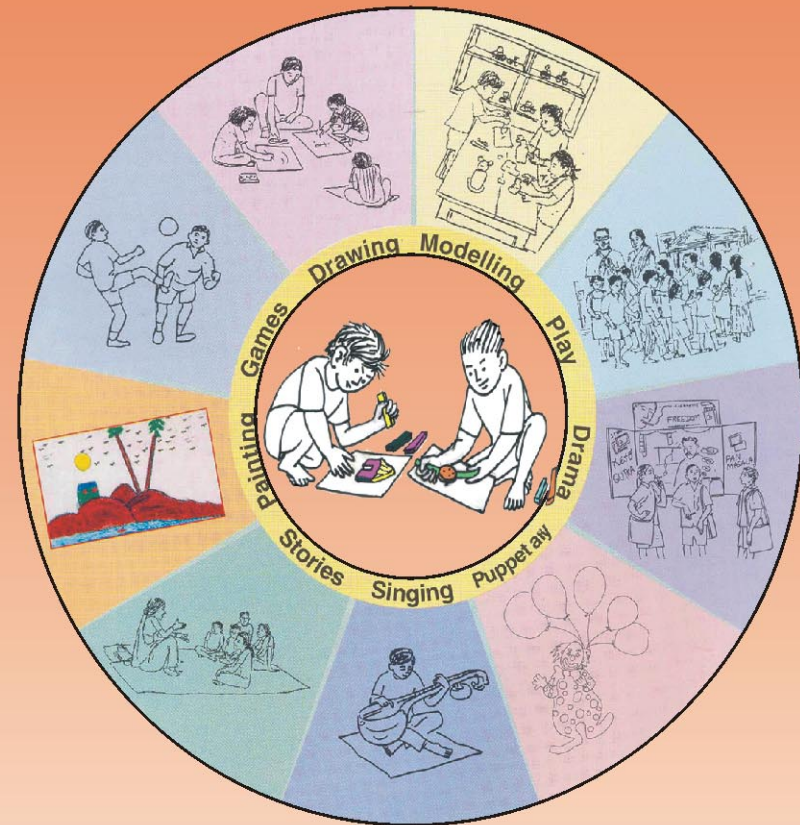


# Psychosocial care for children

## Medium - Clay Modeling



Medium - 7

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## Psychosocial care for children - Clay Modeling

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## FOREWORD

The Indian sub continent is highly prone to natural disasters. Floods, droughts, cyclones and earth quakes are recurrent phenomenon in India. The Tsunami on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004 killed at least 300,000 people making it the deadliest disaster recorded in the history.

The Tsunami that affected thousands of lives including that of children was unexpected and sudden, leaving children confused, shocked and frightened. In a moment, their whole world was disrupted. Some children were orphaned, some lost one parent, some lost their siblings, and some had to adjust to a displaced life as they lost their homes. Some of the children are still living in the camps after two and half years with little or no possessions and do not know when they can go back to their places and the adults around them are not in a position to provide much solace or comfort as they themselves are victims of the killer waves. The normal daily routine is disrupted, and often there is no regular school, making it all the more difficult for the children to restore back to normal life.

In order to help the children recover their sense of well being, an attempt to normalize their daily life routines and their emotional reactions is essential. Children need to feel safe and secure both physically and emotionally. It is important that children are given opportunities to express themselves in a safe and accepting environment. These efforts will enable the children to overcome the trauma they have been through and re-establish their sense of well being and good health.

Therefore to enable children to deal with this traumatic event of the Tsunami, NIMHANS, the nodal center for psychosocial care support in disaster in India, provided technical assistance to the Idhaya EC India project in Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Karaikkal and Kanniyakumari districts of TamilNadu. The child care activity center teachers adopted the medium for working with the children survivors of Tsunami. This played an important role in minimizing the

psychosocial consequences of the disaster. For the normal functioning of children after the Tsunami, they were encouraged not to keep inside the fears but rather to ventilate it out by repeatedly sharing it with others through the use of seven mediums. The psychosocial mediums selected were those the children were comfortable with such as, drawing, dolls, clay modeling, story telling etc. All these mediums were found to be much useful in bringing in mastery over the event and getting back to normalization at the earliest. Further the mediums were play oriented and non threatening for children to ventilate their repressed memories.

The series of seven booklet are intended to enhance practice of psychosocial care for children by helping them reflect on, acknowledge and cope with their feeling following any disaster or with children living in difficult circumstances.

**Dr. D. Nagaraja**

Director/Vice Chancellor  
NIMHANS, Bangalore.

## PREFACE

The Tsunami left behind a large number of dead bodies, shattered homes, personal belongings and chaos. Children found it difficult to apprehend what happened to them. The unaddressed questions also left children behind with anger and fear for the sea, cursing, insecurity and helplessness. The safe and nurturing environment for the normal growth and development of the child was destroyed. The impact on children had greater significance as their normal development was interrupted due to the disaster. Need of holistic care was well understood by Every Child and hence psycho social intervention to bring children back to normalcy was adopted with technical inputs from NIMHANS and through the field support from Idhaya Development Society and other partner NGOs. The projects emphasized at healing the minds of children by addressing the psychological needs expressed by them and by rebuilding the social support during the rehabilitation and reconstruction and reconciliation phase to ensure an encouraging atmosphere for their healthy growth and development.

My sincere thanks to Sr. Lilly Lambert, The Secretary, Idhaya Development Society, Tanjavoor for the dedicated effort from herself and her team members in implementing the project in the field area. Sr. Alex and Sr. Ceicily, of IMHSSS-Karaikkal, Mr. Stalin, Mr. Ramesh Babu and all other comrades of DYFI in Nagapattinam. I express my gratitude to Mr. Pushparaj, of VHAK and Mr. Alphonse- of Action Trust for their sincere effort in implementing the program at the field level in Tsunami affected villages of Kanniyakumari. The teachers of the Child Care Activity Centers who skillfully coordinated the activities and made the program a success in remembered greatly at this juncture.

Sr. Mercy, who was instrumental in implementing psychosocial care program for the children affected by Tsunami in Kanniyakumari passed away in a tragic car accident on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007. Her valuable effort will always be remembered.

Psychosocial care team of NIMHANS who trained, guided and supported the team through out endeavor needs special mentioning. I extremely appreciate Dr. Sekar. Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS, Mr. Subashish Bhadra, Mr. C.Jaikumar, Ms. Grace Henry, Mr. Arvind Raj and Mr. Arul Roncalli.

The splendid efforts of Ms. Gayathri Bhadra, who coordinated our back office with her admirable systematic approach that smoothed our work is greatly valued by the entire team.

I sincerely appreciate the contribution and hard work of the authors of this manual who were committed for the great effort of 'healing the minds' of child survivors of Tsunami. Sincere participation of the child survivors, their parents and family members are greatly thanked here with out whom this work would not have been a success. I am sure this book let will be an important tool kit for the professionals working with child survivors of disaster in understanding the relationship of the child with his/her family members so that help from the family members could be taken in providing emotional support to the child in coping with the situation.

**G . Sriramappa**  
Country Director - EveryChild, India.

## CLAY MODELING

### INTRODUCTION:

Increasingly, therapists are searching for innovative tools to facilitate the client to explore more fully his or her presenting experience in therapy. After almost one hundred years of using talk-based therapy as the only tool to work with clients, now there has been a move to a new innovative and action tool in therapy. The challenges of resistant client, defensive clients, less articulate group of clients (including some children, adolescents and many adults) have led to the quest for therapeutic tools not dependent on high level of verbal articulation. Now a days can be seen the emergence of the range of artistic therapies; dance therapy, art therapy, drama therapy, music therapy involving sound and gesture and movement therapy.

Among the artistic therapy, **Clay Therapy** has substantial capacity to contribute in a major way to the therapeutic process. While many therapists implicitly recognize the potential of clay therapy, few venture to use it regularly in their practice. Goryl's (1995) survey shows that only 25% of the therapists in his sample used clay in their practice, although 99% said they believe that clay was very therapeutic.

In working with children, clay therapy is sometimes included among play therapy techniques. Hall, Kaduson and Schaefer (2002:12) list clay therapy as part of game called the "Power animal technique" where children construct a desired animal in clay to create a positive symbol of strength. Pauls Phillips (1994) in the *American journal of art therapy* reviews a video on the use of clay therapy when working with a boy and his anger. Robert Racusin (2000) includes clay in the materials he used for his brief psychodynamic psychotherapeutic interventions with children but does not elaborate on how specifically clay is used with particular presenting problems. Kahn (1996) working

with exceptional children, suggests that clay therapy offers an alternative approach to learning paradigms and can also provide emotional release and healing for the child. He enumerates a range of topics for lessons in which clay can facilitate both cognitive and affective development of the child.

Clay is supple, has weight and texture and a smell that children often love. It responds to them by changing its form, engaging them in a sort of tactile conversation. Diluting it can alter its consistency. Dyeing or firing it can modify its form. Thus manipulating clay helps a child develop fine motor skills and is often used in pre-school classes. In fact clay has been used by psychologists in many instances for the therapy of disturbed children. Those who are visually impaired can also use it successfully. Children are encouraged to actively manipulate the clay, at times even with aggression.

The end product of the clay model is not as important as the whole process of making it. During their creation process, they are able to think about the loss and later during sharing round they can talk about it and bring out their feelings. Some children may not even talk but the process of making that model would have released some of their emotions.

**AIM:** To allow children to express freely what they miss the most and what they would like to possess by the use of clay modeling.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To allow children to make free expression of the things they lost in Tsunami which they liked a lot.
2. To regulate negative feelings towards positivism with the help of clay modeling.
3. To allow children to think and give shape to their imaginations of things they would like to possess.

## **RATIONALE:**

Often children are unable to identify the emotions that they are experiencing. To all appearances they may seem to be all right but there might be a lot of turmoil and conflicts within them that require to be ventilated. They may want to talk about the details of the event over and over again but are hesitant because of various reasons. The clay can enable children to release these feelings of despair by letting them mold any shape on them by beating, breaking, shaping and reshaping.

Besides, the group exercise with children can also play an important role in facilitating children in developing a new relationship with the peer group. In the group children will gradually come to realize that they are not the only ones to have faced difficulties during the Tsunami but many others from their age group also have gone through the same. They will learn to respect each other's losses and help each other in a group to come over the same.

## **PROCESS:**

Make children stand in a big circle and divide them equally into smaller teams of 4-6. Make them sit on the floor with their team members at some distance from the other group. Give a name to the teams to give them a sense of belonging to that particular team or group. Give the packets of clay to each group and sheet of papers to all the children. In the first stage ask all the team members to think of something valuable they missed at the time of Tsunami and make clay model of that. In the second stage of the activity they have to make clay model of something that they would like to possess in future to feel happy. The facilitator should give children a clear instruction that after they are done with making their models, they will share with their team members what they made. They could also take support from the team members on helping them make the clay models. After all the members of the teams are done with sharing their clay models with the team members, ask all the children to come together and sit in a big circle. The facilitator then

will facilitate the process of children sharing their clay models with the larger group by probing with right questions to the children. The facilitator needs to understand here to ask only the questions that would help the child in expressing why s/he made that particular clay model, why it was important to her/him and how deeply it was attached to her/him. At the same time the facilitator needs to see whether or not the child is comfortable in sharing this with the larger group. In such a case, the facilitator could talk to him/her individually and in required cases give a more intensive psychosocial care intervention.

## **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

- ◆ Allow the children to make any structure they want to make. If they have made something irrelevant to the theme of the exercise, let them finish the structure and then give them more clay to make the structure according to the theme.
- ◆ Do not try to correct the model made by the child.
- ◆ The facilitator also needs to see such that the children are not copying each other's clay model.
- ◆ Conduct the activity in two weeks time with one stage a day.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:** Plasticine, paper and pencil.

## **STAGE - 1**

### **LOSSES IN TSUNAMI**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The exercise on Clay modeling was included as a medium of Psychosocial therapy to encourage children to ventilate their emotions towards the losses they faced at the time of Tsunami in the most innovative and creative way. Children love to play with clay. Through clay modeling they could express the objects or people they were most attached to that they lost at the time of Tsunami in the most playful way. Negative emotions like fear, anger, anxiety, frustration and despair

because of the losses could be quite threatening to the young survivors. Therefore the ventilation through clay modeling could discount these negative emotions and at the same time help them in uncovering the major losses from life.

### **RATIONALE:**

In the first stage of the clay model children are asked to make model of things they miss the most which they lost at the time of Tsunami and then share their model with their team members in the group. This helps the child to think and retrospect why the model that he/she made was important to him/her. Here, more than the outcome of the clay model, the process of giving a shape to the idea of the child is what matters the most. The whole process of molding the clay many a times could help children in releasing repressed memories of their loss.

## **RESPONSES OF CHILDREN**

### **CHILD - 1**



*“I lost my school bag in Tsunami. It was a very nice bag. I liked it a lot. My father once bought it for me.”*

### **CHILD - 2**

*“I made my friend Reshma who died in Tsunami. She was my best friend and I miss her a lot. Next to her I have also made a rose plant that I lost at the time of Tsunami.”*



### **CHILD - 3**

*“I have made two human figures, one is my mother whom I love a lot and the other one is my elder brother who died in Tsunami. I don't know how old he was when he died, he was in the 4<sup>th</sup> standard. When Tsunami waves came, I was sleeping inside the house and my brother was playing near the beach. The big tides suddenly came from the sea and engulfed my brother. For one day we couldn't find him and all of us were quite worried. The next day some people brought his lifeless body in a lorry. My parents saw him for the last time but I didn't. He still comes in my dreams. Before the Tsunami happened I used to play near the beach with my brother, but now I am scared to go to the beach side.”*



### **CHILD - 4**

*“I made a chair. It was a beautiful chair that my father got for me to sit and study. I lost it at the time of Tsunami.”*



### **CHILD - 5**

*“We lost our house during Tsunami. But we got support from NGOs and the Govt. and now we are living in a much better house. Our old house had a thatched roof and the new one has concrete walls and roof. I also made a chair that I lost in Tsunami.”*



## CHILD - 6

*“I have made my friend Ashwin who died in Tsunami. I still remember him.”*



### OUTCOME:

The activity helped to bring out the personal losses experienced by children at the time of Tsunami. Children enjoyed putting shape of the items that they lost at the time of the disaster. The playful and creative way of molding the clay gave them an opportunity to ventilate the feelings and emotions associated with the object and there by reducing the agony associated with the loss of the object. Though most of the children made clay models of the loss of their personal belongings like necklace, earrings, pencil, chair, school bags etc., there were children who were deeply affected by the death of family members, friends and soon. This helped the children to understand not only personal loss but also the loss of others. To come over any kind of trauma, it is required that they come to accept the loss by understanding the situation ‘why’ and ‘how’ it happened. It is very important for children to understand that natural calamities like Tsunami, earthquake etc., bring inevitable changes and destruction with it. Through this session the children were also made to understand that nothing is constant in this world. Each and everything we see undergoes a change. There won’t be only happiness or only problems in this life. Both would come alternatively. When something worst happens one should understand that it is not going to remain for long and soon things would get better. And that everyone should learn to come out of those thinking and look for a better future.

## STAGE-2

### THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY

#### INTRODUCTION:

After the first stage where children made clay models of things/people they miss the most, the second stage of the ‘Clay modeling’ activity is crafted in such a way that it motivates children to look into the future with optimism. It is important to encourage children to set their goals when they are still young. So the second stage of the clay modeling focuses more on making a structure of article that they would like to possess in the future. It is an important stage of clay modeling as the facilitator needs to help the children in drawing a link between the structures created by them and giving a guideline on how they could possess it.

#### RATIONALE:

The second stage is a continuation to the first stage. In the first stage children put across some of the repressed memories of personal belongings or people they lost during Tsunami. In the second stage, children are asked to make model of things that they would like to possess and that would make them happy. The rationale behind the theme being, young survivors come into terms with the losses that they faced due to the natural calamity which was inevitable. So the second stage is an attempt to pass on an important message of ‘hope’ and ‘optimism’ to these young survivors through the language of game. Children are asked to think and give shape to their imaginations to what they would like to possess in order to feel happy. In other words this stage is a stage for releasing negative energy and adopting assertive and positive outlook towards the future.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:** Paper, clay and pen.

## RESPONSES OF CHILDREN

### CHILD - 1

*"I would like to have a car of my own. I want to be the first person in my community to have a car and I want to drive it around in the village. I also want to give a ride to my parents and sisters and my friends in the car."*



### CHILD - 2

*"I made a neck piece. I have lost one at the time of Tsunami. So I want a new one with a beautiful design like the one I have made."*



### CHILD - 3



*"I have always wanted a transistor radio for myself. My elder brother has one but he doesn't let me touch it. I want to listen to songs on it when I lie down near the beach and I also want it to listen to cricket score."*

### CHILD - 4

*"I want a new watch for myself. My father had gifted me one last year when I came first in the class, but I lost it during Tsunami. My father has promised to buy me another one if I score highest marks in my class this year again."*



### CHILD - 5

*"Many of my friend's fathers have mobile phones but my father does not have one. We are poor and my father was saving up all his money for my five sisters' wedding. We lost almost all our savings during Tsunami. Father had kept some money in the bank which is saved. I want to earn well when I grow up and gift mobile phone to all my sisters on their weddings and a beautiful phone with a nice ring tone to my father. He has done much for us."*



### OUTCOME :

Children in the second stage of the activity have shown a positive attitude towards life. In the group they helped each other in giving shape to their dream models with the help of clay. They also connected well with each other in the smaller groups with their peers and showed enthusiasm in helping each other. Children have expressed many dreams and hopes through the exercise of owning vehicles, new houses, transistor radios, watches etc., that according to them would make them feel happy. The facilitator at this stage of the exercise needs to be extremely energetic and assertive in order to be able to transfer a positive energy to the children. They are soft and malleable like the clay and therefore the facilitator could assist children in giving a shape to their future in the most constructive way.

### CASE STUDY

Name- **Jennifer\***  
Age- 11 years

Jennifer made a clay model of her mother during the exercise on clay modeling, whom she lost at the time of Tsunami. Jennifer

\*The name of the child is changed to protect identity.

was the only child of her parents. Her father works in an ice factory in the village and her mother used to take care of the house. Jennifer is studying in 5<sup>th</sup> standard. She stopped going to school for almost four months after her mother's death in Tsunami. Even before she could come out of the grief of her mother's death, her father remarried one month after the incident.

Jennifer, prior to the incident, used to be quite a chirpy girl. However her friends say that she rarely laughs anymore and requests her friends to leave her alone. She doesn't come out to play or go for festivals to nearby village anymore. Once the school teacher made a visit to Jennifer's place to find out why she was missing from the school for so long. On finding out the reason for her aloofness, the teacher took her to CCAC. Jennifer took a while to ventilate her repressed memories. During the exercise on 'Clay Modeling' Jennifer made a clay model of her deceased mother and shared with the group how she saw her mother getting washed away by the Tsunami waves. Everyone from the group showed concern towards her which made Jennifer feel better. The facilitator addressed her distress by asking her to gradually try to get over the grief of her mother's death and take a control over her life. By the second stage of the exercise Jennifer had eased off. In the future she said she would like to go to the city and take up a good job. Jennifer is good at dancing and singing. She wants to get professional training in singing and dancing and in the future wishes to open a music school in the name of her mother.

### CONCLUSION:

Art Therapy through clay modeling combines both art and psychotherapy in a creative process using the created image as a foundation for self-exploration and understanding. People of all ages especially children could benefit from art therapy as the focus is on personal expression. They are able to create visual expressions of their feelings and emotions and hence find it easier to express themselves

through this medium. The end product of clay modeling here is not as important as the process of molding it. Children can ventilate the painful memories attached to the losses by giving shape to clay.

Clay modeling is also beneficial for ventilation because children are able to create, protect and destroy during play without harming anyone and this gives them a sense of control, which in their lives they may not have.

The breaking up of children into smaller teams and working in the group can also develop in children many positive life skills like team work, sense of belongingness, learning from each other and helping each other, listening, concentrating, planning enhancing self esteem, creativity, communication skills, understanding, overcoming shyness to talk in the groups etc.

The clay modeling is designed to help children learn how to identify and regulate the negative feelings of loss and anxiety towards positivism, hope and dreams. The negative feelings if left unattended could come out in the form of frustration, anger and other behavioural disruptions in children. Clay modeling also focuses on skill development with an emphasis on learning new coping skills. Appreciation for their work or behavior enables children to feel good about themselves. The process of creation is healing in itself and when they get recognition from others, they feel happy.

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Medium -7

## Psychosocial care for children Medium - Clay Modeling

Medium of clay implemented with children was effective in releasing the emotions of children on their personal loss during Tsunami. Negative emotions like fear, anger, anxiety, frustration and despair due to the losses were quite threatening for the children and the medium was very effective in helping children to ventilate their negative emotions in the first stage of the activity there by discounting the negative emotions by understanding and accepting the losses in life. The negative feeling on the loss was eventually diverted into positivism by generating an optimistic out look in the second stage of the activity. Children cooperated and worked together and shared their losses in the larger group there by understanding the losses of others. Children are soft and malleable like the clay. Through the activity children could give a shape to their future in the most constructive way.