

**The Canadian Association for Sandplay Therapy  
Third National Sandplay Conference**

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People with developmental disabilities present a challenge to the researcher in terms of psychological assessment. These people often have limited verbal abilities and moreover, their cognitive impairments make it difficult for them to respond to verbal tests. To remedy this situation, a research team composed of creative arts therapists involved with *The Center for the Arts in Human Development* (Montreal) developed a research project with the aim of locating, administering, evaluating and refining creative arts therapies assessments for the developmentally disabled or even creating new ones if none in a particular modality were found to be appropriate for this population. In dealing with the challenge for a certain percentage of the clients with developmental disabilities to actually accomplish figure drawing, a sandtray assessment was also used. *The World Test* (Buhler, 1951) was chosen for this purpose. It has been observed that whereas many in this population cannot represent scenes by graphic means, they can, in fact construct meaningful worlds in the sandtray (Bowyer, 1958).

This presentation will focus on the results obtained with a pilot group (N=6) which was assessed over a three-year period, and a group (N=16) which was assessed over a two-year period. Analysis of the data reveals that participants' scores significantly improved over time. This suggests that subjects' adjustment was ameliorated by having participated in the creative arts therapies program at the *Centre for the Arts in Human Development*. A decrease in aggressiveness, withdrawal, confusion and rigidity were noticeable and behavioral observations also showed that self-confidence and self-esteem increased over the course of their participation in the program. Findings suggest that arts-based therapeutic programs such as the one offered at the Centre offer considerable value in enhancing the lives and overall development of adults with developmental disabilities.

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