

# Make your own puppet and talk, sing, and play with it

—Self-therapy practice using puppets—

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## 1. Introduction

Animals (creatures) often appear in children's favorite picture books. These animals can talk with children. This is common all over the world. I have been a ventriloquist with doll puppets for a long time. Children are always delighted when they see puppets. However, this year I decided to use animal soft puppets. I thought that would bring the puppets closer to the children. In fact, far beyond my expectations, as soon as they saw the animal soft puppets, they opened their hearts, talked to them, touched them, and played with them. I was surprised to see how happy the children were just looking at the puppets. I could not imagine such a change in the children.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, Israeli psychologist and ventriloquist created a project called Shalom Puppet for traumatized children in the disaster affected areas. Children were affected, however, by creating their own puppets and interacting with other friends and adults, they began to express their inner feelings. The Israelis said this helped to build the resilience of children affected by the disaster. I was moved by the power of puppetry.

There are children all over the world, however, not all children are healthy and have peaceful environments to live in. Particularly in countries where there is war or conflict, children cannot truly enjoy playing. I have come to believe that:

- ① Where children play, there is peace.
- ② Where there is peace, there is children's play.
- ③ Children's play symbolizes peace.
- ④ Therefore, the work of childcare workers and adults who create and enrich children's play is a precious work that creates peace.

Even in places where there is no war, there are many children who live in environments where they cannot truly enjoy playing. From an early age, children need play as a spontaneous activity. Puppets can play a significant role in bringing out a child's playful and spontaneous feelings. What's more, if a child has the opportunity to make a puppet for themselves, the puppet becomes their own original puppet-friend. The two of them (the puppet and the child) become good friends, support each other and enjoy each other.

## 2. Theory of puppet production

### (1) The Value of Puppet-Making

Children like creating things. They seek to create what they want and are happy when they are able to do so. Why is making a puppet so meaningful? It enables children to express themselves. In other words, what a child creates is, in a sense, a part of that child, and is also the child themselves. That's why they cherish the puppets. Some children feel attached to them.

### (2) Self-therapy in puppet therapy

There is something called puppet therapy. Puppet therapy is an activity whereby a favorable psychological and physical state is created for the target person through close encounter and interaction with the puppet. The Japanese Puppet Therapy Association explains the functions of puppet therapy in 14 stages. One of them is self-

therapy. In other words, the effects of therapy are not limited to the person being treated or the person watching the ventriloquism (audience), but also to the person performing the ventriloquism. Shalom Puppet was a support activity that was carried out in hopes of achieving exactly that effect.

### 3. Puppet production practice

The workshop I would like to offer this time is for children to choose their own materials and make their own puppets. Although the materials are limited, I would like the children to create one using parts they select among the available materials and glue them together. There are some important points to keep in mind during the making process. ① Choose your own materials, ② Make your own puppets, ③ Give your puppet a name, ④ Move the puppet, talk, sing, and play with them, ⑤ If possible, interact with other puppets. Let's try!

The contents and procedures of this workshop are as follows.

#### (1) Set up

Children sit at tables in small groups. 4 to 6 people per table. It is preferable to have a staff member at each table.

#### (2) Materials

The materials I have prepared are as follows.

- One sock (colors, textures, shapes, etc. vary)
- Puppet eyes, nose, mouth, and hair (each comes in a variety of colors and shapes. Materials are felt and wool)
- Bond (glue gun if necessary)

#### (3) Production

The production steps and program are as follows.

- 1) Introduction of how to make (3min).
- 2) Start making it. ① Choose your sock, eyes, nose, mouth, and hair. ② Use the glue at your own table. ③ Once completed, name your puppet.
- 3) Dialogue. ① Start talking with your puppet. ② Chat with your friend's puppet. Talk to anybody around you.
- 4) Sing along together.

#### 〈Summary〉

Animals often appear in children's favorite picture books. This is because children can relate to them. The purpose of this workshop is for children to enjoy making their own puppets, to open their hearts, and express themselves. Children will be able to make their own puppets with multiple materials, name their puppet, and use it for interactions with themselves and others. I believe we will be able to gain new inspiration and insights from this workshop, and find further themes.

#### 〈Reference〉

Michiko Hara, ed.(2017) Textbook of Puppet Therapy-Theory and Practice, The Japanese Puppet Therapy Association (only Japanese version)

Susan Linn(2009) The Case For Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World, The New Press