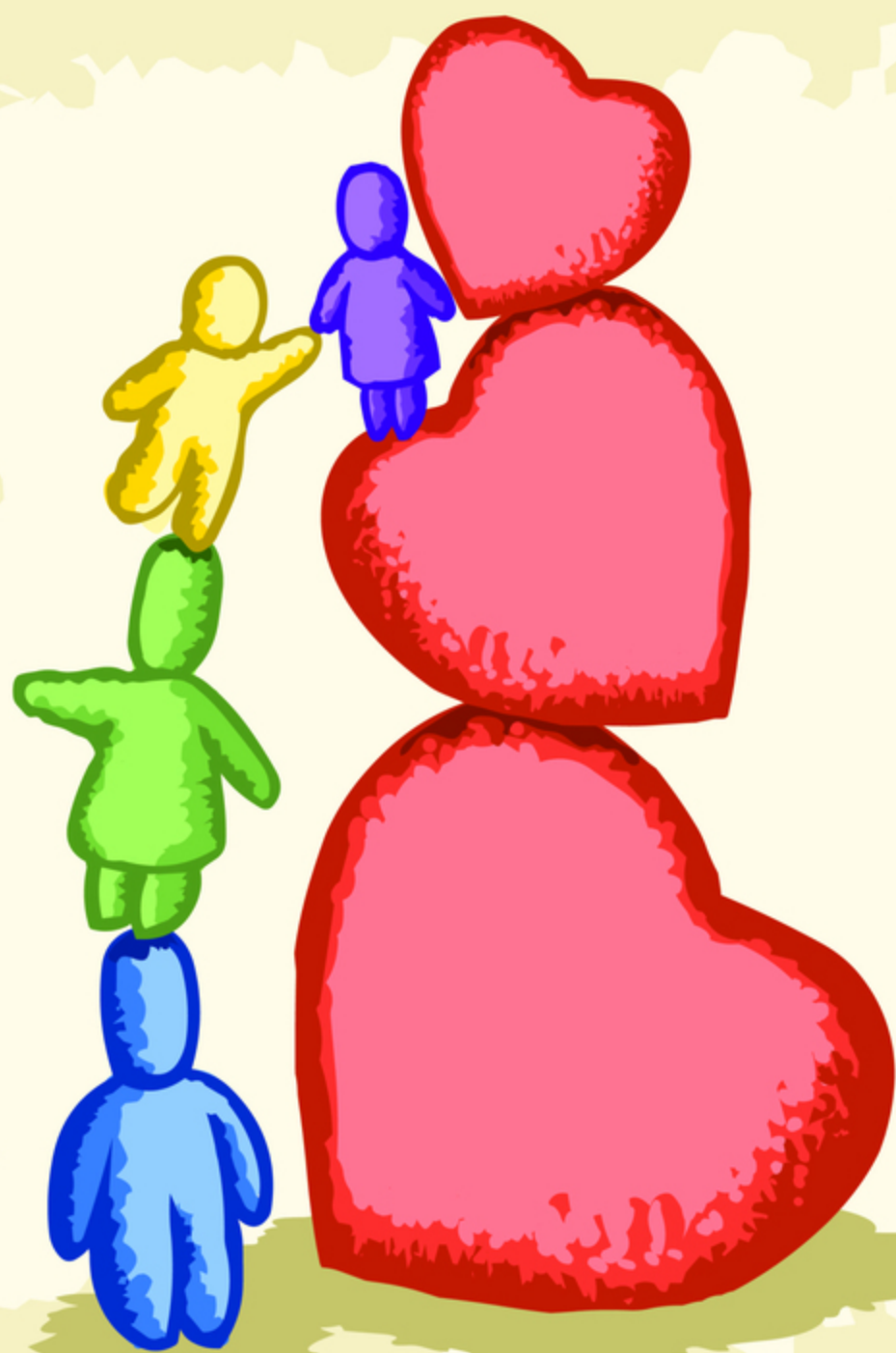


PENNY MCFARLANE



Creative Drama for Emotional Support

Activities and Exercises for Use in the Classroom

‘An invaluable resource for all practitioners in schools who support the social and emotional development of children and young people. The wide range of issues and accompanying activities are presented in an informative and clear structure with guidance on potential safeguarding and child protection issues to help ensure “safe” practice. An absolute must for all those who deal with “challenging” behaviour in our mainstream schools; the book you have all been waiting for!’

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CREATIVE DRAMA FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Activities and Exercises for Use in the Classroom

Penny McFarlane

Foreword by Sylvia Wheadon



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The behaviours

Adults often underestimate the effect that change can have on some children. Faced with situations in which they feel out of control, children may resort to a variety of behaviours that attempt to put them back in control. These behaviours may range from hiding under tables to create their own manageable environment, to 'splitting' – creating an alter ego, which may be another person or an animal that (in the child's mind) copes better with the situation (see 'General and differentiated approaches', pp.28–29). The important issue is to remember that these behaviours are an attempt by the child to feel in control of an uncontrollable situation and that as adults we need either to change the situation or help the child feel more in control.

We can do this by putting structure around the child and activities that involve ritualistic action and repetition can help produce this supportive environment.

Activities

THE TWO ISLANDS



Resources

Lengths of coloured material

Application

This activity is useful when children are faced with an imminent major change in their lives of which they are aware, such as Year 6 transition to secondary school, a house move or even, for a more vulnerable child, progression into the next class.

Objective

The objective here is to use the metaphor of two islands to help the child understand and feel better about what is going to happen and to look at ways that will make the transition easier.

Exercise

- Make two different islands out of material (rugs or cushions can also be used).
- Allow the child to think carefully about the shape and colour of these islands as they represent the present and future.
- Ask the child to sit on the 'present' island and tell you how it feels to be there – the good and bad feelings about being in this class/house/school.
- Ask him then to look across at the 'future' island and tell you how he feels about having to go there. Try to elicit 'good and 'bad' feelings.
- When he is ready ask him if he would like to go across to this 'future' island and how he would like to go, for example, by stepping-stones, boat, plane, etc.
- Ask him if there is someone or something he would like to take with him from the 'present' island to help him with the transition.
- Allow the child time to move across to the island. If he refuses to go, ask him what would make it easier.
- Sit with the child on the 'future' island and ask him how he feels now.
- Ask the child how he feels looking back at what is now the 'past' island.

Extensions

The two islands can be used to represent any situations in the child's life that involve change, including people. Positive affirmations can be made about the new situation or island and used in repetition in a made-up poem or song. The islands can be drawn, depicted in a collage or sculpted in clay.

Further activities

As already mentioned, ritualistic action is very useful in providing a sense of safety and security for children, especially in times of change. We are using ritualistic action when we give out certificates and applaud in an assembly, and it is all the more effective when it is being witnessed by

school, class or peer group. There are many ways this can be used within class time to empower a vulnerable child and increase his self-esteem and sense of security. The following are some ideas:

- Use the activity of 'The Two Islands' as a group, applauding as each child crosses over to the 'new' or 'future' island.
- Make 'shields' with the children (see 'Abuse', pp.42–48) and then present the shields by 'knighting' each child. The children stand in two lines and each child walks down the centre to kneel in front of the teacher who, with a makeshift sword, presents the shield and 'knights' the child as the class applauds.
- Tell the story of the 'Sword in the Stone', emphasizing how those who appear the strongest and cleverest are not always those who succeed best in life. There are other qualities, etc. Act out the pulling of the sword from the stone, allowing each child in turn to be Arthur. You may wish to run this activity after the last, with each child affirming his knighthood and/or qualities.

Other issues addressed

Bereavement, lack of self-esteem/confidence and parental separation.

COMPULSIVE LYING

