Chapter 3

Approaches to Work in Reducing Entrenched Patterns of Violent Behavior: The CAI Model – A Peace Intervention

Christina McLaughlin
Independent Researcher, Ireland

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author will demonstrate the use of a peace intervention to increase children’s self-identity, community attachments, and coping mechanisms. With correct training and awareness, this project could be implemented throughout elementary schools and community organizations. This chapter will highlight the connection between social and emotional learning as a peace intervention to further reduce the impact of trauma at a later stage in a child’s life. Leaning on Axline’s play therapy principles and Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological theory, the author will illustrate how this will become a feasible and sustainable peace intervention. For this, the author has developed the CAI model.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a user friendly guide to illustrate how children can be assisted to make cognitive attachments with local community support structures. The formation of these cognitive attachments is based on the principles of community, attachment and identity. Through social learning, children can develop skills such as self esteem, confidence and awareness. The use of mentoring is also presented throughout this guide, as it may take natural forms such as role models, sports and cultural identities which can be supportive within communities. Through positive interactions, support and direction mentoring can encourage a child to develop a sense of identity.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2209-6.ch003
BACKGROUND

Lederach (2003) defined conflict transformation as the envisioning and responding “to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice, in direct action and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships” (McClain Opiyo, 2015, p.44) This approach suggests that conflict transformation can create the opportunity for change, reduce violence and increase social awareness. Through this understanding a developmentally suitable intervention is created which aims to increase a child’s attachment awareness of support structures. This method of child development is based on using creative interventions of art and story writing. Influenced by Jungian theory and creative interventions, McNiff (2004) states, “As we contemplate an image during active imagination, the activation of creative energy can inspire a variety of different expressions that flow naturally from the process of reflection.” (McNiff, 2004, p.179) Children are encouraged to reflect on their community support structures which are important this may allow for positive attachments to be formed. Through the use of self reflection, children can recognize sources of support that are available to them.

Developmentally, play is an important aspect within child development. Children use play to explore and communicate to their social world. Play assists children to develop ideas and self-identity through the use of methods such as storytelling and symbolic play.

THE CAI MODEL

This guide is based upon the principles of Community, Attachment and Identity, which has been developed from the CAI model. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a practical guide for the implementation of this model through the principles mentioned and to promote children’s social awareness attachments. This guide aims to illustrate how creative interventions such as art and story writing can assist children to identify local community supports. It also aims to interlink the three principles of community, attachment and identity to become sources of support. This guide will provide the reader with a six session plan which will encourage children to form cogitative attachments using developmentally suitable techniques. With the use of reflection, children will be able to note local community supports which are readily available. This includes a person, place, or an activity based support.

The workings of theorists Axline, Bronfenbrenner, Piaget, and Klein provide a psychological, social and emotional awareness base for the development of this guide. According to Loock et al, (2003), “The opportunities generated for student-centred learning that the art-making process in schools may facilitate have been regarded as empowering, since arts-based contexts create opportunities for learners to share their experiences in an empathetic environment through symbolically expressing their emotions in a tangible or concrete way”. (Vicars, M, 2011, p.61) This guide aims to equip children to be able to form suitable cognitive attachments with mentors within their community. Building an inner resource of available supports allows children to acknowledge who they can rely on at times of need. The use of a mentor can provide guidance, direction and support at an emotionally vulnerable time. Reassurance provided by the mentor can have a positive lasting impact upon a child’s life. (Erbe, 2011) Stress, trauma and violent incidents can influence the direction and future development of the child. This guide aims to promote positive mental health through encouraging children to reflect on community support structures that they value. “Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as not