

## **“In Their Own Words”: An Exploration of the Use of Narratives with Children in Counselling**

**Authors :** Alison Brown

**Abstract :** Through stories, children make sense of their world, see themselves through the eyes of another, and process emotions and lived experiences in a non-threatening and indirect manner. Building on research around the use of narrative techniques with adults and families, this research looked directly at the use of narratives as a therapeutic technique with children in counseling. Based on individual therapy sessions with children over a six-year period, this work of collective case studies tells the story of a practice incorporating children’s narratives, of children’s experiences in writing and sharing their narratives, and of the clinical impact of the use of narratives with children. Not all stories were narratives of success or happiness. Children documented their fears and anger as well as their achievements and hope for the future. What emerged through this study was an awareness of recurring themes in the way children responded to the narrative process and in the benefits and limitations of story writing with children. Consistent with previous studies focusing on narrative work with adults and families, the use of narratives with children provided opportunities for healing, acceptance, developing greater understanding, externalizing, and re-authoring a preferred future. In terms of the children’s experiences in writing and sharing their narratives, consistent themes emerged again, with many children finding the experience cathartic and liberating, empowering and hopeful, but most importantly, an opportunity that allowed them to feel and understand that they were not alone. Whilst a small collection of case studies tells the stories of a limited number of children, it is hoped that this research provides both a model and inspiration for others to explore similar uses of narratives with children. As a greater number of children’s narratives are created, the potential to share and benefit from the many rich stories and experiences of other children becomes more of a reality. Across cultures, economic and social settings, rural and urban environments, and varying family structures, it is important that we hear the voices of our children – ‘In their own words’.

**Keywords :** narrative therapy children counselling, social, emotional, zone of proximal development, scaffolding

**Conference Title :** ICDPES 2023 : International Conference on Developmental Psychology and Educational Sciences

**Conference Location :** Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Conference Dates :** September 11-12, 2023