

ASK VIOLET

1. What kind of expectations should we have in our work with the child?

I have a slogan that I often repeat to folks that were in my training programs:

EXPECTATIONS BREED FAILURE

This does not mean that I don't have goals and plans to achieve those goals, but when I am with a child I need to put these on a back burner and totally be present with the child. Whatever happens is what is. For example, if I have decided that it would be valuable for the child to draw a safe place in a particular session, but the child prefers to draw rainbows (this has happened to me), I am not disappointed.. This is what is happening. We may focus on the rainbow, or the colors used, or it may remind me of a rainbow story, or just smile and say nothing. I do not mention the safe place, but honor the child's resistance. It tells me that she or he may not be ready, have enough inner support, to follow my direction, or is asserting her or his own power.

2. What are Fritz Perls? This is actually a question that was written on a piece of paper and sent up to me in a workshop. It made me realize that we should take nothing for granted.

Fritz Perls, along with his wife, Laura Perls, developed Gestalt Therapy. He was a psychiatrist who escaped Germany from Hitler during World War !! and went with his family to South Africa, and later to the United States.

3. What do you feel are the essentials for an effective work area—the basic materials to start with?

In my book, *Windows To Our Children* on page 191 I describe my office during that time in my life. Later, I built a room onto my house which was probably ideal. I did not find that the work I did with children was any different or better than in my small office. The room was large with an outdoor patio and a small connecting waiting room and bathroom. It had a private entrance. We definitely had more room for batoca fights and such. I think it's important to have drawing paper, pastels, some pottery clay, a sand tray and some miniatures, some puppets, and a few toys as described in my book. I have never had a separate play room.

It is amazing what can happen with very little material.

I was once asked to give a sand tray demonstration at an agency and was provided, apologetically, with a box of "junk" and a small plastic sand tray.

The junk was donations from clients—mostly odd, broken toys. I had to forcefully quiet that voice in my head that does have expectations. I asked for a volunteer (an adult therapist) who looked at the "junk" with dismay. I encouraged her to just use what there

was the best she could. A very powerful piece of work came out of her scene. We were all impressed and surprised.

At one point some of you may remember that there was a fire in my office and most everything was burned. I rented another office (while my home office was being constructed) and had very little to begin with. . A parent gave me a large rubber ball. And I had a few puppets that were not destroyed in my office since I had taken them to a workshop. Another parent brought me a small, wooden puppet stage. I had paper and markers. I still remember some of the sessions we had in that empty space. It was quite amazing.

4. What is deflection?

Deflection is releasing energy, as anger, from the original source of that anger to something or someone else.. A child may be fighting and kicking and punching on the playground to release that energy of being angry at the teacher, his parents, etc. He or she finds it too difficult to express their feeling directly at the person who created it. It is not uncommon for a parent to yell at the child for making a mess,, rather than admit she is angry at her husband for not helping out. There are many ways to deflect ones feelings. It is often seen as resistance to dealing with the real source of anger, for example. I see resistance in children as a message to me that the child is not able to deal with the real source and that I must provide her or him with a feeling of self-support. Children are generally not aware that they are deflecting, though with adults this awareness may be key to changing ones behavior.