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Sue Jennings (2018) *Working with Attachment Difficulties in School-Aged Children: Practical & Creative Approaches*. Banbury: Hinton House Publishers.

Review by Fraser Brown

The author of this book is the highly respected play and drama therapist, Sue Jennings. It is the latest in a long line of texts in which she has aimed to broaden our understanding of the process of child development, and the pitfalls along the way. As might be expected, the book is structured around her two major theories, i.e. neuro-dramatic play (NDP), and embodiment, projection and role (EPR). On this occasion Jennings provides us with a wide range of practical exercises that might be used by professionals who are faced with children for whom the NDP &/or EPR processes have faltered. Principally, Jennings lays the problems at the door of the child's attachment difficulties, and the exercises and activities in this book are intended to help the child address those issues.

The book provides around 90 exercises under three separate sub-headings, as well as a number of photocopiable work sheets and story sheets. The exercises range from simple approaches aimed at confirming identity, to more complex activities enabling the child to assert their autonomy, and develop friendships. For example, the initial 'handprints' exercise gives the child an opportunity in a small way to visualise their identity by creating their own handprint using shaving foam and carpet. However, there are three more 'handprints' exercises, which gradually invite the child to take more control and be more creative with their own handprint. Jennings is clearly a great believer in the synergy between mess and creativity.

Part 2 is substantially about holding and contact, and Jennings makes the point that it is a fundamental principle of attachment work that touch is permitted. She develops the safe touch approach, including massage, rhythmic techniques, and modelling with sand and clay. In Part 3 of the book (the projection and role section) Jennings introduces techniques for building spatial confidence and balance. For example, the Treasure Chest explores 'the idea of treasure and its containment', and introduces the idea of the child being the treasure. This section of the book also includes a development of the concept of the 'story basket', which Sharon Jacksties has used successfully with older people, especially people with dementia. Jennings' version of this approach is called the Story Bag Technique. Inside the colourful bag we find a number of items that are likely to stimulate the child's story, such as finger puppets, a family of animals, soft toys, puzzles, a snow globe, a small telescope, shells, etc. The design of the bag is also intended to inspire stories.

The title of this book refers to 'school-aged children', which we can take to mean anyone between the ages of four and ten or eleven years old. As such there is something for everyone here, from teachers with responsibility for mentoring, to highly specialised child psychotherapists. It even has something to offer concerned parents. However, the book will be of most keen interest to the play and drama therapists who have generally been Jennings' audience in the past. Although Jennings prefaces each chapter with a brief exploration of underpinning theory, the purpose of the book is clearly to provide therapists with a wide range of exercises and activities to dip into. She makes it clear from the outset that she is not providing a set of therapy sessions, but rather a resource for users to incorporate into their own sessions. As such, it achieves its purpose, and I would recommend this book to anyone who is intending to work with children who are exhibiting attachment difficulties.