



THE HAMPTON TRUST

Report for the Children's Workforce Development Council

The efficacy of the Write and Draw research tool with children and
who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse

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ABSTRACT

The efficacy of the Write and Draw research tool with children and who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse

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Few programme providing intervention for children who have been exposed to domestic abuse have been academically evaluated. Research methodology on domestic violence and abuse is in its infancy and the rationale for an absence of reliable research is multiple. This includes lack of funding for research, generalisability to the wider hidden population, lack of cultural appropriate standardised instruments, and as this study will demonstrate, the challenges involved in applying a research tool to a very vulnerable group of children.

This begs the question of ***what is an effective research tool for children who have been exposed to domestic abuse?***

The Write and Draw research tool, involving projective questioning, was one of four tools selected for piloting. A control group of 126 children aged eight and nine years of age took part in the study to provide comparative data. Findings from this control group suggest that the respondents associated feeling good with friends, possessions, positive health, achievement, food, family and environmental factors. Feeling not so good included bereavement and loss, ill health, lack of physical fitness, poor body image and bullying. Coping strategies were identified as physical activity, watching television, turning to members of the family or friends, and the use of a supportive statement to comfort another child showing distress. The majority of the respondents completed the research tool with relatively little assistance.

Five groups of children referred for group work because they had been exposed to domestic violence and abuse took part in a pilot study of the Write and Draw research tool. A total of 26 children aged eight and nine years of age were asked to complete the same research tool as the control group. However, many children in this group were not able to complete the projected write and draw research tool but could complete a non projected version. Findings from the non projected version suggest that the primary responses to what made a child feel good, not so good, or what could help was their significant others such as mum and dad. This was in contrast to the control group where friends made them feel good. The children in the control group were able to cite significantly more feelings in relation to feeling good and not so good than the children who had been exposed to domestic abuse. The findings suggest that a write and draw research tool can provide valuable data from children who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse; however the use of projective questioning within the research format is questionable.

Key Findings

Children exposed to violence and abuse were not able to project their feelings, experiences and perceptions in relation to the children in the control group

Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse used significantly less 'feelings' words than those in the control group.

Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse did not cite friends as making them feel good as often as the control group

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 18,569 women and 23,084 children were accommodated and supported by domestic abuse refuges in the United Kingdom during the year 2003/04 (Women's Aid 2007) whilst Strack (2007) found that around 50% of men who abuse their partners also abuse their children. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of children exposed to domestic violence and abuse. Many more children are exposed within the confines of their own homes without ending up in a refuge.

The documented effects on children of exposure to domestic violence and abuse include negative consequences such as the development of mental illness, insomnia, low self esteem, depression, lack of educational attainment, behavioural problems and social isolation. Yet, despite the documented impact this violence and abuse can have, there is a lack of understanding of what should be provided to address the needs of this very vulnerable group of children.

The need to offer interventions to children is unquestionable when one examines the statistics. Children exposed to domestic abuse are six times more likely to commit suicide, 24 times more likely to commit sexual assault, 60 times more likely to be involved in anti social behaviour and 1000 times more likely to become perpetrators of domestic abuse (Strack 2007). Thus the cycle of abuse continues.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health services approach childhood exposure to abuse and violence with crisis intervention, individual therapy, techniques to address post traumatic stress, and family therapy. Whereas the voluntary sector tends to use a social approach involving advocates, mentors, or group work.

Few programme providing intervention for this group of children and young people have been academically evaluated. Research methodology on domestic violence and abuse is in its infancy and the rationale for an absence of reliable research is multiple:

- It is challenging to find funding for any actual intervention, therefore what funding is available does not account for the level of rigorous research required.
- Current services reach only a very small proportion of the children actually exposed to domestic violence and abuse; therefore generalization can not take place.
- There is a range of behaviours that come under the banner of domestic abuse and this, along with different levels of exposure, can make the

terms domestic violence and abuse a very different experience for each child involved.

- Some of the standardised measures that are available to study outcomes have been developed with populations from differing cultural, racial and socio economic groups thereby making validity questionable
- Minimal studies have been undertaken on the differential effects of witnessing violence and abuse in comparison to being the recipient of the violence/abuse

This study will show there is yet another reason why academic evaluations of programmes for children exposed to domestic violence and abuse are rare. This rarity is related to the *applicability* of existing research tools for measuring outcomes with this particular client group.

The research question for this study is therefore ***what is an effective research tool for children who have been exposed to domestic abuse?***

Background to the Hampton Trust

The Hampton Trust is a charity which works with children and families who have been exposed to violence, abuse, conflict or social isolation. We work in a variety of different ways according to identified need and always within the context of child safety.

A literature review suggests that despite the varying experiences of domestic violence and abuse by children, there are common themes that can be addressed within any intervention. This includes the child experiencing a real fear for a parent's safety. This must be acknowledged. Not talking to adults about domestic abuse is another common theme as is the lack of information on where to get formalized support. The children address this through seeking informal support through friends.

The programmes we offer are across the age spectrum of eight to eighteen years and they provide a safe, non-judgmental space for the child/young person where they can express their fears for a parent's safety. Within this space we help the children/young people to build up relationships of trust, formalized, and informal support - and we do this through group work.

Each group lasts on average eight weeks but we try to facilitate friendships or activities beyond that period. Art, craft, games and activities are all used as tools to help the children and young people express themselves. There is a focus within the groups on maintaining personal safety, identifying when they are at risk, and building knowledge on how to take action. The underlying assumption for the

group work is that it facilitates the opportunity for the children to build positive friendships thereby reducing the sense of isolation they can experience.

Background to the study

Despite the theoretical assumptions that support a group work approach, there are no studies showing incontrovertible outcomes that this type of intervention is beneficial for children/young people who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse.

The original intention of this research was to triangulate different research tools to help us assess specific outcomes from our group support programmes. The ultimate aim was to develop a model of research into the outcomes of facilitated support groups for children who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse which could then be applied to a wider audience. Validated and reliable measurement instruments for assessing change were to be applied, pre and post intervention, with the older children on the programme (aged 13 - 16 years) and with the younger children (aged 8 – 12 years).

However, we soon realised that despite the recorded efficacy of the tools we had selected to pilot, the groups of young people we were working with found completion of them to be challenging and distracting.

Due to the importance of research into this area of work, we decided to review our study to focus on the application of the research tools rather than the outcomes of the group work. Four research tools were initially selected.

We then narrowed the research down to focus on two main research tools that were relevant for each of the stated age groups. The first tool was a standardised instrument, the Youth Outcomes Questionnaire (Y-OQ11) which is used to measure young people's general outcomes. The second was the Write and Draw technique for use with younger children.

Due to the word limitation in this report we are only reporting here on one of those research tools which is used with the younger age group of children, the Write and Draw technique.

METHODOLOGY

The Write and Draw Research Tool

Children, especially younger children, who have been exposed to violence and abuse are a silent community. We wanted to use a qualitative method of data collection with children aged 8- 12 years that would provide them with a voice and not just a measurement of change.

We wanted to use a format where the children were free to use their own terms without the imposition of a response system by the researcher. However we were concerned about directly interviewing children about their own experiences, so we decided to employ projective questioning.

Projective questioning can encompass several techniques but all are designed to facilitate the child describing their own feelings impersonally. Simon and Burstein (1985) suggest it is reasonable to assume that the statements made by children are projected views of self. To further illustrate this point, Piaget gave many years thought to the development of projection. He theorised that children project their feelings onto others. Therefore in employing projective questioning the principle is that children will only project what they know and understand from their own experiences.

Projective questioning allows for a relatively large number of children to be surveyed, is quick to administer, cost effective, uses resources the children are used to working with, i.e. people, talking, writing, or drawing, and it is ethically acceptable because it does not overtly probe individual psyches.

Children are asked to respond to triggers that can have more than one meaning. The child is then open to interpret the trigger how they wish.

The Write and Draw, or Draw and Write depending on where you place the emphasis, is a projective technique that provides children with a non threatening and open ended way of sharing their projected perceptions. It was first devised by Noreen Wetton at the University of Southampton in 1989 as part of the Health for Life programme.

Write and Draw invites children to draw a picture about a particular issue/situation and then write a sentence or notes explaining the drawing. Supplementary projective questions are asked to help ascertain their knowledge and beliefs. This technique can be used as a research strategy where the written statements are used as quantifiable data or as an evaluation tool. The technique can be used with children with low literacy skills.

Many different areas of health and social care have been researched using this technique, with all studies concluding in favour of the high quality data that can be collected in this manner. An important part of this technique is that children

can participate at any key stage and whatever their capabilities. Writing and drawing are a natural part of the majority of children's lives.

METHODS

Development of the Write and Draw tool for this study

The Write and Draw tool is not a standardised instrument although the format has been used in many studies varying from substance misuse to accident prevention. We wanted to focus on emotional well being so we needed to understand the language that children as young as eight years of age would use and understand.

The Write and Draw in relation to domestic abuse had previously been used by Strack (2007) at the Family Justice Centre in San Diego. Children there were asked directly about the worst fight in their family, what they did during the fight, and how they would have liked the fight to end. This not only provided data for a risk assessment for each child, but it also provided valuable information on the children's perceptions of familial violence. This involved beatings with instruments, guns, the children being very scared and trying to hide or to intervene, and how ideally they would like the perpetrator to be taken away.

We did not want to focus on the domestic violence a child had experienced in our study, rather the focus was to be the children's emotional experiences of life in general and their coping strategies.

Bennet (1993) undertook research into emotion terminology used by children. This work acknowledged that children under the age of eight can not offer appropriate situations for terms such as jealousy, worry, shame or guilt. Emotional language was therefore confined to good and bad.

So, the tool was designed around this level of terminology in order to try and understand if the group work, or elements of, made a child feel 'good' or 'bad'.

This choice of this particular format meant that the children were not given a lead to comment specifically on domestic violence and abuse or the group work. It was quite possible that other factors made a child feel good or bad outside of their current situation and we needed to understand those factors. The tool was therefore focused on using their language to find out what was important for them in their lives.

Providing an open invitation to comment meant that the child could refer to the group work if they felt it relevant in helping them to feel good. It would also help us explore what elements of the group work may be important to a child. For example friendships, an adult, or the activities they undertook as part of a group.

One of the questions in our write and draw tool was *what can a child do to make themselves feel good?* The rationale for posing this question was to try and

understand the control children perceived they had over their own lives. An important issue in domestic abuse.

Brown (1996) notes that it is an individual's perceived lack of control that makes life's events stressful and hence dangerous to emotional and psychological health. The relationship between stressful situations, such as parental violence and abuse, and the potentially damaging physical effects of prolonged emotional arousal was clearly identified by Selye as far back as 1956. Children often have very little control over what happens in their lives and this is exacerbated in domestic abuse situations.

This perception of control is fundamental to the Locus of Control theory that emanates from social learning theory. This theory suggests that individuals with an internal locus, or the belief they have some control over their lives, are more likely to withstand stress.

The completed tool had four dimensions:

1. To explore perceptions of situational triggers that make a child feel good
2. To explore perceptions of situational triggers that make a child feel bad
3. To explore perceptions of who or can help (safety planning)
4. To explore perceptions of how a child can help themselves (locus of control)

These four dimensions were woven into a story told to the child as follows:

Table 1 Write and Draw Research Tool

1. You are walking home one day when you meet someone the same age as you who is feeling good about themselves and their life. Draw a picture of this person feeling good about themselves and their life. This person tells you all the things that make them feel good about themselves. Round this person draw all the things that make a person feel good and write at the side of each thing what it is.

2. You leave this person who is feeling good and carry on walking home. You go round a corner and meet someone who is your age and feeling not so good about themselves and their life. Draw a picture of this person. They tell you all the things that are making them feel not so good about themselves and their life. Draw all the things that are making this person feel not so good round their picture and then write at the side of each one what it is.

3. This person asks you to tell them who or what can help someone who doesn't feel good about themselves and their life. Draw who or what can help and write by the side who or what can help.

4. You carry on walking home and meet someone the same age as yourself who tells you all the things they do to make themselves feel good when they are feeling not so good. Draw and write what makes them feel good about themselves and their life when they are feeling not so good.

(Based on Brown 1996)

The control group

The format for the write and draw was not standardised therefore we had no data to make comparisons with the findings from the children who had been exposed to domestic abuse. We needed to understand if there was any significant differences between children exposed to domestic abuse and attending a group and children not attending a group for this purpose.

A control group of 126 children aged eight and nine years old completed the tool within their school day. It is not known how many of these 126 children had been exposed to domestic violence and abuse, but it was known that none of the control group, as far as could be ascertained, was attending a group specifically for children who had been exposed.

The intention was to use the findings from this control group to make comparisons against the data from the children who had been exposed to domestic abuse.

Children exposed to domestic abuse

The format was then applied to five groups of children attending a group because they had been exposed to domestic violence and abuse. A total of n=26 children, aged eight and nine years of age, participated in the pilot study. None of these children had a father present in the home and the majority had been placed in a refuge setting at some point. Two of the children had only been in the UK for two years.

Data Analysis

The first stage of the analysis involved photocopying each participants responses and then cutting out each of the four dimensions (feel good, not so good, what can help and what can a child do to help themselves). These were then broken down further into conceptual units identified as separate units that could stand alone. For example, 'mum' and 'dad' was a frequently written response which was counted as two separate units, whereas 'parents' was one conceptual unit.

From these separate conceptual units, a pattern analysis took place by simply taking the cut out drawing and writing and placing them in different pattern sets until all of the conceptual units were accounted for. Thus emergent themes were identified.

FINDINGS

The control group

The main findings from the control group are summarised below:

Table 2 Findings from control group (n=126)

Dimension	Finding	Number
Feeling good	Feelings	91
	Friends	60
	Possessions	51
	Physical health	33
	Achievement	30
	Something within the child (i.e sharing)	25
	Food	19
	Significant others	16
	Something outside of the child (i.e. circus or wedding)	12
	Animals	12
Feeling not so good	Feelings	88
	Loss	48
	Something outside of the child (teacher, horrible person)	47
	Something within the child (i.e. sort things out, think its my fault)	47
	Physical	47
	Health (i.e. not being fit, not eating the right food, falling over)	41
	Friends	36
	Bullying/fighting	29
	Significant others	15
	Possessions	5
Who or what can help	Physical (sleep, cuddle, bath, activity)	55
	Something outside of the child (computer TV, music, reading)	49
	Friends	14
	Animals	11
	Something within the child (trying,	11

	being positive, telling jokes, thinking of good things)	
	Significant others	9
Child help themselves	Something within the child (i.e. not worrying, forgetting, ignoring, trying harder)	63
	Something outside of the child (i.e. sun, garden, smell, childline, Samaritans, the church, teachers)	40
	Health (i.e. nurses, doctors, medicine, food)	39
	Significant others	34
	Friends	29
	Animals	9
	Possessions	3
	Achievement	2

In summary, the respondents in the study associated feeling good with friends, possessions, positive health, achievement, food, family and environmental factors.

Feeling not so good included bereavement and loss, ill health, lack of physical fitness, poor body image and bullying.

Coping strategies identified were physical activity, watching television, turning to members of the family or friends, and the use of a supportive statement to comfort another child showing distress.

The majority of the respondents completed the research tool with relatively little assistance.

Children exposed to domestic abuse

The key finding from this Write and Draw Group was that a large proportion of the 26 children who took part in three separate groups found they were unable to complete the research tool.

After several attempts with the projected version of the Write and Draw, the research tool was adapted to make the questions applicable to the first person, and thereby directly related to the children themselves.

The following findings are replicated (not verbatim) according to each individual response, and not according to each respondent. Thus, some children made more than one response to each dimension of the overall tool.

Table 3 Findings from children who had been exposed to domestic abuse (n=26)

Dimension	Finding
Feeling good	People saying I am cool
	A trophy
	Puppies
	Mum
	Dad
	Dog
	Brother
	Friend
	Doing well at school
	Winning something
	Happy happy happy
	I love good
	Muscles
	Nice people
	Cindy
	A new computer
	A holiday
	Feeling cool
	Stars
	Playing football
	A dog
	My brother
	My special hat
	Memories from old times

	My old dad
	Composing
	Keyboard
	Singing
	20 horses
	Fencing
	A big castle to live in
	Mum
	Brother
	Disneyland Paris
Feeling not so good	Good kick in the face
	I want my dad to go away
	People calling me names
	Slugs
	Behaviour – ‘No’
	Not getting a hat
	Not playing
	Being bullied
	People making fun of me
	I hate it
	His ugly face
	Got dumped for having big ears
	I don’t want a life
	I’m fat
	I’m ugly
	I hate life
	Football
	My friend wasn’t happy because he lost his toy
	Sad feelings
	My sister cos she annoys and depress me
	My sisters cos they shout at me
	(name) as she doesn’t really like me for some reason
	My new dad
	Tantrums
	Bad moods
	If he is trapped I will be happy – if he is not trapped I will not be happy
	Love
	My dad is bad
	Dad
	When people swear
Who or what can help	Lock away my dad

	Happy family
	Friend
	Teddy
	A new house
	Mummy giving me a cuddle
	New house
	Animals
	My mum
	Dad
	Friends saying its Ok
	Playing
	Football
	Friend saying I will play with you
	Talk about their life
	Go and play with them
	Play with friends
	Happy things
	Good friends
	I have a good mum
	Happy families
	I want a boyfriend
	A new football
	A hug
	Friends
	Friend –as she would make me laugh
	My best friend coz she makes me laugh
	Granny
	Grandad
	Mummy
	A car
Help yourself	Talk to them about your life
	I learned I can belong to a group but still show my feelings and be me
	Drawing
	Not be like my dad
	Drawing
	Talk to your friends
	Play with friends
	Think happy thoughts
	Sing a song be happy
	Sing a song
	If you feel bad you should talk to someone
	Play football
	Drawing

	Let feelings out in a controlled way
	Art
	A key for my room so no-one can invade my privacy
	Playing
	Colouring
	Writing
	Talking
	Control myself
	Not being scared

A total of 35 responses were obtained in relation to what made a child feel good. The primary response was significant others such as mum or brother. Extrinsic factors such as people saying they were cool, stars or an activity were the next main response. Children cited extrinsic factors more often than intrinsic ones, such as memories from old times, whereas children in the control group cited intrinsic factors more often.

Only one child wrote that a friend would make them feel good. This is in direct contrast to the control group where the primary response to what made a child feel good was friends. Only two children mentioned feelings (happy and good) whereas in the control group 91 responses were received from 126 children relating to feelings. Animals were reflected in both the control group and this group.

Feeling not so good for the children in this group generated 30 responses. The primary response in this section was significant others which was mainly 'dad'. The next main response was intrinsic factors such as being fat, ugly and hating life. In the control group extrinsic factors outnumbered the intrinsic factors whereas in this group it was the intrinsic factors that were cited more often. The children in this group did not mention loss, yet many had experienced loss of a family member such as their father, loss of a home and loss of their network of friends.

Three children mentioned feelings such as hate, love and sad. In the control group 88 responses on feelings were received from the 126 participants.

A total of 31 responses were received in relation to who or what can help. The overall primary response for the children was their significant others such as mum, a happy family, granny and grandad. The next main response was friends. Extrinsic factors such as a new house outnumbered the intrinsic ones such as a hug

For the children in the control group their significant others did not play such a major role in their responses to what could make a child feel good.

Coping strategies where the children could help themselves were overwhelming intrinsic. That is the child believed they could help themselves through singing, thinking happy thoughts, controlling themselves, not being scared, talking and locking their room. Whilst this finding is in keeping with the control group, the control group also cited a large number of extrinsic factors that could help such as help lines. No child in this group of children exposed to domestic abuse cited outside sources of assistance.

Summary

Both the control group and the group of children exposed to domestic violence and abuse were able to provide worthy insight into their emotional literacy through the use of the Write and Draw research tool. Whilst only their written contributions have been analysed here, their drawings offer further insight into their world. A sample of the pictures from the group of children exposed to domestic violence and abuse is provided in the appendix.

Whilst this pilot study has provided numerous and valuable data that could be discussed in-depth, the following discussion centres on just three of the key learning points:

1. Children exposed to violence and abuse were not able to project their feelings, experiences and perceptions in relation to the children in the control group
2. Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse used significantly less 'feelings' words than those in the control group
3. Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse did not cite friends as making them feel good as often as the control group

These three key findings are discussed in more detail in the following section.

DISCUSSION

This section is structured around the three key findings from the study.

Children exposed to violence and abuse were not able to project their feelings, experiences and perceptions in relation to the children in the control group

Around two to three years of age children develop an ability to project their feelings experiences and sensations onto another individual (Piaget 1982). This is a development that is closely linked with empathy. It is known from other studies that children exposed to domestic violence show an inability to empathise with others (Gilligan 1991). Individuals who cannot empathize with others' feelings are less likely to curb their own aggression.

There are six possible explanations for the finding that the children exposed to domestic violence found it hard to project.

One is that a growing body of evidence suggests that children exposed to domestic abuse have an excess of neural activity which alters brain function due to the stress response. Whereas exposure to moderate stress can result in resilience, exposure to severe and ongoing stress results in an excess of neural activity which alters brain function (Perry 2004).

The second explanation is that children exposed to domestic violence have been shown to over rely on non verbal communication and as the research tool did not involve non verbal communication they found some challenges in completing. However this would not explain why they could complete the tool when it was not projected.

A third hypothesis is that to project and empathise with a parent who is being abused is just too devastating for a young and developing brain to cope with therefore this part of the child is 'shut down'.

A fourth reason may be that children learn social skills by identifying with adults in their lives. Children cannot learn projection and empathy in their interactions with others when their only models, do not exhibit this (Garbarino et al., 1992).

The fifth possible explanation is when children experience a trauma; a common reaction is to regress to an earlier stage when things were easier. This regression can be therapeutic by allowing the child to postpone having to face the feelings aroused by the traumatic event. It is a way of gaining psychological strength. However, when children face continual stress they are in danger of remaining psychologically in an earlier stage of development.

The sixth hypothesis is, to control their fears, children who live with violence may repress feelings (Wallach 1994). The findings from our study show that children exposed to domestic violence expressed feelings significantly less than the children in the control group. This defensive manoeuvre takes its toll in their immediate lives and can lead to further pathological development. It can interfere with their ability to relate to others in meaningful ways and to empathise

Whatever the reasons for the challenges the children experienced in trying to complete the projected version of the Write and Draw tool, it is clear that those who provide interventions must include projection and empathy exercises as a relevant part of their programme. For those who wish to research or evaluate such interventions, projective techniques may not be a suitable instrument for this purpose. However valuable data can be obtained through using drawing and writing without projective questioning.

Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse used significantly less 'feelings' words than those in the control group.

The data from this pilot study suggests a need for children who have been exposed to domestic abuse to develop their emotional literacy. As seen in the previous section on projection, children who live with violence may repress feelings (Wallach 1994).

Proper labeling of emotions ensures feelings become easier to handle, it can help children understand themselves, as well as help them learn to get along with each other. Jacobson (1991) found that parents are the main cause of anger feelings in children and that there is a gender difference in how this emotion is expressed. Boys are more likely to act aggressively whilst girls remain silent or withdrawn. Anger in itself is not unhealthy but how it is expressed can be.

The findings from this pilot study suggest that interventions for children exposed to domestic violence and abuse need to focus on emotional literacy. The Write and Draw research tool would be a relevant technique for further exploring emotional literacy.

Children exposed to domestic violence and abuse did not cite friends as making them feel good as often as the control group

Children who have been exposed to violence may have trouble learning to get along with others. The anger that is often instilled in such children is likely to be incorporated into their personality structures. Carrying an extra load of anger makes it difficult for them to control their behavior and increases their risk for resorting to violent action. (Wallach 1994).

It is known that exposure to trauma interferes with a child's ability to trust (Osofsky and Fenichel, 1993). All of which would impact on a child's ability to make and sustain friendships

For children living in an atmosphere of stress and violence, the ability to make friendships is crucial to healthy development. Group work can offer a safe environment in which to start learning about friends.

Summary

In summary, the Write and Draw research tool can provide valuable data, more so when a control group is used to validate the findings. However, children who have been exposed to domestic abuse and violence may find it too challenging to project onto a third person. Projective drawing tools such as the Write and Draw, House Tree Person, Kinetic Family Drawing, and Draw a Person may therefore not be relevant for this particular group of children. In this study, the Write and Draw tool appeared to be equally effective when applied in the first person.

Children exposed to domestic abuse that took part in this pilot study were not able to cite feeling words as often as the children in the control group. In addition, they did not cite friends as helping them to feel good as often as the control group. These are all important considerations when designing group work interventions for children exposed to domestic violence and abuse.

The pilot study has shown the efficacy of the Write and Draw research tool in relation to children exposed to domestic violence and abuse who are attending for group work. Therefore the intention is to expand the study over the coming months to collect further data with the aim of adding to the evidence base of interventions with this group of very vulnerable children.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Use projective techniques with caution with children who have been exposed to domestic violence and abuse**
- 2. Develop a programme of emotional literacy to use within group work intervention**
- 3. Provide a focus on relationships and friendships within group work intervention**

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Appendix One

To be properly understood, children's drawings must be considered from a variety of contexts such as the environment they are in and in which the drawings are taking place as well as their emotional state and the relationships with the people around them, including the facilitator.

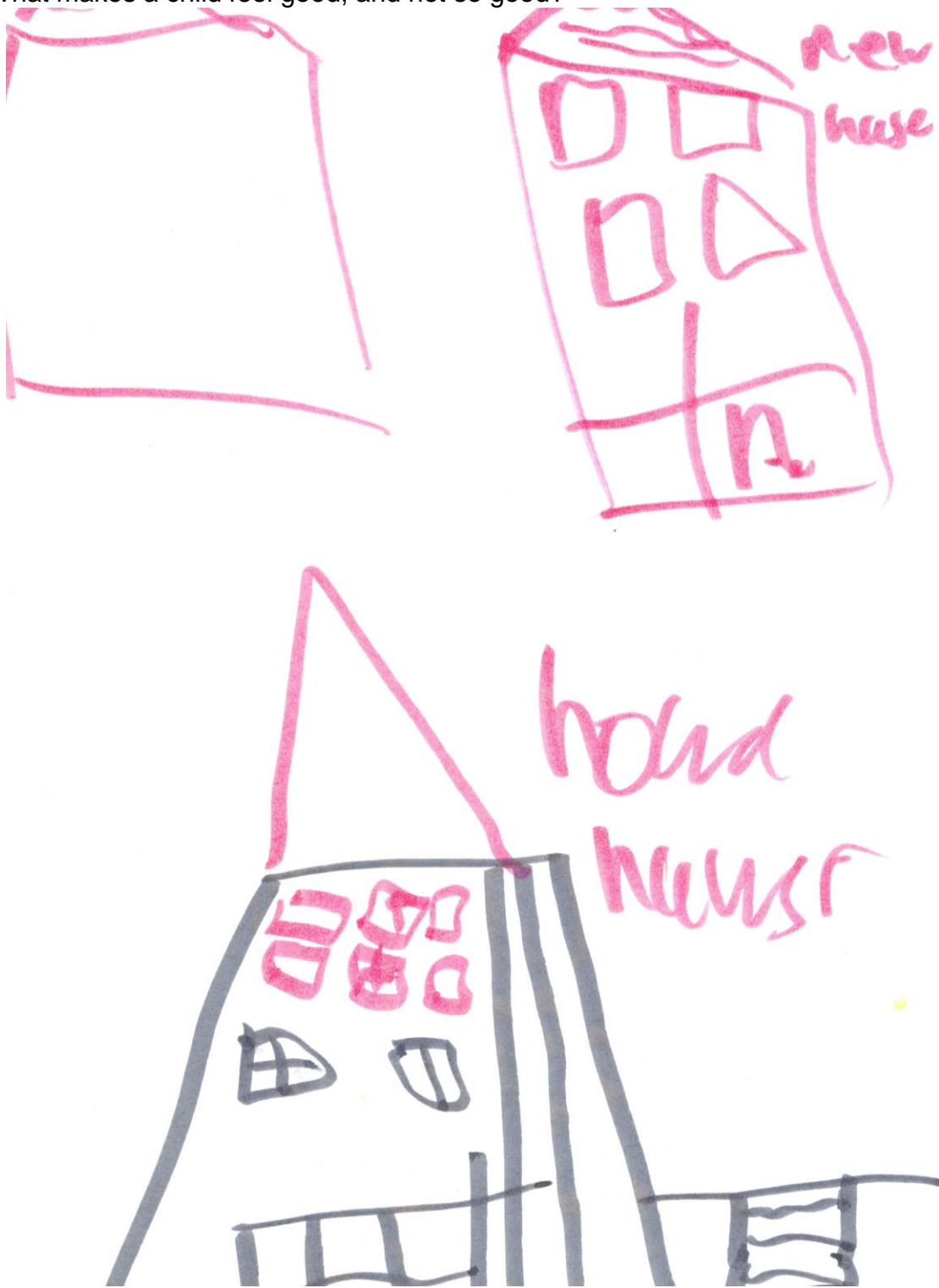
Many therapists expect the drawings of children exposed to violence to be expressive but in fact they are usually sparse, with little attention to detail, and with limited use of colour.

Malchiodi (1998) states that is lack of detail is not surprising. Children who are exposed to domestic abuse may be withdrawn, frightened, and dissociated. Their levels of psychological exhaustion means they do not have the capacity to represent on paper the traumatic events they have experienced.

Art does help with the healing process. Traumatized children have been found to repeat a drawing of a simple image and it this repetitive behaviour that can help them begin to deal with the abuse. Excessive shading in a drawing exposed to violence has been put down to anxiety but Malchiodi (1989) also believes this is a comforting self soothing behaviour.

What follows is a series of drawing obtained from the children during the course of the research. The Write and Draw research tool does not specifically advocate analysing the drawings unless you are qualified in art therapy, however the drawings are replicated here as they do provide some insight into the world of children exposed to domestic abuse.

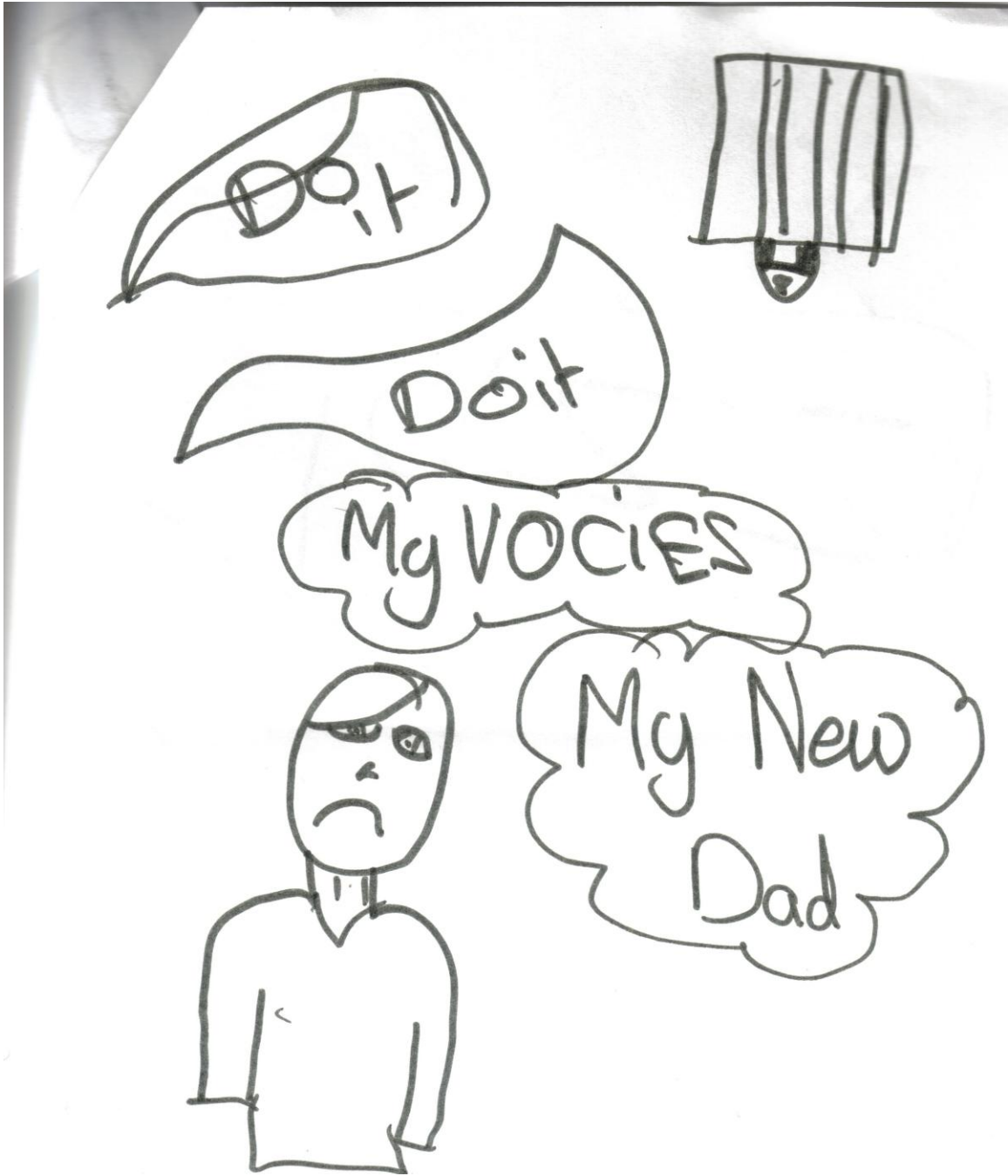
What makes a child feel good, and not so good?



What make you feel good?



What makes you feel not so good?



What makes you feel not so good?



✓)) / / /

my dad





What could make you feel better?

