

Post-A-Paper: #003

Impulsivity and snails

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Part One: Issue, Problem or Diagnosis

Luke a seven year old boy presents with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which is marked by a great deal of impulsivity. His parents described him as “out of control” and an “endless supply of energy.” Luke’s impulsivity has caused him difficulties at home, school, and in the community.

Part two: “CLAYresolution”

The counselor engages Luke in the therapeutic process by directing Luke to follow simple one step commands, such as: “Luke please place two cans of Play-Doh® on the table.” “Now place the water on the table.” “Good. Now place the seashell and bottle cap on the table.” Luke attempts to impulsively interrupt counselor; however, counselor states, “Luke we are going to make a terrific snail today. I’m going to need you to control your impulses by slowing down like a snail before you do something.” Luke agrees and counselor begins instructing Luke in creating a snail.

Part three: Techniques/Questions/Strategies

The counselor reminds Luke that he has the skills necessary to make a snail, as he has demonstrated an ability to make snakes, balls, and cones. Counselor then begins to direct Luke in the development of a snail. While making the snail, the counselor simply states, “Last week, you sure impressed me. You were able to develop a great list of things that lips help us do. I can’t help but wonder what you can tell me about snails.” Luke quickly remarks, “Well, snails are slimy, slow, have a shell, antenna, don’t like snakes and other things that try to eat them, they live outside, and leave behind a slimy trail.” Counselor validates Luke’s list by saying, “You sure know a lot about snails. Our snails are going to have cool eyes and antenna. This week we are going to learn about how being slow like a snail can help someone.”

While developing his snail and processing issues, Luke frequently attempts to interrupt the counselor, reaches in front of counselor to gather a supply, and attempts to work ahead of counselor in development of the snail. Luke begins to become frustrated as the eyeballs he made do not sit on the head of the snail and the smile of the snail is upside down. Counselor reminds Luke of a “one liner” by stating, “Luke there is hardly nothing we can’t fix. Let’s both start over, but this time, let’s slow

down and follow directions.” Luke agrees and is eager to begin again. Counselor patiently reminds Luke to slow down.

While developing the snail, counselor asks Luke a question: “Where does moving too fast like a rabbit cause people problems.” Luke replies, “Sometimes I go to fast at school and forget to do a couple of problems on a test. At church, instead of walking down the stairs, I ran and bumped into someone. Last night, at home, I kept getting up from the dinner table to get things and almost missed out on dessert.” Counselor responds, “It really sounds like it is important for you to slow down so you won’t forget problems on a test, bump into someone, or miss out on dessert.” Luke replies, “Yeah, I don’t want to miss out on dessert!”

Counselor and Luke then process how to slow down like a snail: “Remember to slow your roll like Sammy the snail – before you move to fast – remember to stop, look, listen, think, and then make a good choice. When you take a test at school – slow down like Sammy the snail and check it twice before turning it in to the teacher. When at church, slow down like Sammy the snail and walk, don’t run, and use the hand rails on the stairs. At home, slow down like Sammy the snail, always ask for permission to leave the table and you won’t miss out on dessert.”

Counselor speaks briefly with Luke’s parents and encourages them to play the traditional game of red light – green light at home to encourage Luke to control his impulsivity. Parents agree to report upon Luke’s progress at the beginning of next session.

Part Four: How to/Art Work/Steps

Please utilize Paul R. White’s (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) CLAYtherapy© A Manual of Therapeutic Applications of Clay with Children. This manual is available at www.playtherapyclay.com.