**Using Masks to Incorporate Narrative and Art Therapy ideas**

These are some of the ideas I have been trialling and some of the questions I have tried in my mask making and therapy with children.

**Introducing the idea**

* Explain that the child will be creating a mask as a way of exploring the feelings we sometimes have hidden inside. Use bear cards to show that sometimes we can look happy, but inside we can be sad or angry.
* Have the child identify a feeling that they mask, cover up, try to hide or do not like to show anybody (e.g. using bear cards). Ask “if there is a feeling you hide inside, which one would it be?” Choose a bear card that shows that feeling.
* Invite them to think about “If we were to make a mask of this feeling, what would the character look like? What shape would it be? What colour would it be? What else would be on the mask?

**Creating the Mask**

* Invite them to begin drawing their mask, initially using textas and pastels, then later adding craft bits and pieces if they so choose (e.g. feathers, coloured paper, buttons, cotton balls, etc)
* Explain that it is not a self portrait, it is a character. It can be as crazy or weird as they like. Sometimes it’s helpful to make a mask of your own while they are, to reinforce this idea.
* Invite them to cut out the mask and the eyes so they can see through
* Ask the child to give the character mask a name “What would you call this feeling or problem, if it had a name”? (e.g. if kids are stuck, tell them about other names that kids have used like “Mr Angry, Miss Crazy Woman, Mr Volcano”)

**Interviewing the Mask/problem**

We’re going to pretend that the feeling or problem is here with us now. I want you to put on the mask, so that I can ask it some questions. That will help me to understand what this feeling or problem is like for you.

*Hello (insert name)….My name is …..and I’m just wondering if you could tell me a bit about yourself?*

* *Tell me (insert name) What sort of tricks do you get up to when you come into (clients name)’s body? What do you make him/her do?*
* *If you were mucking things up for (clients names)….. at home…in the community…at school…. what would you be doing?*
* *What sort of things do you make (clients name) say to …your dad?…your mum?...your teacher? …your brother/sister?*
* *What do you make (clients name) think about him or her self?*
* *How much time do you spend in (clients name)’s body?*
* *Is this time getting longer or shorter or staying the same?*
* *I know that (clients name)’s life hasn’t always had you around. Can you tell me when you first started giving (client name) a hard time?*
* *Was there something happening to (clients name) that you thought, now’s a good time to go and start messing things up for him/her?*
* *What do you think (clients name)’s life was like, before you came along?*
* *How big a problem do you think you have made for (client’s name)?*
* *What sort of effect have you had on (clients name)’s… relationships with her friends….
….relationships with her family? …..relationships with her siblings? ….schoolwork? ……health? ….everyday activities? ….how she/he thinks about him/her self?*
* *What other stories can you tell me about yourself?*

**Drama/Movement**

*How does your character move?*

The worker and client can put on their masks and interact with each other in playful ways. (e.g. the worker can creep up on the client to see how they would react, gently prod them, use noises to get a reaction, chase them around the room or pretend to run away from them etc etc)

**After the interview**

Ask the child to take off the mask…

* *I’m interested in hearing what you think about (masks name). What do you think about (masks name) ?*
* *Is there anything you want to say to (masks name) now?*
* *Are you happy with how much time (mask’s name) is hanging around?*
* *Is it good or bad that (masks’s name) has affected you in this way? Why?*
* *If (masks name) was not around so much, what would be happening?*

In future therapy sessions when building up a picture about the alternative story, the mask can be used by sitting it on the table and talking about it using the questions for discovering unique outcomes. Or if there has been further trouble, ask the child to put the mask on so you can interview them about (masks name) about the trouble it caused.