



Welcome to the Playground! Interactive and Artistic Tools to Work with Children and Adults
WEBINAR SUMMARY
21 Sept 2016

I. Experts:

Katja Bizjak is a certified coach with practitioner diploma in executive coaching. She currently runs her own company, called Sandtray, striving to facilitate learning through playing.

II. Content:

Mrs. Bizjak works mostly with education-related groups, including kindergarten and primary school teachers, the social sector, such as workers in child protection, as well as the nonprofit sector.

She suggested that creative and interactive methods are useful when introducing people in a group and at the beginning of collective work, because it helps to de-connect people's rational and defensive mechanisms. They can also help with problem solving and trauma healing.

She stressed that creative methods are engaging and fun. Because they are very experiential, these methods allow the users to use both sides of the brain and think outside the box, while also unleashing deeper sides of the unconscious, which can then be analyzed and interpreted and lead to healing.

These creative methods allow non-rational approaches to life and work, breaking rules and barriers, and thus represent powerful tools to bring us important insights into the rational part of the brain as well.

There are different modalities for creative tools, from visuals one to sound and movement.

Mrs. Bizjak emphasized that the advantage of creative tools is that they are intercultural or over-cultural, in that they require minimal verbal and rhetorical skills, overcoming language and other types of barriers.

In her work, Mrs. Bizjak uses many concepts developed by C.G. Jung, such as a collective unconsciousness, comprising content that is common to all humanity, not just individual consciousness. She also referenced the existence of certain archetypes, which are symbols deeply inscribed in our souls and speak their own language.

In terms of the tools that can be used, Mrs. Bizjak emphasizes anything can become a creative mechanism, ranging from magazines, pictures, to legos, clay and natural materials.

She has also created games that can help her in her work with her clients, which include:

1. Card games, which work at the end of the sessions, engaging people's associated thinking and allowing them to share how they feel and what they would like to offer to others.
2. Magazine pictures: at the beginning the of session, choosing an image could help represent the challenges the group is facing and how to achieve change
3. Story cubs/imagine dice with pictures on all side: when rolling the dice, one can encourage the the client to tell a story and encourage them to talk.



4. Building/rebuilding or shaping/reshaping with different materials: this is a powerful tool to conceptualize a problem, explain what it means and the person would like to change it at the symbolic level and then find a way in real life as well.
5. Sand-tray therapy with miniature toys: the clients are asked to take the toys they like and usually starts talking in a non-cognitive-rational way. Therapy is usually done one-on-one, but a group of less than ten people can reorganize the final structure on the sand in terms of the changes that they want to see made.
6. Expressive artwork: it is key to observe the materials and colors, the interaction between different elements that the client puts together. It is important to always work with the art, not directly with the real life problem, asking the client: ‘What part touches you the most? Where are you?’ In order to explore the real emotions behind the artwork, one can ask the client to become the artwork or role play (by the having a conversation with their creation). At the end, the client should be asked how they would like the image to look like, if the problem were solved. Through creative methods, the change happens at the symbolic level, bringing everything back to rational and cognitive levels, in order for the person to be able to know what to do.

With all of these practices, it is important to always ask what symbols selected mean to the client, not interpreting them on their behalf already. This opens up people to talk about their concerns and ideas and eventually leads to solutions.