

Transforming Behavior

Training Parents
& Kids Together

by

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Aurora

with invited contributors

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MaPS Progress Note Templates: Intensive Outpatient Psychiatry (IOP) Session
CAT Progress Note Templates: Intensive Outpatient Psychiatry (IOP) Session

About the Author
About the Contributors
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About the Author



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Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) Treatment Protocol

with Tony Edelblute and Katherine Reed

INTRODUCTION

The basic curricula for the Parenting Approaches for Challenging Kids (PACK) and Mastery of Psychosocial Skills (MaPS) programs intentionally were designed to be user-friendly, broadly applicable, and potentially deployable to nonclinical or nonspecialty settings such as school, primary care, or other community sites. However, the PACK and MaPS intensive outpatient psychiatry (IOP) program at The Children's Hospital Colorado was delivered via a multidisciplinary team of clinical, pediatric, and mental health providers including licensed, masters-level creative arts therapists. The third weekly session of IOP employed the mediums of art and music to augment the parent and psychosocial skills training that occurred in the earlier two weekly sessions. Modules 1–10 of the Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) IOP sessions were evolved to parallel and complement PACK and MaPS Modules 1–10, just as PACK Modules 1–10 were designed to correspond to MaPS Modules 1–10.

The CAT component of IOP provided a forum for nonverbal exploration and expression of feelings and family relationship dynamics. Youth and families who were particularly psychologically defensive or uncomfortable with linguistic expression especially benefitted from this less direct creative arts intervention. According to Malchiodi, “the art task offers families a lens to observe themselves as though they were outside their system” (1994, p. 35). Art and music can be used to help a family more fully witness their own (and others') situations by reducing the associated emotional charge, which enhances the potential for change. The art and music therapy interventions characterized in the CAT modules were facilitated in therapy studios equipped with a wide range of art and music supplies. Every effort was extended to standardize this aspect of the program and describe it in the CAT modules as explicitly as possible for the sake of enabling program dissemination; however, because art and music are inherently personal, nonverbal forms of expression, this mode of therapy can never be fully predetermined or wholly represented linguistically.

Each CAT IOP session began with a review of the week's themes and an introduction or reminder about the format and expectations for creative arts therapy. The CAT sessions were presented to families as a form of therapy that made use of materials and instruments to facilitate the expression of thoughts, feelings, and ideas; families were informed that they required no previous artistic or musical skill or experience. Initially, check-ins began with all parents, children, and siblings assembled together in one large circle. Each individual was asked to share his or her name

and primary goal for IOP and provide an update on his or her progress toward that goal. If it was the family's first session of the CAT component of IOP, the family members were asked to recognize a strength embodied by the child for whom they were seeking treatment.

During the creative arts intervention, the sounds, behaviors, and art making became vehicles for communication and self-expression. When metaphors were identified during the production or description of artworks or musical interactions, they were used to guide therapeutic conversations. For instance, if a child depicted a family of owls in his or her artwork, the owl could become the focus of discussion and a tool for understanding intrapsychic or interpersonal processes. CAT processes provided "in-the-moment" opportunities to enhance awareness of behavioral and relational patterns, whether via metaphoric illustrations or direct reflections regarding communication styles. For example, a mother's complaint that she "didn't feel heard" was made tangible and concrete during a musical dialogue in which group members reflected that her instrument was barely audible within the family's musical play. Creative images and musical dialogues propelled families to contemplate, formulate, and rehearse novel and improved communication strategies. Art and music often allowed individuals to gain access to deeper, nonverbal emotions and dynamics that had not yet been expressed verbally or even surfaced consciously. The creative arts therapy process served to elucidate unknown or poorly understood feelings and family dynamics, promoting fresh perspectives, growth, and change in individuals and families (Dvorkin, 1998; Malchiodi, 1994).

Occasionally, a child or family member in a CAT IOP session simply could not or would not fathom or entertain metaphoric formulations. Such instances generally involved youth or adults who were known to have features of an autism spectrum disorder, low intellectual potential, or high levels of psychological defensiveness and cognitive rigidity. In these cases, the therapists directed attention toward their current behaviors, facilitating discussion regarding potential implications of those behaviors outside of the session. Regardless of a participant's developmental level, CAT served to deepen awareness of nonverbal communication patterns.

The interventions used in the CAT IOP sessions were designed to be facilitated by master's-level creative arts therapists. Art and music can be powerful tools, capable of triggering intense emotional reactions. Creative arts therapists are trained to navigate complex family dynamics within the context of the creative process. Many settings do not have creative arts therapists available; in these cases, a licensed mental health professional may augment traditional therapy approaches using the creative arts to the degree to which they are qualified as defined by their scope of practice.

MODULE 1: Introduction to Musical Relating

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 1: Parenting Goals, Resiliency, and Parenting Styles
- MaPS MODULE 1: Introducing Yourself and Starting a Conversation

Goals of CAT Module 1: To foster self-expression, promote listening skills, practice reflective listening or mirroring, and enhance appreciation of the nonverbal aspects of effective communication. This music therapy session's primary aim is to introduce families to musical play as a way of fostering awareness of the building blocks of effective communication—self-expression, listening, and mirroring. These skills are independent of the verbal and semantic content of any given communication, which is often a novel concept for many parents and children.

Materials Needed: Enough percussion instruments to allow each group member to choose his or her own instrument (e.g., floor toms with mallets, djembes, hand drums, tambourines, shakers, xylophones, “sound effect” instruments [e.g., ocean drum, thunder tube])

DIRECTIVE 1: Mirroring

Once introductions and check-ins are complete, ask each group member to choose an instrument. Introduce the idea that any communication involves at least two people: the person expressing him- or herself and the person listening or receiving the other’s expression. Ask an adjacent group member to go first and to play whatever he or she wants to play on his or her instrument, however he or she would like to play it (within the general guidelines that no instrument or any individual’s ears may be under threat of harm). Explain that you will be watching and listening to the player and will reflect, as best you can, what the person is playing *while he or she is playing it*. The emphasis in this directive is on in-the-moment tracking of the other person rather than hearing a chunk of information that is later repeated back. This process facilitates a real time-sensory tracking of the other person and minimizes the degree to which the listener conceptualizes and reframes the other’s self-expression through his or her own perceptual filter.

Once you have modeled the mirroring, the person who first expressed him- or herself musically mirrors the next person in the circle. Mirroring progresses in pairs around the circle in this way, with each person first playing however they like, then taking the role of mirroring the next person in the circle. This continues until each group member has been both an expresser and a listener. Ask the group to share what they noticed, including whether they preferred one role—expressing or mirroring—better than the other. Invite individuals to comment on what it feels like to play each of the roles and whether they experienced new or familiar feelings. In addition, cue the families to identify factors that promote successful mirroring, such as steady visual contact and sustained attention while listening, or predictable rhythmic play when expressing. Encourage group members to identify verbal interactions during which such skills may be actively applied.

DIRECTIVE 2: Entrained Rhythmic Play

This directive expands on the mirroring exercise by noting that, in general, individuals do not repeat back exactly what is said to them, even when they are listening well. Draw comparisons to a rock band or orchestra in which each player plays something different than the others in the group yet contributes positively to the overall sound.

Begin this exercise by establishing a simple rhythm on your instrument. Because there is no expectation that the group members have had any prior musical experience or training, the rhythm should include an explicitly stated pulse. Ask the next person to join in rhythmically without necessarily imitating, although imitation may be encouraged initially if the group member expresses distress or confusion about his or her role. Cue the next person in the circle, then the next, to join in until there are four people playing together. Once four people are playing, ask another group member to join in but ask the person who first started playing to drop out so that a four-person grouping is consistently maintained. Going around the circle in this way, “pass” the rhythm all the way around the circle. Allow time after each addition and drop-off for the rhythm to restabilize before the next add and drop is cued.

Following this directive, guide group members to reflect and comment on factors that increased group cohesion, inviting comparisons to verbal interactions. In instances during which the rhythm “fell apart,” cue the group members to speculate on factors that might have improved the interaction rather than blaming individuals for the breakdown. Playing in rhythm typically is a fun, intrinsically motivating activity that builds family and group cohesion. Encourage and reflect positive affect and interactions throughout the intervention.

MODULE 2: Resiliency Boxes

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 2: Factors Underlying Misbehavior
- MaPS MODULE 2: Being a Good Listener and Giving and Receiving Compliments

Goals of CAT Module 2: To recognize a child's strengths, create a special container to hold them, practice listening, and rehearse giving and receiving compliments. This CAT intervention is intended to highlight and reinforce positive qualities or skills as well as promote positive change, personal growth, and mastery of communication skills. This module includes separate activities for the parents and the children, initially, followed by a joining together at the end of the session.

Materials Needed: Small cardboard boxes in a variety of shapes; acrylic gloss medium; paintbrushes; colored tissue paper, stickers, and sequins with which to decorate boxes; small strips of colored paper; thin permanent markers; school glue; scissors; small glass rocks

DIRECTIVE 1: Coping Boxes

After check-in, present children with a choice of several different shapes of small cardboard boxes (e.g., hearts, stars, squares, circles). Lead the children to a separate table, and provide them with a demonstration of decoupage. This art process uses acrylic gloss medium as both the adhesive and varnish for small torn pieces of colored tissue paper and other small paper pieces. Stickers and sequins also may be used in limited amounts to create original collage designs. Most children relish the opportunity to create their own special box. The small, intricate nature of these art supplies fosters concentration, focus, and development of fine motor skills and individual expression. Have the children sit together with their peers and siblings and create their own individual boxes. Encourage the children to share supplies, ideas, and support with each other. In addition, guide them to use their listening skills represented by the *D.R.R.A.M.P.P.* mnemonic.

At another table, instruct the parents to use markers on the small colored paper strips to write specific compliments, recognize strengths, and record positive messages for their children. Encourage the parents to elucidate specific positive aspects of their child's temperament, reminding them about the use of labels reviewed in their skills sessions. For example, parents sometimes struggle to shift their perception of their child's behavior from "demanding" or "stubborn" to more positive labels such as "assertive," "tenacious," or "has strong opinions." Guide the parents, if necessary, to explore alternative ways of viewing their children. Offer parents specific examples of positive qualities or personality traits such as "you always think of others' needs" or "you are talented with your hands" that might enhance the child's awareness of the traits he or she possesses and may want to further develop. Other messages written on the scraps might reference specific coping skills that are effective for particular children, such as "remember to breathe deeply when feeling frustrated" or "always take space when you need it." Have parents create separate compliment strips for each child, including the siblings of the child for whom the family is seeking treatment. Have the parents fold their strips creatively to allow them to fit inside the small boxes. Cue parents to reframe perceptions regarding their children to facilitate the replacement of derogatory labels with empathic understanding. This intervention fuels a cycle of positive affirmation, planting seeds of confidence, resilience, and self-esteem in the child.

The parents also may create small glass rocks containing special words or phrases. Have the parents trace their rocks onto colored paper, cut out the shape, and write a word or phrase (e.g., "breathe," "move carefully") on the paper to serve as a behavioral cue or reminder to the child. The small paper may be attached to the flat side of the rock with a couple drops of basic school glue so

that the word appears magnified through the rock. The children may elect to carry their rocks in their pockets throughout the day to serve as tangible reminders.

Throughout the session, structure the time expectations for both parents and children with verbal cues—45 minutes to create art, a 15-minute reminder, and a 5-minute countdown to cleanup. Guide parents and children to clean their areas so that the whole group may once again gather at the large, clean table. Once settled, have the parents give their children their collection of small folded papers and rocks. Ask each child to read aloud the compliments and messages, one by one, to the larger group. In this way, each child may be recognized publicly for his or her strengths, positive attributes, and helpful coping skills. After sharing all (or some, depending on group size and time) of the messages aloud, ask the children to consider how they might use their boxes and where they might keep them. Encourage the children to protect their boxes in a safe place so they can reference the positive messages contained within during times of distress or confusion. This concept encourages the skill of self-care, especially for children whose parents may not always be available. Encourage families to create similar boxes for the parents at home. In this way, role modeling of positive recognition may foster self-esteem, trust, and resiliency in all family members.

MODULE 3: Body Tracings for Emotion Identification

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 3: Aversive Behavior Cycles: The 7 Ps of Promoting Positive Behavior
- MaPS MODULE 3: Overview of Anger

Goals of CAT Module 3: To facilitate the development of emotion identification and monitoring skills, enhance awareness of physical manifestations of emotions, and foster collaboration between family members

Materials Needed: Large butcher paper taped onto walls, nontoxic markers, oil pastels, visible list of emotion words

DIRECTIVE 1: Body Tracings

Introduce this CAT intervention to families as an opportunity for the child to serve as the instructor. This exercise involves each family collaborating to create artwork followed by a whole-group discussion to process the products and check out.

Once introductions and check-ins have been done, ask the child to stand against the butcher paper while his or her parent traces the outline of the child's body onto the butcher paper with marker. Then instruct the child to "teach" his or her parents how to illustrate the drawing with a goal of depicting at least five different emotions the child experiences in specific parts of his or her body. Encourage participants to use lines, shapes, and colors to depict these emotions rather than pictures or words. These abstract designs enable the parents to more accurately reflect the nature and intensity of the child's emotions. Suggest to families that they draw a key in one corner of the butcher paper and label the emotions by color. Often, children describe a pattern in which an emotion initially experienced in one body area travels to other areas, changing or growing as it moves. For instance, a child may instruct a parent to draw a red wavy line in the forehead representing confusion, which travels down through the neck, shoulders, and arms, growing in intensity, until it reaches a state of explosion in the hands.

Once a minimum of five emotions have been depicted in the body tracing, ask the children to illustrate triggers outside the body that correlate to each emotion. For example, if they had depicted

love in red in their heart area, they could draw an image outside the body representing the experience that helped foster that love feeling. In this way, children can begin to identify external triggers that influence their emotions while simultaneously experiencing the visceral, life-size version of their own bodies. Encourage parents to listen and follow their child's instructions accordingly. This intervention is designed to facilitate a sense of mastery for youth, enhancing their awareness of their own experiences as well as educating themselves and their families about their emotions. Encourage parents to attend to all of their child's emotions, recognize the internal experiences associated with those emotions, and appreciate the external precipitants that fuel them.

Once the artwork has been completed, invite participants to rearrange their seating so that everyone may view the finished body tracings together. Ask each child to present his or her artwork to the larger group and explain his or her image verbally. Some children may request help from their parents in describing the artwork. Facilitate a discussion among the larger group for each child, posing specific questions to increase awareness of the child's physical experiences of emotions and external triggers. Although anger typically is the emotion upon which the children focus most, be sure to validate and normalize *all* emotions during this group discussion. Because the artwork and discussion target emotional identification and not behavior, make sure children feel safe and validated regardless of the intensity of their emotions. Remind parents of the 7 *Ps* as they navigate through this process.

An alternate version of this exercise, which is comparable therapeutically, can be performed at the table with small outlines of the body printed on 8½" × 11" paper. In this option, all family members illustrate their own bodies with a focus on anger and its intensity, again using lines, shapes, and colors to illustrate where in their bodies they feel anger. Once the family's body illustrations are complete, they can be hung on the wall as a group to foster awareness for all family members of the various manifestations of anger in each individual. Comparisons can be made with the artwork itself, as group members can then translate the metaphors represented with actual comparisons of each family member's temperament. Avoid interpreting artwork for the families and focus instead on cueing the artists to formulate their own insights using specific questions to invite the exploration and explanation of aspects of their own drawings. This variation promotes awareness of the family dynamics revolving around the singular emotion of anger. It also fosters communication about each individual's need to be understood and the differences in emotional experiences between family members.

MODULE 4: Name That Mood and Musical Emotion Sculpt

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 4: Parental Empathy: Part 1
- MaPS MODULE 4: Triggers, Cooling Down, and Coping Skills

Goals of CAT Module 4: To build a feelings vocabulary and to practice empathy formulas

Materials Needed: List of emotions, posted so that it is visible to the entire group; a bell; a variety of percussion instruments representing a wide palette of sounds (e.g., floor toms with mallets, djembes, hand drums, tambourines, shakers, xylophones, "sound effect" instruments [e.g., ocean drum, thunder tube])

DIRECTIVE 1: Name That Mood Game

This intervention was designed to facilitate the practice of expressing and recognizing mood states in oneself and others. The nonverbal modeling of mood states is practiced effectively within a guessing-game context, which tends to elicit enthusiastic participation, especially from the children. This game allows the group to hear emotions being expressed musically while facilitating a playful environment that tends to defuse negative reactivity from other family members. The words or names used to identify emotions are connected not only to subjective sensations but also to the musical behavioral cues of force, speed, and rhythmic organization.

During the introductions preceding this intervention, prompt participants to name two feelings that they are experiencing at that moment. This cues the group members to associate the moods that they are feeling with verbal descriptors for the moods. Then, as the game is introduced, refer back to the check-in with prompting questions such as, “Did you notice how people’s moods seemed to match the way they played?” or, “Did you notice that the same instrument sounded a little different depending on who played it?”

Tell group members that their job is to silently choose an emotion word from the list provided and then decide which instrument they feel could best portray that emotion. Advise group members to take turns portraying their chosen word on their chosen instrument while the rest of the group guesses which emotion they are expressing. Depending on the level of arousal and enthusiasm in the group as well as group size, either allow group members to state their guesses spontaneously, out loud, or ask them to raise their hands before guessing.

Following the game, encourage the group members to verbally connect force, speed, and/or rhythmic cues with the named emotion. A prompting question might be, “How did you know Johnny was portraying (anger, excitement, or sadness)?” It is not uncommon for a group to struggle to identify correctly the name of an emotion being musically represented; this can happen to *any member* of the group, including the facilitator, and should not be framed as a failure to communicate on the part of the player. Use these moments as opportunities to explore the gap between one’s intentions to communicate and others’ perceptions. Encourage the group member playing to change the way he or she is playing based on the feedback received. The player also may give hints based on which guesses are closest in meaning to the intended word. It is never helpful to allow group members to guess by reading down the list, and that behavior should be discouraged.

DIRECTIVE 2: Musical Emotion Sculpts

The second directive for CAT Module 4 is intended to foster the identification and illustration of relevant feeling states actively experienced by individual children. Making a comparison to the music industry’s rating of the country’s “top hits” in any given week, ask the children to name between three and five of their “top emotions.” These may be the emotions they experience most often or ones with which they most closely identify. If a child names only positive emotions, provide him or her with a gentle reminder that the group is available to help with difficult emotions; then cue him or her to add at least one emotion that he or she has found troublesome. Advise the child to name these emotions aloud, not secretly as in the last directive.

Ask the child to assign instruments to each emotion and give the instruments to other group members to play with the goal of representing the emotions. Clarify that group members with instruments are going to be asked to play their assigned emotions at the same time. The child’s job is to direct each player until he or she succeeds in accurately expressing the emotion he or she was assigned as experienced by the child. Once all of the instruments (and emotions) are played to the child’s satisfaction, the child is asked to nod to the facilitator, who then cues the players to stop. A bell may be used to start and stop each round of play.

In the discussion that follows this activity, invite the group members to comment on what they heard, with the primary question being, “What do you think it felt like to be (child’s name)?”

Encourage general comments about overall tone and feeling as well as more specific observations pertaining to which moods were most prominent or which moods related sonically or rhythmically to other moods. Such cueing often engenders discussions regarding the relationship of anger to other emotions, for example, or creates opportunities to reinforce positive emotions in the child. Encourage parents to communicate their observations about their child to their child using the empathy formula to reflect their impressions regarding both positive as well as more challenging emotions.

MODULE 5: Why Do They Like That Music?

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 5: Parental Empathy: Part 2
- MaPS MODULE 5: Feelings, Being a Good Listener, and Empathy

Goals of CAT Module 5: To continue building and using an emotional vocabulary and to practice using empathy formulas

Materials Needed: Computer with Internet connection, external audio speakers

The concept underlying this intervention is very simple and the directive tends to generate a high level of participation and emotional investment among the group. Before the session, set up the computer to play audio with the browser window opened to a music video sharing site. Web sites such as <http://www.youtube.com> include nearly any song a group member might request and, thus, make it unnecessary for the facilitator to maintain an impossibly large collection of music. When available, choose videos that display the song lyrics because music video images often distract from the interpersonal focus of the intervention.

Inform the group that both parents and children will have an opportunity to choose a song for the group to listen to. Advise family members that once the song has been played, they will be asked to make empathic statements to relate their hypotheses regarding why the person who chose the song liked that song. Be sure to establish expectations and set limits regarding the song content's appropriateness for group listening; occasionally a child will seize this opportunity to deliberately provoke his or her parents. In such instances, make an empathic statement to the child such as, "It seems as though you may have chosen this song to make your parents squirm." This example may be used to highlight and generate discussion regarding a general dynamic between the child and parents if it is central to the family's stated goals for the program. Alternately, you may redirect the child to choose a song that represents his or her own personal preferences rather than one representing a relational dynamic.

The role of the therapist in modeling empathic communication is of pivotal importance in this intervention. In one session we ran, one of the fathers in the group provided an excellent example of the often unpredictable direction this intervention may take. After the father chose a pop-rock song with no particular lyrical significance, his son reflected that the father made the selection simply because he found the song fun. This led to a conversation regarding how the father, on the family's relatively long drive to attend the program, routinely turned up the volume of this particular song. The group leader asked the father, "Your son says you like it because it's fun. Is that accurate?" The father affirmed that this observation was accurate, then suddenly became tearful, stating, "It's important to have fun, because everything has felt so hard lately." The therapist cued

the son to make an empathic statement about what was happening in that moment, providing a potent opportunity to practice empathy skills in the face of real and intense emotions.

Selecting and listening to music can be cathartic and is a natural way of validating one's own emotions and experiences. Youth often feel invalidated and devalued when confronted by a parent's expression of confusion and dismay in response to their choice of music, especially in reference to genres such as heavy metal or hard rock. In accordance with the principle that "validation does not equal agreement," the parent can practice validating the child's musical preferences despite personally experiencing the musical stimulus itself as aversive. Conversely, the child can be cued to metaphorically step outside his or her own likes and dislikes to identify language to describe the values embraced by his or her parents.

Music and song preferences are a highly personal form of expression as evidenced by the sheer amount and variety of musical choices available to the listening public. Song listening tends to evoke a combination of affective states; specific, time-limited memories; and a sense of one's unique identity within his or her own social contexts. As such, the opportunities for empathic reflection upon an individual's song choices are vast. The role of the therapist is to direct the empathic statements as well as the discussions in general with the intention of addressing areas of interpersonal challenges and bolstering communication patterns within a family.

MODULE 6: Family Building with Grab Bag

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 6: Problem Solving Together
- MaPS MODULE 6: Problem Solving, Hot Headed and Cool Headed, and *D.I.R.T.*

Goal of CAT Module 6: To practice and facilitate deeper understanding of *D.I.R.T.* problem-solving skills and to foster collaboration and achievement of collective family goals

Materials Needed: Small paper bags, each containing the same collection of craft supplies (one bag per family): pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, beads, foam shapes, buttons, small wood pieces, or any other readily available craft supplies; school glue; scissors; large piece of cardboard

This CAT intervention is designed to foster a spirit of collaboration and to facilitate problem solving within families via the provision of an achievable goal. The exercise requires that individual families work collaboratively to produce artwork and then join the larger group to process the activity.

During the check-in, provide the group with a reminder of the *D.I.R.T.* model of problem solving and introduce the project. Provide each family with a bag of art supplies to use in the creation of a group artwork. Creative freedom is important because it fosters the sense of flexibility and tolerance conducive to group problem solving. To begin, describe the *D.I.R.T.* problem-solving model, which should be posted on the wall. To recap from the PACK and MaPS modules, *D* stands for *define the problem*, *I* stands for *identify possible solutions*, *R* stands for *reflect on possible solutions*, and *T* stands for *try it out*. The problem, inherent in the exercise to follow, should be presented as a challenge to families. The directive is for each family to create any kind of environment (e.g., a building, a playground, a farm, a beach scene, an amusement park) using as many supplies as possible from their bag. Allow 45 minutes for the families to navigate through the process of *identifying* possible solutions, *reflecting* on them, and *trying* some out.

Encourage parents to bear in mind the 5 *Ds* of problem solving as they negotiate potential strategies with their children regarding the project. Parents tend to readily revert to habitual communication patterns characterized by high levels of direction even when approaching the creative problem at hand. Likewise, children prone to displaying rigid and controlling demeanors are likely to assume control of the decision-making process for the family right away. Encourage parents to refrain from displaying negative emotional reactions and engaging in counterproductive power struggles and instead offer cool-headed responses. Ideally, families should strive to ensure that all members provide input and contribute to the project in a meaningful way; however, this goal often is easier said than done. Derailment sometimes may result from the frustration built up by ineffective communication styles. If such a pattern of exhaustion or exasperation is noted within a family, cue the parent or child to take a brief time-out. Because successful goal completion is the primary objective for the exercise, encourage families to resume the problem-solving process after cool-headedness had been restored. It might be helpful to role-model creative problem solving for parents by offering potential collaborative solutions when families appear stumped either with decision making or the handling of art materials; however, at the same time, be mindful to allow sufficient room for families to solve their own problems, and step in only when hostility or frustration escalate to the point of impeding progress.

The materials incorporated in this intervention should be developmentally appropriate and conducive to engendering a sense of mastery among youth. In our experience with this module, children typically excel over their parents in gaining access to their imaginations; the parents or other adults often have not “played” in such a way for years. Children often exude high levels of energy and excitement regarding the project and tend to focus primarily on task completion, whereas the parents’ goals often diverge, focusing primarily on reliably adhering to the *D.I.R.T.* steps. Because child and parent goals are often disparate, encourage parents to attune to their child and align with them using the empathy formula, the 5 *Ds*, and *D.I.R.T.*

Once the materials have been cleaned up, place the finished projects on a large table while the whole group gathers together again. Have each family present their project with specific mention of the individual and collaborative efforts of each child. The success of completing this task often is exceptionally gratifying for many parents, probably because of the inherent metaphoric implications. Parents or children often attest during checkout that “This was the first successful project we’ve completed in years” or, “I can’t remember the last time we built something together.” Because the ultimate goal is so achievable, success is nearly guaranteed. Occasionally, a problem may arise during checkout if children—especially those who are sensitive and self-critical—compare their final projects with those of the other children. Address such incidents by refocusing discussion on the creative and unique contributions of each child, serving as a role model for parents. Closing discussion should include parent identification and exploration of noted communication styles, referencing those that are common and typical as well as those that are novel and more successful. Verbal acknowledgement of family members for successful use of tools such as *D.I.R.T.*, the 5 *Ds*, and cool-headed responses should be explicitly provided whenever possible.

MODULE 7: Musical Conflict Resolution

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 7: Behavioral Contracts: Steps for Making Up—O.A.M.
- MaPS MODULE 7: Conflict Resolution, Steps for Making Up, and Behavioral Contracts

Goals of CAT Module 7: To develop mastery of effective communication skills and to practice non-verbal aspects of conflict resolution

Materials Needed: A bell, a variety of percussion instruments representing a wide palette of sounds (e.g., floor toms with mallets, djembes, hand drums, tambourines, shakers, xylophones, “sound effect” instruments [e.g., ocean drum, thunder tube])

This directive builds upon interventions described in CAT Modules 1 and 4, though families who have not yet completed those modules may still perform the directive effectively. Following check-in, invite each family to identify a recent conflict they have experienced that they are comfortable sharing and targeting for intervention. For the sake of simplicity, ask the family to choose an interaction that can be represented with just two people. If two parents were present for the conflict, have the family choose one parent to model the interaction with the child or, if time allows, each parent may take a turn. Rotate around the room to provide guidance, if needed, assisting each family to effectively designate a recent problematic interaction in need of a resolution (the *D* of *D.I.R.T.*).

Once each of the families has agreed on a scenario, instruct them to work together to represent the interaction musically. If families need assistance with this task, the music therapist may guide the decision making by asking prompting questions about each person’s voice in the conversation. Inquiries about how loud each person’s voice was, what role each person saw him- or herself playing in the interaction, and so forth will help guide the family member’s choices. For example, the largest drum might be chosen by the family member who was the loudest and most assertive, whereas a xylophone, with its many note choices, might be assigned to someone who was seen as more accommodating. These examples are illustrative only. Do not prescribe who should play which instrument; rather, guide the decision-making process by punctuating the family dialogue with clarifying questions.

Have each family take a turn musically demonstrating their conflict to the larger group. Ask group members who are not playing to listen to the interaction carefully so that they can provide empathic reflection and suggestions for improving the interaction. Cue the family that goes first to assemble their instrument choices and direct them to verbally describe to the group the interaction they are modeling prior to modeling it musically. Musical play is intended to be nonverbal; therefore, remind players not to talk while they are playing. Cue the start and stop of the musical dialogue via the ring of a bell. Ring the bell to end play either when the dialogue transpires but with no changes or progress or when it becomes clear that the interaction, albeit only musical and metaphorical, is escalating with little hope of resolution.

Following the round of play, ask group members to offer descriptions of what they heard, being careful to use empathic statements when commenting on a player’s perceived mood or perspective. Once the group has been surveyed, check the accuracy of the group’s perceptions against the family members’ perceptions of what actually happened. Ask all group members, including the dyad that just “performed,” to brainstorm strategies—*within the musical metaphor*—by which the conflict might have been better resolved. Common responses may include “more reflective play” (i.e., matching the other’s volume), “playing in rhythm with any steady or rigid rhythms offered,” or “moderating one’s own volume.” Again, these examples are only illustrative. Guide the group to generate their own ideas rather than providing answers to them directly. If the group is stumped (which tends to happen most in the first round of play, with ideas flowing more easily in subsequent rounds), cue the group by reflecting on what was heard during the musical dialogue. For example, offering an observation such as, “I couldn’t hear mom over Jenny’s drumming. How did that affect their conversation?” might prompt the group to suggest that mom be more assertive or that Jenny tone down her play. In either case, it is important that the player’s initial approach is first reflected empathically and that suggested changes are aimed only at improving the quality of the (musical) conversation and not at chastising anyone’s play.

Ask the dyad to play a second round, incorporating the suggestions they find most relevant or potentially useful. Following this round of play, invite the pair to reflect on what worked or, at least, caused a change. Common themes that likely will arise from this intervention include the following:

- Improved musical dialogue is achieved when parents play more reflectively and empathically rather than correctively.
- Improved musical dialogue is achieved when children, having *first* had their ineffective communication strategies reflected empathically, adopt suggested changes, which they are able to recognize as being in their own and everyone else's best interest.

This intervention tends to be most enlightening for parents who habitually attempt to control or change their child's behavior. Most children become relatively easy to lead, musically, in terms of volume, force, and rhythm if, *and only if*, their play is first matched (i.e., reflected empathically). In our experience with this activity, we noted that the dyads appeared to have the most fun when exhibiting the most effective interpersonal behaviors. The musical part of the intervention may be done with each family performing in front of the larger group. End the session by brainstorming and recapping potential strategies and behaviors that the family might practice outside of group.

MODULE 8: Communication Styles and Behaviors

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 8: Cooperation Builders: Part 1
- MaPS MODULE 8: The Four Styles of Communication and Assertiveness

Goals of CAT Module 8: To practice identifying communication styles and to expand communication style repertoires

Materials Needed: A bell, strips of paper prepared as described below, a variety of percussion instruments representing a wide palette of sounds (e.g., floor toms with mallets, djembes, hand drums, tambourines, shakers, xylophones, "sound effect" instruments [e.g., ocean drum, thunder tube])

The structure of this intervention is that of a game, which tends to elicit more spontaneous participation from group members and reduce hesitancy to play unfamiliar instruments. In this game, organize group members to play in dyads, with one person ("the initiator") starting a musical, nonverbal "conversation" using any chosen instrument while the other person ("the respondent") responds, also on any chosen instrument. Direct the respondent to follow specific instructions in formulating his or her musical replies. The instructions are provided on slips of paper that the music therapist has prepared beforehand, folding them in half and placing them in a box or bowl from which the respondent randomly chooses before playing. Sample behavioral directives include the following:

- Do exactly *what* your partner does, *how* he or she does it, *as* he or she does it (mirror him or her).
- Reflect what your partner plays *louder than he or she played it*.
- Play only when your partner is not playing.
- Look at your partner and what he or she is playing, but do not play anything yourself.
- Reflect what your partner plays *very quietly*.

- Match your partner for a little while, then play *completely differently*.
- *Ignore* your partner and play whatever you want whenever you want.
- Mostly listen, then once in a while copy part of what your partner did.
- Play back what your partner plays as best you can without making eye contact.
- Every time your partner starts playing, *interrupt* him or her.

Once the respondent chooses his or her direction, ask the initiator to start the musical “conversation.” The respondent should proceed to communicate in the way prescribed by the directive he or she selected. Ring the bell to stop the conversation either when nothing in the dialogue has changed or when sufficient time has been afforded. Lead the rest of the group to answer the following two questions:

1. What do you think the respondent’s direction was?
2. How well did this strategy for responding work?

The first question addresses the group members’ perceptions of the interaction. Typically, this question is experienced by participants as fun and intrinsically motivating. In our experience, it is common for an observing group member to conjecture about the respondent’s potential attitude or ulterior motives during the exchange even when the facilitator makes it clear in the introduction or preceding rounds of the game that the instructions are purely behavioral. This typical misinterpretation provides a rich opportunity for the group leader to reinforce the concept of separating observations of behavior (i.e., “this is what he or she *did*”) from interpretations regarding motives or attitudes of the behavior (i.e., “he or she was being so...”).

The second question provides the group members with an opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of particular communication strategies. Invite the group members to identify which style of communication—passive, assertive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive—is being represented by the respondent’s behavior. Facilitate discussion regarding whether the chosen behavior is particularly comfortable or uncomfortable (i.e., ego syntonic versus ego dystonic) for the respondent performing it. This exercise and ensuing dialogue generates an opportunity to acknowledge personal strengths and challenges in a playful, relevant way.

The specific instructions offered not only clearly represent the four basic communication styles but also are commonly observed behaviors in musical, nonverbal interactions. This propensity confers “field relevance” to the behavioral directives and ensures that each round of play is unique, especially considering that even the same directive might be interpreted and expressed differently by different respondents. For example, a round of “mirroring” might be experienced as validating for one group, whereas another group might find it disingenuous or even contemptuous. Attend carefully to the relationship dynamics occurring in the room, strategically interjecting when indicated to maintain group discussions on a productive course.

MODULE 9: Comic Strip with Two Characters

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 9: Cooperation Builders: Part 2
- MaPS MODULE 9: Dealing with Bullies, Tricks for Teasers, and Building Self-Esteem

Goal of CAT Module 9: To illustrate perceptions regarding the chronology of behavior and consequences; imagery is used to visually represent behavioral sequences with a demarcated beginning, middle, and end

Materials Needed: Long white paper with predrawn black boxes in the form of a comic strip, thin markers, colored pencils, pencil sharpener

This CAT intervention is intended to provide an opportunity for individuals to create their own artwork. Once individuals have completed their own comic strips, the large group gathers to observe the comic strips for the sake of processing their work and checking out.

In this exercise, the comic strip provides a vehicle for individual storytelling. Parents are able to illustrate a story depicting a conflict resolution between two characters of their choice, often choosing their own children as central characters. Children may illustrate whatever social conflict is foremost on their minds, whether it transpired between themselves and a bully at school, a parent, or a sibling. The option to use fictional characters to metaphorically represent personal struggles emboldens both parents and children to depict difficult or even threatening stories. Fictional storytelling allows for depersonalization of a conflict, enabling the artist to share even the most distressing or painful issue with a group. The focus on sequencing of events facilitates the recognition of behavioral triggers, typical response patterns, and consequences of behaviors.

After check-in, instruct each individual in the group to choose as many colors of markers and/or pencils as desired to create his or her visual story. Remind the group that talent or skill is not necessary to depict a story; stick figures can be just as expressive as intricate drawings. For this activity, words, images, or any combination thereof are allowed. Emphasize the importance of establishing a clear beginning, middle, and end to the conflict being depicted, which needs to include at least two main characters. Instruct the group that by the last frame of the comic strip, the conflict should be resolved. This directive invites each group member to share a pertinent story as well as apply the learned skills of problem solving using *D.I.R.T.*, dealing with bullies, tricks for teasers, and the 7 *Es* of cooperation building. Allow individuals to sit wherever they choose within the room for this activity; some children may prefer privacy while drawing, whereas others may want help during the process and crave closeness to an adult.

Because this art directive relies on the imagination of group members without specific narrative, parents and children occasionally may struggle to begin. In such instances, serve as a validating presence and assuage the insecure artist or neutralize resistance. Reminding both children and adults that they will not receive a grade or any judgment about their artistic talent or skill often is the only intervention required to release their hesitation.

Once all comic strips have been completed, hang them on the wall at the front of the room and rearrange chairs so that all group members may view the artwork. Or have the group sit in a circle for checkout and allow each artist to present his or her artwork from his or her seat. Either way, it is essential for the artists themselves to share their stories verbally with the group using the comic strips as their guide. Invite questions and comments from all group members for the sake of clarifying or elucidating aspects of the story. Some children may relish the chance to share their artwork and stories with a larger group, whereas others may feel shy and beg their parents to present for them. In the latter case, resistant children should be encouraged to share their own stories so that the group can understand their individual perspectives versus their parents' version.

The checkout discussion also may be used to review problem-solving skills as well as to identify and address struggles or impaired relationship dynamics persisting in families. It is helpful for parents and children to reflect on their behavioral and communication patterns through imagery to enhance their understanding of each other's perspectives. For instance, if a child depicts the story of a character being bullied with the solution of "blowing up" that bully rather than correcting the negative situation, cue the parent *first* to empathize with the victim of the bullying and *then* to explore with him or her potential solutions that would not result in the victim's incarceration! While being mindful to maintain a healthy balance between fantasy and reality in the exploration of these stories, model and encourage efforts to validate difficult emotions but also to identify realistic solutions. Regardless of the outcome, and whether the depicted solution is realistic, feasible, or even legal, commend the child on completing the task.

A requisite for successful completion of this intervention, pivotal to the creative art therapy process in general, involves “staying in the metaphor.” Strive to focus the final group discussion on the artwork and its fictional, metaphoric content as much as possible. This strategy increases the sense of safety experienced by the children, enabling them to verbalize difficult emotions and conflicts more freely, especially if they were ascribed to a character versus the children themselves. Therapists serve to navigate these discussions for the sake of maintaining a sense of emotional safety as well as balance between fiction and reality. A child who is not anxious or concerned about revealing guarded emotional content is best posed to work toward effective and feasible resolutions of conflict. Once their stories have been told, however, many children do elect to reveal that the “tiger” or “alien” in their comic strip actually represents themselves. Following the child’s lead in such an instance is a sensitive but often fruitful process.

Invite families to take their artwork home after checkout. If a child feels that his or her comic strip is unfinished or needs a “second chapter,” provide him or her with paper to complete his or her project at home. This is especially helpful if it seems clear that the child needs more practice exploring concepts related to conflict resolution, problem solving, or sequencing of behaviors and consequences. Empower parents to serve as conversational guides at home by continuing to build their alliances with their children through empathic reflection, creative collaboration, and cooperation.

MODULE 10: Conversation with Paint

To Accompany PACK and MaPS Program Sessions

- PACK MODULE 10: Making Children Feel Special
- MaPS MODULE 10: Review of Being a Good Listener, Empathy, Problem Solving, and Assertiveness

Goals of CAT Module 10: To review and foster increased awareness of communication styles, to develop observational and experiential skills in recognizing interpersonal relatedness patterns, and to review and further hone empathy skills

Materials Needed: Stack of 18" × 36" white paper, 7–10 plastic bowls with a variety of colors of tempera paint, at least 20 paintbrushes of various sizes, 3–5 washcloths, 3 smocks

This art therapy intervention is designed as a large-group activity during which two participants at a time engage in a “conversation with paint” within the wider circle of participants who serve as “witnesses.” The simultaneous presence and involvement of both painters and witnesses is essential to this exercise because subsequent discussions of each “conversation with paint” include observations of communication styles, interpersonal patterns of behavior, and body language.

After check-in, explain the directive. Instruct each child for whom treatment is being sought to choose one family member with whom he or she would like to converse, nonverbally, using paint. Suggest that children choose the family member with whom they struggle the most to communicate. Offer smocks to the pair, if desired, and position them, standing side by side, in front of the 18" × 36" paper (taped onto the table), which is surrounded by between seven and ten bowls of paint and paintbrushes. The art therapist, also in a smock, stands close by with washcloths and a large cup of water. Instruct the pair of painters to begin taking turns making marks on the same paper for exactly 3 minutes without talking. Ask them to focus on colors, shapes, and lines, avoiding more concrete and explicit pictures, symbols, or letters. Encourage the pair to paint without thinking, to have fun with the process of simply making marks. After each mark is made, have

the painter provide the brush to the art therapist, who cleans it with the water and washcloth to make it available for immediate reuse. This process enables the painters to focus on making marks without having to pause to clean brushes. Keep track of time and provide verbal reminders of time remaining at 1 minute left and at 30 seconds left.

Encourage witnesses to attend closely to all aspects of the “paint dialogue,” including the chronology of marks, body language, and the finished artwork itself. After 3 minutes have transpired, have the painters remove their smocks and sit down. Then invite witnesses to share their observations about the process. For instance, a group member may state, “I noticed that Johnny made large, bold marks and his mom seemed to closely follow his color choices and direction” or, “I noticed that Mandy stayed primarily in one corner of the paper with her marks even though Dad seemed like he was trying to encourage her to follow his lines” or, “I noticed that Mark painted on top of every mark his brother made.” Guide the discussion, incorporating a review of both PACK and MaPS concepts by posing questions such as, “So which communication style did that interaction seem to portray?” Reflections and observations should be focused deliberately on the artwork itself even while group members practice recognizing patterns of communication. Clarify to the group that each observation shared is just that—an observation, which may or may not be accurate. Encourage painters to listen carefully to all observations before sharing their own feedback. After 5–10 minutes of group discussion, ask the painters to respond to the group’s feedback by remarking on which comments were accurate and which were not. This approach optimizes the opportunity for parents and children to fully absorb other group members’ observations for the sake of enhancing awareness of their natural communication patterns. After the first pair’s discussion comes to a natural close, the next child chooses a family member with whom to “paint dialogue,” and a rotation ensues until each child has painted once or, if time allows, twice. If the children paint more than once, they should choose a different family member with whom to dialogue for each turn they take. Timing should be adjusted to ensure that each family is able to serve in both the painter and the witness roles.

Painters generally are able to translate relational aspects from real life from what had transpired nonverbally during the exercise. Parents acquire an enhanced appreciation during this exercise for how their nonverbal messages affect their children because nonverbal responses are evoked based on assumed meaning. For instance, in one of our workshops a parent stated, “I didn’t realize that my attempts to protect Abby felt to her like smothering. This helps me understand her defensive responses now.” Another parent commented, “Watching my sons paint together, it’s easy to see how a disagreement quickly escalates to the point of aggression. They are misinterpreting each other’s messages.” Ask families how this process might have transpired differently at the beginning of treatment. Closing comments include summative observations from each family about the process in relation to their changing relationships. All insights derived from this intervention potentially benefit the entire group because both witnesses and painters are able to practice and polish their empathy, communication, and interpersonal skills.