

# **JENGA II: Workshop on Psychotherapy and Healing Arts**

Organized by **JENGA** East Africa Psycho-social Network

14-15 September 2015, Tribe Hotel, Nairobi

## **Final Report**

### **I. Introduction and background**

1. The second JENGA Workshop (JENGA II) was held from 14 to 15 September 2015, following the launch of **JENGA: The East Africa Psycho-social Network** at JENGA I in December 2014. Participants were drawn from the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, art therapy, music therapy, dance and movement, drug and alcohol counselors, counselors of children and adolescents, counselors in human settlements, church and spiritual counselors and academia across nine countries: Canada, Germany, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania and the United Kingdom.

2. The objective of the Workshop was to share experiences and good practices in using Expressive Arts in Healing and Psychotherapy, such as drawing, painting, dance/movement/body awareness and dream analysis and to explore the integration of traditional, mainstream and alternative approaches to mental health and psycho-social support at the community level and across the East Africa region.

3. Participant evaluations stressed the desire for a longer (5-day to 1 week) training course with dedicated workshops or modules devoted to each subject, in particular: adolescent and child mental health, expressive arts and dreamwork. Participants also appreciated the venue of the Workshop (Tribe Hotel) and the interactive sessions on drawing and on dance/movement/bodywork. Below are some of the main take-aways from JENGA II.

## II. Main take-aways from presentations and discussions

### A. "But I Can't Draw!"-- Building Foundations for Using Expressive Arts Therapy (Karen Abbs, Clinical Psychologist, Advisor to Centre for Victims of Torture, Ethiopia and United Kingdom)

4. Throughout human history, we have been turning to the arts for healing, expression and transformation. The field of Expressive Arts Therapies, encompassing music, visual art, drama, and writing, are now all seen as integral tools in the therapeutic process and are being validated through research and study. Recent brain research is starting to demonstrate that using the arts in the therapeutic process is healing on a brain level, not just on a psychotherapeutic level. It is an exciting time to be part of the field as the world begins to embrace what have been considered 'non-traditional' methods of healing. For more information on research in art therapy, please see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21579762>.

5. We are all told we can't draw, we can't move, but we are all creative beings. What are the expressive arts? Freud and Jung's work encompassed the original expressive arts. For some people, talking about a feeling or an issue is so difficult, whereas the arts allow us to give expression to our emotion. We can use music, dance and movement, drawing, painting, sculpture, writing, drama theatre, role-playing, acting out our lives in theatre ("Theatre of the Oppressed" for victims of torture), and play is also part of expressive arts. **T**here is the (mis)-conception that art is not *serious*.

6. So how does art help us to heal? (Video: the power of art). Art is empowering, takes our minds off our troubles and makes us feel we can do anything. There is increasing pressure to provide proof that there is a medical (evidence-based) basis for art helping patients. Learning how to evaluate art therapy is part of the field now and researchers are starting to use Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to measure the brain's response to art. We can conjecture that some changes have taken place in the brain. Art was first used for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after combat in WWII, and the military is now spearheading the research into why it works.

7. Researchers are uncovering more and more clinical evidence for the healing power of art. Moreover, there is scientific evidence starting to show that trauma is stored in our bodies and the healing part of our brains. So talk therapy is not necessarily the only or the best way to access and heal trauma. Art is one thing in our toolbox that provides a safe container for the patient or client, rather than forcing them to talk about things that cause them emotional suffering.

**B. The Impact of Substance Abuse and Addiction on Families and Partners (Annika Fleischmann, JENGA Leadership Group, MA Student, Counseling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa).**

8. Addiction can be seen as a “family disease”: When one person is addicted to a substance, the whole family needs support. The family of an addict goes through four stages: In stage one the family is genuinely concerned about the well-being of the sick person. The knowledge about addiction is rather low and the family is not yet aware about the severity of the problem. In the second stage the family has noticed that something is going wrong but they refuse to accept it and deny it while thinking that they can handle the matter by themselves. In stage three, the family adapts to the situation by changing their own behaviors. Family members are preoccupied with the addict’s behavior and start losing themselves. The last stage is the stage of exhaustion. The family realizes that their efforts are fruitless and fear spreads. They hit rock bottom and are now ready to seek support from outside.

9. The family of an addict is imbalanced. As a result, each family member takes over a certain role in the family to gain back balance in the family system. The chief enabler protects the addict and reduces consequences of his or her behavior such as embarrassment, job loss, etc. The hero is a perfectionist. He tries to compensate for the addict’s shortcomings and perform well in everything. The scapegoat on the other hand shows antisocial behavior and bad performance. He intends to distract the attention from the addict to himself. The lost child avoids stress and arguments. It tries not to add any trouble to the already existing problems in the family. The mascot deals with the situation through the use of humor. His job is to crack jokes and distract the family from the problem.

10. Family members of drug users generally suffer under the condition of having an addict in the family. A child will suffer from physical and emotional abuse and

neglect. A spouse will suffer in various ways, namely physical and emotional abuse, being manipulated and lied to, financial problems and others. Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety can occur.

**C. The Fruits of Parent-Child “Thereness” and open Communication about Sexuality (Mtheto Hara, JENGA Leadership Group MA, Counseling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa)**

Main Take Aways:

- The pictures provoke very healthy and insightful debate and discussion
- The participants are free and keenly involved in sharing and exchanging ideas and every participant gets a chance to contribute to the discussion
- The topic brings out personal insights and experiences and some participants express desire to hear from others on how they can improve their communication channels with their own children.
- Participants express overwhelming interest in discussing this topic in more detail in future and possibly even share their own parenting challenges and seek forum with their colleagues on tips on better communication with the children.

11. Further information was made available in the presentations shared with the group and participants have availed themselves of each other in communicating about MHPSS issues following the Workshop.

12. Preparations are underway for JENGA III which take account of the main feedback received by participants in the after-workshop evaluations – namely, that there was a desire for a longer (5-days or 1 week) seminar or training course, providing ample time to explore in depth the use of different expressive arts and in particular dreamwork.

13. On behalf of JENGA, the East Africa Psycho-social Network and BeautifulMind Consultants, Ltd, we are extremely grateful for the chance to have worked together in this innovative and inspiring forum and look forward to the next event.

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