

Group work Report Faery Garden Group Jan-December 2016 ©CaraCare

Faery Garden group is a creative experience in which children are encouraged to re-discover the magic and mystery of their own imagination and the beauty of nature. It is a journey of creation that brings children to together for all four season. Planning, designing, achieving. Sensing, enjoying, connecting. All is what faery gardening is all about.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The success of the first CaraCare gardening group owes much to the belief, hard work and generosity of quite a few people. It is an honour to acknowledge you all either by name or collectively.

Thank you, the intrepid four children, who formed the first gardening group run at Cara House. Thank you for teaching the three facilitators Manny, Karyn and Mary Jo more about the power of the imagination and hard work of children that we knew possible. Your enthusiastic, hard work, and ingenuity inspired us every session we gathered together. You turned a weed patch in a corner of the Cara garden into something beautiful, not just for yourselves to admire, but for children, young people and adults in the years to come.

Thank you to Sally Righterⁱ, who skilfully wrote a section of this report. Hence being the first CaraCare participant to co-author a group work report.

Thank you to the dedicated carers and parents who got the children to us every Saturday without fail and trusted us with the care of their children, (including gardening in the rain and dirty hands ①) over the life of the group.

Thank you to a wonderfully skilled and creative group facilitators I had the pleasure to work with Manny and Karyn. Thank you for the beauty, passion and care you bring to the time we spent with these children.

Thank you to the staff at The Benevolent Society and Catholic Care who referred and supported the attendance at the group.

Thank you to the generosity of the Irish community in Sydney through the Lansdowne club. The donation from the 2016 St Patrick's Day lunch funded a large part of the total cost of this group. I hope the findings of this group reflect the worth of your contribution and honour your generosity.

DEEP GRATITUDE ALWAYS Mary Jo Mc Veigh Founding CEO CaraCare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Purpose of Report

The aims of this report are

- To document the progress of the children engaged in the first CaraCare gardening group.
- To include the opinions of the children who completed the group.
- To identify and evaluate the process of delivering a gardening as a group work program to children and young people who have been abused.

Method of Data Collection

The data was collected in terms of both a process at the end of every session by using two brief check in questions and a final interview on the last session.

The final interview was the most exciting form of data collection for CaraCare in 2016. CaraCare turned children's participation as one of its founding principles into action by inviting one of the gardening group participants, Sally, to contribute to this report.

Sally is involved as one of the junior-journalists for the CaraCare Children's magazine. She wrote a piece on the gardening group for the magazine. In doing so she designed the interview schedule, interviewed all the children and wrote the article with minimal guidance from CaraCare staff.

The quality of her work was of such a high standard it has been included in this report as part of the data collection.

This was an experimental pilot project as a gardening group had never been run at CaraCare. Therefore, no outcome measures were designed to capture quantitative data.

However, all the children have agreed to return two months post group to participate in a focus group session and co-author a paper for publication in a professional journal.

Participants

Of the 4 children engaged in this group:

- > 4 were primary victims of abuse.
- > The age range was 8 to 13 years.
- > There were 2 boys and 2 girls.
- > Each child suffered from a different form of abuse.
- ➤ Relationship to offender 3 parents, 1 extended family member.

Key findings

The feedback from the children was overwhelmingly positive. The children placed great significance on connection to others and creating the garden as an enjoyable and worthwhile pursuit. The results highlighted:

- The success of gardening in providing a meaningful experience to children who were abused.
- The success of gardening in providing a resilience based experience for children who were abused.
- ➤ The success of gardening in providing a resilience based experience for children who were abused.

Conclusions

The results from the evaluation of this group show that gardening was a highly valued and meaningful experience for each of the four children who attended. An unexpected and highly significant outcome was the benefits to children who did not attend the group but played in the garden as part of their individual therapy sessions at Cara House.

The popularity of the group is evidenced by the fact that mid-way through this group we started another group and by the end of the group and time of writing this report there are eighteen children on a waiting list.

The biographical details of the children are significant in terms of age range and trauma category as it shows the flexibility of gardening as a program.

CaraCare will continue to offer and evaluate Gardening as one of its major group work programs. In addition we will co-author an academic paper to be submitted for publication in a major professional journal.

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

1:1 Australian data on the abuse of children

The following information is a summary of the recent report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australian Government 2014-2015 findings on child abuse and neglect.

The report estimated that one in every three children in Australian received child protection services, with 73% being repeat clients. This was a rise of 6% over the previous year. The rates of these reports that were substantiated remained at a stable level since 2012. This report showed one in every five of those children being the subject of multiple substantiated reports.

The most common forms of abuse substantiated were emotional abuse and neglect.

1:2 Formation of the idea for a faery garden group

This group came from a collaborative idea of Manny Kassiotis, Karyn Miller and Mary Jo Mc Veigh. Each of these professionals have varying interests in gardening or the use of creativity and imagination in helping children heal from trauma. A chance meeting between Manny and Mary Jo from CaraCare and Karyn from The Faery Realm sparked conversations and sharing of ideas. From these conversations the decision was taken to pilot a faery garden group.

1:3 Rationale for the group

The underlying rational for this group was based on threefold clinical assertions that (1) the significance of place attachment (2) the use of imagination and (3) the importance of nature as factors in children's recovery from trauma.

1:4 Place Attachment

Much has been written in the child development field about the importance of the attachment between children and their parents for children's emotional, physical and psychological needs. Scannel & Gifford (2010) highlight the relevance of person-place bond for identity and Thomas and Thompson highlight that the everyday environment of a child is vital to their social development and overall health.

Simkins and Thwaites (2008:532) point out that, 'it is essential that the voices of children play a more significant role than they currently do in the arrangement and content of spatial realms.'

They conclude their paper with a significant consideration for adults to heed;

If we are to appreciate this realness of place from the perspective of children, we not only need to give them a voice, but we also need to be able to listen to

the voices appropriately and understand them. Simkins and Thwaites (2008:543).

1:5 The use of imagination

Simkins and Thwaites (2008:543) discovered the importance of imagination for children in their study of place attachment:

Brook (2010:303) highlights the importance of nature affording children the opportunity to unlock their creative imaginations:

The evidence for the development of creativity being linked to this kind of informal play, particularly in nature is well founded. The natural environment always offers affordances and challenges, it gives the child the raw material. But unlike the model airplane to prepared craft kit it needs imagination to see the affordances and surmount the challenges.

1:6 The importance of Nature

Collins, Avey and Lekkas (2016:673) highlighted that in the 1940s in the mental health field renewed a focus on biological treatment for mental illness that meant, 'with drug treatment increasingly viewed as a panacea, the landscape receded in significance'.

Collins et al (2016:675) also noted that in 1984 when Roger Ulrich published his paper on the effects of looking at trees on patient recovery time, 'this paper, in part, provided the evidence needed by the medical profession working within a strictly biomedical framework to recognise the benefits of landscape.'

Horticultural therapy is now used for a wide variety of social and physical and mental health issues, (Kim, 2003; Richards & Kafami, 1999). Kim (2003) shows how it dates as far back as ancient Egypt but was utilised in America in 1798 by Dr. Benjamin Rush with the culmination of the first professional organization being opened in 1973:The National Council for Therapy and Rehabilitation Through Horticulture, (currently entitled American Horticultural Therapy Association; AHTA).

Richards & Kafami (1999:184) used Mattson's definition to define Horticultural therapy as:

The experience of plants between the therapist and the patient/client. Their interaction creates an environment which is beneficial in mediating patient/client dysfunction because plants are universal to the human experience and symbolize a synchronization of human life with that of earth.

Nature is a grand concept that comes in many forms. Due to the urban location of the therapy centre we chose the garden as a form of what the Kaplans termed as 'nearby nature'.

A review of the literature on the use of nature with children highlighted some positive outcomes. Some of the literature related to gardening in particular. A summary of the finding of the literature review is found in figure 1:1.

Authors	Themes from the literature
Beringer, A., & Martin, P., (2003)	The importance of adventure therapies to acknowledge the part nature plays in the success of these programs.
Brook, I., (2010)	Highlighted the health and social benefits of being in nature.
Flick, K.M., (2012)	Horticultural therapy can be beneficial to children across the Autism Spectrum Disorder but needs more research to pinpoint best way to apply it to this group of children.
Hordyk, S.R., Dulude, M., & Shem, M., (2015)	Nature is important to children's development beyond mental and physical benefits. Children have a relationship with nature that they see as reciprocal, caring for nature and feeling contained by nature was evident.
Linzmayer, C.D., Halpenny, E.A., & Walker, G.J. (2014)	Children had positive sensory and affectual experience in nature. Arousal that was challenging but not overwhelming added to the positive aspects of the experience
Roe, J., & Aspinall, P., (2011)	Effects of a forest setting on boys with extreme behaviour problems showed increased social cohesion and trust, sense of ease, creativity and exploratory behaviours.
Said, I., & Bakar, M., (2007)	Highlighted positive results in physical, social and cognitive functioning when child patients moved from ward to garden area.
Söderström, M., et al (2012)	Healthier body shape, increased night sleep and better well- being of children as a result of being in high quality outdoor environments.
Swank, J.M., & Shin, S.M. (2015)	Positive result of a gardening group with children with emotional and behavioural problems were: self-concept scores higher, improved behavioural adjustments, opportunity to co-work
Twill, S.E., Purvis, T., & Norris, M. (2011)	Gardening project in Juvenile Detention Centre showed improved behaviour in the facility, helped relationships with staff, lesson learned in gardening took home with them.
Worsham, N.L. & Goodvin, R. (2007)	Interviews with professional involved in gardening and nature project with children showed five themes that are important; metaphorical environment, garden environment, one-on-one relationship, child-centred focus, challenging representational models.

Figure 1:1 Summary of findings of literature review

The literature review (figure 1:1) showed the positive effects of nature on emotional, physical and social development of children and young people. However, of the articles reviewed only five targeted gardening (Flick, K.M., (2012); Said, I., & Bakar, M., (2007); Swank, J.M., & Shin, S.M. (2015); Twill, S.E., Purvis, T., & Norris, M. (2011); Worsham, N.L. & Goodvin, R. (2007).

While Swank, J.M., & Shin, S.M. (2015) and Worsham, N.L. & Goodvin, R. (2007) research was with children akin to our clinical population of children (abuse and emotional problems) none of the studies identified the use of gardening alone with children who have been traumatised by abuse. None of these two studies looked at the element of gardening combined with imagination, i.e. Faery Garden. Moreover, none of these studies reported feedback from children.

This literature review has highlighted a paucity of research on the use of gardening and the use of creative imagination and gardening with children who have been abused. Consequently, this highlights the place that CaraCare can play in leading creative practice with children and young people who have been abused.

Chapter Two: OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

This evaluation report details the participation of 4 children in the first CaraCare gardening group. The group was held on four consecutive Saturday mornings in April 2016 and a further sessions three at the turn of each season of the year. The group took place at Cara House in Concord New South Wales during 2016.

2:1 Aims

The aims were to provide children, whose lives have been impacted by the trauma of neglect, violence and abuse, an opportunity to tap into their own creative imagination and enjoy the benefits of collective gardening.

2:2 Participants

The total number of children referred to the group was four, with no drop out throughout the entire year that the group was inexistence. The biographical details are contained in figure 2:1

AGE	GENDER	LIVING STATUS	ETHNICITY	TRAUMA HISTORY	OFFENDER
7 years	Male	ООНС	Aboriginal	Neglect	Parents
8 years	Male	Kinship Care	Anglo-Australian	Neglect/ Emotional Abuse	Parents
9 years	Female	Birth Family	Anglo-Australian	Sexual Assault	Relative
13 years	Female	Kinship Care	Iran-African	Domestic Violence	Father
				Neglect	Mother post separation

Figure 2:1: Biographical details of children

To honour the confidentiality of the children who attended the group there are no images of them in this report. However, both the children and their carers agreed to photographs of the gardening process with them in it that did not identify them in any way. Some of these photographs that shows the progress of the garden have been included in the report.

2:3 Facilitators

Two clinicians and one community partner were used in the facilitation of this group. The two clinicians were highly skilled and trained; one was Mary Jo McVeigh, CaraCare CEO and the other was Manny Kassiotis, Senior Clinician Lead at Cara House. The community partner was Karyn Miller CEO Faery Realm.

2:4 Process

In the process of creating the faery garden the Group facilitators planned and modified each session to meet the needs of the group participants. However, there was an overarching structure designed to provide the children a safe, reliable, predictable, consistent and fun group work experience.

The process was purposely focused on engaging the children with the natural world and their own creative imagination.

2:5 Structure

The overarching structure of this group work program was as follows:

- Four 2 hour gardening sessions held in April 2016.
- Three 2 hour sessions held in each of the preceding school terms, coinciding with the turn of the seasons.
- Facilitators met each week for half an hour planning and set up before group session
- Facilitators held a one-hour post session meetings each week to debrief and plan.

2:6 Session Structure

Each group session had a consistency aimed to promote safety and group cohesion. While the maintenance of this consistent routine was seen as important by facilitators they were also highly attuned to the needs of the group and able to value individual difference. The routine of each group was as follows:

- A Welcome activity
- Planning, Designing, Gardening
- Morning tea
- Session review

The Welcome activities consisted of the facilitators reading the 'Noticing's' from the week before, also hearing from each person how their week had been and then stepping through the planned activities for the current session.

The Session Closures consisted of the group coming back together to describe an element of the group they enjoyed or wanted to change. The results of these closure rounds are found in figure 4:1.

2:7 Children's participation

Recognising children as the co-creators of their own healing process CaraCare prioritises children's participation in the running of the group sessions. This active participation unfolded over the life of this group in a manner that did not flood the children and took into account their individual ages and ability.

As the premise of this group was based on harnessing children's creative imagination the group was highly child participant focused. In addition one of the children, contributed to the writing of this report and all children will have the opportunity to co-author an academic paper that will be submitted to a professional journal.

2:8 Partnership

Community partners across the welfare sector are a vital part of the success of the group work programs to be run by CaraCare as they will provide the main referral base for the groups. The three agencies that referred children to this group were:

Family & Community Service
The Benevolent Society
Catholic Care

Chapter Three: EVALUATION

3:1 Data Collection

This gardening group was the first to be run at CaraCare. While the three facilitators had extensive experience of gardening and working with traumatised children none of them had combined these variables.

A literature review, (figure 1:1) conducted highlighted a paucity of research on doing creative gardening (i.e. Faery Garden) with abused children. With this unknown clinical landscape lying in front of them the facilitators choose to run this pilot group using a 'reflective fascination paradigm'iii to discover the children's experience of the group.

The only tools utilised for data collection, therefore, were to gain information on the children's experience. The first tool was a sessional feedback sheet that contained tow questions; (1) What did you like about today's group (2) What could have been done differently. These questions were asked and recorded by a facilitators as the children were packing up at the end of the session.

3:2 Session Feedback

Figure 3:2 shows the results of the session feedback. The answers to the questions were recorded using the children's direct language. The overwhelming response to do something different was 'Nothing". The child who answered "more gold", did so because he took immense joy with sorting through the gold coloured stones for the garden.

The predominant themes of what was liked was balanced between doing the gardening and making the items and placing them into the garden.

CHILD ONE (C)							
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Liked	When we worked together.	Working together.	Creating stuff.	Creating all the things for the garden.	Non- attendance	Planting the flowers.	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.
Do Differently	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.

CHILD ONE (J)							
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Liked	Gardening.	Planting the Plants.	Building stuff together.	Making all the things.	Painting the faery House.	Making the river.	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.
Do Differently	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.

CHILD ONE (SA)							
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Liked	Designing the garden.	Making the chair.	Creating stuff.	Putting all the stuff in the garden.	Non- attendance.	Making things.	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.
Do Differently	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.

CHILD ONE (S	CHILD ONE (S)							
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	
Liked	Gold	Gold	Non- Attendance	Everything	The Faery House	Everything	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.	
Do Differently	More Gold.	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	Nothing	No sessional data collected. End of group interview was conducted.	

3:3 End of Group Interview

The section of this report was written by one of the participants and despite minimal editing is the sole work of the young person.

In 2016 a group of 4 children participated in the first fairy garden group. The children as well as the facilitators Mary Jo, Manny and Karyn also participated in this workshop by guiding us through the process of creating the final product of the fairy garden. We, the four kids supported by the facilitators, all played a part in the making of this fairy garden or faery-Tobia as we call it, some steps included designing the items and placing them in the garden, and in the end creating the final product by bringing all the elements together which you can see today if you visit the Cara House. The basis and aim for this project was to create a fun and engaging place to all people who come regularly or a just visiting Cara house to see, and for the children who participated to learn something new and experience new things. I have interviewed the children who took part in this workshop to ask them about their opinion on the fairy garden. We named it Faery-Tobia as there is a dog at Cara house who loves to dig in the garden, we thought it would be ironic to have the fairy garden named after him as it seems he enjoys it almost as much as we do.

The questions I asked my fellow gardeners were as follows:

- 1. What was the most enjoyable experience during this workshop?
- 2. What step of building the fairy garden was the best?
- 3. What do you think about the fairy garden?
- 4. Why do you think the workshop was a good thing to do?
- 5. Why do you think others will enjoy doing the workshop?
- 6. Do you think children and young people should do gardening? Why?

Answers to these questions are as follows:

What was the most enjoyable experience during this workshop?

All the children in this group all thought that the best part of the workshop was creating the garden. Although there are many elements in creating the garden the all shared common answers for this question e.g.

"Digging and creating the garden, as well as playing with the fairies and other items".

What steps of Building the Faery Garden was the best?

Putting the plants and elements into the garden was the favourite and best part for the group. They all had fun doing this part and therefore it was the best for them. "I thought the best part of the fairy garden was putting all the final elements such as the fairy houses and fairies in the garden".

What do you think about the faery garden?

All the children were proud of their work seeing how much it has changed from beginning to end. They all thought it was good and are very proud of it.

"When we first saw the garden it didn't look nice but now it does and I think we have done a good job".

Why do you think the workshop was a good thing to do?

The workshop was a good thing to do as it gave us joy, we learnt new things and spent time together, all of the children answered to this question.

"I think the workshop was a good thing to do as you got to play and spend time with other children who participated and befriend them"

Why do you think others will enjoy doing the workshop?

They all thought others will enjoy this workshop because it is fun and enjoyable. "Others will like the workshop as it is fun and enjoyable"

Do you think children and young people should do gardening? Why?

All the children agreed that all young people and children should do gardening ad it is fun and will let you have new experiences.

"I definitely think that all people should to gardening as it is enjoyable and just gives us a way to go outside and interact with people"

Overall the fairy garden group was a great success and all who participated have only good things to say about it. I definitely think it is a good idea to get kids involved in gardening and interacting with others in a nice environment. I would definitely recommend this for other places to do and other children to participate in.

Chapter Four: DISCUSSION

4:1 Summary of Evaluative Issues

In summary, the results of this group highlighted several important evaluative issues for CaraCare:

- The success of the faery garden group in providing a meaningful experience to children who were abused.
- The success of the faery garden group in providing an expressive group therapy experience for children who were abused.
- The success of the faery garden group in activating the three fold clinical assertions of (1) the significance of place attachment (2) the importance of nature and (3) the use of imagination as a factors in children's recovery from trauma.

4:2 Wisdom gained

The issues that arose from this evaluation went far and beyond what any of the facilitators expected. The overwhelming positive feedback from the children about their experience plus the extensive waiting list not only convinced the three facilitators of the need to continue with running gardening groups but to co-author a paper with the children for publication in a professional journal.

4:3 Unforeseen consequences: Participants

The facilitators hypothesised that the gardening group would provide children with the three fold clinical assertions of (1) the significance of place attachment (2) the importance of nature and (3) the use of imagination as a factors in children's recovery from trauma. However, what also eventuated as an important factors were the children's enjoyment of the physical acts of creating items for the garden and a sense of social connection.

The joy the children took from creating the garden and seeing their work come to fruition is hard to capture on paper. This joy was so present that it featured in the facilitators debrief each session.

While all four children gained from the experience two children appeared to take away extra benefits. Sally, created her own faery garden at home and ended up co-authoring this paper. John^{iv} immediate enthusiasm and love of gardening grew throughout the life of the group so much so he was asked to consider if he would like

to mentor some of the younger children in the next garden group to be run. He accepted without hesitation. His carer mentioned the positive impact that this request has had on him in the subsequent weeks.

4:4 Unforeseen consequences: External to the group

The facilitators did not foresee that other children who came to Cara House would use the garden as a therapeutic space. This was brought to their attention by the therapists who work at Cara House. Consequently, a request will be sent to these therapist to provide case examples of how they integrated the garden into ongoing therapy. This data will be included in the paper to be written for publication.

Adults who visited Cara House either as clients or in a professional capacity also expressed interest in the garden;

4:5 Limitations

The limitations of the data:

- Small numbers of participant's means data cannot be globalised.
- Lack of comparison with another group work program.
- Lack of standardised measure to analysis the qualitative data

[&]quot;I was mesmerised by it. It is so beautiful."

[&]quot;I could sit and stare at it for hours. It is so peaceful."

[&]quot;I went straight home and planned a faery garden with my children."

Chapter Five: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the data analysis, interview contents and interpretation of the results. That,

- CaraCare continues to offer gardening as a therapeutic group intervention to children and young people who have suffered trauma as a result of abuse and neglect.
- 2. CaraCare further refines protocols and procedures to support and evaluate the gardening group work intervention.
- 3. CaraCare engages in further research in the area of group work interventions to children and young people who have suffered trauma as a result of abuse and neglect to establish an evidence base for effectiveness.

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ⁱ This is a pseudo name to protect the identity of the child who contributed to this report. When she turns eighteen she will be contacted by the CEO and asked if she wants to have her real name included and the report will be amended to reflect her request.

ⁱⁱ "Noticing" is a concept developed as part of the Wrapped Program, written by Mary Jo Mc Veigh which is based on attachment theory. It utilises attunement language to highlight resilience and strengths in children and young people.

iii This term was created by Mary Jo Mc Veigh in her clinical and consultancy practice as a form of learning. She invites clinical and students to approach aspects of their work from a pure form of 'not knowing', that is, not seeking answers or outcomes and allowing the work to reveal its wisdom. She then uses a Socratic form of inquiry to unearth clinical findings.

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