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The Importance of a Mentoring Counselor in the lives of Shelter Home Children: A Re-bonding Experience

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Abstract

Based on the author’s original counseling theory that she calls Relational Expressive Play Therapy (REPT), this paper discusses the ongoing action based, qualitative case study research using the REPT mentor counseling approach supported by the theory of Humanistic Counseling, along with theories of Bowlby, Payne, and Erickson [1-3], with children in shelter home settings. These children are between the ages of seven and 14, they have been abandoned by their parents and are “at risk” due to rebellious behaviors in school, at home and in their communities. At the core of these children’s rebellious behavior is the lack of both a sense of self-esteem and a significant relationship with a significant adult. Because shelter home children do not have the support of parents in their lives, the cooperation and active involvement of a significant adult figure who is supportive of the child’s holistic development is paramount to the emotional healing and growth of these children.

This paper will also address the importance of developing a long term “secure base” attachment with a significant adult counseling mentor who is not only a counselor who provides emotional support and understanding, but also a child advocate who becomes a long-term significant adult in the child’s life. The counseling mentor helps the child to become involved in age appropriate extra-curricular activities and school work. The counseling mentor also acts as a liaison between the shelter home setting and the community. Case studies of the two participants currently involved in the research project will be discussed.