

## My First Session: a child's view of child and adolescent psychotherapy

"I didn't really know what to expect when Aunt J told me I was going to go to a "therapist session". Aunt J looks after me and she came with me to see this so-called therapist who turned out to be just a lady. She told me that the therapist would help me with my feelings. I asked what feelings were - how did I know I had them? My Aunt J looked at me and seemed thoughtful, she said, you just know. I thought that I didn't know but decided to be quiet because my Aunt had gone all quiet too.

"The therapist lady seemed nice. She had a doll's house in her room and some drawing pencils and colouring pens. I liked the tea-set best and I made the lady and Aunt J a cup of tea, so that they wouldn't be thirsty. The lady said her name was R and she asked Aunt J about me when I was a baby and a little girl, smaller than I am now. She even asked questions about my mummy. Aunt J doesn't like to talk about mummy but she did when R asked her. I tried to shut my ears.

"Aunt J says mummy didn't understand about taking care of me when I was little. She says that I am still little, but I give her one of my looks, because I think I am big. I don't want to be little, I think it's scary being little. Aunt J seemed to have wet eyes when she talked about me as a baby. She said I was all alone some of the time, she worried about me. She said I looked lost and little. I dropped the tea set on the floor and the lady R said that maybe I wanted her and Aunt J to know that I had had to be big and strong and do grown up things like make tea. She said that having to be big can be lonely and hard sometimes. Aunt J started to cry and I patted her hand and made her another cup of tea. I did wonder if they were going to talk about feelings. I was worried they might. I hoped that if I made enough cups of tea, they might forget.

"The lady R talked to Aunt J and me about how I'd had a very hard time and that she thought it made sense to her why I kicked my friends and broke some of Aunt J's things - like her make-up and her necklace. She said that feelings, especially sad and angry feelings, can be so hard to talk about and that maybe angry feelings were much easier to show than sad ones. She said that Aunt J was feeling very sad for me and that sad feelings are nothing to be frightened of.

"I sat on the little chair and started to draw - I didn't want them to know that I was listening. I drew a lady with long legs and long arms and a tiny little girl with brown pig tails like me. When I showed the lady, she asked me about the picture. Aunt J said that she thought the little girl looked like me. The lady said that the girl didn't have a mouth and that mouths can show or tell our feelings. I drew a sad mouth, an upside-down smile. I didn't like the picture when it had a sad face, but the lady said it was very important.

"She said that when I come to see her next week, Aunt J could wait outside and that we could both think about feelings together - just me and her. I would also have my own box to put my pictures in and it would have some toys and people in, for the doll's house. I gave R the picture but I was very cross with her

because now she knew all about my upside-down smile feelings. But R said it was really very good that now the little girl in the picture had a mouth. I thought, now I have a mouth, I can tell her exactly what I think of her, but I didn't. I decided to wait until next week."