessions (Drewes, 2008; Goodyear-

Brown, 2010; Trotter, Eshelman, & Landreth, 2003), it is an aspect of the counseling

environment that counselors working with children must address in their own manner.

This article will discuss aspects related to youth and aggression, perspectives on

aggression in school counseling settings, and a selection of theory-based interventions

that can be employed with students displaying aggression in session.

Youth and Aggression in Counseling

Dating back to the works of Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Albert Bandura,

childhood behavior issues such as aggression have been an area of interest to

understand and treat in counseling (Bandura, 1973; Carmichael, 2006). Aggressive

behavior in children is often a multidimensional phenomenon with social, cultural,

familial, and biological components. These children may be angry, anxious, and lonely

and may lack the ability to express emotions appropriately (Shechtman, 2017). The fact that childhood aggression can stem from a variety of issues (e.g., trauma, grief, anxiety) demonstrates a significant need for skills and interventions for school counselors (Norton, Ferriegel, & Norton, 2011; Sories, Maier, Beer, & Thomas, 2015). Considering the conflicting messages children receive from parents and society, this can be a troubling experience for them as well (Trotter et al., 2013). It is imperative that aggression issues are identified early in childhood to develop and utilize effective and appropriate interventions (Dincel & Demirtis-Zorbaz, 2015).

Helping young people who demonstrate aggressive behaviors in the counseling setting can be a frightening and difficult process for practitioners. Aggression release in counseling is often seen as natural and helpful, but the findings are conflicting on the most appropriate methods of addressing aggression in the counseling setting (Drewes, 2008; Goodyear-Brown, 2010; Guerney, 2001; Swearer, Schwartz, & Garcia, 2015). For example, the use of aggressive toys and materials (e.g., bop bags, toy soldiers, weapons, etc.) in play-based counseling sessions features two distinct views of addressing aggression. Drewes (2008) stated that the inclusion of aggressive toys in counseling implies aggression is acceptable and even desired and often results in increased aggressive behaviors outside of the counseling session (e.g., schools). Findings by Sories and colleagues (2015) also indicate that while aggressive materials in session are helpful, they are not essential to the process. Conversely, Landreth, Ray, and Bratton (2009) stated that aggressive play allows the opportunity to experience aggressive behavior first hand while allowing for learning self-control with appropriate limit setting. The use of aggressive-release toys also allows children to express anger,

hostility, and frustration freely and purposefully and not including them could limit the natural expression of aggression (Landreth, 2012; Ray et al., 2013). A plethora of interventions have been recommended for dealing with aggression in youth ranging from child-centered play therapy to cognitive-behavioral techniques (Barnes, Smith, & Miller, 2014; Blanco & Ray, 2011; Carmichael, 2006; Winburn, Gilstrap, & Perryman, 2017).

Regardless of the materials and interventions utilized, the primary role of the counseling process is to allow children to test limits and boundaries in a safe location in a relationship with a caring and involved adult (Kottman, 2011; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2013; Shechtman, 2017). Additionally, it is imperative that the counselor understand the feelings of aggression to help the child process and express these feelings and gain control (Landreth, 2012). These aspects are of paramount concern for school counselors because of the increased unmet mental health needs of students which are often seen though aggression (Ebarhim, Steen, & Paradise, 2012; Trice-Black, Bailey, & Reichel, 2013).

Aggression in School Counseling Sessions

It is recommended that 75% of school counselors' time should be spent in guidance curriculum and responsive services to help develop basic life skills and address immediate concerns (Ray, Muro, & Schumann, 2004). While this is the recommended time allotment, most school counselors are not provided the opportunity to utilize the counseling skills received in training (Capella, Jackson, Bilal, Hamre, & Soule, 2011). This factor is of vital importance because it is estimated that 20% of children experience mental health issues, yet 75% receive no counseling services

(Blanco & Ray, 2011). Further, 62% of preschool teachers report experiencing some sort of aggressive behavior from students (Dincel & Demirtis-Zorbaz, 2015). Considering that mental health problems for elementary students can lead to aggressive and disruptive behaviors in classrooms resulting in academic, social, behavioral, and cognitive difficulties, it is imperative that school counselors utilize appropriate interventions to work with students dealing with aggression early in a child's education (Barnes, Smith, & Miller, 2014; Ebrahim, Steen, & Paradise, 2012; Swearer, Schwartz, & Garcia, 2015)

Research has shown that creative interventions, such as play and art therapy, as being effective in school settings (Blanco & Ray, 2011; Chang, Ritter, & Hays, 2005; Ray, Bratton, Rhine, & Jones, 2001; Randick & Dermer, 2013; Trice-Black, Bailey, & Riechel, 2013). Additionally, creative interventions such as play therapy align with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model ® (2012) as developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and empirically supported (Winburn et al., 2017).

Children with high levels of aggression and conduct problems greatly impact the school environment and future student success (Powell, Boxmeyer, Baden, Stromeyer, Minney, Mushtaq, & Lochman, 2011). Students show aggression in the classroom, lunchroom, playground and even in the school counselors office. Aggression and disruptive behaviors are often to blame for students' disciplinary problems in the school setting. Recent studies have shown that targeting physical and psychological aggression in the counseling setting, whether it be group, individual, or schoolwide, has been a large factor in reducing these problem behaviors in school (Staecker et al.,

2016). It is important to begin teaching violence prevention and how to deal with aggression at the elementary level to better prepare the student for dealing with aggression and problematic situations in middle and high school (Staeker et al., 2016). Furthermore, unaddressed feelings of anger can lead to violence in school settings (McWhirter et al., 2013). Studies have shown that when a child can better cope with aggression and other disruptive behaviors, not only has there been an improvement in behavior, but also in academic achievement (Johnson & Hannon 2014). If these behaviors are left unattended, students may be at risk for increased aggression and externalizing behaviors that can lead to much more serious problems in the future (Meany-Walen, Kottman, Bullis, & Taylor, 2015).

Given the research evidence, it is important for elementary school counselors to have the skills to address aggression in the counseling session to help students better understand the root of their aggression and to promote their academic and social success. The purpose of this article is to provide specific theory-based interventions for working with aggression in session at the elementary school level. Four theory-based aggression interventions will be discussed in the following sections.

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt therapy emphasizes relationship building, awareness, contact, and self-expression based in the here and now (Yalom, 2001). According to Oaklander (2001), anger is one the least socially tolerated emotions, and as consequence, individuals learn how to restrict or block its expression during their childhood years. A child's externalized aggressive behaviors may stem from not being aware of or able to express the authentic source of anger. While the expression of aggressive energy is a natural

expression of the self, it is often interpreted negatively as aggression and as something to be avoided (Campbell, 1993). Consequently, children may learn to deflect, or to project their aggressive emotions to outward sources that are not even connected to the true source of anger in their lives.

The counselor's role is to act in a way that helps the child become aware of the real source of aggressive energy and express it in a way that is safe and appropriate within the boundaries of a well-established therapeutic relationship (Oaklander, personal communication, 2014; Robinson, 2011). This is a relationship in which therapist and child come together as equals. Next, the counselor must evaluate the contact level of the child and to determine the level of presence the child has during the session. If the child is cut-off, resistance may occur resulting in an obstruction to counseling progress. If the child is resistant, the counselor may need to acknowledge the resistance to help the child build enough self-support to express difficult emotions (Lac, 2016). Ultimately, it is all about the experience of the child and self-nurturing work of the child's negative feelings (Oaklander, 2001). These feelings of anger can be explored through experiments that can aid in the child experiencing the emotions in the healing relationship to process through the emotions in a novel way (Robinson, 2011).

This intervention utilizes a Gestalt-therapy based experiment with clay as a creative strategy to help address aggression in school counseling sessions. According to Oaklander (2001), making things with creative materials such as clay provides children with a tactile and kinesthetic experience that helps them contact their true feelings in a way that surpasses verbal expression alone. Also, by watching the child work out his or her angry feelings by manipulating these materials, the counselor can

directly observe how the child processes anger, instead of just hearing about it (Campbell, 1993).

Materials

The primary material needed for this experiment is clay. Play-Doh is typically utilized in this type of experiment. It is recommended that a firm table or surface where the clay can be placed and manipulated be utilized. Finally, the school counselor may want to have water and cleaning supplies available to address any potential mess that could result.

Procedure

Step one: It is vital to acknowledge the source of the child's aggressive feelings at the beginning of the session. Start by identifying the child's verbal and non-verbal expression of anger in the here and now. Some suggestions could be: "I noticed that when you walked in the door your fists were clenched" or "When you mentioned your friend's name, you grit your teeth."

Step two: Explain to the student in age-appropriate language that you have an activity with clay that you would like to suggest that helps work through difficult feelings, such as anger. Ask if the child would like to engage in the exercise. If the answer is no, stay with the child where he or she is and work through the child's decision to stay angry or with whatever feeling he or she is experiencing.

Step three: Once the child agrees to participate ask her to take a piece of clay and place it in his or her hands and close his or her eyes. If they don't want to close their eyes explain that keeping their eyes open can get in the way of feeling the clay. You can also suggest that they can try out how it feels to do the activity with their eyes

closed and with their eyes open to compare. It is suggested that the counselor work along with the students to go through the process with them. Next, tell them to just sit for a moment and take a couple of deep breaths with the clay in their hands.

Step four: Tell the students to make something with their clay. Some suggested prompts might include: "Move your fingers through the clay and let them shape the clay into whatever form or shape you like;" or "There is no right or wrong during this exercise, and there is no need to think about what to make before making it;" or "Let yourself be surprised. See if the clay wants to go its own way or if you want it to go your way;" or "You will have only a few minutes to do this (2-3 mins). When I say time is up open your eyes and look at what you have made. You can put a few finishing touches but don't change the shape. Just look at it and let it speak to you."

Step five: Explain to the child that what he or she created with the clay says something about him or her. Start asking the child to describe the clay. Ask him or her to give it a name and describe what it is. If they are having trouble doing this, ask the child to describe the objects physical properties or describe the process or how they felt creating the form or shape.

Step six: After the child is finished describing the clay, ask "How does this fit into your life?" or "How does this fit into what happened earlier today in class, in the cafeteria, or playground, etc." Use active listening skills and reflection of feeling to find out how the child feels and ask them to say it in the present (Instead of "I felt", use "I feel mad when..."). From a Gestalt perspective, whatever the child expresses through the clay describes a great deal about what the child feels in real life and how he or she copes with aggressive feelings.

Step seven: Once the child has had enough time to process those feelings with the counselor, it is recommended that more appropriate or acceptable ways to deal with anger at school be discussed. You can brainstorm ideas with the child and come up with strategies that will work for him or her.

Cultural Components

Students across different sociocultural backgrounds may find the Gestalt clay experiment to be useful because it allows them to act out an angry situation, giving them a sense of power over the outcome resulting in a very personal and holistic experience (Luc, 2016). The emphasis on building a relationship with a child first and respecting the child's process makes it culturally competent approach to be used with children from different backgrounds and across different developmental ages (Robinson, 2011). The versatility of clay makes this experiment suitable for children with different developmental disabilities and across different age groups. Further, the aspects of movement and personal awareness is based in the lived world of the student thus allowing for his/her culture to be primary to the situation and process (Luc, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations

The main strength of Gestalt therapy is building a relationship with the child in the here and now before any actual therapeutic or counseling work begins (Yalom, 2001). In addition, being respectful and honoring the child's process helps create a safe space with clear boundaries for the creative expression of aggressive energy that might not be available anywhere else for that child (Oaklander, 2001). On the downside, following the child's process may take more session time than is available, especially in an elementary school setting, where sessions may be restricted. Further, there is a

necessary knowledge about Gestalt theory and practice that may go beyond the scope of a novice school counselor. Nevertheless, even for the experienced Gestalt practitioner, it is important to set priorities in working with children in a school setting, going only where the child is willing to take you and within the time limit that is allowed (Robinson, 2011).

Adlerian Therapy

Adlerian counseling focuses on the *whole* person within their environment. The relationship between counselor and client is collaborative, but it is up to the client to make their own decisions and come to their own conclusions, and when working with children at the elementary level, this can be difficult to accomplish (Meany-Walen et al., 2015). By including age appropriate techniques and language, however, Adlerian counseling can be highly beneficial to elementary aged students (Meany-Walen, Bratton, & Kottman, 2014).

When using Adlerian counseling with students who are showing aggressive and disruptive behaviors, it is important to understand the child's world and how the child perceives themselves within their world. It is also important to help the child discover mistaken beliefs and goals that may be causing some of the aggression (Froeschle & Riney, 2008). It can be very difficult for children to properly express themselves through words alone, so creative avenues, such as play, allows a nonverbal and concrete method of expression (Meany-Walen et al., 2014). Adlerian counselors can use play therapy to help students identify their misbehaviors, goals, and better express how they see themselves in their own world. The use of art can be highly beneficial for Adlerian counselors. This type of play therapy can allow students to understand their situations in

ways that words cannot convey (Meany-Walen et al., 2015). The use of Adlerian art therapy has been shown to decrease children's bullying and aggression, while improving their academic achievement (Froeschle & Riney, 2008). Such interventions may allow students to express themselves through art and play and to explain the meanings behind their art to the counselor.

Adlerian counseling focuses on (a) understanding feelings of inferiority, (b) realizing that behavior is purposeful and goal-directed, and (c) understanding a student from his/her perception of his/her own world. When it comes to aggression, it is important for the counselor to determine the purpose or goal of the misbehavior (attention seeking, power, revenge, or inadequacy) and use encouragement to help the student work through their aggression. In sessions with children, the use of art can help the student to express things that they are unable to put into words. The following is a technique for understanding aggression and other disruptive behaviors in elementary aged children during a counseling session. This technique is best used with middle to upper elementary students in individual counseling sessions.

Materials

The materials needed for this creative activity include blank paper and drawing utensils (e.g., markers, colored pencils, crayons, paint, etc.). One index card will also be provided to the student. It is recommended that cleaning supplies or a plastic tarp and/or washable art materials be utilized for this activity.

Procedure

Step one: Start by making a connection with the student. Acknowledge that they are upset or angry and let the student know you are there to help understand why.

Some prompts may include: "I can see you angry about what happened in the classroom" or "It looks like are sad upset because you had a fight on the playground."

Step two: Ask the student if they want to try an art activity with them. This step in important in developing a collaborative relationship with the student.

Step three: Place 5 colored markers/crayons/pencils and a piece of paper in front of the student and ask the student to pick feelings for each color. The counselor can give examples of feelings verbally or visually as needed. Write the meaning of each color on an index card, which will be placed in front of the student as a reminder while drawing.

Step four: Instruct the student to draw what happened that lead to the aggression using the colors to show their feelings.

Step five: When the student is finished, ask him/her to explain the drawing in his/her own words. Be sure to remind of the colors used and the feelings that correspond to each color if the student fails to do so. The goal of misbehavior and feelings of inferiority can be very difficult concepts for young children to understand, so it is up to the counselor decipher how these fit into the child's drawing. The emotions used in the picture can help guide the counselor to understand the goal of misbehavior and allow the student and counselor to work together to help the student feel important in his/her own world. After the goal is understood, the counselor can use positive regard and encouragement to help the student work through his/her aggression.

Cultural Components

An Adlerian approach to working with students gain provide several benefits from a cultural perspective. Research supports the use of Adlerian play-based therapy with a

variety of races and cultures (Taylor & Bratton, 2014). Adlerian therapy is also effective with diverse cultures because of inclusion of family and important people in a child's life to gain understanding and insight into the child's goals of misbehavior and inferiority issues as well as strengths and resources (Akay & Bratton, 2017).

Strengths and Limitations

Adlerian creative techniques have proven to be effective in working with youth from a variety of cultures and in school settings (Taylor & Bratton, 2014). This style of intervention can be useful for school counselors to utilize with aggressive students by using creative methods based in art to help identify the emotional aspects of aggressive behaviors. Further this technique investigates the child's world view and resources to address such behaviors. This is of special interest considering that Kottman and Meany-Walen (2016) suggested that school personnel can play a significant role in a child's learning and interaction style's result in positive outcomes for school-based interventions.

Some concerns do exist, however, with Adlerian-based creative interventions. Primarily, there is the issue with time and implementation for school counselors who may be dealing with challenging student/counselor ratios; thus, resulting in a lack of time and availability for proper implementation and follow-up (Kottman & Meaney-Walen, 2016). Similarly, because this approach relies on significant people in the child's world (parents, teachers, etc.), their inclusion in follow-up of this activity can be difficult due to the need for their commitment to the process (Akay & Bratton, 2017).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

There are multiple ways for a counselor to address aggression in session, which can greatly impact student's behavior all around the school (Swearer, Schwartz, & Garcia, 2015). Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is one approach for working with this population. CBT has been shown to be effective with many populations, including children and adolescents (Rotheram-Fulller & McMullen, 2011). CBT has been found to significantly reduce violence and aggression in children (Ozabaci, 2011). CBT interventions are aimed towards teaching children coping skills and enabling them to think and ultimately behave differently (Down, Willner, Watts, & Griffiths, 2011).

CBT also lends itself very well to creative techniques (Fehr, Russ, & Ievers-Landis, 2016). Bubbles can be used in a creative, unique manner to visualize and conceptualize thoughts and feelings that students may be experiencing. When a student is angry, asking them to "take deep breaths" can be a challenge and ineffective without proper follow-up. However, physically blowing bubbles can provide children the opportunity to understand the importance of deep breathing, which helps with reduce anxiety, anger and stress. It is also imperative to consider what the child is thinking, thus affecting what they are feeling and doing. One important aspect of CBT is teaching how to do something instead of what to do (Rotheram-Fuller & McMullen, 2011). The following technique is focused on identifying automatic thoughts when a child is demonstrating aggressive behaviors, as well as breathing techniques in a fun, calm manner to help student's process their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors surrounding their aggression.

Materials

School counselors will need bubbles and a wand for blowing. It is recommended that a variety of wand sizes be included in the selection. It is recommended that cleaning materials also be available to address any potential spills or residue left by the bubbles.

Procedure

Step one: First, the counselor will acknowledge the aggression in the session.

Step two: The counselor will then explain to the student there is a fun way to help them when they are feeling angry.

Step three: Next the counselor will blow a bubble. The counselor will describe and demonstrate the difference between small and big bubbles. When someone blows fast and hard into a wand, small bubbles are created. If someone takes his or her time to blow a bubble, the bubble will be larger.

Step four: The student will then practice making big and small bubbles.

Step five: Then the counselor will describe bubbles like the thoughts we have. When we get angry, we automatically think small and fast. If we took our time to take deep breaths, our bubbles would be big, and well developed, just like thoughts. If our thoughts were more developed, maybe we would have different behaviors.

Step six: Then the counselor and student will practice blowing three big invisible bubbles that they can blow secretly when they are angry to help them when there are no bubbles around to blow.

Cultural Components

It is a vital skill for school counselors to be able to address any cultural differences with expressed aggression. In many cultures, anger or aggression can be subtle, while in others aggression can be obvious or distracting (Ozabaci, 2011). CBT has been shown to be an effective intervention with a variety of issues (including aggression) with a diverse array of students (Ginsberg, Becker, Drazdowski, & Tein, 2012; Rotheram-Fuller & McMullen, 2011). Further, the focus on the child's ability to identify inner-strength and resiliency can be a very culturally impactful aspect of CBT (Wood, Drahota, Sze, Har, Chiu, & Langer, 2009).

Strengths and limitations

Creative CBT interventions have been shown to be effective with a variety of problems and populations (Fehr, Russ, & Ievers-Landis, 2016). In this intervention, the use of bubbles can provide a safe and familiar method for addressing aggression in a school counseling session. The metaphor of bubble blowing can be easy for many students to understand and process. Further, this approach can aid in practice and mastery of students' perceived situation (Fehr, Russ, & Ievers-Landis, 2016).

While the metaphor could be easily understood with some students, it could be confusing to others. CBT tends to be a highly directive approach with a strong emphasis on functional cognitive abilities which may not be the most effective approach for younger or lower functioning students (Rotheram-Fuller & McMullen, 2011). It would be imperative to familiarize yourself with the student's cognitive capacity to fully adapt the bubble blowing techniques prior to implementing this technique.

Reality Therapy

The use of art-based therapy in school counseling has become increasing prevalent in recent years (Cook, Mayorga, & Ball, 2016). Some of the benefits of using art with students includes improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and improved social skills (Randick & Dermer, 2013). Counselors can also use art to help children expand their communications repertoire while providing tangible symbols of emotion (Davis, 2011). Drawing activities have also been found to be very effective in working with children who have experienced violence and trauma (Ziff, Ivers, & Shaw, 2016). It is for these reasons that the combination of reality therapy techniques, such as the WDEP method, and drawing can provide a valuable tool for school counselors and students. Through drawing activities, children can engage in the WDEP technique of reality therapy in a visual manner for continual evaluation, commitment, and processing of wants, choices, and new behavior options (Wubbolding, 2017). Reality therapy places emphasis on the relationship with the child by staying in the present, creating a safe and warm environment, avoiding coercion and punishment, expressing genuine concern and empathy, and being positive and optimistic (Wubbolding 2017). As a result, it is recommended that a positive relationship has been established between the counselor and student prior to initiating any type of technique.

This technique utilizes the WDEP method utilizing art to address aggression in a counseling session. The WDEP method addresses four fundamental questions. (a) What do you want? (Wants), (b) What are you doing to get what you want? (Doing), (c) Is what you are doing working? (Evaluation), and (d) What is another way to get what you want? (Planning) (Wubbolding, 2000). The WDEP method is an imaginative and

pliable technique that is like the problem-solving method utilized in schools to help children match instructional resources to educational needs (Davis, 2011; Wubbolding, 2017).

Materials

The school counselor can use a variety of drawing materials for this activity. Included among these could be washable crayons, markers, pencils, and paints, various sizes and styles of paper (e.g., construction paper, floor tablets, etc.), and a clean, flat surface (e.g., table, easel, etc.). It is also recommended that clean-up materials, such as paper towels and cleaners, are kept on-hand in the event of a spill or errant mark.

Procedures

Step one: Review the current aggressive situation to make sure there is clear understanding of the student's emotions and thoughts regarding the situation. Following the review, the counselor can begin by relating the issue to what the child wants to happen regarding the situation.

Step two: Introduce the WDEP concept to the child, making sure to address it in a developmentally appropriate manner to maximize understanding. The counselor will want to explain each of the WDEP aspects and provide or ask for examples from the child to ensure appropriate understanding. When the counselor feels that the child has a clear understanding of the concepts, the drawing materials can be provided to the child.

Step three: The counselor will then instruct the child to create drawings that relate to the WDEP model. For example, the child could divide the page into four quarters and label the four sections as wants, doing, evaluation, and plan. It is essential to focus on the problem identified by child, asking what he/she wants to see happen,

and drawing it on the paper. The counselor must be open to exploring potentially creative and/or negative ideas (i.e., the student making the problem or person disappear or become a bird and flying away). If such scenarios occur, the counselor can discuss them with the child to understand the feelings and thoughts behind such ideas and help the child develop more realistically achievable options, as well as potential consequences for negative behaviors.

Step four: Discuss what is being or could be done by the student to achieve this want and drawing it on the paper. At this stage, it is important to focus on what the student is doing rather than what others around the child are doing. By doing this, the counselor can help the student maintain responsibility for his/her choices and actions related to the situation versus blaming others.

Step five: The counselor would then have the student evaluate the doing aspect that did/will or did not/will not work to get what is wanted. It is vital that this process is done with the counselor, but that the student makes the final decisions on the effectiveness of the actions. The drawing aspect of this step can be one of the more creative and insightful opportunities as the student may provide a variety of possible reactions and behaviors that come as a result of failing or succeeding. The counselor may also have to explore some of these reactions to assess the appropriateness and ethical concerns (i.e., aggressive behavior) that may arise.

Step six: The counselor and student discuss and develop new plans to address the wants with different thoughts and behaviors. Again, it is important for the counselor to be aware of unrealistic or negative plans made by the student. At this stage, it is vital that a discussion take place between the counselor and student to produce a suitable

and measurable plan that can address the situation appropriately. The counselor's role is to listen, discuss, and aid the student in selecting the plan he/she sees as most suitable and attainable for a given situation. It is also important to remember that failing to accomplish the plan is an option, as this technique can be a continual process.

In subsequent follow-up sessions, the counselor and student can review and edit the drawings as needed. For example, if the plan did not work, they could develop and draw a new plan or revisit one of the previous ideas. Through this style of interaction, the counselor and student can continuously evaluate and update the situation as well as how the child is dealing with the issue. Additionally, it provides a tangible record of the issue, interventions, and successes for both parties.

Cultural Components

The principle aspects of this intervention are culturally appropriate for working with a multitude of students in a school setting. The variety of art styles and openness of the process can lead to utilization with numerous world views and experiences (Cook, Mayorga, & Bell, 2016). Further, reality therapy provides an intervention that has been shown to be effective with an increased variety of presenting issues with varying world views and cultural differences (Wubbolding, 2017).

Strengths & Limitations

There are several strengths associated with this theory-based art intervention for working with aggression in an elementary counseling session. The focus, in reality therapy, on the relationship, student wants, and responsibility allows for a deep and meaningful exploration of the student's aggression. In addition, a realty therapy approach helps the student become increasingly self-aware and committed to the

change process, while also aligning counseling with the student's values, culture, and skill set (Wubbolding, 2017). Additionally, art can be a brief and effective therapy that aligns with the ASCA National Model (Randick & Dermer, 2013). Art can also be less threatening than traditional talk therapies resulting in a more comfortable and developmentally welcoming setting (Cook, Mayorga, & Ball, 2016). Finally, art has a quality history of being well received by students. Participants in a study by Ziff, Ivers, and Shaw (2016) noted their art therapy experience as "joyful" and "relaxing." Their findings also found that art aided in emotional regulation of the participants.

There are potential limitations to art and reality therapy however. Some students may not be open to the art process because of perceived levels of artistic ability or comfort with the materials. Potential variations that could be offered include writing or acting out the process. There is also some criticism of reality therapy's focus on the present and personal responsibility with little focus on the student's past or impact of cultural factors in decision making. These aspects can be addressed by counselor ensure to attend and utilize the student's perspectives of the story to fully understand how he/she understands the world.

Conclusion

The use of creativity-based interventions in school settings to address aggression in counseling sessions allow for exploration of feelings, wants, thoughts, relationships, and behaviors for students in the moment. While responding to myriad of developmental, cultural, academic, and mental health needs of students, school counselors must utilize appropriate counseling interventions to fully meet student needs. It is paramount that school counselors engage in proper training to continue to develop

knowledge, skills, and techniques to best support students dealing with aggression in session. For example, school counselors can receive training and credentialing through many theory-based or creativity-based professional organizations. School counselors trained in these areas are then well positioned to support students and school stakeholders in gaining better understanding and perspective of their aggression within context of their cultural and developmental considerations. Through this new knowledge of students' aggression, along with appropriate interventions, the goal is to enhance academic and personal/social aspects for all stakeholders in the school setting.

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