

The Therapeutic Method of JMCC

We work with the creative, image-rich materials such as sand, clay, paint, and storytelling. These materials allow the child to be free of existing definitions and to find his or her unique expression. We insist that the place and space meet each child's way of mending and processing his or her inner life.



Here is an example, of how a four-year-old defined his workplace: "I love playing where you are, whatever you call it." He conveyed himself through a personally frightening transition in his family, constructing roads to a "new place," building houses and places of comfort. He used the tractor that had struggled to make new roads into this unknown place for him. He summarized the changes he created by saying, "This tractor used to be used for pulling up muck and yuck. It's been cleaning up the bottom (of the water). Now

it's just used for plowing dirt. But it used to be used for cleaning the muck. And there was a lot of muck to be carried away, wasn't there!"

His definition of Jumping Mouse Children's Center becomes a useful reminder of keeping our definitions—as the mending place, mental health center, sandtray work, a therapeutic space—malleable as "works in progress" for the sake of the children whose struggles we witness. Each child's journey builds upon the belief that all children require the space and the people who are willing to discover with them "whatever you call it."

The Focus Is On the Child

In serving young children in their present life, we also benefit the future of—the child, their family, and the larger community:

- We move both the child and their family forward to meet their own increasingly healthy goals.
- We educate often young, single parents in parenting and in the most effective use of other agencies.

In a phrase, our focus is to move from merely stopping behaviors to preventing problems. Each therapist is the child's advocate into the family system, and the family's advocate into the community. This work involves the process of:

- Maintaining a safe space for the child to self-discover.
- Educating those in the child's environment on that child's unique place in development, self-perceptions, and interior needs.
- Working within the child's larger community.

JMCC has also set as a priority consulting with the parents and significant others in each child's environments. To this end, we work in consultation with teachers, doctors, parents, attorneys, and domestic violence advocates.

We must balance the inner work the child is able to do through play and imagination with being the spokesperson for the child in their relation to their external world. In lay terms, we see our role as "a diplomat in the country of the child," translating the interior being of the child who will follow that out into the world (their unique map), into something more understandable to parents and teachers.