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In Lovin' Color

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Abstract

This short piece shares a work-in-progress painting by a four year old within the context of Attachment Theory.

Author/Artist Bio

Blendine Hawkins is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice and a lecturer at Chaminade University of Honolulu. She received her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and her Ph.D. in Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She completed her pre- and post-doctoral fellowship at the Couples and Family Therapy program at the University of Oregon. Her research interests are with transnational and families of color, intercultural couple dynamics, attachment and peaceful parent-child relationships, and utilizing intersectionality theory and attending to marginalized identities in client care.

Keywords

attachment theory, art, human development

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In Lovin' Color

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Ultimately, the aim is to empower them to create, feel, connect, and express. Whether four years old or fifty-seven, this invitation to select colors and images that inspire powerful feelings has almost always been met with a grin. Then maybe a hum of playfulness, or furrowed brows of thoughtfulness, and then a sigh or exhale at the end. I use art in my work as a family therapist and I find it works best when I provide little to no instructions. Often, I supply the words Loved or Safe as they are significant within Attachment theory, one of the more notable and evidence-rich approaches to understanding human development and relationships (Cassidy, Jones, & Shaver, 2013). The theory and the half century of research into attachment postulate that caregivers provide the foundation from which the working models of infants and children are shaped, essentially parents teach children how to view the world and themselves (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1988). Growth happens in the context of relationships that provide love, security, and responsiveness, mainly families (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). The neurobiological research is evident, both in how the brain and body responds to different situations given (in the simplest and most reductionist of terms) how loved or safe they feel. It goes to follow that having either a child or adult explore their feelings visually, allows them to expand on these important facets of their inner world. This work-in-progress painting was created by a four year old, who chose specific colors for the figures of people with outstretched hands, and then there's the one signifying 'loved' for which they had their "arms wrapped around themselves". I ask "how do you feel loved? Why did you choose 'excited'? How were you kind? When did you feel brave today?" knowing it's just the beginning of a much longer and important conversation.



Brave, Kind, Loved and Excited about Dinosaurs

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