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It is **OCTOBER**.  
It is time to hibernate.  
**It is also time to seed new things.**  
Sandra

## SEEDING NEW THINGS

**Incomplete closure prevents new beginnings!**

Wow! That is quite a thought. Liz White, a psychodramatist and an amazing woman who leads our professional supervision group in Oshawa, introduced me to that thought. I like it. It's helpful. Incomplete closure prevents new beginnings. What does that mean? I think it means that we become **STUCK** if we do not have closure on events in our lives! How do we get **UNSTUCK**? That is a tougher question. How do we get **UNSTUCK**?

**Become comfortable with uncertainty. Face our fears.**

The first step is becoming comfortable with uncertainty. Facing our fears. We need closure on old wounds, old memories and warped thoughts. We must let go of old defenses and stop trying to control our lives in old unproductive ways. We learn how to cope in our early lives when we are just children. Those old defenses are set in old wounds. They are based on hurts, pain and a child's way of trying to manage. They are based on a child's perspective of the world. They are not based on an adult perspective. Pema Chodron in her book, [Comfortable with Uncertainty](#) writes, *Based on a deep fear of being hurt, we erect protective walls made out of strategies, opinions, prejudices, and emotions.* (pg. 3).

**" The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change, the realist adjust the sails." William Arthur Ward**

Pema Chodron writes, "*We move toward turbulence and doubt however we can. We explore the reality and unpredictability of insecurity and pain and we try not to push it away.*" (pg. 1) Jungians call it, "meeting the Shadow." Looking at the past is an important part of healing.

**Once we have created closure, healed old wounds and let go of old defences, we can begin living fully in the present. We can become our full and authentic selves.**

How do we do that?

**New beginnings list.**

- This is what I like.
- This is what I don't like.
- These are the activities that ground me.
- This is who makes me feel fully alive.
- This is who I laugh with, chat excitedly to, feel comfortable and happy with.
- This is what I want more of.
- This is what I am truly interested in.
- This is what I imagine myself doing.
- This is what I truly LONG to do.

**What next?**

- Start small.
- Julia Cameron writes **Finding Water, The Art of Perseverance**, "*Make a list of those who are your "believing mirrors". They reflect back to you your competency and potential. They are on your side and bring to your discussions a sense of optimism and hope. You owe it to yourself to be in regular contact with these individuals.*" Pg. 38
- Set aside your INNER CRITIC
- Set aside your hurt child.
- Set aside your need to get revenge.
- Set aside your need to get answers.
- Set aside your need to have "them" apologize.

**STOP waiting for life to START**

Will I ever heal all of the wounds?

Will I ever get completely UNSTUCK?

The truth? Maybe not.

Will it be easy?

The truth? No.

**Will it be worth it?**  
**YES!!**

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This article is published in  
The Theraplay Institute Newsletter Summer 2011

## **THERAPLAY® IN HAITI: OCTOBER 2010**

**Sandra Webb, Certified Theraplay Therapist, Cobourg,  
ON**

In October 2010, ten months after the devastating earthquake, I was invited to go to Haiti with Mission of T.E.A.R.S. This Toronto based agency does humanitarian work in many countries around the world ([www.missionoftears.ca](http://www.missionoftears.ca)). We arrived in Haiti two days after cholera broke out and left two days before the hurricane arrived to devastate Haiti once again. A colleague and friend, Brian Nichols and I were invited to look at the feasibility of setting up therapeutic programs for girls who had been sexually abused in the tent camps. It was a short trip of only a week that was packed full of new experiences and heartbreaking stories. The plan was for us to return every three months after this exploratory trip. It felt great to know that we would be setting up our plans on this trip and would be able to adjust, expand and develop the programs on future trips.

Diane and Gordon Lewis (director) and Mission of Tears support two projects in Haiti. Our work was primarily with H.I.S. Home for Children ([www.hishomeforchildren.com](http://www.hishomeforchildren.com)), a Crèche for children. The Crèche, run by house parents Chris and Hal Nungster, is home to 80 children. H.I.S. Home was asked by Social Services to begin a separate home for girls who had been sexually abused. There were 9 girls aged 11 to 16 in the girl's home. None of them spoke English. All of them had been traumatized. All but two of them did not have contact with any family. Two of them had been slave children. One 15 year old girl was pregnant. All but two of these girls had been sexually abused in the tent camps after the earthquake on January 10, 2010. H.I.S. Home and the staff of the girl's home wanted some direction about how to help these girls with the trauma and abuse.

Brian and I had no idea what to expect on this trip. We didn't know how traumatized the girls would be; how receptive the girls would be to our presence; whether the girls would be willing or able to talk about their

abuse; whether the staff would be open to our help; what the conditions would be where we would be working. We didn't know what we could expect to accomplish.

We discussed and made tentative plans for the week. We put together our expertise and chose activities that would help us gauge what the girls were capable of doing and what types of programs might be helpful in dealing with the trauma. We were aware that these girls would have other types of trauma besides the sexual abuse. The plan was that we would set up therapeutic programs and instruct the staff on the programs so they could carry on when we weren't there. Brian and I would liason with the staff and assess the programs on our follow-up trips. We planned a combination of activities in Theraplay, Play Therapy, Art Therapy and Sandtray-Worldplay. We took along a great deal of art supplies and a Sandtray-Worldplay set up of sand, a sandtray and images.

The staff at the girl's home included a housemother, a male night watchman/guard and a day woman. All of the staff lived in the tent camps. Their own stories included losing a child during the earthquake, losing their homes, a mother-in-law losing a leg and one of the woman being buried in the kitchen for a day. So the staff as well as the girls in the home were traumatized.

We did not have as much time at the girl's home as we had planned or hoped for. The daily needs the staff were required to take care of often came before or instead of our plans. We were also asked to participate in other meetings and activities that took time away from our planned work. In addition, we needed a translator for everything. There were two young men who could translate for us but they had multiple roles. One day one of our translators had to leave to pick up blood for a transfusion that a baby required. Another day, our translator was late because they had to get groceries before the stores closed for a holiday.

On this trip to Haiti, we were working at assessment and group cohesion. Our goals were:

1. Getting to know the girls.
2. Assessing their ability to connect, participate and be present.
3. Assessing the extent of their trauma.
4. Assessing the intellectual and psychological abilities of the girls.
5. Assessing the ability of the girls to talk about their trauma.
6. Assessing the ability of the girls to participate in a group or individual therapy.
7. Assessing the self esteem and confidence level of

the girls.

8. Assessing the ability of the girls to trust in others.
9. Deciding what type of programs would be appropriate and helpful.
10. Gauging the ability of the staff to support the programs.

We planned to meet with the staff on their own, with the staff and girls as a group and then to meet with the girls individually, in pairs or small groups. Initially, we chose a number of activities (Theraplay®, Art and Sociometry) that would help the girls relax, have fun and get to know us. In our individual sessions, Brian planned to use art activities. I planned to use Sandtray-Worldplay and Theraplay®.

These were our proposed Theraplay activities. We weren't able to use all of them.

1. Special hello /Special goodbye/ Special handshakes
2. Bean bag off the head
3. Cotton ball games
4. Mirror imaging
5. Name with gestures
6. Say the person's name and throw the ball to that person
7. Balloon between two bodies
8. Drawing around hands, feet or bodies
9. Eye signals
10. Hand stacking
11. Sticky nos
12. Lotion /powder prints
13. Balloon games
14. Elephant kiss
15. Butterfly kiss

The Special Hellos and Goodbyes were great. The girls laughed and we all connected. They enjoyed sharing their own special creations. The group activities with names were helpful to us in getting to know the girls. The girls enjoyed making up gestures with their names. These activities helped the girls develop as a group, have fun, and reduce their anxiety. The bean bag and cotton ball games allowed us to be playful together and connect. The lotion and powdering allowed me to do some nurturing with the girls. The girls all loved the elephant and butterfly kisses. There was a lot of laughter and delight with them. The activities also provided some structure so that the girls understood that there was an organization to our activities. The girls liked the challenges in the activities. They enjoyed showing me what they could do and really liked when I followed or imitated them.

What we found out during our time in Haiti

1. The girls were willing to be a part of a group.
2. The girls were cooperative. They welcomed us each day and were keen to see what we had planned.
3. They interacted well and comfortably with each other.
4. The staff was interested in what we were doing and willing to participate.
5. The staff was good with the girls. The girls were comfortable with the staff
6. Theraplay and group activities helped integrate the girls and their caretakers.
7. Theraplay crossed the boundaries that language created.
8. Theraplay created laughter and cohesiveness.
9. Theraplay gave us a unique way of communicating and developing a relationship with the girls.
10. Some of the girls were developmentally or mentally challenged
11. Most of the girls had a very narrow belief about creativity and spontaneity. They were awkward with being silly at times.
12. The language barrier added extra challenges (not unexpected but difficult) but some activities do not require translations and are fabulous in these situations.
13. Through Sandtray-Worldplay activities and a People in My World activity I was able to help the girls tell their stories.
14. There wasn't time to do all that we had planned.
15. There wasn't time to see all of the girls individually.

At the end of the week, Brian and I discussed our observations of the girls and the staff with Chris and Hal Nungster and Gordon and Diane Lewis. We concluded that the girls are safe and well cared for in this home. Even though our original plan had been to set up therapeutic programs and return to support the staff in implementing the programs, we decided that the staff didn't have the experience or resources to follow through with the programs between our visits. We concluded that at this point, Haitian energy is focused on providing the basic necessities of food, shelter and safety.

I was honored to go to Haiti. It was exciting to be able to use some of the skills that I have gathered over the years in a constructive role in a traumatized country. I was thrilled to feel that I had something to contribute to the children of Haiti. It is undecided at the moment whether we will return to Haiti. I hope so. One of my concerns is that we can retraumatize children when we ask them to tell their stories over and over without any

follow up. We introduce them to the possibility of finding some relief to the trauma, some connection to people who want to help and then we leave. We open the wounds and then we disappear. We understand that children in our culture become less likely to attach and create healthy relationships when they are traumatized and when they move a lot. If we go to countries that have experienced abuse, trauma and loss, as therapists we have to be clear about our role and our intentions. We have to be respectful of the people we are there to treat. If I return to Haiti I will adjust my therapeutic plan according to the time allotted and the plans to return in the future. I would use Sandtray-Worldplay again but probably in a less directive manner. I would let the girls take the lead about what they wanted to express, divulge or explore in the sandtray. I would not hesitate to use Theraplay® if I return to Haiti. Theraplay allows us to provide therapeutic support without doing therapy that could be retraumatizing. It is an excellent tool. These are benefits that I believe Theraplay could provide for the children in Haiti who were sexually abused in the tent camps where they lived after the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in January 2010.

1. Create cohesion in the group.
2. Improve self- esteem for these traumatized girls.
3. Improve and enhance the ability of these girls to play.
4. Create group awareness and group connectivity.
5. Teach the girls to engage with each other and their peers.
6. Help the girls to relate to their caregivers.
7. Help the girls to see their caretakers as people in authority who are caring, helpful and nurturing.
8. Help the girls to experience their caretakers using structure and challenge.
9. Theraplay would include activities that use healthy touch.
10. Theraplay would help remind the girls that adults provide comfort and stability.
11. Theraplay is nonthreatening.
12. Theraplay is therapeutic without being intrusive.
13. Theraplay would create a window of opportunity through safety, fun and trust after which the girls may be ready for directive therapy about their abuse and trauma.

For more information: [www.sandrawebbcounseling.com](http://www.sandrawebbcounseling.com).

**BUILDING THE BONDS OF**

## **ATTACHMENT DVD**

with Daniel A. Hughes  
produced by Sandra Webb

**Do you have a child who exhibits these symptoms?**

**Do you work with children like this?**

**If you answered yes or maybe, this DVD will help you to understand your child. The DVD will give you new tools to help you survive and begin to thrive. You and your child can live a happier and more productive life.**

**Therapists and educators can learn how to understand these children and gather new tools to help the families. As a therapist or a teacher, you can feel less frustrated, less confused, more productive and breathe easier because there is more harmony and success in your therapy practice or your classroom.**

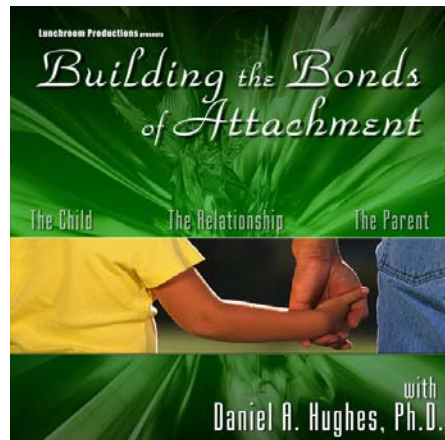
- Superficially engaging and "charming"
- Indiscriminately friendly
- Lack of affection
- Little eye contact
- Persistent nonsense questions and incessant chatter
- Inappropriately demanding and clingy
- Lying about the obvious
- Stealing
- Destructive behaviour
- Abnormal eating patterns
- No impulse control
- Lags in learning
- Abnormal speech patterns
- Poor peer relationships
- Lack of cause and effect
- Lack of conscience
- Cruelty to animals
- Preoccupation with fire

**Order the Building the Bonds of Attachment DVD at**

**[www.sandrawebbcounselling.com](http://www.sandrawebbcounselling.com)**

**A companion CD is also available.**

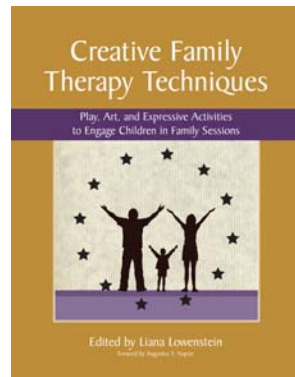
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**Creative Family Therapy Techniques**  
edited by Liana Lowenstein (2010 Champion  
Press)

[www.lianalowenstein.com](http://www.lianalowenstein.com)



**Sandra Webb is one of the contributors  
(Pg. 52 - My Life in the Sandtray)**

**Sign up for the Creating Peace Finding Joy  
Workshop and create more joy and peace for  
yourself.**

**Sincerely,**

**Sandra Webb  
Sandra Webb Counselling**