

POETRY THERAPY AS INTERVENTION STRATEGY IN THE POST-  
DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

by

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I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted by me for the Masters degree at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university/faculty. I furthermore cede copyright of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

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Francilié Hoek

05/12/2005

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## **Abstract**

Divorce is one of the most traumatic and complex mental health crises facing children today. The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the influence of an intervention programme on the adjustment of adolescent girls from divorced families. A literature study was done and an empirical investigation utilizing the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire was conducted. Two groups, an experimental and control group, both consisting of six adolescents, were evaluated before and after the experimental group took part in a Poetry Therapy intervention programme. Criteria for inclusion were adolescent girls whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and whose parents were divorced. The eight-week programme was divided into five modules structured around the micro-maps of narrative therapy and focused on the exploration of identity, conflicting emotions, social integration and adapting to a changed environment. Poetry Therapy had a significant influence on the Personal Freedom scale of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire, but not on the other adjustment scales. Poems written towards the end of the programme depict a sense of newfound connectedness, humour and the spirit of self-discovery. Participants further described a new-found confidence in their creative ability as well as a greater awareness of the contribution poetry can make in their lives. A limitation pertaining to this study was the small number of participants, as well as their availability after school hours to attend sessions. It is recommended that in future, a Poetry Therapy programme be presented in an in-house facility where clients are available for sessions at all times. More research is needed, especially cross-culturally, to determine what populations benefit and to what degree. The employment of Poetry Therapy as a preventative therapy needs to be explored.

**Keywords:** Divorce, adolescent, intervention programme Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire, Poetry Therapy, intervention programme, narrative therapy, Personal Freedom scale, confidence, creative ability, in-house facility.

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## **Introduction**

In modern society, divorce occurs more frequently and is granted more easily by courts of law. A growing number of people are affected by this breakdown of the family unit. According to South African statistics, three out of five marriages end in divorce (Van der Hoven, 1990). During 1997, 34 231 divorces were officially granted, and 43 476 minors were affected (Van Rensburg, 2001). Moodie and Anstey (2002) report that 27 000 divorces were granted in 2002, affecting more than 45 000 children. In some schools, almost 80% of pupils come from divorced homes.

Divorce is described as a multifaceted process occurring over time, rather than a single event (Kelly, 2003). Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000) found divorce to be a cumulative experience, as children of divorce suffer an upsurge of related problems at each developmental stage and are thus regarded as a population at risk. According to Kot and Shoemaker (1999) the developmental level of children of divorce has been illustrated to affect all factors of adjustment. Recovery is a gradual process and the worst turmoil tends to abate after about two years (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

In the case of parental divorce, adolescence is regarded as a period of particular vulnerability (De Varis 1995). It is during this developmental phase that children experience dramatic changes in various areas of development, such as physical maturation, cognitive level of functioning, socio-emotional development and identity formation, as well as moral development (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998). Thus, after a divorce, adolescents face the daunting task of adjusting to two sets of significant changes in their lives, namely those that normally arise during the adolescent developmental period and those that flow from the divorce process. Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin and Kierman (1995) studied the timing of divorce as an indicator of long-term adjustment. Results suggest that later divorces, between the ages of 11-16 years, may indeed be more harmful (Kot & Shoemaker, 1999).

Research shows that adolescents of parents who are divorcing are a group at risk. Children from divorced families have a two- to three-fold increased risk of problems,

compared to children of two-parent non-divorced families (Kelly, 2003). The risk for substance abuse and teenage childbearing in children of divorce is doubled (Kelly, 2003). Parental divorce has also been attributed as a serious precipitating factor to adolescent suicide (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to Everett (1989), the family with adolescents is disturbed by divorce because it is the parent and not the child that leaves the house. Furthermore, during adolescence, the transition into young adulthood is in close proximity. The effect of parental divorce at this stage may lead to a greater likelihood of adverse reactions and therefore continuous maladjustment during early adulthood.

According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial model of development (1968), the major developmental task in adolescence revolves around the development of a positive identity versus role confusion. Divorce and the accompanying negative emotions could be detrimental to the development of a positive role identity because of feelings of disappointment and confusion regarding relationships, as well as internal conflict concerning moral value systems when the marriage vows are violated. Furthermore, divorce could directly impact the development of a positive gender role identity (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1998).

Piaget's cognitive theory (1972) describes the adolescent as functioning on the formal operational stage of thinking. Hodges (1987) notes that the adolescent is thus able to hypothesize about the parental relationship as well as empathize with the parents. On the one hand the level of cognitive development gives adolescents important coping skills in dealing with the divorce of their parents, while on the other hand it places them at risk of being emotionally drained and depended upon by the custodian parent.

Brummer (2000) describes the following intra-psychic consequences of divorce in children: feelings of sadness, aggression, guilt, isolation, anxiety, depression and the wish that their parents could be reunited. Rejection, especially by the parent who leaves the house, might also be experienced (Hetherington et. al., 1993). Interpersonal consequences include a decline in social engagements and scholastic achievement and an

increase in aggressive behaviour (Van der Merwe, 1995; Kelly 2003). Adolescents' preoccupation with the divorce makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their schoolwork, while a poor eating and sleeping pattern may also contribute to poorer achievement in school (Benedek & Brown, 1995). A decline in effective parenting could manifest at the exact time when the child has to cope with the divorce. This is due to the fact that at this time both parents could be experiencing emotional liability, aggression, depression, impulsive and even antisocial behaviour (Hetherington, 1993). Furthermore, the socio-economic status of a family could change as a direct result of divorce.

In contrast, Jekielek (1998) stresses that for some children, divorce could have the positive consequence of putting an end to marital conflict. It is also stated that ongoing conflict in a marriage could have a greater negative impact on the wellbeing of the child than divorce. Some parents undergo regression after going through divorce, taking on the role of the child, while the child takes on the role of carer and pillar of strength (Potgieter, 1986). After divorce the single parent might have a tighter time schedule and it can be expected from the child to take on greater responsibility for household chores (Muller, 1998). Therefore, children of divorce often tend to develop accountability and maturity beyond their years.

Researchers agree that divorce could be equated with bereavement involving similar processes of "grief work" (Hodges, 1986; Chiriboga & Catron, 1991). Hozman and Froiland's loss model (1976) is based upon the assumption that children of divorce must grieve the loss of the parental relationship in the same way that children grieve the death of a parent (Hodges, 1986). Both Wallerstein (1983) and Hodges (1986) propose that children work through the same five stages, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. However, Potgieter stresses an important difference between the death of a parent and divorce: "While the death of a parent brings about final parting and intense grief, divorce involves no such finality" (1986, p.50). After mourning the loss of the original family system, successful adjustment to the changed family environment is paramount.

“Adjustment is defined as adaptation to undesirable circumstances” (Kot & Shoemaker, 1999, p.175). A central stimulus to adjustment is the ability to instil within families in transition a sense of hopefulness, optimism, internal locus of control and the ability to cope and manage (Everett 1989). Research by Pedro-Carroll on school-based intervention programmes indicates definite positive changes in adjustment for children who participated in the proposed intervention programme (Hodges, 1986). This included reductions in anxious-moody behaviour, improved learning behaviour, better peer sociability, increased frustration tolerance and adaptive assertiveness. Due to an increasing amount of referrals, group intervention for at-risk learners is considered a viable alternative (Johnson & Wiechers, 2002). Furthermore, group interaction provides socialization and identification with peers, and instils hope in participants (Perschy, 1997). Poetry therapy facilitates emotional expression, encourages self-exploration and guides clients towards integration of conflicting thoughts and emotions (Mazza, 2003; Lerner, 1994; Hedberg, 1997). As intervention strategy with adolescents, it can be successfully applied to a group environment, wherein adolescents are encouraged to express themselves through poetry, resulting in the resolution of issues and internal conflict.

### **Poetry therapy**

Poetry therapy is an operational term for the use of poetry in a therapeutic experience. “The emphasis in poetry therapy is upon the person, not the poem” (Lerner, 1991, p.213). It is designed to assist the client to a greater understanding of himself and the world around him, resulting in a more effective adjustment to society and better mental health (Rubin, 1978). It could include a one-to-one relationship or a group process, or both. Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1986) differentiate between “reading-” and “interactive bibliotherapy”, with a focus on the triad of participant-literature-facilitator. With respect to clinical application, the terms “interactive bibliotherapy” and “poetry therapy” are essentially synonymous.

The theoretical foundation for the use of poetry in therapy is drawn from a number of therapeutic approaches. According to psychoanalytic literature, the interface between

psychotherapy and poetry is the mutual use of preconscious and unconscious material to explore feelings and the use of words to describe them (Mazza, 2003). The humanistic foundation for the therapeutic use of poetry can be traced to Gestalt theory. Within the Gestalt framework, poetry is considered from a problem-solving perspective (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951). Moreno's (1969) psychodrama was a major influence in utilizing artistic methods in psychotherapy. Both Gestalt and psycho-dramatic theory stress the importance of role examinations and the use of metaphor in therapy (Mazza, 2003).

According to the post-modernistic views of therapy, clients give meaning to their lives through their socially constructed narratives (Anderson, 1997). Poetry therapy is consistent with the narrative approach and refers to the use of the language arts in therapeutic capacities. Witkin (1995) noted the importance of language as a means of understanding clients and helping them redefine their situation in a manner that facilitates the attainment of their goals. White and Epston (1990) advanced narrative therapy by providing a conceptual framework and the practical application of various writing techniques such as having clients story and restory their lives. Although narrative therapy does not rely exclusively on written means, the "story" in its overall form is consistent with the traditions of poetry therapy.

Mazza (2003) has developed a model for poetry therapy practice and describes three therapeutic components. The receptive/expressive mode refers to the client's reaction to and discussion of poems, while the therapist explores the client's reactions. The second or expressive/creative mode prescribes writing exercises such as the cluster or collaborative poem and journal writing as techniques for both assessment and treatment. Lastly, the symbolic/ceremonial mode draws attention to the use of metaphors and rituals in everyday life, facilitating a connection between internal and external reality. Rituals are helpful with endings such as death and divorce. All three components of poetry therapy have the potential to address the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains of experience through emotional expression and integration, cognitive restructuring and experimenting with new behaviour. According to Mazza (1997), poetry therapy can therefore be adapted to most psychological models.

### **The process of poetry therapy**

According to Mazza (2003), the receptive/ prescriptive component involves the introduction of literature into therapy. Poetry and popular music can be used within a group treatment model combining the selection of pre-existing poems and songs and the development of group or collaborative poems. The close connection between poetry and popular music might be taken advantage of because adolescents have a passion for rhythm in rap and music, and seem to respond naturally to rhythm and rhyme (Myers, 1998). The selection of a poem may be based on the isoprinciple of choosing a poem with a mood similar to that of the client, but which offers a positive message without being didactic (Leedy, 1969). This principle can be extended to include the mood of a group. It is important to select poetry with straightforward content and emotionally laden themes with particular appeal to adolescents (Myers, 1998). Although personal meanings are at the core of poetry therapy, poetry has the capacity to universalize feelings (Mazza, 2003). The isolated adolescent might therefore be comforted by poems expressing similar emotions he or she is experiencing. Poems that are short, not too abstract, written in the first person and are likely to elicit emotion from clients, prove to be most useful in therapy (Rofls & Super, 1988).

Within the expressive/creative mode of poetry therapy, the use of poetry writing can be valuable as a means of assessing and treating adolescent clients (Mazza, 2003). A haiku is a Japanese poem with three lines of five, seven, and five syllables each. Oaklander (1988) describes a simplified five-line haiku she found to be very successful in therapy with children and adolescents. The poem starts off with a title word, followed by two words describing the first word, then three and four words, all elaborating on the first word and the fifth line repeating the first word. This uncomplicated poetic form places no emphasis on rhyme and encourages free-flowing expression of feelings within safe parameters. Group collaborative poems could also be developed. This technique involves each member being given the opportunity to contribute one or more lines to a poem. Considering the tremendous influence of peers in the adolescent stage, such group modalities are often very effective (Mazza, 2003). According to Perschy (1997),

adolescents have such a strong need to identify with their peers that connecting with a small group dealing with similar issues can be extremely valuable. It was also found that poetry therapy advances group cohesion and self-discovery. The collaborative poem is helpful in getting members in the problem-solving process of creating a poem reflecting the views and depicting the mood of the entire group (Mazza, 2003).

Lastly, the symbolic/ceremonial component involves the use of metaphors, rituals and storytelling (Mazza, 2003). Poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, sound, and image allow us to make what is perceived within the heart come to light in our writing (Fox, 1995). The use of metaphor in therapeutic contexts has been presented by several authors (Goldstein, 1983; Mazza, 2003), and is indicated as a therapeutic tool: “One way of talking about experience is through the creation of metaphor” (Goldstein, 1983, p.235). By understanding an individual’s metaphors, the therapist has access to the patient’s model of the world. Form is also an important component adding to the therapeutic value of poetry. Henninger in Longo (2003) states: “Form makes arrangement out of derangement, harmony out of disharmony, and order out of chaos.” The form and structure of a poem can provide a sense of control that may make the reader feel less alone, even if there is not a hopeful message (Mazza, 2003). Storytelling, in terms of its value in the symbolic component of poetry therapy, refers to a technique that can be used within a variety of therapeutic capacities. White and Epston (1990), within the context of narrative therapy, discuss the “storying of experiences” making use of five micro-maps in the narrative process. These maps incorporate the following: the deconstruction of the story, “re-authoring conversations”, “redefining ceremonies”, “re-membering conversations” and “taking it back practices”.

### **Therapeutic value of poetry therapy**

Poetry therapy can be successfully utilized as a form of family therapy to help individual members work through family issues such as divorce (Mazza, 2003). Young people often find poetry an enjoyable mode of expression and therefore the poem holds particular promise for adolescent therapy. Furthermore, it provides possibilities for growth as a result of interaction with others in a group setting (Angelotti, 1985).

The literature outlines four types of benefits that result from poetry: affective, cognitive, personal and interpersonal development (Hedberg, 1997). The cognitive benefits, according to Mazza (2003) and Lerner (1994), demonstrate the ability of poetry to communicate learning, humour, insight, and to improve verbalisation of feelings. The cathartic effects of both writing and reading poetry aloud occur when feelings of rage, hopelessness and pain are expressed in a safe milieu (Hedberg, 1997). Self-esteem as well as self-support are increased through creativity. Interpersonal benefits occur because the poem serves as a vehicle for communication, communicating needs, interests and feelings (Lerner, 1991).

### **Poetry therapy as intervention strategy for the adolescent from a divorced family**

Research has indicated that poetry is useful as a means for adolescents to explore and cope with their feelings (Mazza, 2003). According to Harrower's (1972) review of her own poetry, the poems written in adolescence depict the struggle to achieve a personal identity. These poems clearly attempt to integrate the new, and often ego threatening, life experience, with the old, more sanguine beliefs.

Poems compress thoughts, feelings and attitudes in much the same way adolescents compress the essence of their lives in a single party, a football game, or a telephone call. An adolescent's day-to-day life is a series of poems – intense, complex, sometimes startling, and often difficult to understand (Myers, 1998, p.1).

Creativity is regarded as a higher spiritual function and is described by Wolin and Wolin (1993, p.163) as follows: "...many resilient survivors dabble in writing, music, painting or dance to break the constraints of their troubled families and their own hurt feelings." According to Shaw, the period of adolescence is one of high creativity (Shaw, 1981). He further suggests that themes of time, loss and death in the adolescent poetry of famous poets such as Poe and Plath indicate an interrelationship between creativity, mourning and adolescence. Literature describes the successful use of poetry in grief counselling



with a range of client groups, and more specifically adolescents (Mazza, 2003; Hiltunen, 2003; Gustavson, 1997). Furthermore, poetry therapy has promise as a supportive technique encouraging self-expression within the grieving process and fosters a sense of validation and control.

In light of the aforementioned literature it appears that the following is essential in an intervention with adolescents. First and foremost, the focus of such a programme should fall on exploring the adolescent's identity, the most important crisis of this developmental stage. South African findings show that a group intervention programme can contribute to alter adolescents' perceptions of divorce, reduce feelings of anxiety and depression, enhance self-concept and assist them in revising faulty beliefs about divorce (Johnson & Wiechers, 2002; Smith, 1996). It is further recommended by Johnson (2000) that a differentiation be made between the stages of early adolescence and late adolescence concerning the composition of therapeutic groups and that a systemic approach be utilized, which sees the child, the parents, the teachers and the school system as target populations for intervention programmes.

Poems chosen for an intervention with adolescents should reflect their feelings, thoughts and attitudes (Myers, 1998). This supports the notion that the poems will help the adolescents cope with and explore their own feelings. Furthermore, it is important that such a programme makes full use of the adolescent's unique creativity (Oaklander, 1988). Adolescents experiencing the effect of their parents' divorce go through the same stages of grief as is perceived by a person who loses someone to death. Thus it is important that the final stage of the intervention programme focus on acceptance and integration of conflicting thoughts and emotions (Hiltunen, 2003).

### **Focus of the research**

The focus of this study was to evaluate the impact of a Poetry Therapy group intervention on the post-divorce adjustment of adolescent girls. The objective of this study was to determine whether a Poetry Therapy group intervention promotes successful adjustment amongst adolescent girls from divorced families.

## Research method

This study is based on experimental research conducted at a high school in Bloemfontein. The random two-group design was utilized with a pre-test and post-test.

## Participants

The study is based on intervention research carried out among adolescent girls 16 to 18 years of age at a high school in Bloemfontein. Written permission was obtained from the participants and their parents. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups, namely an experimental and a control group, consisting of 6 adolescent girls each. The criteria for inclusion being: adolescent girls whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and whose parents are divorced. The groups consisted of one grade 10 learner, four grade 11 learners and one matric learner. More grade 11 learners participated due to the fact that their register teachers were enthusiastic about the programme and identified more possible group members. The age variable was measured on the interval scale and the mean age and standard deviation was calculated for both groups. The grade of the respondent as well as the parent with whom she resides was measured on the nominal scale and frequencies and percentages calculated by means of the SAS computer programme (SAS Institute, 2003). (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Frequency concerning grade and residing parent

Biographical variables	Experimental group		Control group		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Grade:</b>						
10	1	16,7	1	16,7	2	16,7
11	4	66,6	4	66,6	8	66,6
12	1	16,7	1	16,7	2	16,7
Subtotal	6	100,0	6		12	100,0
<b>Residing with whom:</b>						

Father	1	16,7	0	0,0	1	8,3
Mother	5	83,3	6	100,0	11	91,7
Subtotal	6	100,0	6	100,0	12	100,0

The information in Table 1 indicates that the groups are divided equally according to grade. Only one respondent in the experimental group resides with her father. All other respondents live with their mothers. The mean age of respondents in the experimental and control group is 17,0 years ( $s = 0.63$ ) and 16,83 years ( $s = 0.41$ ) respectively. This difference in age is insignificant.

The participating adolescents' preference for reading and writing activities were recorded by means of a biographical questionnaire.

**Table 1.1 Classification of participants according to information obtained from a biographical questionnaire**

<b>Biographical questionnaire</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>
Recreational reading	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Engage in diary keeping	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Identify with song lyrics	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
Write poetry	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

It seems that all of the participating adolescents engage in recreational reading, indicating that they prefer to read Christian literature and magazines. Fifty eight percent of participants indicated that they have engaged in diary keeping, while only 33% identify with the lyrics of popular songs and 67% have written at least one poem.

### **Data gathering**

A pretest inventory measuring adjustment was completed by both the experimental and the control group, after which the experimental group participated in a poetry therapy programme over a period of 8 weeks. After implementing the intervention, the two groups completed the same inventory post-test. The first and second testing was set ten

weeks apart and the researcher was present at both testing sessions. After completion of the post-test inventories the control group was exposed to the same programme. Using the process of narrative therapy as theoretical grounding, a qualitative content analysis was done on the collaborative and individual poems produced during sessions to identify emerging themes.

### **Measuring instruments**

Post-divorce adjustment was measured by the following scales of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire: Self-confidence, Self-esteem, Self-control, Nervousness, Health, Family Influence and Personal Freedom.

#### ***Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire***

The purpose of this Questionnaire is to determine an individual's level of adjustment. The intervention was aimed at improving the adjustment of adolescent girls from divorced families. This instrument was used to measure the level of adjustment of the participants in two main areas namely personal adjustment and home relations (Fouché & Grobbelaar, 1983). Both the groups completed specific scales of the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire, pertaining to their intrapersonal and interpersonal adjustment before and after the intervention took place. The following 7 scales were included: self-confidence, self-esteem, self-control, nervousness, health, family influences and the personal freedom scale (Fouché & Grobbelaar, 1983).

In the area of personal relations the self-confidence scale measures the degree to which a person has confidence in his ability, while the self-esteem scale refers to a person's inner appraisal based on evaluation and acceptance of personality characteristics. The self-control scale reflects the extent to which a person controls and channels his emotions in accordance with his judgement. Scales measuring nervousness and health indicates the presence or absence of anxious behaviour and the tendency to be preoccupied with the physical condition. The area of Home Relations consists of the family influences scale, measuring the degree to which a person is a dependent in the home as well as the personal freedom scale, measuring the degree to which a person feels restricted by his parents. A high score is indicative of good adjustment while a low score indicates

maladjustment. A very high score on a component should be interpreted with caution, since it is possible that the testee is trying to compensate.

The Personal, Home, Social and Formal Questionnaire possesses a high degree of construct validity. The reliability coefficient was calculated according to the split-half method and varies between 0.68 and 0.91 for the different subscales for adolescent girls (Fouché & Grobbelaar, 1983). Since the number of participants was limited, raw scores were used for analysis in this study.

### **Biographical information**

A self-compiled biographical questionnaire was also completed. Questions regarding the period since the divorce and preference for reading and writing activities were also included.

### **Poetry therapy intervention programme**

The experimental group was exposed to a Poetry Therapy group intervention while the control-group received no intervention during the eight-week period.

The aim of this intervention programme was to improve the adjustment of adolescent girls from divorced homes. The programme specifically focused on improving self-esteem and emotional stability through integration of conflicting emotions. Healthy relationships with family and peers as well as identity formation were also addressed. The aim of the group intervention was to facilitate discussions whereby experiences could be shared, feelings normalized and the consultation of other group members encouraged.

The programme was implemented over a period of eight weeks and presented in eight one-hour sessions. The participants were exposed to a poetry therapy group programme drawing on both the receptive/expressive and expressive/creative modes of poetry therapy. This involved them responding to and discussing certain poems specifically

chosen by the facilitator, according to theme and the perceived mood of the group. Furthermore writing exercises like the haiku and collaborative poem were employed.

Hozman and Froiland's loss model (1976) was employed as a guiding model because it is based upon the assumption that children of divorce must grieve the loss of the parental relationship in the same way that children grieve the death of a parent (Hodges, 1986). They proposed that children had to go through the same five stages namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The five micro-maps as set out by White and Epston (1990) as part of the narrative therapy process were used to structure the modules. The first two modules namely the Deconstruction of the story and Re-authoring conversations comprised of two sessions each, while the last three modules; Re-defining ceremonies, Remembering conversations and Taking it back practices were addressed in one session each (See Appendix).

#### *Deconstruction of the story*

The focus was on raising the participant's awareness of the loss of their parent's relationship and the impact thereof on their lives, even if it happened a while back. Sensory contact was increased and established so that emotions would be easily identified. Appropriate ways to express conflicting emotions were explored. In addition to self-expression the participants' sense of self were heightened and self-discovery was encouraged.

#### *Re-authoring conversations*

During this module it was important to integrate conflicting emotions in a significant way so that a hopeful message is conveyed. Loss and disappointment in life were explored and dealt with by means of cognitive restructuring.

#### *Redefining ceremonies*

Increasing self-support through creativity was central to the module. The development of identity, self-acceptance and building self-esteem were addressed.

### *Remembering conversations*

The development and maintenance of healthy relationship were important in this module.

### *Taking-it-back practices*

Reflecting on the group process as well as integrating the participant's thoughts and feelings were at the core of this module. Instilling hope and a feeling of optimism about the future was paramount.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following research hypothesis was formulated.

**Adolescent girls exposed to a Poetry Therapy group intervention programme (experimental group) show better post-divorce adjustment than adolescent girls not exposed to the intervention (control group).**

The above mentioned research hypothesis can be represented in terms of one of the scales as follows:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_1 : \mu_1 > \mu_2$$

(Everitt, 1996)

Where  $\mu_1 =$  the average self-confidence measurement for the population adolescents that received the Poetry Therapy intervention (experimental group), and

$\mu_2 =$  the average self-confidence measurement for the population adolescents that did not receive the Poetry Therapy intervention (control group)

Similar hypotheses can be formulated for the pre- and post-measurements of the remaining scales.

## Statistical analysis

### Quantitative analysis

Measurements were obtained on specific dependent variables while the research group consisted of 12 participants. This limited number of participants can influence the assumption of normality, therefore a non-parametric method is indicated. The seven variables were all measured on the interval scale and therefore according to Howell (2002) the Mann Whitney U-test is indicated as a non-parametrical test to compare the central tendency of two independent groups.

Due to the fact that pre- and post-measurements were taken it is important to compare the mean pre-scores. If no significant differences can be found, it can be assumed that the two groups were similar with regards to adjustment before the commencement of the research. In this case the post-scores of both groups will be compared with one another. If significant differences arise with regards to the average pre-scores, it can be deducted that the two groups were not similar with regard to adjustment before the start of the research. It follows that each group will be assessed individually and compared in terms of pre- and post-scores. If significant differences occur between pre- and post-test scores in the experimental group, but not in the control group, it can be assumed that the intervention was successful. The 5% level of significance was used in this study.

### Results of Quantitative analysis

To examine the formulated hypothesis, the pre -scores on the different scales of the PHSF was compared. The Mann-Whitney U-test was utilized supported by SPSS computer programming (SPSS Incorporated, 2001). The results are shown in Table 2

Table 2: Mann-Whitney-results on the pre-scores of the two groups

Dependent variable	Experimental		Control		U-value+
	$\bar{X}$	s	$\bar{X}$	s	
Self-confidence	27,17	3,06	28,50	4,37	13,5
Self-esteem	22,83	5,38	25,50	3,73	11,5
Self-control	25,67	6,77	27,17	5,98	16,5



Nervousness	23,00	7,54	22,83	7,31	18,0
Health	26,00	10,20	28,67	5,64	12,5
Family influence	26,33	7,94	24,67	5,89	17,0
Personal freedom	35,67	8,36	29,67	4,03	7,5

+ corrections for even order of rank

\* Critical value for direction giving U-test on 5%-standard = 7

In Table 2 it is clear that not one of the seven scales' average pre-scores differ significantly from one another. The null hypotheses can be maintained in all instances. It can thus be assumed that the two groups were rather similar in terms of adjustment before onset of the research.

Owing to the fact that the differences in mean pre-scores is not significant, the mean post-scores on the seven scales were compared making use of the Mann-Whitney U-test. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Mann-Whitney-results on the post-scores of the two groups

Dependent variable	Experimental		Control		U-value+
	$\bar{X}$	s	$\bar{X}$	s	
Self-confidence	29,50	6,50	27,83	6,43	16,0
Self-esteem	27,83	4,36	25,17	3,19	11,5
Self-control	26,50	5,89	25,50	4,81	17,5
Nervousness	24,83	9,28	24,83	7,68	17,5
Health	29,33	10,40	30,83	6,71	16,5
Family influence	25,83	8,54	27,00	5,10	17,5
Personal freedom	37,83	7,73	30,00	3,52	6,0

+ corrections for even order of rank

\* Critical value for direction giving U-test on 5%-standard = 7

In Table 3 it is clear that significant differences on the 5%-standard occur in the mean post-scores for the scale Personal Freedom. In this case the null hypothesis is

disregarded because  $6 < 7$ . The information in Table 3 indicates that in comparison to the control group, participants in the experimental group have a significantly higher post-score with regards to the personal freedom scale. No significant differences between the two groups regarding the mean post-scores on the other 6 scales could be identified. The null hypothesis must be retained in those six instances. Thus Poetry therapy had a significant influence on the sense of personal freedom of the experimental group, but not on the other adjustment scales.

### **Results of qualitative analysis**

The qualitative analysis is based upon the identification themes in the poetry, written by the participants during the course of the therapy programme.

The five micro-maps as set out by White and Epston (1990) as part of the narrative therapy process, were used as broad guidelines to analyse the poetry written by participants during the course of the therapeutic programme.

### **Deconstruction of the story**

This process involves the client telling her story about her situation or circumstances. Deconstruction of the dominant story takes place through externalizing, with the aim to separate the person from the problem. Most participants defined their story by feelings of hopelessness and despair, loneliness and a disorganized family environment.

*With a heart full of sorrow, I run alone*

*I'm sick and tired of the chaos at home* (Respondent no.1)

The following haiku's further externalized the problem:

*Alone*

*In the*

*Midst of company*

*You might find yourself*

*Alone*

*Hopeless*

*It destroys*

*Don't expect anything*

*Don't dare to dream*

*Hopeless*

(Respondent no. 2)

(Respondent no. 2)

### **Re-authoring conversations**

This technique involves the therapist guiding the client to create a new alternative story. Unique outcomes are usually the starting point of alternative narratives and are the opposite of the dominant story. Opposing haiku's were written as the foundation of a new narrative and as a means of challenging the original story.

<i>Company</i>	<i>Hoop</i>	<i>Hope (Translation)</i>
<i>You choose</i>	<i>Is hier</i>	<i>It's here</i>
<i>Appreciate the people</i>	<i>Net vir jou</i>	<i>Just for you</i>
<i>Willing to be your</i>	<i>Gryp dit gou vas</i>	<i>Capture it now</i>
<i>Company</i>	<i>Hoop</i>	<i>Hope</i>
(Respondent no.3)	(Respondent no.6)	

### **Re-defining ceremonies**

This refers to a client inviting spectators to share in her new story by means of a ceremony celebrating her new identity. Poems written during this ceremony depict a sense of newfound connectedness, humour and the spirit of self-discovery.

<i>I</i>	<i>Ek</i>	<i>I (Translation)</i>
<i>Not her</i>	<i>Sonder gebrek</i>	<i>Without blemish</i>
<i>Am *Helen Hefer</i>	<i>Soms ook 'n gek</i>	<i>Sometimes so foolish</i>
<i>And live in Bloemfontein</i>	<i>Myself herontdek</i>	<i>Rediscovered myself</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Ek</i>	<i>I</i>
(Respondent no.3)	(Respondent no.1)	
(pseudonym)		

### **Re-membering conversations**

Through this process a person can decide who plays an important role in her life. The aim is to determine whose voices can be of use in the current situation. This creates support and meaning in the client's life. The majority of the participants wrote haiku's

about their parents. These poems depict the fulfilment of the adolescent's needs as well as the ability of the parent mentioned to satisfy them. Furthermore a theme of loyalty towards the non-custodian parent is prominent.

<i>Dad</i>	<i>Ma</i>	<i>Mom (Translation)</i>
<i>No one</i>	<i>Ek kan</i>	<i>I can</i>
<i>Will ever be</i>	<i>Ek kan nie</i>	<i>I can't</i>
<i>Able to replace my</i>	<i>Ek kan nie kla</i>	<i>I cannot complain</i>
<i>Dad</i>	<i>Ma</i>	<i>Mom</i>
(Respondent no.2)	(Respondent no.5)	

### **Taking-it-back practices**

This refers to the therapist reflecting on the contribution that is made by a specific member to the lives of other members of the group. The poems produced during the last group session, was an attempt to assess what the group process meant to each member. The poems written by them highlighted the fact that the small number of participants, contributed to the creation of a safe atmosphere encouraging honesty and openness. Furthermore it was an opportunity to make known any uncomfortable feelings or thoughts they were experiencing. If any member needed to cry out for help, the weekly sessions provided the chance to do so.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Ons groep</i>	<i>Our group (Translation)</i>
<i>We were</i>	<i>Ons word</i>	<i>We were</i>
<i>Small, honest, but</i>	<i>Word nou beroep</i>	<i>We were called upon</i>
<i>We were all truthful</i>	<i>Om ook te roep!</i>	<i>To call out</i>
<i>Group</i>	<i>Ons groep</i>	<i>Our group</i>
(Respondent no.3)	(Respondent no. 1)	

During the weekly interaction the facilitator was continuously confronted with the discrepancies in life, experienced so intensely by the adolescent. An example thereof would be experiencing disillusionment because of a divorce and at the same time embracing hopes and dreams for the future in a vigorous way. Much depended on the

facilitator's ability to integrate material arising in the sessions in a meaningful way. The facilitator had to revisit her own adolescence and share a lot of her own experiences. The following poem depicts the facilitator's feelings about the process:

***Wednesday group***

*Instil Hope!*

*In battered teenage*

*Hearts, mostly mine*

*Wednesday group*

**Conclusion**

To conclude the findings of the quantitative analysis it is important to note that before onset of the research, the experimental and control group were rather similar in terms of adjustment. Although statistically insignificant, an improvement on the scales: self-confidence, self-esteem, self-control, nervousness and health were noted in the experimental group. This does not support the findings of Lerner (1991), linking poetry and the process of creating it, to an increase in self-support as well as self-esteem. Furthermore the results of this study do not correlate with an improvement in self-control as described by Mazza or lowered anxiety level as stated by Hedberg (1997). A significant improvement on the personal freedom scale might be owing to the capacity of poetry to universalize feelings as stated by Mazza (2003). The interaction with others in a group contributes further to the adolescent feeling less boxed in at home after realizing that he or she is not alone. Furthermore poetry has the ability to communicate humour and improve verbalization of feelings (Lerner, 1994). This may contribute to the adolescent viewing their home situation in a different light and becoming better equipped to communicate their needs and wants.

Following is a summary of the findings of the qualitative analysis. Participants reported that they were sceptical about the programme at first due to negative experiences of poetry in literature classes at school. They particularly enjoyed the use of contemporary song lyrics and modern poems. Furthermore they discovered that they have the ability to

express themselves by means of poetry without being exceptionally talented as a writer. Some described a new-founded confidence in their creative ability as well as a greater awareness of the contribution poetry can make in their lives. The group modality was found to be effective, new friendships were formed and members even socialized after group meetings. Some participants expressed the wish for a bigger group, to include a greater diversity of individuals.

Most participants defined their story by feelings of hopelessness and despair, loneliness and a disorganized family environment. The poems written during the course of the programme depict the fulfilment of the adolescent's needs as well as the ability or inability of the parent mentioned, to satisfy them. Furthermore a theme of loyalty towards the non-custodian parent is prominent.

### **Discussion and recapitulation**

At the start of the intervention it could be assumed that the experimental and control group were similar with regards to the dimensions of adjustment assessed in the research study. In comparison to the control group, participants in the experimental group had a significantly higher post-score with regards to the personal freedom scale on the Personal, Home, Social and Formal Relations Questionnaire. Therefore the null hypothesis was disregarded with regards to the personal freedom. No significant differences between the two groups regarding the mean post-scores on the other 6 scales could be identified. The null hypothesis must be retained in those six instances. Thus exposure to a poetry therapy programme had a significant influence on the sense of personal freedom of the experimental group, but not on the other adjustment scales. Part taking in the group programme might have had a positive effect on the adolescent participants' perception of their home situation. As well as becoming more capable of communicating their needs and wants. Furthermore they gained confidence in their creative ability and the ability to express themselves by means of poetry. This might also have influenced their awareness of their personal freedom. The programme attributed to the participants displaying a more positive attitude towards poetry. Furthermore they

acquired a more optimistic outlook on life. In practice it was difficult to obtain bigger groups due to a few reasons. The groups had to be conducted after school hours and many of the girls had other extra-curricular obligations. Because of the length of the programme it ran into the midyear exams and adding to the problem was the low level of commitment and motivation some of the girls displayed. It is recommended that poetry therapy programmes be implemented in an in-house facility so that participants are available at all times and gain maximum benefit. Poetry therapy is virtually unexplored within the South African context. By this programme demonstrating the use of poetry in practice, the results of this study might draw attention to this field. Research has indicated that poetry is useful as a means for adolescents to explore and cope with their feelings (Mazza, 2003). This idea is partially supported by the results of this study. Poetry Therapy seems to be most valuable when utilized to explore, express and integrate emotions. It also provides the adolescent with a platform for communicating needs and wants. The creative arts have a vital role to play as an auxiliary therapy in any effective therapeutic treatment programme. More research is needed especially cross- culturally to determine which populations benefit and to what degree. Furthermore contra-indications for use as well as the short and long-term effects of poetry therapy must be evaluated. When taking into account the numerous diseases caused by stress and depression e.g. adolescent suicide attempts, the employment of poetry therapy as a preventative therapy educationally, needs to be explored. Once adolescents are educated about the value of poetry reading and writing, they may become motivated to seek the written word as a means to explore and understand the complexities of their personal lives.

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## **APPENDIX**

1. Poetry Therapy programme
2. Poetry
3. List of references

## "Die spreek met voete"

A Poetry therapy programme to enhance the post-divorce adjustment of adolescent girls.

<b>Session</b>	<b>Micro-map</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Session 1	Deconstruction of the story	Introduction to the programme and raising awareness of the impact of the divorce on their lives.
Session 2	Deconstruction of the story	Conflicting emotions as part of the dominant story are identified and expressed: <i>Anger/Frustration</i>
Session 3	(Deconstruction of the story)/ Re-authoring conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Conflicting emotions as part of the dominant story are identified and expressed: Sadness, Guilt, Isolation.</li> <li>◆ Unique outcomes (the opposite of the dominant story) are used as starting point for alternative narratives.</li> </ul>
Session 4	(Deconstruction of the story)/ Re-authoring conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Depression and inner tension are explored expressed.</li> <li>◆ Unique outcomes (the opposite of the dominant story) are used as starting point for alternative narratives.</li> </ul>
Session 5 Session 6	Re-defining ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Exploring the choices available in life, instilling a sense of hope.</li> <li>◆ Self-esteem and exploring own identity.</li> </ul>
Session 7	Re-membering conversations	Determine which relationships play an important role in their lives.
Session 8	Taking it back practices	Ending: focusing on integration of feelings and thoughts as well as reflecting on the contribution made to eachother's lives.

The duration of each session is an hour. The activities take about 45 minutes to complete. The group leader for integration purposes may use the remaining 15 minutes, while refreshments are enjoyed.

## **DECONSTRUCTION OF THE STORY**

### **Session 1 Introduction**

#### **Objectives:**

- ◆ Meeting other group members
- ◆ Contracting
- ◆ Introduction to the programme
- ◆ Introduction to the first component *Identity*

#### **1. Ice breaker (15min)**

##### **Instructions:**

Give each group member a piece of paper with the instruction to gather the following information from the other members:

- ◆ Favourite music group
- ◆ Favourite TV program / movie
- ◆ Favourite food
- ◆ Colour of group members' eyes
- ◆ Favourite colour
- ◆ Hair colour

Afterwards give feedback regarding the results.

##### **Rationale**

- ✓ Members of the group get a chance to interact with one another and get to know each other better.
- ✓ The focus of the exercise is on positive things one can still enjoy despite the sadness of divorce.



## **2. Contracting (5min)**

The group leader lays down the rules for the coming sessions and discusses the agreement of confidentiality.

## **3. Introduction of the programme (20 min)**

### **Instructions:**

The group leader explains the reason for the group's existence and gives participants a piece of paper folded down the middle. On one side, ask participants to draw a picture of their family before their parents' divorce and on the other, a picture portraying the family after divorce. Use the poem *Aan die redakteur* as introduction to the programme. Make use of this activity to expose the group to the working method to be followed in the sessions. To amplify the message of the poem, play the song *Ironic* by Alanis Morissette. Both the poem and the lyrics to the song focus on the irony we encounter in our everyday lives. A family meant to live happily ever after, is destroyed because of divorce. In small groups of two, share opinions and ideas regarding the application value the poem and song's message hold for their own lives.

### **Rationale:**

✓ Members' awareness of their parents' divorce is raised.

## **4. Homework assignment (5min)**

### **Instructions:**

Each member of the group should keep a "diary of feelings" and describe the events that evoked these feelings.

### **Rationale:**

✓ Group members get the opportunity to do self-reflection.

## **Session 2 Conflicting emotions: Anger/Frustration**

### **Objectives:**

◆ To help group members identify, express and integrate emotions.

- ◆ To raise awareness of the reality of the loss.

### **1. Music activity (20min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Use the song by Pink, *I'm a hazard to myself* as introduction to the theme of the session. After listening to the lyrics of the song, participants get the chance to draw a picture of anything that comes to mind, using words and symbols. Discuss these drawings afterwards in the group.

#### **Rationale:**

- ✓ To identify themes relating to the most important issues in their lives currently.

### **2. Poetry activity (20min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Each participant gets a copy of the poem *Frustratie*, read by the group leader. Divide the group into smaller groups of two and instruct them to fill in the missing words of the poem. Afterwards share their responses in the group.

#### **Rationale:**

- ✓ The group is directed to give expression to specific emotions.

### **3. Homework assignment (5min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Two participants share a computer disc. On a weekly basis one of the participants will get the chance to write short poems, thoughts, diary notes etc. and save it on the disc. Every other week the disc is exchanged. At the beginning of each new session an opportunity will be given for feedback regarding this exercise.

*\*Please note that this activity depends on a learner's access to a computer.*

**Rationale:**

- ✓ Group members get the opportunity to start a dialogue and share thoughts and feelings with one of the other members.

**DECONSTRUCTION OF THE STORY/RE-AUTHORING CONVERSATIONS**

**Session 3      Conflicting emotions: Sadness, Guilt and Isolation**

**Objectives:**

- ◆ To get temporary relief from uncomfortable emotions by part taking in a relaxation exercise.
- ◆ To help members identify their emotions.
- ◆ To integrate conflicting emotions.

**1.      Share and tell (10min)**

**Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share a song, poem or comment on the diary.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To establish group cohesion.

**2.      Relaxation exercise (15min)**

**Instructions:**

Each member is given a piece of clay. While they close their eyes and relax, instructions is given to pinch, throw, break etc. the clay. A discussion about the feelings they became aware of follows.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To raise awareness, self-expression and establish contact.

### **3. Haiku poems (20min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Explain the form of the haiku to participants. Instruct them to write four haiku poems with the titles Anger, Sadness, Guilt and Isolation. For each negative haiku, an opposite, positive haiku must be written. They can choose their own titles.

#### **Rationale**

- ✓ To express specific emotions and establish a feeling of optimism.

## **DECONSTRUCTION OF THE STORY/RE-AUTHORING CONVERSATIONS**

### **Session 4 Depression and tension**

#### **Objectives:**

- ◆ To provide temporary relief from tension and other emotions that might be difficult to handle.
- ◆ To help participants identify and express specific emotions.
- ◆ To accept the reality of the loss.

### **1. Share and tell (15min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share a song, poem or comment on the diary.

#### **Rationale:**

- ✓ To establish group cohesion.

### **2. Poetry exercise (30min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- 2.1 Read the poem, *I.D.* (Anon) aloud to the participants. Each member gets a chance to state something positive about herself e.g. I am good at sports. Afterwards she has the opportunity to pose a question about herself to the group e.g. Am I beautiful?/clever? etc. (15min)

- 2.2 Read the poem *Wiskunde* by Antjie Krog to the group. As a group explore the feeling of isolation as depicted in the poem and how it might apply to our lives. Furthermore behaviour and thoughts that accompany the feeling of isolation are explored. (15min)

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To raise awareness, identify and express specific emotions.

**3. Homework assignment**

**Instructions:**

A computer disc is shared between 2 participants. On a weekly basis one of the participants will get the chance to write short poems, thoughts, diary notes etc. and save it on the disc. Every other week the disc is exchanged. At the beginning of each new session an opportunity will be given for feedback regarding this exercise.

*\*Please note that this activity depends on a learner's access to a computer.*

**Rationale:**

- ✓ Group members get the opportunity to start a dialogue and share thought and feelings with one of the other members.

**RE-AUTHORING CONVERSATIONS**

**Session 5 Choices**

**Objectives:**

- ◆ To explore each participant's creativity
- ◆ To instil a sense of hopefulness and help participants reinvest in life.

**1. Share and tell (10min)**

**Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share a song, poem or comment on the diary.

## **Rationale**

- ✓ To establish group cohesion.

### **2. Poetry exercise**

Read the poem *The road not taken* by Robert Frost to the group. Afterwards instruct group members to draw a picture of what they think the poem is about. Explore the metaphor of the two roads by asking members to make it applicable to their own lives.

### **3. Homework assignment: Dream chart (10min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Each participant should make a dream chart on an A3 piece of paper. It involves making a collage of pictures and words cut from magazines. Hopes and dreams they have for their own lives are hereby visualized on paper. The group leader shares her own dream chart with the group.

## **RE-DEFINING CEREMONIES**

### **Session 6 Self-esteem and Identity**

#### **Objectives:**

- ◆ To explore participant's creativity
- ◆ To raise awareness of the self
- ◆ To increase self-esteem
- ◆ To instil a sense of hopefulness and help participants reinvest in life.

### **1. Share and tell (10min)**

#### **Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share her dream chart.

#### **Rationale:**

- ✓ To establish group cohesion.

## 2. Name painting

### **Instructions:**

Give each member a piece of paper and a paintbrush. Instruct them to fold the paper in half. On one side they have to write their names with paint, and while the paint is still wet fold the paper in halve. A pattern is formed in the fold. Afterwards they have to find a picture in their name blot that symbolizes something important in their lives or serves as a metaphor for describing their character.

### **Rationale:**

- ✓ To give expression to the self and explore an own identity.

## 3. Poetry exercise (20min)

### **Instructions:**

Read the poem *Spree met voete* by Phillip De Vos as a group effort. Explore the implication of the clever use of words in the poem, for the adolescent's life. *Fee met sproete*, stands in direct contrast with *Spree met voete*. Explore specific situations such as not being chosen for the netball team through role-play, playing the opposing roles mentioned in the above.

### **Rationale:**

- ✓ To explore identity and self-concept as well as increasing self-support.

## **RE-MEMBERING CONVERSATIONS**

### **Session 7 Relationships**

#### **Objectives:**

- ◆ To raise awareness about relationships.
- ◆ To determine who plays an important role in the participants' lives.
- ◆ To create support and meaning in the adolescent's life

## 1. Share and tell

### **Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share a song, poem or comment on the diary.

### **Rationale:**

✓ To establish group cohesion.

## 2. Music activity (10min)

### **Instructions:**

Play the song *Deurmekaar* by Karen Zoid. Ask participants to write down phrases and words down that come to mind while they are listening to the above song.

### **Rationale:**

✓ To raise awareness of emotions and facilitate emotional expression.

## 3. Poetry activity (15min)

### **Instructions:**

Read the poem *Bitterbessie dagbreek* by Ingrid Jonker to the group. Make the images in the poem more tangible to them by making use of a sensory awareness exercise. The poem serves as a point of reference to initiate a discussion on relationships. Talk about all the relationships an adolescent might engage in eg. with the opposite sex, girlfriends, parents, teachers etc. Explore the influence of their parents broken relationships on the above relationships.

### **Rationale:**

✓ To determine who is playing an important role in their lives.

## 4. Sensory awareness exercise (10min)

### **Instructions:**



Make the images in the poem more tangible by touching and smelling real pine needles, tasting real berries, looking in a broken mirror etc.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To establish and raise sensory contact.

**5. Homework assignment (5min)**

**Instructions:**

Each participant gets a copy of Antjie Krog's poem *Ma* to take home. They can try to write their own haiku poem to their mom or their dad.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To increase self-support through creativity, express feelings and integrate conflicting emotions.
- ✓ To create support and meaning in their lives.

**TAKING-IT-BACK PRACTICES**

**Session 8 Ending**

**Objectives:**

- ◆ To integrate group members' feelings and thoughts about the group experience.
- ◆ To end the therapeutic process in a meaningful way.
- ◆ To give an opportunity for reflection on the process.

**1. Share and tell (10min)**

**Instructions:**

Give an opportunity to anyone who wants to share her haiku written last week.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To establish group cohesion.

**2. Haiku reflection (10min)**

**Instructions:**

Each group member get an opportunity to write a haiku poem, reflecting on the group experience.

**Rationale**

- ✓ To help the group focus and reflect on the group process the past eight weeks.

**3. Group poem (15min)**

**Instructions:**

The group leader tapes the haiku's together with masking tape, so that it can be read as one, long group poem.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To represent everybody's thoughts and feelings as an integrated whole.

**4. Ending (10min)**

**Instructions:**

Give each group member a card with the poem *Gebed vir 'n groen perske* by Annesu de Vos and read it aloud. The back of the card contains a haiku written by the group leader to share his or her personal experience of the group process.

**Rationale:**

- ✓ To provide each group member with a small reminder that they partook in the process and to end the sessions with a feeling of hope for the future.

## **Aan die redakteur**

(Die Vlieg, 1999)

As katte doodgetrap  
Langs stoptekens lê  
En die Onse Vader “alternative” is  
Saam met REM

En die mense dra fraai rooi strikkies  
Op AIDS-dag  
Terwyl daar in Rwanda  
Die een of ander oorlog woed

En Superman êrens in ‘n rolstoel sit

Want die druggies lieg op TV  
“We’re addicted to life!”  
Maar die lewe is ‘n sad sad ecstasy

Plak elastoplast op die osoon se gat  
En skreeu Viva!  
Want vrede is die veer van ‘n wilde makou  
In die Pretoria se dieretuin

AI HOE MOEG MOET DIE  
ENGELE NIE WEES NIE!

Die Uwe  
Born free

## **IRONIC**

(Morissette, 1995, track 10)

An old man turned ninety-eight  
He won the lottery and died the next day  
It's a black fly in your Chardonnay  
It's a death row pardon two minutes too late  
Isn't it ironic...don't you think

## *CHORUS*

It's like rain on your wedding day  
It's a free ride when you've already paid  
It's the good advice that you just didn't take  
Who would've thought...it figures

Mr. Play it Safe was afraid to fly  
He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids good-bye  
He waited his whole damn life to take that flight  
And as the plane crashed down he thought  
"Well isn't this nice..."  
And isn't it ironic...don't you think

## *Repeat Chorus*

Well life has a funny way of sneaking up on you  
When you think everything's okay and everything's going right  
And life has a funny way of helping you out when  
You think everything's gone wrong and everything blows up  
In your face

A traffic jam when you're already late

A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break  
It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife  
It's meeting the man of my dreams  
And then meeting his beautiful wife  
And isn't ironic...don't you think  
A little too ironic...and yeah I really do think...

*Repeat Chorus*

Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you  
Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out  
Helping you out

## Frustrasie

(Die Vlieg, 1999)

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al hierdie woorde gooi ek in

JOU  
(die leser)  
se gesig

want ek is moeg  
vir die samelewing  
wat my dryf om  
bloedbesmeerde hande  
oral met my saam te sleep

so:

\_\_\_\_\_ my

\_\_\_\_\_ my

\_\_\_\_\_ my  
gooi my met klippe dood

want  
die  
wêreld is my woning  
NIE!

**I.d.**

(Die Vlieg, 1999)

Ek

Ek is

Ek is \_\_\_\_\_

Met drome in my kop en

Kraletjies in my hare,

Bid in my hande

En tranes in my oë

Van hartseer en bly en God

Wat my gemaak het spesiaal

En net minder as 'n engel

Wie is jy

Wat durf my drome vertrap

My hart breek

My motiewe bevraagteken

My mond laat bewys van

Onreg en vernedering

MOEDELLOOS

Te min sorgeloos!

MOEG

Te min entoesiasme!

ONTNUGTER

Te min droom!

VASGEBIND

Te min vryheid!

Ek

Is ek

Is ek \_\_\_\_\_?

## Wiskunde

(Krog, 1982)

Elke dag sterf ek 35 minute lank  
Vasgetangens in my bank  
En voor die bord boer  
'n iemand wat my wiskunde voer.

Gevra: Trek lyn AB en vind dan C.

Bewys: Ek trek AB

Ek konstrueer 'n middelloodlyn

Op...verby die sterre

En vind C

Alleen.

Op Phytagoras sit hy kruisbeen

En ween, ween

So hél alleen.



## **Deurmekaar**

(Zoid, 2003, track 4).

Ek het geloop sonder om te

Groet

Ek wil jou bel ek wonder of

Ek moet

Ek weet jy dink ek't jou

Verniel

Ek het jou lief met my hart

En siel

Ek het geloop sonder om te

Groet

En clean breaks is tien-teen-  
een goed

En ek sit hier op die langpad

Soos soveel kere vantevoor

En iewers langs die highway

Het ek my beste pel verloor

Ek ken jou lyf

Ek ken jou taal

Ek ken jou goed

Ek ken jou kaal

Ons het opgestaan

Ons het weer geval

Die herinneringe maak my

Mal

Die fight's verby

Die vuur's geblus

Die storm het bedaar

Sonder woorde is ek baie

Deurmekaar

Ek het geloop sonder om te

Groet

Maar jy's nog altyd een wat

Net praat wanneer hy moet

As ek kon sou ek minder sê

Sou jy dalk beter weet wat ek nodig het, Don

'n Minor chord vir 'n minor

key

Op my sad kitaar

Sonder woorde is ek baie

Deurmekaar

## **Bitterbessie dagbreek**

(Jonker, 1975)

Bitterbessie dagbreek

Bitterbessie son

'n spieël het gebreek

Tussen my en hom

Soek ek na die grootpad

Om daarlangs te draf

Oral draai die paadjies

Van sy woorde af

Dennebos herinnering

Dennebos vergeet

Het ek ook verdwaal

Trap ek in my leed

Papegaai-bont eggo

Kierang kierang my

Totdat ek bedroë

Weer die koggel kry

Eggo is geen antwoord

Antwoord hy alom

Bitterbessie dagbreek

Bitterbessie son

MA

(Krog, 1982)

Ma, ek skryf vir jou 'n gedig

Sonder fênsie leestekens

Sonder woorde wat rym

Sonder bywoorde

Net sommer

'n kaalvoet gedig –

want jy maak my groot

in jou krom klein handjies

jy beitel my met jou swart oë

en spits woorde

jy draai jou leiklipkop

jy lag ne breek my tente op

maar jy offer my elke aand

vir jou Here God.

Jou moesie-oor is my enigste telefoon

Jou huis my enigste bybel

Jou naam my breekwater teen die lewe

Ek is so jammer mamma

Dat ek nie is

Wat ek graag vir jou wil wees nie.

## **Die mislukte fee**

(De Vos & Grobler, 2002)

Eenkeer was daar 'n moederfee.  
En was daar kindertjies? Ja, twee.  
Twee piepfyn feetjie-kindertjies  
Met vlerkies net soos vlindertjies.  
Hul twee was albei mooi en slank,  
Die een was bleek en lelieblank,  
'n liewe kins ('n soete...),  
maar die ander was vol sproete.

Die moeder voel toe erg begaan  
En was die kind met lewertraan,  
Met katjiesdou en hondemelk,  
Sy doop haar in 'n leliekelk,  
Maar help dit haar? O nee, o nee,  
Sy was en bly 'n sproetefee.

Nou kon die moeder niks meer doen,  
Sy gee die kind 'n afskeidsoen:  
Jy het as fee (sag uitgedruk)  
Volledig en totaal misluk.

Gaan na die koning Barrebeit  
En sê vir hom: U majesteit,  
My moeder stuur haar groete.  
Ek is 'n fee met sproete.

Dalk neem die koning jou in diens.  
Dus sê ek liewerster tot siens!

Miskien het hy 'n blink idee  
Vir 'n min of meer mislukte fee.

Die feetjie het toe ver gereis  
Op pad na daardie blink paleis  
En prewel sy die hele tyd:  
O grote Heer en Majesteit,  
My moeder stuur haar groete.  
Ek is 'n fee met sproete.

Maar-toe sy die paleis bespied,  
Begin sy rittel soos 'n riet.  
En toe sy voor die koning staan,  
Vra hy: Waar kom dié kind vandaan?

Skoon wit van senuagtigheid  
Sê sy: O grote Majesteit,  
My moeder stuur haar groete.  
Ek is 'n spreek met foete.  
Die koning sê: Ek't opgelet  
En merk dat jy wél voete het,  
Maar, liewe kindjie, glo my goed:  
Ek het nog nooit 'n spreek ontmoet.

Toe gee hy dadelik bevel;  
Die hele hof kom aangesnel.  
Die koning sê: Dit is 'n spreek,  
Iets heel besonders. Gee haar tee,  
En gee haar koek. En pienk roomys.  
Sy sal bly woon in my paleis.

Toe bly die fee, 'n lang-lang tyd  
In die paleis van Barrebeit  
En nié as kamermeisie, nee!  
Sy is benoem as opperspree.

Sy het 'n pragtige spinet  
En blink pantoffels voor haar bed.  
En al die here van die hof  
Kniel voor die spreetjie in die stof.  
Uit hierdie storie kan jy lees,  
Dat jy as fee misluk mag wees,  
Maar heel geslaag kan wees as spree.

Dit maak mens dankbaar – Ja, terdeë!

## **The road not taken**

*Robert Frost*

(Moffett & Mphahlele, 1994).

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if i should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.



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