

Reflections (all names changed)

It was school holiday last week and I found myself thinking of the young people I counsel, hoping they are coping well during this time without sessions. We've tried to prepare for the break as best we can, but I still finding myself reflecting on them and some of the time we've had together.

1 Starting Off

All my kit is out ready, the therapeutic games, paper and card, modelling foam, cards to use as ice-breakers, colouring/doodle books: inside my trolley there's a lot more art and craft materials, but I want him to invite him to explore that for himself. I find myself feeling both anxious and excited.

I am meeting Sam for the first time today. All I know so far is that the family have broken up, they've moved to a new house and school, dad is in prison and Sam is having a hard time and wants to talk to someone. I want to be that person and I want to be good enough to meet his needs; hence my anxiety.

But then I consider how he might be feeling, meeting someone he doesn't know, something different in his life that's already had a lot of turmoil and upset. What's it

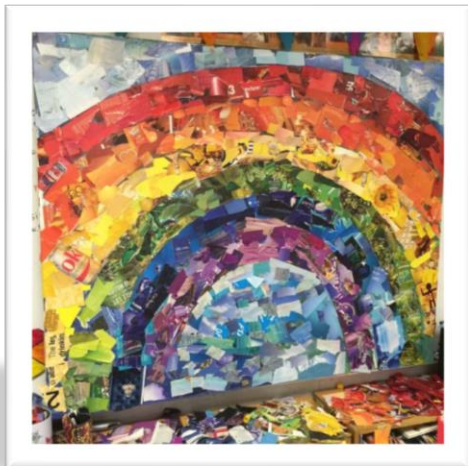
going to be like for him? I want him to feel secure and able to express himself and experience the positive impact that counselling can have. There's a quick knock on the door and Sam walks in.....



2 Working Creatively

Amy is working on a large poster, sticking, gluing, drawing, painting, colouring, mark-making. She is feeling energised today and she talks about her feelings and relationships with family, friends and others.

She wants safe ways to remember her relatives who were murdered, and she continues working on the poster and talking.



The following week she wants to carry on with her poster, adding, removing and exploring the changes and what's happened during the intervening week. **She's doing everything, but we are doing it together.** She's trusting me with her thoughts and feelings, and I'm always amazed how quickly that trust is given. I'm with her, actively listening, reflecting, exploring possibilities, opportunities and choices, accepting. But most of all, she takes the lead and makes the decisions.

3 Letting Go

Sessions are almost finishing for Omar. Although this is what he wants, and he feels ready, he's had some really difficult times and there's still the uncertainty of what it will be like to go without sessions.

Over the last few sessions we have been preparing for this ending, reflecting on and reinforcing his understanding and appreciation of his strengths and attributes, acknowledging the changes and growth he has made.

He's recently watched the film 'Captain Marvel', so in this final session we develop his own avatar, around which **we draw the layers of his self-esteem and strengths (the force field) that protect and empower him now.** We laugh and have fun, as we often do, and both agree that he is in a good place now and ready to finish.

The card he gives me before he leaves the room includes the words **"You've brought back my happiness and helped me through my darkest times"**

