

*Creating Empathy and
Understanding Through
Bibliotherapy*

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Talking Points

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- Identify various resources and novels that relate to specific issues.

Defining Bibliotherapy

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- *Bibliotherapy* is a tool for helping people deal with their problems through reading novels or stories about characters that possess similar problems. Because reading appeals to the imagination, bibliotherapy provides an interaction between the readers and the story of novel, which can be less threatening than direct confrontation.

(Adderholdt-Elliot and Eler)

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- ☐ Therapeutic: A problem exists
- ☐ Preventative: A shared concern or issue prompts an interest and is addressed before a problem exists.

Why use Bibliotherapy?

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- Uses student strength areas: i.e. reading and problem solving;
- Gifted students are often avid readers;
- Developmentally, it is an appropriate tool for counseling teens and younger students;
- An effective way to deal with the *affective needs* of gifted students;

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- Can be used to solve problems.

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3. **Insight:** The individual identifies possible solutions.
4. **Application:** The individual applies the insights to his/her own life.

Using Bibliotherapy

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- Plan structured thematic units using young adult literature that addresses the affective needs of gifted students.
- Plan structured activities that provide for student responses to their feelings, such as the use of journals and the *Temperature Taking Activity*.

The Temperature Taking Activity

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- Ask your students “How do you feel _____ right now?” (select one or more to add in the space: physically, intellectually, and/or emotionally.)
- Have your students respond in their journals using this writing prompt formula:

My temperature is...

That is my (physical, intellectual or emotional) temperature because...

Using Bibliotherapy

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Using Bibliotherapy

- Know your students and know children's and young adult literature.
- Recognize that there are some problems that you as a teacher or even a counselor are not equipped to handle and be ready to refer to a physician, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Your Goals in Addressing a “Problem”

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- Create recognition and ownership of the problem;
- Create a support group that is pledged to tackle the problem together.

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- Select “good” literature – find the best that is out there;
- Use as many book lists as sources that you can find; [See the Resource List in the Handout]

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- Look for situations in novels that offer alternatives;
- Look for characters with whom the reader can identify;

Choosing the Books

- Don't forget non-fiction.
 - ❖ Perfectionism: *What's Bad about Being Too Good* by Adderholdt, M. & J. Goldberg.
 - ❖ Understanding Giftedness: *Gifted Kids Survival Guide* by Galbriath, J & J. Delisle.

I have based these *Guidelines* on notes from J. Halsted's *Some of My Best Friends are Books*.

The Process

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- Read the book: If it doesn't hold your attention, it will not hold a gifted reader's attention!
- Plan discussion questions;

The Process

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 - Hint at the plot or conflict in the book;
 - Suggest ways that the conflict(s) might related to the readers;
 - Tell enough about the characters to initiate identification with them;
 - Tell the readers why **you** like the book and why you think they might like it too!

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- Set the parameters:
 - Confidentiality is important. The group should understand that what is said in the group is not repeated elsewhere. You might have to “cap” students from saying too much that is too personal or that later they will regret sharing.

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- Encourage students to share their coping strategies.
- Let the conversation flow where the group wants it to go.
- Outline good discussion techniques with the group before beginning. Especially stress the importance of listening: the first step in communication and that everyone must have a chance to talk.

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- Help the group focus by highlighting the motivations of the characters, the problems in the book, and the solutions presented.

The Process

Begin the discussion with a few fact questions to ensure that the group has read the book and to assess the group's general level of understanding and response to the book.

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- What is the central character's biggest problem?
- How do you think he/she feels when...?
- What strengths does he/she have that help him/her cope?

The Process

- How did someone you know handle the same situation?

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- What would you have done?

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- How did someone you know handle the same situation?
- What would you have done?
- If you were his/her best friend, what advice would you give?

The Process

- How would that help the situation?

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- What effect do the people in the book have on one another?

The Process

- In having students write in response to some of the interpretative questions use as a guide the stages of bibliotherapy by interpreting as:
 - Identification = recognizing
 - Catharsis = feeling
 - Insight = thinking

An Example

Jacob, I Have Loved by Katherine Patterson

Jacob, I Have Loved

Sara Louise Bradshaw is sick and tired of her beautiful twin Caroline. Ever since they were born, Caroline has been the pretty one, the talented one, the better sister. Even now, Caroline seems to take everything: Louise's friends, their parents' love, her dreams for the future.

For once in her life, Louise wants to be the special one. But in order to do that, she must first figure out who she is . . . and find a way to make a place for herself outside her sister's shadow. [Amazon.com]

Guiding Questions

- Hinting at the plot and conflict: *In Jacob, I Have Loved, Louise's abilities are unrecognized, and all of the family's resources go for voice lessons for her musically gifted twin, Caroline.*

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- Ways the conflict might relate to the group: *Louise grows up believing that her family loves Caroline more than they love her. Have you ever felt that way?*

Guiding Questions

- Guide the group to identify with the characters:
Louise is hard-working and resourceful but not much interested in schoolwork or in her own future until circumstances force her to make a decision.

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- Guide the group to identify with the characters: *Louise is hard-working and resourceful but not much interested in schoolwork or in her own future until circumstances force her to make a decision.*
- Share why you like the book: *I like this book, especially because I like each of the characters – even Caroline – by the end of the book.*

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 - Identification [*Recognizing*],
 - Catharsis [*Feeling*],
 - Insight [*Thinking*],
 - Application [*Applying to one's own situation*] comes later.

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- As a teacher, you probably have not been trained as a counselor, so you must be sensitive enough and be ready to refer students to a counselor, who may in turn refer to a physician, a psychologist, or a psychiatrist.

A Cautionary Note

- You must control the depth of the discussion. It is not necessary to go into great and explicit details. That is for a trained professionals to handle. Students should be protected from saying too much that they may later regret saying or be embarrassing.

From: Hynes, A. & M. Hynes-Berry: *Bibliotherapy: The Interactive Process: A Handbook.*

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 - Maturity: self-awareness, self-acceptance, tolerance of others;
 - Integrity: respect for self and others than enables the therapist to avoid exploitation of emotions;

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- Adaptability: the ability to adjust plans to meet the needs of the group at the moment and to allow participants their own interpretations.

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 - ✦ Empathy: the ability to understand another person's feelings without actually experiencing them;
 - ✦ Respect: the recognition of the value of another person's feelings and of his or her inherent worth and uniqueness;
 - ✦ Genuineness: sincerity, spontaneity, openness; awareness and acceptance of one's own inner experiences.

One Last Note

From Judith Halsted

One Last Note

To use developmental bibliotherapy with gifted children, leaders should also know and enjoy children's literature, understand child development in general and that of gifted children in particular, have the trust of the children with who they are working, and know something about counseling and discussion techniques. [Page 111]

Resources for Books for Bibliotherapy

Listed in your Handout

Resources

- *Annotated Bibliography* (Chapter 8) in Halsted's *Some of My Best Friends are Books*. [Pages 237-499]
- “Books for Children Featuring Gifted Children” in Silverman's *Counseling the Gifted*. [Pages 337-345]
- Schroeder-Davis' *Appendix* in Kerr's *A Handbook for Counseling the Gifted and Talented*.
- *The Book Finder 4: When Kids Need Books* by Spredemann-Dreyer.

Picture Books That Deal With Bullying

- **The Bullied:** *Weird* by Erin Frankel (2012, Free Spirit Publishing)
- **The By-stander:** *Dare* by Erin Frankel (2012, Free Spirit Publishing)
- **The Bully:** *Tough* by Erin Frankel (2012, Free Spirit Publishing)

Picture Books That Deal With Bullying

- *Bully* by Patricia Polacco (2012, Putnam and Sons)
- *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson (2012, Nancy Paulsen Books)
- *Twinkle* by Akire Lynn Williamson (2017, The Butterfly Typeface)

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