

## An Introduction to Puppets as an Arts Therapies Tool

### What are Puppets?

Puppets are a highly versatile tool within all areas of Arts Therapies, but can usually be seen more prevalently in Drama Therapy and Play Therapy. They can be used with a wide client group including children, teenagers and adults.

Puppets can range from basic glove, sock and finger puppets to the more intricate marionette puppet. They can be bought ready to use or can be made as a personalised therapy tool.

Regardless of the origin of the puppet, we can instil into it a personality, a story and a voice if we so wish. We can impress a social story, a fairy story or a personal story onto the puppet and use it to explore problems, obstacles and behaviours, it will also help us to devise strategies and learn ways in which we can overcome our difficulties at a safe distance.

### How can we use Puppets in Therapy?

We can use puppets within 1-1 therapy and with group work, such is the versatility of the puppet. The client is able to explore creating a puppet with the therapist or using those already available to them.

Clients working on a 1-1 basis may wish for either themselves or just the therapist to have 'control' over the puppet. The client can tell the therapist what needs to be said or what story needs to be told. The therapist can then bring this to life through the puppet.

Alternatively, the client can have control over the puppet and the therapist can take on a facilitatory or witness based role. Within Client-Centred sessions, the client really can take the reins of the puppet work and lead this in their chosen direction.

With groups, we have the option to work with just one story, a group amalgamation of stories or we can work with much smaller groups of pairs. The puppets can tell the stories which resonate with the group members easily. This means that the group member is still telling their story, but at a distance.



## Who can use Puppets?

Anyone can use puppets, but we do need to be mindful of the sensory aspect of the puppet ; how does it feel? Does it make a sound? How small/large is the puppet?

We also need to look at the physical abilities of the client. Can the client hold the puppet, for instance? We must not assume they cannot and so in keeping with the Client-Centred framework we can offer the client a wide range of puppets in order for them to choose the most suitable for themselves.

## We can use puppets with clients with:

- Emotional Behavioural Disorders
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Speech/Language Delay/Disorder
- Profound difficulties, e.g. Cerebral Palsy, Brain Injuries
- Mental Health Disorders
- Loss, Separation, Bereavement
- Attachment Disorders
- General Wellbeing

## Puppets can help with:

- Imagination
- Problem Solving Skills
- Emotions
- Language
- Confidence
- Self-esteem
- Non-verbal communication

If you would like further information on Puppets, Arts Therapies and any of the ITS multi-disciplinary therapies, please check out our other resources.

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