

DVD 4 - My Mountain: A Narrative Assessment Tool for Children and Adolescence

Presenter: Tania Skippen

DVD Overview

This DVD showcases the use of a picture metaphor story that is useful at the initial assessment contact with the client in collecting information, establishing rapport and setting direction for future therapy sessions. The language used is targeted at communicating with children aged between 6 and 12 years but can be adapted for use with adolescents. It's about hearing the young person's story in a normalising and developmentally appropriate context.

Information collected at the initial client contact can be combined with information taken at the intake/ referral stage, parent interview and combined with collateral from other agencies. It can also be combined with further mental health assessment investigations such as MSE, substance use or suicide risk assessment information to complete a thorough Initial Assessment. This can then be recorded on the Assessment Form (see Appendix)

The DVD contains 3 parts:

- An overview and introduction to the My Mountain tool
- A case study example with video and Power Point slides
- A brief demonstration of how to use the tool with a young person.

Presenters:

- Author of the My Mountain tool – Tania Skippen Occupational Therapist
- Child Actor used in fictional case study- Mitchell

Case Study Notes:

This case study was based solely on fictional characters. Similarities to persons or real events are purely co-incidental.

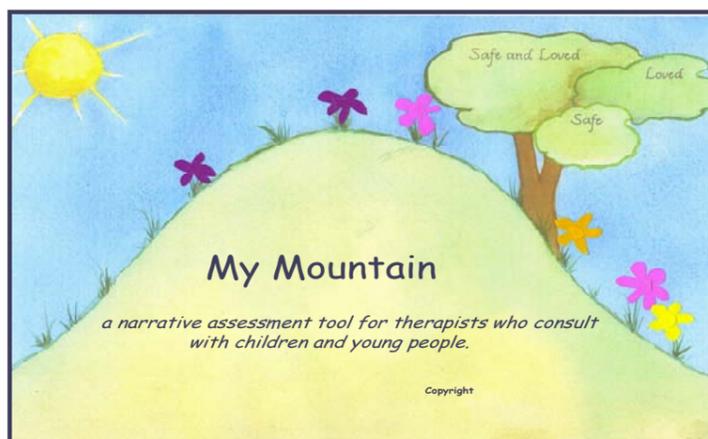


Accompanying Resources and Exercises

Additional Resources include:

1. Introduction to the *My Mountain* tool
2. Power Point notes and pictures using case study example - Olivia
3. DVD demonstration case study – Mitch. Notes and Reflection activities

***My Mountain* Narrative Assessment Tool**



1. Introduction to the *My Mountain* Tool

My Mountain, is a narrative assessment tool used in consulting with children and young people. When a client comes to consult with a therapist, it is usually because a problem story looms large in their life. *My Mountain* is a generic narrative that allows the client to tell their own story within the framework of a parallel story common to humanity.

A common dilemma for therapists and counsellors is that they are often required by the organization they work for to obtain answers to a certain set of questions at the initial client assessment. *My Mountain* provides a non-clinical way of clients speaking about the answers to these questions while facilitating a quick formation of rapport and the setting of direction for future therapy sessions.

As the *My Mountain* story unfolds, valuable information about the client's history, the effects of the problem, client responses and ways of coping, existing skills and knowledge, social and family connectedness and hopes for the future are revealed. The client is able to see where the therapist fits into the story and can decide if they would like to consult further with that person in finding alternate narratives that better suit their hopes for the future.

My Mountain is a story that becomes a picture. As the narrative progresses, the client tells their story and the components are added visually to the *My Mountain* base picture. The finished artwork is then photocopied for the therapist's record and the original watercolour print given to the client.

Purpose

The *My Mountain* narrative was created with the purpose of helping clients feel comfortable in the telling of their stories, providing a context that is normalizing and perhaps less foreign to a young person's experience than a formal series of interview questions. *My Mountain* can be used as an information gathering tool that adds to an initial assessment but does not necessarily replace it. It is not a standardized test. It is intended to be used along with initial interview information, developmental, medical or psychiatric history and further specific assessments. It is not a risk assessment tool.

Who is recommended to use this tool?

The tool is intended to be used by therapists and counsellors qualified in consulting with children and young people. Although it is an information gathering tool and not a treatment tool, the therapeutic impact of its use should not be overlooked. It is advisable for the tool to be used by a person trained in the helping professions as it is to be used with the intention that follow-up support and counselling can be made available to the client if necessary.

Target Group

Although the *My Mountain* narrative is useful for consulting with clients of any age, this text has been written with 6-16yr old clients in mind. The language used in the text is aimed at the younger age range of 6-12yrs and can easily be adapted when speaking with adolescent clients.

Stories transcend cultural barriers and the *My Mountain* narrative provides a means of each person's story being told within their own cultural context. The story has no intrinsic moral, ethical or religious bias.

Materials Needed

1. Therapists Manual
2. *My Mountain* Base Picture (or A3 paper for drawing)
3. Sticker Kit (if being used)
4. Coloured felt tipped pens

The *My Mountain* narrative is most effectively told using an accompanying Base Picture and Sticker Kit. If these are not available to the Therapist, then the picture can be drawn by hand and information added using coloured pencils or felt tipped pens.

The Base Picture and Sticker kits can be ordered, see page 3 of the *My Mountain* Therapists manual included in this package for details.

2. *My Mountain* Power Point

The power point information is linked with the development of the base picture used in the DVD example of Olivia.

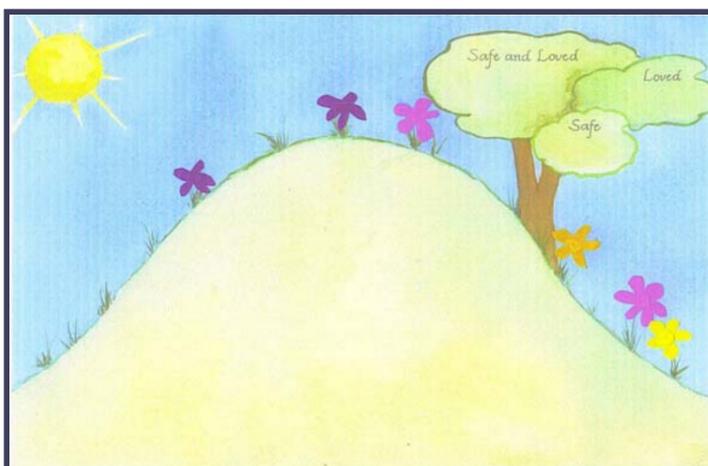
Case example

- Olivia – 13 year old girl
- Referred by mother through GP with concerns about depressed and anxious mood.
- Presenting with increasing withdrawal from family, conflict with mother and poor success at school academically.
- Mum concerned about bullying at school

Steps for using the *My Mountain* Tool

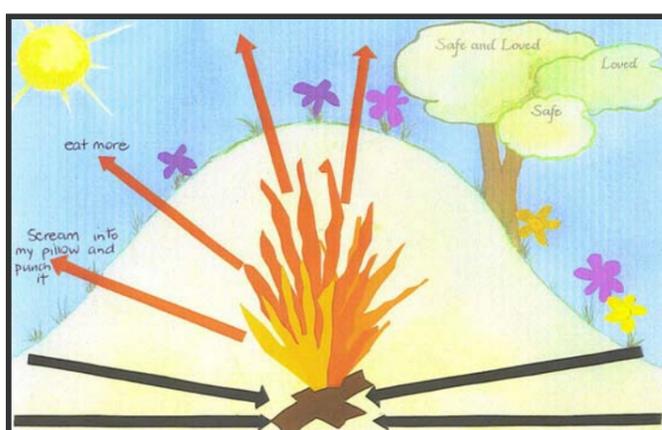
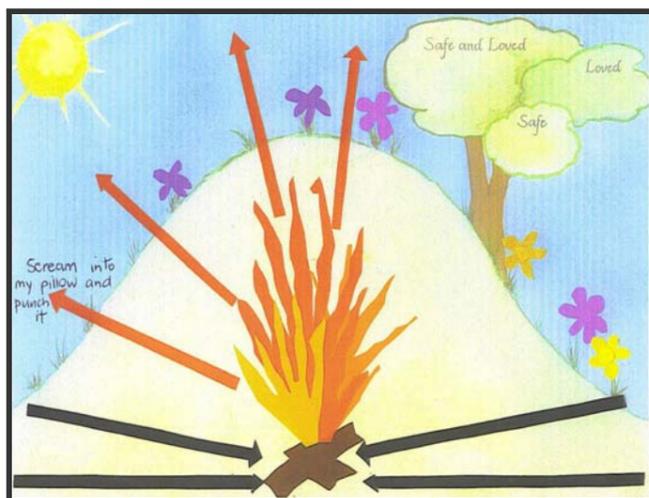
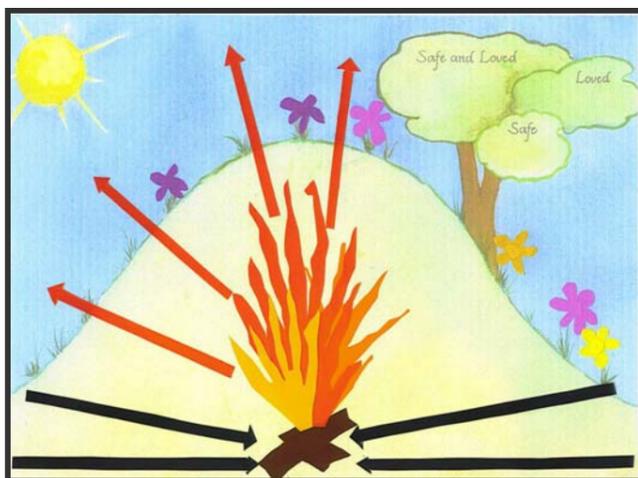
Introducing the Story

- Keep the story moving. This session is about collecting facts not digging deep.

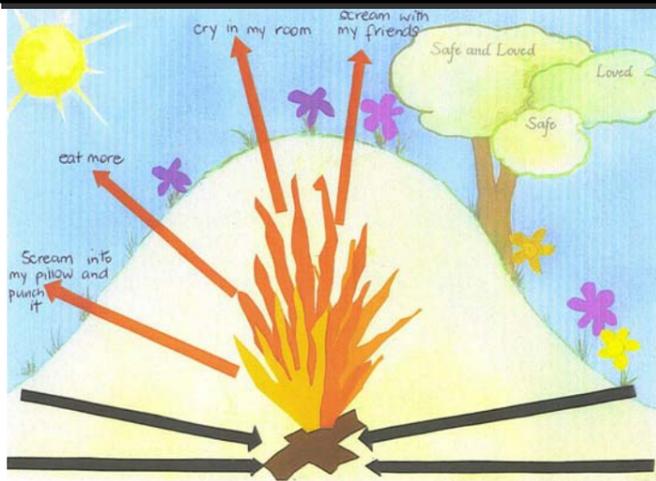


Exposing the explosions – client responses to pressure. Behaviours seen by self & others

- Normalizes the notion that everyone has difficult things to deal with in life
- Normalizes the client's responses to pressure
- Gives clues as to internalizing or externalizing tendencies

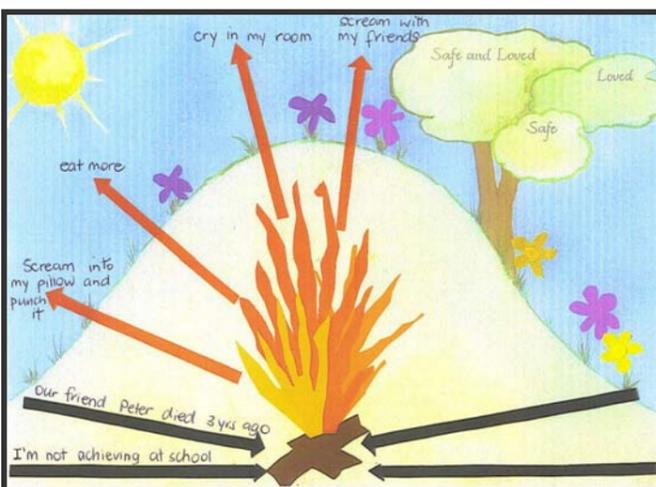
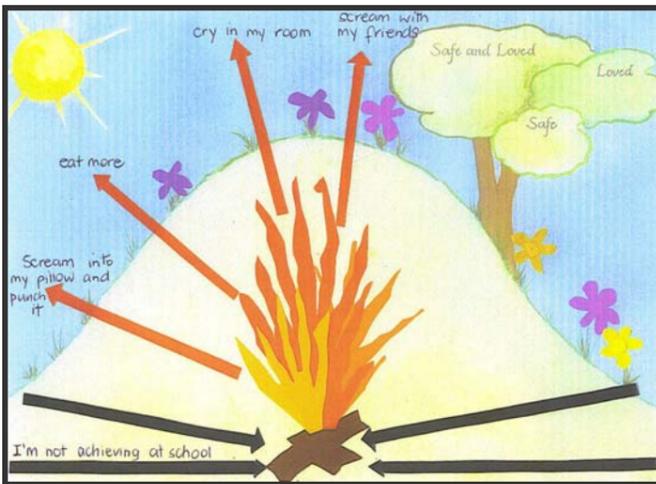


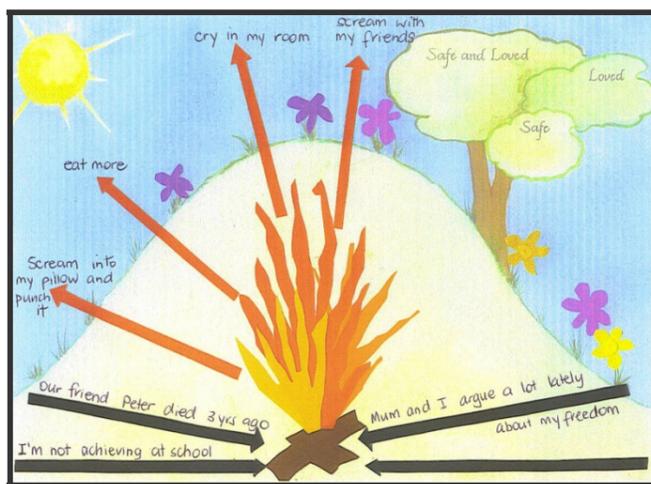
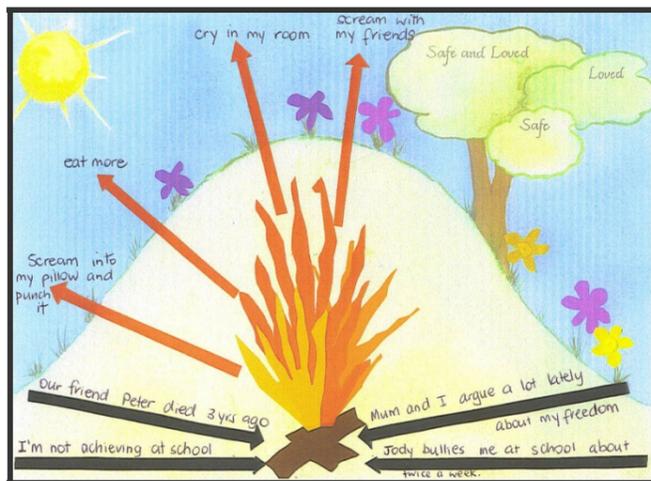
Transition to Child and Youth Mental Health Practice
Core Skills Project 2008



Uncovering the history of the 'Problem'

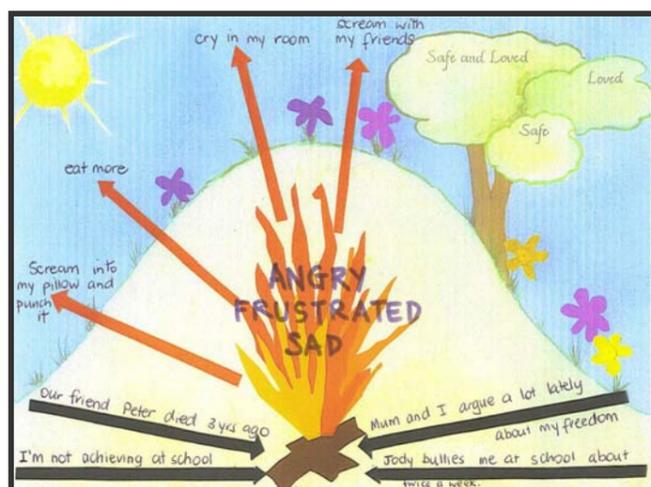
- Discovers precipitating factors
- Describes a brief history of the problem
- Issues written as FACTS not feelings





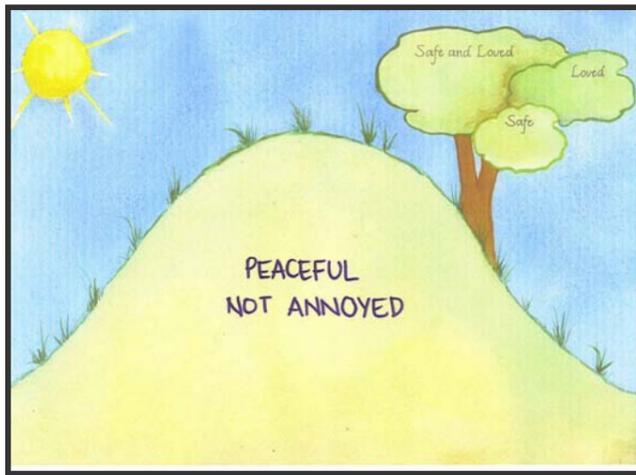
Naming the dominant problem or feeling

- Describes the problem or feeling that the client is trying to contend with
- Discuss 'anger'



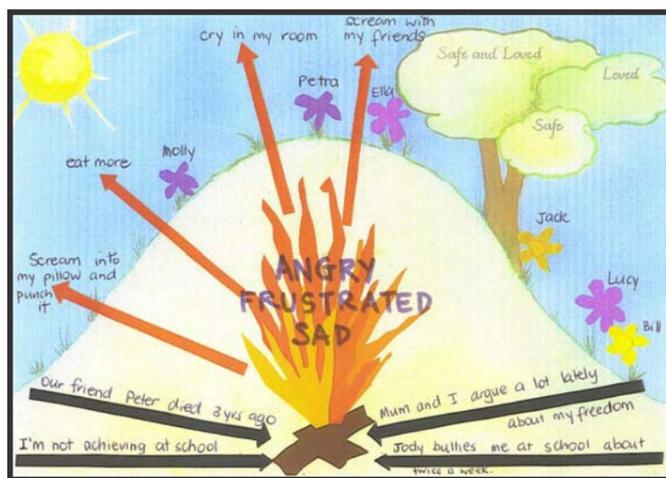
Identifying a preferred feeling

- Identifies a preferred feeling state and hope for the future



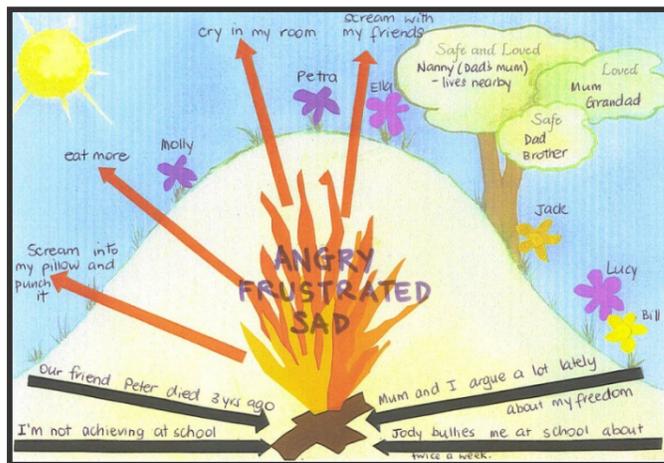
Declaring existing friendships and social connections

- Describes social supports and protective factors
- Gives the therapist an idea of the client's social skills & ability to connect to children of the same age



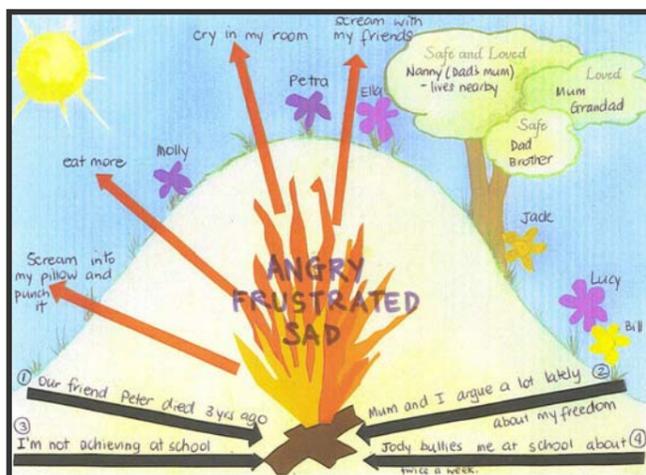
Noticing supports in family relationships

- Provides some info on family dynamics, support and concerns
- Sense of connectedness, safety and protective factors



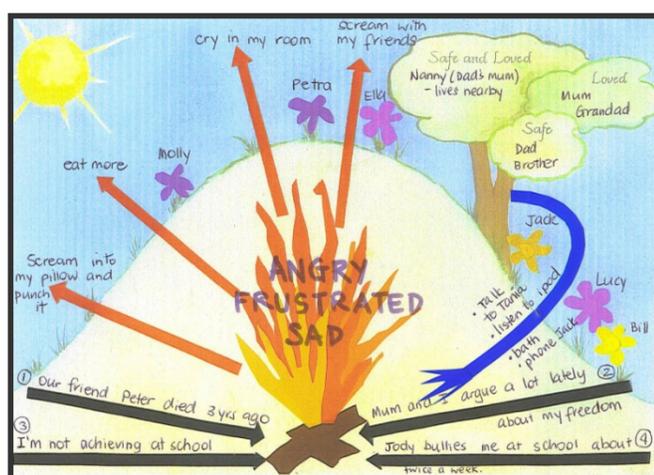
Understanding the relative weight and effects of the Problem stories

- The client values the importance/ weight and impact of the precipitating factors/ problem stories
- Start with the least bothersome thing and work towards the most bothersome thing



Identifying client skills and knowledge

- 'Putting the fire out' identifies resources the client uses to cope with distress, problem solve and feel better
- Describing the therapists' role and checking with client if they would like to continue sessions that would work toward their preferred feeling / hope.



Closure and retelling

- Check where the client would like the completed story kept and how much they would like shared with the carer/ parent if at all
- Retelling thickens up the story – focussing on the supports, strategies and skills
- Reinforces direction for future therapy sessions/ recovery planning