

CHAPTER 5

TWO CASE STUDIES: THE EXPLORATION OF A PHENOMENON

CASE 1 - PRESENTING SABELO CASE 2 - INTRODUCING PETUNIA

I introduce the reader to Sabelo and Petunia. Each case study explores the phenomenon of traumatic grief in a particular child. These two cases will be presented differently due to the limited scope of this research dissertation. The first case, Sabelo, will be presented in the detail and richness that qualitative research advocates and deserves. It includes cognitive, emotional and behavioural assessments both prior to, and after therapy. The 11 therapy sessions are presented together with artworks (List of Figures). The second research case will report findings on the pre-and post-therapy tests. The limited number of sessions - 4 sessions - will be described briefly and are presented together with artworks (List of Figures). Each case study will follow the same protocol of pre-testing, non-directive art therapy intervention and post-testing as follows:

- Accessing background history from parent/s and school staff/reports
- Pre-therapy testing
 - Cognitive Assessment - *SSAIS-R*
 - Emotional Assessment - Drawings (*DAP and KFD*)
 - *The Sacks Sentence Completion Test*
 - *The Impact of Event Scale (PTSD)*
 - *The Connor's Behaviour Checklist*

- Art therapy sessions
- Post-therapy testing
 - Cognitive Assessment - SSAIS-R
 - Emotional Assessment - Drawings (*DAP and KFD*)
 - *The Sacks Sentence Completion Test*
 - *The Impact of Event Scale* (PTSD)
 - *The Connor's Behaviour Checklist*
- Summary and conclusions

5.1 Case 1- Presenting Sabelo*

Sabelo was in Grade 6 and 11 years of age at the time of our first meeting at his school. He presented as a surly and distant child who wanted nothing to do with whatever he thought I as a therapist had to offer him. He had been experiencing difficulty with the authority of the school for many years and according to the principal, was on the verge of being expelled if nothing changed for the better. Sabelo was also experiencing social difficulty, being perceived as an aggressive loner by his peers and his teachers. The school was all too happy that Sabelo was to receive some form of intervention as they perceived him as a behaviour problem that they were forced to endure. The staff felt helpless in understanding what constituted his problems and how to offer him constructive help in the school environment.

5.1.1 Background

The background was supplied by an interview with Sabelo's mother, interviews with his teachers and school principal and information gathered from his school file.

*Names have been changed to protect individual identity

5.1.1.1 Family Background

Sabelo is the youngest of four children. His siblings are Danny* (28), Rosemarie*(24) and Maggie*(19). Sabelo's mother, Maria* is the single parent of this family as her husband, Arthur*, passed away on 22 January 2000 when Sabelo was 8 years old and in Grade 3. Sabelo had been close to his father. Arthur had been seriously ill for a year and died from cancer at home. Sabelo was never told that his father was terminally ill and he never got a chance to say goodbye to his father. Sabelo's mother is a school teacher in Alexandra and is the sole bread winner for the family. Sabelo's 19 year old sister lives at home while she attends Technikon, but is very often not at home. Danny and Rosemarie live away from home but visit regularly.

5.1.1.2 Birth, infancy and pre-school history

In terms of his birth history, Sabelo was an unexpected but welcome arrival. The pregnancy and birth went well and there were no complicating health factors. In terms of infant and pre-school health history, Sabelo appeared to have average sleeping and feeding habits. No serious diseases or injuries were incurred and developmental milestones were reached within the norm. Sabelo attended an English-speaking pre-primary school in 1996. As Tsonga was Sabelo's mother-tongue, language and communication were a difficulty for him in pre-primary. Apart from this no other problems were experienced at this stage.

5.1.1.3 Primary School History

Sabelo began at his present English medium primary school in Grade 1 in 1997. He was found to be a slow worker, finding specific difficulty with both reading and comprehension. His general proficiency in communicating in English continued to

be a problem for him in Grade 1. No further problems were experienced during this time but the school advised that Sabelo repeat Grade 1 in 1998 as he was young for the grade and because of his language difficulties. In his repeat year of Grade 1 Sabelo progressed slowly in his scholastic work but enough to be put up to Grade 2 in 1999. Sabelo was now 8 years old and in this year his father became seriously ill with cancer.

Sabelo presented with behaviour difficulties in Grade 2, being described by his class teacher as distracted and disruptive in class and aggressive towards his peers. Sabelo's behaviour became so difficult for the teacher to cope with that she requested that Sabelo be removed from her class and be placed in the other Grade 2. Although communication was made with Sabelo's parents with regard to his behaviour, the school reports that little co-operation or involvement was obtained. Sabelo continued in Grade 2 with his behaviour remained largely unchanged, according to his Grade 2 school reports.

Sabelo gained entrance to Grade 3 in 2000. In January 2000 Sabelo's father passed away. The school attempted to keep contact with the family, but considered that Sabelo's mother was distancing herself from the school and did not want to deal with Sabelo's difficulties. She avoided meetings and did not return phone calls. When contact was made in August 2000 to discuss Sabelo's aggressive behaviour the mother was perceived by the principal and teacher to be defensive and disobliging. The school advised that Sabelo go for counselling but no action was taken regarding this advice. Sabelo's aggressive behaviour began to escalate to a point where he was suspended for five days in October 2000. It had been alleged, as was heard in the disciplinary hearing, that Sabelo had stolen keys from the teacher and that he had kicked her and acted aggressively towards her. His scholastic work was suffering as he was disruptive in class, not concentrating during class-work and refusing to do his homework.

Although his scholastic progress was poor and the school advised extra remedial classes offered in the school, Sabelo's mother remained at a distance from the school's recommendations. The principal and teachers felt increasingly helpless in the situation. Sabelo was however put up to Grade 4 in 2001, now 10 years old. His aggressive behaviour towards his peers and his teachers alike continued unabated. He was perceived as aggressive and as a loner.

In November 2001, Sabelo was suspended for bullying. The incident occurred during after-care, where Sabelo had tied a younger boy to a pole for teasing him and proceeded to kick him and hit him. A disciplinary hearing was held in which it was decided that after his return to school, Sabelo was to be kept busy polishing shoes in the principal's office for the rest of the term during breaks.

Sabelo was becoming increasingly disruptive. Teachers, parents and pupils knew him by reputation if not by name. Sabelo proceeded to Grade 5 in 2002 and he continued with poor scholastic achievement, aggressive behaviour and poor relationships with authority and peers. In June of 2002 Sabelo was again attending a disciplinary hearing, facing a second suspension for five days. The incident involved his response to a teacher tearing up his class-work in front of the class. Sabelo had reacted by kicking and biting the teacher and attempting to leave the school without permission. At this hearing, which Sabelo's mother attended, the school wished to expel Sabelo from the school. Sabelo's mother refused to accept this and contacted the education authorities to re-instate Sabelo at the school.

After this difficult sequence of events, Sabelo's mother took him to a psychologist for an emotional assessment. The report, written in August 2002, concluded that Sabelo had not worked through his father's death adequately and that Sabelo required counselling.

Sabelo attended play therapy briefly during the course of 2002. During this time there were continued reports on his school file for bullying. In July 2002 he bullied one of his peers. In August he tore one of his class-mates schoolbag and on a separate occasion, threatened his peers with bodily harm. His relationship with the authority of the school became increasingly difficult. His work progress continued to be poor and teachers had largely given up on receiving homework or class-work from him. Sabelo responded to any demand or perceived threat from the environment with over-reactive emotional outbursts. The resulting punishment he received from the teachers or principal left him feeling a large degree of alienation from the school environment.

5.1.2 Pre-Therapy Cognitive and Emotional Assessment

Cognitive and emotional assessment took place over a few days, which culminated in an evaluation with regard to Sabelo's cognitive and emotional needs. The assessments included a *SSAIS-R* to ascertain cognitive functioning, projective techniques to gain insight into Sabelo's emotional functioning. An *Impact of Event Scale* was used to assess the possibility of PTSD (used in the sampling process) and the *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* was selected to assess interpersonal behaviour in the school setting. This section looks at these assessments in detail together with reflections and conclusions with regard to a diagnosis and recommendations.

5.1.2.1 Pre-therapy Cognitive Assessment

a) *Senior South African Individual Scale Revised (SSAIS-R)*

The *SSAIS-R* is used to obtain a differential picture of certain cognitive abilities. Firstly the level of general intelligence is determined to predict scholastic

achievement. Secondly, relative strengths and weaknesses in certain important facets of intelligence are evaluated to obtain diagnostic and prognostic information.

(i) Behaviour during testing

Sabelo appeared lethargic and did not engage with the test material immediately. This improved as testing progressed. Towards the end of testing Sabelo became tired and lost concentration.

On the Verbal Scale, specifically during Vocabulary sub-test, Sabelo appeared slow and measured in his thinking. He appeared calm and confident in the comprehension sub-test. His manner during the Similarities sub-test was definite and matter-of-fact. He was able to say that he did not know what certain words meant and therefore could not know the answer. He became somewhat detached during the Number Problems sub-test and the Story Memory sub-test. He complained of feeling tired and refused to continue, but agreed to complete the testing at our next meeting.

At our next meeting, Sabelo continued with the Non-verbal Scale. During the Pattern Completion sub-test he worked quickly and impulsively, not appearing to make an effort to work out difficult tasks. He enjoyed the Block Design sub-test, insisting on completing the design even after time had run out. During the Missing Parts sub-test he used gestures to indicate the missing parts, using language to a lesser extent. He continued to comply with requests but indicated his tiredness during the form-board sub-test.

(ii) Test Results

- Full Scale : Average Range (102)
- Verbal Scale : Average Range (105)
- Non-verbal Scale : Average Range (97)

TABLE 1

| <i>Verbal Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> | <i>Performance Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Vocabulary | 10 | Pattern Completion | 6 |
| Comprehension | 10 | Block Designs | 9 |
| Similarities | 11 | Missing Parts | 15 |
| Number problems | 9 | Form Board | 8 |
| Story Memory | 13 | | |
| Memory for Digits | 6 | Coding | 6 |

Age on date of assessment: 12 years 1 month

- Full Scale

The summed score on the *SSAIS-R* reveals Average potential, however there is inter-test scatter, which may be more significant than the summed score. This inter-test scatter suggests that there is a variance in his cognitive processing. That is, his cognitive abilities are not evenly developed. This may reflect that Sabelo may have higher scholastic potential than is revealed but that this may not be realized due to certain difficulties. The inter-test scatter is consistent with many of the symptoms consistent with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

- Verbal Scale

The *SSAIS-R* reveals that Sabelo is within the Average Range of verbal learning ability. One must however take into account the cultural bias of the test and that English is Sabelo's second language. Vocabulary and Comprehension scores are in the Average Range, indicating that Sabelo's knowledge of everyday vocabulary and social norms are intact. On the Similarities sub-test, Sabelo scored within the Average Range which indicates that his logic, abstract reasoning, verbal concept formation and long-term memory are expressed at an average level. Below Average scoring on reasoning with regard to mathematical problems implies that Sabelo may have lack of an elementary knowledge of mathematics required to solve Number Problems. There may also be anxiety, which prevents adequate concentration on the task at hand. Sabelo scored in the Above Average Range for short term auditory memory which indicates that he has the ability to concentrate when tasks are presented orally. The low score on the Digit sub-test may indicate tendencies toward depression, possible anxiety and feelings of frustration.

- Non-verbal Scale

The Below Average Pattern Completion score may indicate the below average ability to analyse and extract visual concepts and apply them. There may be emotional disturbances, which could be interfering with the ability to distinguish non-essential from essential details. There may be poor visual concentration and visual perceptual ability which could be due to anxiety or emotional difficulties or a visual perceptual deficit. Sabelo scored in the Below Average Range for Block Design. Sabelo ran over time for many of the block design tasks, although he was able to approximate the solution. This may indicate perceptual difficulties or poor spatial conceptualisation.

There may also be a low level of aspiration due to expectation of failure. Sabelo scored well above average on the Missing Parts sub-test. This reveals flexibility of thought and good perception and/or over-alertness to stimuli, such as hypersensitivity to criticism. The below average score on the Form-board sub-test may reveal that Sabelo has difficulty with spatial tasks. However this may also indicate anxiety, difficulty with visual concentration or fatigue. Given a task demanding visual-motor speed, Sabelo performed in the below average range. This indicates that Sabelo's visual associative learning ability, visual-motor speed and visual-motor integration is below the norm. This may result in reading difficulties together with slow pace in written scholastic tasks and confusion in how to go about a task.

(b) *Summary*

The summed score on the *SSAIS-R* reveals Average potential (102). There is a non-significant discrepancy of 8 points between the Scaled scores, in favour of the verbal (Verbal:105; Non-verbal: 97). There may be scholastic difficulty, specifically in reading, based on the visual perceptual difficulties found. Inter-test scatter is noted on the Non-verbal scale, indicating unevenly developed abilities in this area. This inter-test scatter may be more significant than the summed score. This may reflect that Sabelo may have higher scholastic potential than is revealed but that this may not be realized due to certain difficulties. The inter-test scatter may be consistent with attention difficulties or Attention Deficit Disorder, anxiety or tension denoting the possibility of emotional difficulties. These emotional aspects may be affecting Sabelo's ability to concentrate and apply himself to a task. Analysis of an emotional assessment is essential in order to clearly understand the nature Sabelo's difficulties.

5.1.2.2 Pre-therapy Emotional Assessment

a) *Drawings*

Qualitative analysis of Sabelo's responses to the *Draw-a-Person (DAP)* and the *Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD)* provides insights into his subjective experience of his emotional environment; significant figures in his life and how he experiences himself emotionally.

(i) Analysis of the Draw-a-Person (DAP) – Figure 1

Behaviour during drawing was noted. Sabelo drew himself with many erasures and little improvement in the drawing itself. This may indicate some anxiety with regard to the testing situation or his level of anxiety with regard to himself in general.

According to the indicators in Appendix F, central placement and a reasonable size may indicate healthy adjustment. While Sabelo's *DAP* is centrally placed, is of reasonable size and presents quite an open figure, the overall global impact of the picture reveals a certain emotional emptiness in the picture. The lack of detail and the vacancy in the eyes are revealing in this respect. In looking at the detail of the *DAP*, Sabelo reveals himself as a sensitive boy in drawing relatively large ears.

The large, flattened head may indicate a tendency towards an excessive use of fantasy in order to meet his need for human relationship. It may also indicate intellectual aspirations. The absence of a nose may indicate anxiety and difficulty with appropriate self-assertion. This difficulty with assertion and need for power is echoed in the angular and unbalanced arrangement of the shoulders. The

absence of hands and short floppy arms reveals a sense of emotional helplessness. The imbalance in the size of the legs also gives the viewer a sense of instability. The small feet for the size of the person may indicate fearfulness and/or a need for safety.

Overall, given the child's history with regard to aggressive behaviour, there are very few signs of overt aggression in this *DAP*. That is, large size drawing, bulging muscles, long arms, big hands, teeth, guns, knives, clawed nails (Appendix 1). Rather, there is an emergent picture of an anxious, somewhat helpless and fearful boy. This does not fit with his aggressive history and yet "it is not unusual to see children with PTSD portray themselves as both helpless and aggressive" (Stronach-Buschel & Bettina, 1990:50). The idea of "masked depression" is considered outdated (Epanchin, 1987:197) although "a number of authors note that depression occurs frequently with conduct disorder".

(ii) Analysis of the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) - Figure 2

On an overall viewing, it is immediately evident that Sabelo is not present in the family picture. Those present include his mother (on the far right) and his three older siblings. This may mean that Sabelo does not feel like part of the family or that there is not a proper sense of family. Perhaps there may be an idealization of his siblings in that he wants to be "big" and in control like his brother and sisters and yet he feels little control and mostly helpless in his own life. In the discussion after the picture was drawn, Sabelo said he did not feel like part of his family and that he felt alone.

Sabelo's mother is depicted in a similar fashion as his siblings, giving an impression that she is not differentiated in any personal way. This may indicate that Sabelo's mother holds no unique emotional significance in Sabelo's

perception; that she is perceived emotionally as equal to a sibling rather than as a particular figure of nurturance. In fact the figure to the left of Figure 2 reveals a rounded figure with a more welcoming smile that may represent a figure of maternal nurturance. The figures were drawn in order from left to right which would also indicate the emotional predominance of this figure drawn first in Sabelo's life.

There is an air of passivity to the figures drawn. Sabelo chose not to have his family "doing something" even though instructions were clearly given. This could be interpreted as oppositional behaviour or perhaps the passivity and lack of energy drawn in the picture, is part of how Sabelo experiences his family. That is, that there is little active interaction or a lack of wanting to make contact in the family. This may represent Sabelo's need for more contact with his environment and significant people in his life especially since he expressed a lack of belonging in the family and feeling alone.

Sabelo's *KFD* also reveals some of the same characteristics as those of his *DAP*. The vacant eyes; the lack of detail; the floppy, handless arms and the small feet are again present. One is left with Sabelo's feelings of helplessness, aloneness and depression.

b) *The Sacks Sentence Completion Test*

Sabelo did not wish to participate in this test. I offered to do the test orally with him which he accepted. The *Sack's Sentence Completion Test* revealed the following in terms of Sabelo's perception of:

- family;
- sex;
- inter-personal relationships; and
- self concept.

a) FAMILY

I. Attitude toward mother

- 14. My mother *is never there*.
- 29. My mother and I *keep out of each other's way*.
- 44. I think that most mothers *are mean*.
- 59. I like my mother but *I don't like it when she shouts*.

Rating :2

Interpretative summary:

Sabelo's "attitude towards his mother" appears to be one of avoidance, anger and an awareness of her lack of involvement in his life.

II Attitude toward father

- 1. I feel that my father seldom *took me to his work*.
- 16. If my father would only *not have died*.
- 31. I wish my father *was still alive*.
- 46. I feel that my father (*would not answer*).

Rating :2

Interpretative summary:

Sabelo's "attitude towards his father" is one of regret and sadness. In the initial completion of the sentences Sabelo left out 31 and 45 and came back to them later on request. As can be seen there was avoidance of the topic of his father.

III Attitude towards the family unit

- 12. Compared with most families, mine is *different*.
- 27. My family treats me like *a baby*.
- 42. Most families I know *do things together, not like mine*.
- 57. When I was a child, my family *was much happier*.

Rating: 2

Interpretative summary:

There is generally a negative “attitude towards the family unit”. There appears to be a lack of connection in the family. There is a sense of nostalgia for the past. Sabelo may also experience himself as outside of the family unit.

b) SEX

IV. Attitude toward women

- 10. My idea of a perfect woman *nothing*.
- 25. I think most girls *are nasty*.
- 40. I believe most women *I don't know*.
- 55. What I like least about women *they lie*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo appears suspicious and avoidant of women.

V. Attitude toward heterosexual relationships

- 11. When I see a man and a woman together *nothing*.
- 26. My feeling about married life is *my mother is not married*.
- 41. If I had a love affair *I don't know*.
- 56. My love life *nothing*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

There is avoidance and a personalized awareness of the absence of his father's role as a husband.

VI. Attitude toward friends and acquaintances

- 8. I feel that a real friend *doesn't betray you or fight you*
- 23. I don't like people who *backstab you*.

38. The people I like best *I don't know*.

53. When I'm not around, my friends *backstab me*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo desires true friendship but doubts that this is possible. He expects betrayal and/or rejection.

c) INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

VII. Attitude towards superiors at work or school

6. The male teachers at our school *are OK, sometimes horrible*.

21. In school, my teachers *hate me*.

36. When I see the teacher coming *nothing*.

51. People whom I consider my superiors *I don't know*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

There is an avoidance of issues pertaining to respect for authority. Sabelo appears to feel unaccepted in the school environment and there are feelings of persecution.

VIII. Attitude toward people supervised

4. If I were in charge *I would let school finish early*.

19. If people work for me *I would be good to them*.

34. The people (children) who do things for me *no-one*.

48. In giving orders to others *I don't*.

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo considers himself a fair and good person. He may wish that others could see him in this way.

IX. Attitude toward colleagues at work or school

13. At school, I get along best with *nobody*.

28. Those at school with me *are just there*.

43. I like working with people who *I don't*.

58. Other children in my class *nothing*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo's relationships with peers at school appear to be strained. Sabelo's attitude is one of opposition and avoidance.

d) SELF-CONCEPT

X. Fears

7. I know it is silly but I am afraid of *I'm not afraid of anything*.

22. Most of my friends don't know that I am afraid of *nothing*.

37. I wish I could lose the fear of *I'm not afraid*.

52. My fears sometimes force me to *(no answer)*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

An attitude of avoidance and fear of vulnerability is most evident.

XI. Guilt

15. I would do anything to forget the time I *(no answer)*.

30. My greatest mistake was *letting the brake off the car*.

45. When I was younger, I felt guilty about *nothing*.

60. The worst thing I ever did *was have an accident*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

There is some avoidance of the task. However there is a sense that there are feelings of guilt although they are unexplored.

XII. Attitude toward own abilities

- 2. When the odds are against me *I fight.*
- 17. I believe I have the ability to *I'm not sure.*
- 32. My greatest weakness is *I'm small.*
- 47. When luck turns against me *I'm lucky.*

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo shows an attitude of resiliency together with a sense of humour.

XIV. Attitude towards past

- 9. When I was a child (younger) *I used to play with my friend Thabo.*
- 24. Before I was at school *I was happy.*
- 39. If I were young again *I would be happy.*
- 54. My most vivid childhood memory *is my father in bed.*

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

There is a longing for the perceived happiness of early years before his father's death. There may be a yearning for the carefree days before the demands of school became a reality.

XIV. Attitude toward the future

- 5. To me the future looks *I don't know.*
- 20. I look forward to *the end of the week.*
- 35. Someday I *will grow taller.*
- 50. When I am older *I'm leaving to go to high school.*

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo appears uncertain about his future but expresses tacitly his difficulty being at school at present. His self-image is challenged.

XV. Goals

- 3. I always wanted to *sing*.
- 18. I could be perfectly happy if *I didn't get any homework*.
- 33. My secret ambition in life *I don't know*.
- 49. What I want most out of life *is to be happy*.

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo's goals are very immediate and short term. There is a sense that he has not really considered attainable goals in his life.

General Summary

1. Principle areas of conflict and disturbance

Sabelo's principle conflict may appear within the family. There may be regret and avoidance in his thoughts about his father and mother. There may also be a feeling of aloneness. There may be conflict in terms of Sabelo's expectations of how the world would be and how it has turned out for him thus far. There may be disappointment and an expectation that the world is a dangerous place where there is no-one to trust. This appears to present in a defensive and aggressive disposition. There is perhaps an inner fear and vulnerability masked by an external appearance of being fearless and uncaring.

2. Interrelationships among the attitudes

Interrelated attitudes incorporate the feelings of being disappointed by the adults around him. His feelings of low self-worth are represented across the attitudes in his expectation of the worst happening to him and a poor expectation for the future.

3. Personality structure

- (a) Extent to which the subject responds to inner impulses and to outer stimuli – Sabelo expects his environment to reject and betray him.

- (b) His response to outer stimuli is defensive and aggressive. There appears to be over-reaction to outer stimuli.
- (c) Emotional adjustment – Sabelo may not have adjusted to life without his father. He may feel betrayed by his mother and father in that they never told him that his father was dying. He may feel disappointed in the adults around him and in life in general. This lack of integration of his father's death into his psyche and the perceived failure to be protected from life's pain by significant adults may be partially responsible for possible feelings of depression.
- (d) Maturity – Sabelo's maturity may have been stunted by this un-integrated experience. He is "stuck" in a place of helplessness.
- (e) Reality level – Sabelo avoids the reality of his father's death and any reminder thereof. He selectively attempts to exclude the reality of this painful experience and yet finds that the reality intrudes on him consistently.
- (f) Manner in which conflicts are expressed – Conflicts are expressed in a defensive and aggressive manner.

c) *Summary of Pre-therapy Emotional Assessment*

Sabelo appears to be experiencing emotional difficulty. He appears to show signs of depression. There may be a perceived lack of support from his family and significant others which exacerbates his feeling of being alone in his sense of loss. He may be masking feelings of vulnerability and loss by alienating himself and others in a show of aggression. The analysis of the *Impact of Event Scale* (PTSD) taken in the sampling process will be useful in further understanding the impact of Sabelo's father's death in his life.

5.1.3 The Impact of Event Scale - Pre-therapy

The result of the scale was as follows (Appendix G):

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------|
| <u>Avoidance Sub-scale</u> : | Mean of items 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22 : | 3.25 |
| <u>Intrusion Sub-scale</u> : | Mean of items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 20 : | 2.71 |
| <u>Hyper-arousal Sub-scale</u> : | Mean of items 4, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 : | 2.85 |

The *IES-R* score: Sum of the above 3 clinical scales: 8.81 (out of a maximum figure of 12) = 0.73

This score shows a high percentage of PTSD symptoms. There is sufficient avoidance, intrusion and hyper-arousal to allow for a diagnosis of PTSD with regard to Sabelo's experience of his father's death. It is my understanding that the presence of PTSD would be a primary diagnosis which has led to the secondary symptoms of emotional difficulties.

5.1.4 The Connor's Behaviour Checklist - Pre-therapy

The *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* was given to Sabelo's class teacher to complete (Appendix H). An interpretation includes the following:

The *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* confirms Sabelo's difficulty with concentration and distractibility. Restless and over-active behaviour as well as daydreaming are behaviours cited. The teacher also sees Sabelo as being "overly sad or sullen" and having difficulty with temper outbursts. In terms of social interaction, Sabelo appears somewhat removed from and unaccepted by the group. Teasing

other children and interfering with their activities is also an observed behaviour. The teacher also identifies defiant, impudent, quarrelsome and stubborn behaviour. All these behaviours are those observed by the teacher incidentally and informally in the classroom over a period of time.

5.1.5 *Conclusions and Recommendations*

a) Conclusions with regard to the Cognitive Assessment

- There appears to be average potential with regard to scholastic performance.
- There may be scholastic difficulty based on visual perceptual difficulties.
- Concentration is compromised which may be due to emotional difficulties.
- There are indicators that there are emotional difficulties present. There appears to be anxiety and depression present.

b) Conclusions with regard to the Emotional Assessment

- Sabelo appears to be experiencing emotional difficulty which confirms the hypothesis made on the cognitive assessment.
- He appears to show signs of depression which appears, according to his behavioural and scholastic history, to have started after his father's death.
- There may be a perceived lack of support from his family and significant others which exacerbates his feeling of being alone in his sense of loss.
- He may be masking feelings of vulnerability and loss by alienating himself and others in a show of aggression.
- Due to the length of time since his father's death (3 years) and the increasingly out-of-control behaviour cited, it is suspected that Sabelo may be experiencing PTSD.

c) Conclusions with regard to the *Impact of Event Scale*

According to the *Impact of Event Scale*, there is significant avoidance, intrusion and hyper-arousal to allow for a diagnosis of PTSD with regard to Sabelo's experience of his father's death. This is supported by the findings on the Missing Parts sub-test of the Non-verbal scale of the *SSAIS-R*.

d) Conclusions with regard to the *Connor's Behaviour Checklist*

- The *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* confirms Sabelo's difficulty with concentration and distractibility as found in the *SSAIS-R*. This difficulty with concentration would also manifest in restless, over-active behaviour and daydreaming, as cited on the *Connor's checklist*.
- The teacher also sees Sabelo as being "overly sad or sullen" and having difficulty with temper outbursts. These observations appear to confirm the idea of depression and symptoms of hyper-arousal.
- In terms of social interaction, Sabelo appears somewhat removed from and unaccepted by the group. Teasing other children and interfering with their activities is also an observed behaviour.
- The teacher also identifies defiant, impudent, quarrelsome and stubborn behaviour which alienates him from his peers and teachers alike.

e) Summary of Conclusions

Sabelo appears to be experiencing symptoms of PTSD which has resulted in an ongoing depression. This is impacting on all areas of his development; emotionally, socially, educationally and behaviourally.

f) Recommendations

- Counselling/therapy would be a recommendation to address the areas of PTSD and resultant emotional difficulty.
- It is recommended that Sabelo seek remedial support in terms of scholastic achievement, in order to address the current scholastic “lags”.

5.1.6 11 Selected Art Therapy Sessions over the Course of a Year

a) Introduction

In presenting the following eleven sessions, I would like to bring the reader's attention to the manner in which this presentation will be given. In making a choice between writing “a descriptive narrative first followed by analysis and interpretation” (Merriam, 1998:243) or “integrating descriptions and vignettes with commentary” (Merriam, 1998:243), I came to a decision in favour of the latter. The reason for this decision was that this method matched my personal style of writing. It also allowed me, as the writer, to take the reader on a journey of experience with this particular child. My ongoing interpretation and internal dialogue influenced my position as therapist in the session and therefore influenced the session itself.

To recap, a full assessment of Sabelo was now complete. The assessment information was written up and presented to Sabelo's mother in the form of a report. Sessions began after gaining parental permission to continue with therapy.

b) Sessions with Sabelo

It was evident from the outset that Sabelo had become comfortable in our regular meetings. This was revealed in his willingness to come to therapy and his ability to take what he needed from the sessions. Due to illness, I was unable to attend our first therapy session. Sabelo was dutifully notified of this situation the day prior to the session. The following week when we met for the first therapy session, Sabelo refused to talk to me and sat quietly.

5.1.6.1 Session 1

Sabelo sat quietly on the chair staring out of the smudged window. We sat there together for some time when I reflected to him that perhaps he was angry with me. His eyes shifted slowly from the window towards mine and then back to the window again. I reflected further that this anger may have been because I had missed our session last week and that he was looking forward to it. He scowled and moved uncomfortably in the chair. We sat there for what seemed like an age when he suddenly gestured that he would like to draw. As all the art materials were displayed and available at all times, I concluded that the smudged window had proven less interesting to him than the art media at some point in his “silent treatment” toward me. I realised the power of silence.

Sabelo took a pencil and a piece of A4 paper and proceeded to draw a house (Figure 3). The house itself was drawn first with no windows and no door. He proceeded to draw in windows with burglar bars and added a top window in the roof. He said he had completed his drawing. I reflected that I noticed that the house appeared as though it did not want anyone to come in and I asked if he agreed with this or not. He looked at the house for some time and then, leaning

back in his chair passively, he drew in handles on the window. He then added a garage to the right of the picture with a staircase to the top floor. Sabelo then said to me that someone can come in through the door at the bottom and reach the house through the staircase but that the door and windows can only open from the inside, as all windows do.

His drawing had revealed much to me in its projective quality. Not only was Sabelo's anger at me able to find expression but he was telling me through the drawing that he needed to protect himself. Perhaps he was also testing how the therapeutic space would cope with his feelings of anger. Sabelo's drawing told me that the only way for me to reach him emotionally was for him to allow me in. Only he held the key to the door.

Aside

In the following three sessions Sabelo came willingly but did not want to use the art media or talk at all. He sat on the chair sadly, slumping over the table in front of him either staring out of the window or resting on his arms. Reflections to him included that he was tired and needed a place to rest and relax. I concluded that he needed the quietness to reflect on his own thoughts without intrusion, which he was granted. At no point in these sessions did I consider that he was uncomfortable and yet there was some discomfort on my part. I felt as though I was being tested. Perhaps Sabelo was deciding whether to "open the door" or not.

5.1.6.2 Session 2

Sabelo came into the therapy room purposefully and looked at all the media offered. He selected the dough, preferring it to the clay that was also an option.

He said the clay was too “sticky”. He kneaded the dough, rolled it in his hands; getting in touch with the medium and its relaxing properties. He made a flat solid circle with most of the dough using a roller and shaping the circle with his hands. He then used his fingers to gently prod a line down the middle, and then split the circle in two. He used one of the half-circles to make a lounge suite, with a rug on the floor and a coffee table on top of the rug. He was fully engrossed in his activity, working calmly and with focus. The chairs that he fashioned clustered around the centre table and rug. Sabelo used the other half of the dough to form a fireplace and fire. After having taken much time to create all these figures, he relaxed back in his chair and looked at what he had made with satisfaction.

After some time he began to talk about the scene. He told me that the children come home and make the fire to keep the house warm. Sometimes the dad will tell stories or help the children to lay and light the fire. The mother will sometimes come and sit at the fireside and enjoy its warmth. She only makes the fire if no-one else is there, to warm herself. His story was staccato and told in a soft voice, revealing emotion that he had not yet revealed before. I reflected that this story was difficult for him to tell and yet he was ready to tell it. He continued to fiddle with a chair making modifications and improvements, making eye contact with me off and on. Eventually when he felt the experience was complete he pushed the dough together into a ball. I reflected that perhaps he needed to put his feelings about this story together just like he is putting the dough together. Just before the end of the session, he told me that his father had died. It was said matter-of-factly, with no detail and punctured the air in its directness. His face was flat and devoid of emotion. Sabelo got up and indicated that he wanted to go to the toilet.

5.1.6.3 Session 3

Sabelo came in hurriedly and immediately began to cry, the tears rolling down his face. He was not able to say anything. I said that I wondered whether his feelings were so strong that he could not speak. He nodded and looked at the floor and at other things in the room. I reflected that perhaps he could be hoping that by looking at other things and thinking about them, he may be distracted from his feelings. He did not respond. After a while he seemed to relax and looked around for some painting paper and paints. He did not speak for the rest of the session.

He proceeded to involve himself in his painting. He painted the whole page red, using measured and even strokes moving backwards and forwards in almost a rocking action. He then covered the red paint with white. When this was relatively dry he covered the white with black. He used the black paint with little water making scratching sounds on the paper. He continued soothing himself with the to and fro movement of painting until the end of the session.

5.1.6.4 Session 4

Sabelo came into the room purposefully and immediately selected paint and paper. He asked accusingly if other children had used his paint. I said to him that the paints were only for his use but that perhaps he would feel better if he had a box that would hold his paints and paintings. Perhaps in this way he would know clearly what paints were his and he could perhaps trust that his paints had not been used by someone else. He agreed. I further reflected that perhaps he was also curious about other children who may be coming for therapy. He was quiet and avoided eye contact. He set about his painting (Figure 4).

His use of the paint was more fluid and relaxed than in the previous session. He systematically painted from left to right adding what appeared as facial features last. He did not comment on his painting and he invited no comment. The end result was perhaps the impression of a mask and I wondered whether Sabelo was working with the mask within himself, what Winnicott called the false self. Whatever the painting meant to Sabelo, it was evident in his interaction with the paint medium that he was self-soothing and finding pleasure in the process of painting. In keeping with the approach of Kramer I followed the lead of the client. Sabelo gave me no invitation to participate verbally. The art session held no verbal content but it was my distinct impression that Sabelo was working deep within himself.

5.1.6.5 Session 5

Sabelo walked into the therapy room, and collected the brushes and water for his painting. He asked about his other paintings and where they were. I brought out a box that held both his set of paints and the paintings that he had already created. I reflected that perhaps he wanted to know if I looked after his things and whether I kept a space in my mind for him when we were not together. He said yes. Sabelo seemed pleased about the box and he began to paint on the paper he had selected. He painted in six colours; red, black, blue, green and yellow each separated by white (Figure 5).

He painted meticulously, enjoying the texture and sensory experience of the paint medium. He brushed the paint on thickly and richly, diluting here and there by adding water. When his painting was completed he asked me what I thought about it. This was a new development in the art therapy process; he was involving me in his personal process by inviting my comment. I reflected that he had enjoyed painting and wanted to share this experience with me.

I asked him about what the colours meant to him and what feelings they made him feel. He said that red was a “dark, sad and angry“ feeling, as was black. He said that the yellow, green and blue were “lighter, happier” feelings. The white was in-between. I said that I could see that somehow he was able to hold these “darker” and “lighter” feelings together on the page. He was quiet but pensive. Sabelo pointed out that there was still time in the session and that he would like to decorate his box. He painted the surface of each side of the box in a different colour (Figure 6). He was most pleased with his result and left the therapy room whistling as he went. He appeared relaxed and satisfied.

5.1.6.6 Session 6

At the beginning of this session Sabelo entered the therapy room looking for his box. He checked that his paints were there and he looked through his paintings. Once this need had been satisfied he made eye contact with me and said that he would like to paint. He took his time selecting brushes and when he was deciding on which paper to use he returned to his box and extracted the painting that he had completed in Session 3. He used the hard end of a paintbrush and began scratching out a tree and some flowers from the solidly painted black, now-dry paint. He said that there was a beautiful garden hidden in this picture all along and that he wanted me to see it. I reflected that perhaps he wanted me to know that underneath what was seen on the surface is a thing of beauty that he wanted to reveal to me. I added that perhaps he wanted to share that he may be starting to hope or believe in the beauty behind the darkness. He nodded and then was quiet, continuing to scratch out forms from the blackness.

Sabelo then collected water and said that he wanted to paint on the picture as well. He painted the colours yellow, blue, purple and red in solid forms. He then painted a face in white with green facial features (Figure 7). He did not invite my

comment or offer any comment of his own. It was however interesting to me that he painted a face or a “mask” over the newly-revealed garden. I interpreted this as him giving himself the glimmer of seeing parts of himself that had been consumed by darkness. In doing this he became afraid of what that might mean to him. It was almost as if he was working with his “false” self and his “real” self but needed to keep the mask in place to protect himself from fragmenting, to hold himself together.

At the end of the session he asked me to look after his painting before he left the therapy room.

5.1.6.7 Session 7

Sabelo came in and decided to play with the dough. He played with it for a few minutes and then packed it away. He then was looking through the drawing media and on to the paint media. I reflected to him that perhaps he was feeling as though he couldn't settle to anything. I wondered what that was about. He said that the holidays were coming up and that he was not looking forward to the holidays. I wondered why this was so. Sabelo said that his mother was going away with the church next week. I asked how he felt about this. He said that it was not much different than normal. “I'll only miss her when I am bored”. I reflected that he may get sad and miss his mom when he has nothing to do or when he has time to think about how sad her not being there makes him feel. He did not respond but went and selected the paints and large brushes. I suggested that perhaps he may also miss coming for therapy during the weeks of the holidays. He again said provocatively “Only when I am bored”.

He settled in his chair and went about the painting of a large circle in rough, chaotic manner in the colour red (Figure 8). He added rays onto the form in a

slap-dash manner. As he continued to paint, his movements became less haphazard and slowly became more controlled. Using now the colour orange, there was evidence of a defined border.

Rays in orange also were added but much more calmly. It was interesting to me that the painting looked like a sun. Ogden (1979:91) links the drawing or painting of a sun to the expression of dependency and a need for emotional warmth. As Sabelo finished this very quick painting he said "This is my heart". I asked how his heart felt. He said that it felt sad and unhappy. He added as an after-thought, "The sadness only comes out when I am angry". I affirmed his insight.

Before he left the room he asked me to keep his painting safe. I assured him that I would keep his heart safe.

5.1.6.8 Session 8

There had been a long school holiday between the last session and this. Sabelo looked refreshed after the holiday and I reflected this to him. He came in smiling and somewhat over-confident.

Before beginning his painting, which he again spontaneously selected, Sabelo pointed out, somewhat critically, that his paints were nearly finished and that he needed to have new paints. I said that I had purchased some paints to replace those paints that were almost finished. He seemed pleased and his arrogance lost some of its edge. I reflected that he perhaps felt pleased that I understood his need before he expressed it and that perhaps it felt good that I was keeping an eye on his needs. He nodded.

He opened the new paints and complained that they smelt different. I reflected that he was happy to have the new paints but that the paints were not exactly the same as the paints he was used to. Perhaps he finds the change difficult. He did not respond. He then asked if anyone else from his grade comes to see me. I said that he was the only one and I suggested that perhaps it was nice to feel special. He shook his head but smiled broadly. Sabelo continued painting quietly for some time. He asked if I still had the dough that he had played with before. I assured him it was available to him by showing him the dough. I reflected that some things change and some things stay the same. I added that perhaps he was worried that things may be different in our relationship after such a long break. Perhaps he was wondering would I still be here; would I be the same as before? He did not respond and continued with his painting. The painting itself (Figure 9) was initially somewhat amorphous but took on certain human features as Sabelo came to its completion. To me this again represented Sabelo's working with the "mask", the "false" self. In the final moments of the session he chose to play with the "old" dough in senso-pathic play, enjoying its soothing properties rather than making something specific. He left the session calmly looking back at me with a wry smile as he walked away.

5.1.6.9 Session 9

Sabelo walked into the session and we exchanged pleasantries which was unusual. Sabelo selected the dough. He modelled a basket with chips and chocolates placed inside (Figure 10). He asked if he could paint the dough and after gaining permission, he painted the basket red. While painting, he accidentally knocked over the red paint onto the floor. He expressed concern about getting into trouble with the principal.

I reflected that it was uncomfortable for him to spill things all over the place and that getting into trouble was something unpleasant for him. He nodded and proceeded to clean up. I helped by getting a bucket of water and a cloth and we cleaned up the mess together. After the paint was cleaned up we spoke about “messes” and cleaning them up. He said that he didn’t like messes but he always found himself in a mess and in trouble at school. It made him angry. He thanked me for helping him clean up the paint. I asked him how it felt to have someone help to clean up the mess. He responded quietly, “Good”.

I thought that perhaps it was good that Sabelo had been able to experience “a spill” in a session. He could assimilate how the therapeutic space would deal with an “emotional spill” – would it be contained or would he get into trouble and be rejected?

He then remained quiet for some time and continued with putting the dough chips and chocolates into the basket. He said “This is for a picnic. Some people are going to the swimming pool for the day and they will take the basket with them for when they are hungry”. At the end of the session Sabelo asked to put his basket into his box. My impression was that Sabelo felt somewhat contained. In forming the basket which held “good things” Sabelo was perhaps expressing his ability to contain and hold good things within himself, even if only in a small way.

5.1.6.10 Session 10

Sabelo walked in confidently and comfortably and immediately set about working with the dough. He formed two balls and painted one red and one yellow (Figure 11). He said that they were his secrets and that his secrets were good and bad secrets. I asked how it felt to keep secrets. He said that sometimes it was difficult. I said that perhaps he may be wondering whether his secrets would be

safe with me if he shares them. He nodded. He was quiet after this. He mixed the colours red and yellow together to make orange. He never painted the balls with the colour but continued to mix the colours on his palette. I reflected that perhaps his secrets held a little good and a little bad in both of them. He said “Yes, I get confused”. He asked to paint and set about painting a tree (Figure 12). The roots were represented in relief form, with the roots showing under the ground. Sabelo then proceeded to paint over the roots with brown so that the roots could not be seen. I reflected that he is covering up his roots and I wondered if that had anything to do with his dad and maybe one of his secrets. He began to speak about his father.

“I was 9 when my dad died. There was something wrong with his lungs, I’m not sure of what it was, my mom didn’t tell me. He was sick for a long time, about a year, after falling down at work one day. He even went into hospital for a week. When he came from the hospital he died... on Saturday morning...at 7 o’clock. My sister was sleeping with me in the room ...my mom didn’t wake us up. Only my older sister and my mom spoke to him before he died. I didn’t speak to him and he never said goodbye to me..... I knew he was sick but I never thought he could die and leave us...nobody told me.....They covered him with a white sheet and wouldn’t let me see him”.

Sabelo was quiet, staring at his hands which were clenched together. There was a long silence which held his tiredness and his deep emotion. There were no tears but his grief was a strong presence in the room. Perhaps he had kept these secrets for so long that he was left exhausted as the words formed and were released from his mouth. He had been angry with his father for not saying goodbye, and angry that he did not know how seriously ill his father was. Those close to him failed in letting him know the truth.

“I saw him again at the funeral. There was a brown coffin covered in glass. He looked the sameI miss him, all the other kids have a dad and I don't.....it's not fair..... We visit the grave every two weeks and leave stuff there for him.....Like on Fathers Day, I left the stuff that we made at school for our fathers, at the grave stone I hope he likes them”.

I asked Sabelo how he pictured his father now and he said “He is in heaven. He is with his brother who is also dead, ... he is not alone”. He smiled about this. I reflected that this picture of his dad not being alone pleased him, perhaps even comforted him. He nodded. I wondered whether Sabelo thought his dad could see him or be near him even though Sabelo could not see his dad..... Sabelo thought about this for a while and shrugged his shoulders....”I don't know”. I thanked Sabelo for sharing his secrets with me and suggested that perhaps he might like to make a memory box about his father to hold good memories about his father. He looked directly into my eyes and held them there for a while. “Yes, that's a good idea”. He was enthusiastic and said he would see me next week. He walked away without looking back.

5.1.6.11 Session 11

Sabelo was enthusiastic to begin a memory box for his dad. He selected the paints and began to paint the box all around. He spoke of what he would put into the box. “I'll put photographs in, and some seeds from his planting box, maybe some coins.. he used to have money in his pocket.....I'll look around the house and put things in here for me”. After completing the undercoat to the memory box, Sabelo asked to paint on paper until the box was dry enough for a second coat.

Sabelo began to draw a house in brown felt-pen adding in a tree, sky and sun. In giving the house a distinct outline made me think of Sabelo's need for structure. There was also the presence of a sun which looked very similar to Sabelo's "heart picture" (Figure 13). It reminded me of his need for emotional warmth and love, although somewhat on a smaller scale in this picture. Although the painting showed much progression in terms of content, balance and harmony; the overriding mood of the picture was created by the deep blue sky. Sabelo became engrossed in painting the sky with rhythmic strokes. He was very quiet during this time and I followed his lead by respecting his need to be quiet. "Non-directive therapy grants the individual the permissiveness to be himself...without evaluation or pressure to change" (Axline, 1989:14).

When this picture was completed, Sabelo carefully put it on the floor to dry and proceeded to give his box a second coat of paint. He seemed content, calm and focused. He noticed when the end of the session was approaching and began to tidy up spontaneously. He left the box and picture with me without instructions this time and said matter-of-factly that he will see me next week.

5.1.7 Post-therapy Cognitive and Emotional Assessment

5.1.7.1 Post-Therapy Cognitive Assessment

a) *Senior South African Individual Scale – Revised (SSAIS-R)*

Re-testing took place a year after the initial testing. The post-test results will be given as well as an ongoing comparison with the pre-test SSAIS-R.

i) Behaviour during testing

Sabelo participated eagerly in the testing situation. There was no anxiety present which would be expected due to the relationship built over time. He engaged

positively in the Vocabulary sub-test. He became somewhat sulky when he could not answer item 12 on the Comprehension Sub-test. It appeared as though achievement may be a growing aspiration. On the Similarities Sub-test he responded interestedly and with less reaction to difficult items. He appeared to enjoy the Number Problems Sub-test and responded quickly to the questions. By the end of the Story Memory in which he attempted his best, it was evident that Sabelo was becoming tired.

After a break, Sabelo began the Pattern Completion Sub-test somewhat impulsively but settled to the task after the first three items. During the Block Design Sub-test he was calm, motivated, methodical and success oriented. He was careful and co-operative on the Missing Parts Sub-test. He approached the Form Board Sub-test with concentration and motivation. When he found a task challenging he defended himself by accusing the tester of not helping him.

ii) Test Results

- Full Scale : Average Range (110)
- Verbal Scale : High Average Range (103)
- Non-verbal Scale : High Average Range (118)

TABLE 2

| <i>Verbal Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> | <i>Performance Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Vocabulary | 10 | Pattern Completion | 13 |
| Comprehension | 11 | Block Designs | 13 |
| Similarities | 11 | Missing Parts | 14 |
| Number problems | 9 | Form Board | 11 |
| Story Memory | 11 | | |
| Memory for Digits | 8 | Coding | 8 |

Age on Date of Assessment: 13 years 4 months.

- Full Scale

As measured by the *SSAIS-R*, Sabelo's overall intellectual functioning is in the High Average Range. This is noteworthy in comparison with the pre-therapy test situation, where all scales reflected an Average Range. There was little shift in comparing the difference between pre- and post-testing on the Verbal Scale. The noteworthy change was evident in the Non-verbal Scale. There was a 21 point increase in the Non-verbal Scale on the post-therapy test which influenced the overall Full Scale moving from Average on the pre-test to High Average on the post-test. There was an absence of inter-test scatter which was evident in the pre-therapy test of the *SSAIS-R*.

- Verbal Scale

The *SSAIS-R* reveals that Sabelo is within the Average Range of verbal learning ability. There was little change in the distribution of the scores compared to the pre-therapy *SSAIS-R*. Vocabulary, Comprehension, Similarities and Story Memory sub-tests all fell within the Average Range. Below Average scoring on the Number Problems sub-test is consistent with the pre-test. Difficulty with mathematical concepts is still an area that needs to be addressed. The Memory for Digits sub-test revealed an improvement from a Below Average scaled score on the pre-therapy test to a Low Average score on the post-therapy test.

- Non-verbal Scale

The Pattern Completion sub-test moved from a Below Average to an Above Average scaled score. This may reveal an increased ability to analyze, extract and apply visual concepts. It may also show increased concentration and freedom from distractibility. Sabelo's performance on the Block Design sub-test showed an improvement from a Low Average scaled score to an Above Average

The noteworthy change was seen specifically on the Pattern Completion, Block Design and Form-board sub-tests. This positive shift was sufficient to affect the overall Full Scale result positively (8 points). It appears that emotional aspects affecting poor and/or variant performance on the Non-verbal sub-tests had been adequately addressed. The anxiety and poor concentration as seen in the pre-therapy testing results appeared to be sufficiently eased to produce such significant change. It is however important to analyse the emotional assessment to gain clarity on these preliminary findings.

5.1.7.2 Post-therapy Emotional Assessment

a) *Drawings*

i) *Analysis of the Draw-a-Person (DAP) – Figure 14*

Behaviour during drawing was noted. There were some erasures but less than on the pre-test *DAP*. Sabelo appeared to be resistant to being requested to do something specific when he was used to the art of his choice within the therapeutic context. The overall global impact of the drawing is that of hostility. It was my impression that Sabelo was showing his hostility towards the test situation. Sabelo explained at the end of the drawing that this was a super-hero figure, which may also reveal a defensive position through the use of fantasy. The cognitive levels also differ from the pre-therapy *DAP*. The first drawing is infantile in comparison to the post-therapy drawing. The level of sophistication is higher and more age appropriate.

The analysis of the post-test *DAP* reveal aggressive tendencies according to the indicators in Appendix F. This is indicated by the large head, the long arms and arrangement of facial features. The size and openness of the top of the head

may also indicate a use of excessive fantasy as an indirect, less effective method of problem solving. The eyes show anger but may oscillate between anger and fear. They are however not empty anymore. The ears are prominent revealing a tendency towards sensitivity and a dislike of criticism (Ogden, 1979:76). In comparison to the pre-test *DAP*, there is a movement from an empty, helpless figure to a hostile figure.

There may be engagement with the real source of the depression expressed in the pre-test *DAP*, which is anger at his father for leaving him and for not saying goodbye. He may also be engaging with anger against people close to him whom he feels let him down.

The small nose reveals that Sabelo may not be sure how to assert himself. A nose was absent on the pre-test *DAP*, so the presence of a nose may indicate initial progress in this area. According to Ogden (1979:78) the prominent, long neck bridging the head (the intellect or ego control) and the body (affect or id impulses), may indicate Sabelo's concern or difficulty regarding his need to control threatening impulses. The shoulders appear formed with large arms which may reveal a need for power and control. The lack of feet may indicate fear or a need for safety.

Overall, this *DAP* reveals a boy who may be angry, insecure and sensitive. However, there is an absence of the empty, helpless quality as seen in the pre-test *DAP*. This may be a boy who is working intra-psychically on assertion, ego control and power needs.

ii) Analysis of the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD) – Figure 15

This family drawing appears healthier and more appropriate than does the pre-therapy *KFD*. The style and quality of the drawing is quite different from the post-test *DAP* which may reveal emotional fluctuation.

The global impression of the post-test *KFD* is that of a family reaching out to one another. The presence of the father in the picture is significant as Sabelo told me after the drawing was completed “My dad is always with me, he is always there”. The father was drawn first which reveals the prominent position the father has in Sabelo’s emotional world even after his death. There is physical connection between the siblings which confirms the hypothesis on the pre-therapy *KFD* that the siblings nurture each other.

The mother was drawn second and is a fuller maternal figure than in the pre-therapy *KFD*. She is also “out shopping for food” which may mean that she is seen by Sabelo to be trying to meet his need for nurturance and the needs of her family. She is positioned far away from the sibling group and appears only to be connected to them through the father. She is also the figure positioned farthest away from Sabelo which may show their distant emotional relationship. The elder brother appears closest to dad but Sabelo says that “He does nothing” in the family. His sister Rosemarie sews clothes which may confirm her position of nurturance in the family. Maggie is standing closest to Sabelo which may indicate emotional attachment or that she is the next sibling in chronological order. Although Sabelo drew himself last, he is in the drawing, unlike on the pre-therapy *KFD*. This may reveal that he may be beginning to feel more part of his family.

b) *The Sacks Sentence Completion Test*

The *Sack's Sentence Completion Test* revealed the following in terms of Sabelo's perception of family, sex, inter-personal relationships and self-concept:

a) FAMILY

I. *Attitude toward mother*

- 14. My mother *is happy*.
- 29. My mother and I *are happy together*.
- 44. I think that most mothers *are horrible*.
- 59. I like my mother but *she sometimes gets on my nerves*.

Rating :1

Interpretative summary:

Sabelo's "attitude towards his mother" appears to be ambivalent. There are times of happiness but also at times she is "horrible". There is improvement in Sabelo's attitude toward his mother compared to the pre-therapy test.

II *Attitude toward father*

- 1. I feel that my father seldom *said goodbye*.
- 16 If my father would only *have spent more time with me and made me happy*.
- 31. I wish my father *could come back*.
- 46. I feel that my father *was a healthy man*.

Rating :1

Interpretative summary:

Sabelo's "attitude towards his father" is somewhat ambivalent. He wishes his father could return as he misses him but there is realistic sadness and anger that his father left without acknowledging him. There appears to be

realistic sadness that their relationship was cut short. This appears to show that Sabelo is dealing with the reality of his father's death. There is no longer avoidance of this central issue.

III Attitude towards the family unit

- 12. Compared with most families, mine is *fine*.
- 27. My family treats me like *a child*.
- 42. Most families I know *are not happy*.
- 57. When I was a child, my family *loved me*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative summary:

There is generally an ambivalent "attitude towards the family unit". There appears to be times when he feels his family is fine and yet other times he considers his family unhappy. He yearns for the past when he felt loved. There is improvement however in that they no longer treat him as "a baby" but as "a child" – he has grown emotionally.

b) SEX

IV. Attitude toward women

- 10. My idea of a perfect woman *nothing*.
- 25. I think most girls *are nasty to other children*.
- 40. I believe most women *are kind*.
- 55. What I like least about women *honesty – sometimes they are not*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo expresses ambivalence to women. He feels they are sometimes kind and yet they are not to be trusted. Perhaps this may be related to his angry feelings about not being told about his father's impending death.

V. Attitude toward heterosexual relationships

- 11. When I see a man and a woman together *I think they are happy.*
- 26. My feeling about married life is *fine*
- 41. If I had a love affair *I don't know.*
- 56. My love life *not a lot.*

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

His attitude toward heterosexual relationships appears positive and healthy.

VI. Attitude toward friends and acquaintances

- 8. I feel that a real friend *is a good person.*
- 23. I don't like people who *shout at me.*
- 38. The people I like best *is my family.*
- 53. I'm not around, my friends *are not happy.*

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

His "attitude toward friends and acquaintances" appear healthy and positive. It is evident that he has grown in confidence socially compared to his pre-therapy attitude.

c) INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

VII. Attitude towards superiors at work or school

- 6. The male teachers at our school *are not kind.*
- 21. In school, my teachers *are kind – some of them.*
- 36. When I see the teacher coming *I stand in line.*
- 51. People whom I consider my superiors *nothing.*

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo is ambivalent toward authority but there is progress in comparison with the pre-therapy attitude. There is less hostility and feelings of being persecuted.

VIII. Attitude toward people supervised

- 4. If I were in charge *I would let school go out at 12 o'clock.*
- 19. If people work for me *I would make them happy.*
- 34. The people (children) who do things for me *my mother.*
- 48. In giving orders to others *I feel fine.*

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo appears comfortable in a leadership position and considers himself able and fair. It is interesting to find a positive reference to his mother. This further endorses the improving relations between Sabelo and his mother.

IX. Attitude toward colleagues at work or school

- 13. At school, I get along best with *my friends.*
- 28. Those at school with me *are kind to me.*
- 43. I like working with people who *like working with me.*
- 58. Other children in my class *some I don't like.*

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

There is improvement in Sabelo's "attitude toward colleagues at school". He is able to understand the idea of mutual respect. There appears to be less anxiety with regard to this attitude in comparison to the pre-therapy test attitude.

d) SELF-CONCEPT

X. Fears

- 7. I know it is silly but I am afraid of *my mother*.
- 22. Most of my friends don't know that I am afraid of *my mother*.
- 37. I wish I could lose the fear of *going inside the ceiling, dark things*.
- 52. My fears sometimes force me to *run away*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo acknowledges his fear of his mother. He also reveals age-appropriate fears and his impulse to escape. His self-concept is still somewhat fragile.

XI. Guilt

- 15. I would do anything to forget the time I *lost my mother's money*..
- 30. My greatest mistake was *letting my sister take advantage of me*.
- 45. When I was younger, I felt guilty about *nothing*.
- 60. The worst thing I ever did was *when I took the car out of reverse and it hit another car and broke the door*.

Rating : 2

Interpretative Summary :

"Guilt" seems to be associated with his mother and sister. However these feelings of guilt may be associated with maturity especially since it was an attitude avoided in the pre-therapy test.

XII. Attitude toward own abilities

- 2. When the odds are against me *I keep quiet and think*.
- 17. I believe I have the ability to *play soccer, striker*.
- 32. My greatest weakness is *swimming*.
- 47. When luck turns against me *I keep quiet and think*.

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo's "attitude towards his own abilities" is realistic and confident. In the face of adversity he comments that he will "keep quiet and think" as opposed to "I'll fight on the pre-therapy test. This reveals a degree of maturity.

XIV. Attitude towards past

- 9. When I was a child (younger) *I used to play with my friend Thabo.*
- 24. Before I was at school *I used to go to the nursery school.*
- 39. If I were young again *I would be very happy.*
- 54. My most vivid childhood memory *is my birthday when I was 4.*
We had a cake.

Rating : 1

Interpretative Summary :

His "attitude towards the past" is nostalgic and sentimental but without significant regret.

XIV. Attitude toward the future

- 5. To me the future looks *like a nice place.*
- 20. I look forward to *having the best life.*
- 35. Someday I *will be very happy.*
- 50. When I am older *I would like to be like my father – a nice man.*

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

His "attitude towards the future is hopeful and confident.

XV. Goals

- 3. I always wanted to *play*.
- 18. I could be perfectly happy if *my mother could buy me a new bicycle*.
- 33. My secret ambition in life *I'm not going to tell*.
- 49 What I want most out of life *is happiness*.

Rating : 0

Interpretative Summary :

Sabelo's "attitude towards goals" was playful at times but are mostly age-appropriate and realistic.

c) General Summary:

1. Principle areas of conflict and disturbance

Sabelo's principle conflict appears to be within himself. His ambivalence in many of the areas of attitude show a consideration of the positives and the negatives in relationships. His acceptance of these may be the next step. In comparison to the pre-therapy sentence completion test, Sabelo appears less reactive to his environment and less regretful of the past, becoming more future oriented.

2. Interrelationships among the attitudes

What is striking is the lack of avoidance and denial which was strongly evident on the pre-therapy test. Interrelated is the positive orientation and an orientation toward being "happy". This may be related to Sabelo's generally positive perception of the people around him.

3. Personality structure

- a) Extent to which the subject responds to inner impulses and to outer stimuli – It appears as though Sabelo is strengthening ego control although there is conflict with id impulses. He is able to "be quiet and think" instead of "fight" when challenged.

- b) Emotional adjustment – I consider that Sabelo is becoming emotionally adjusted. He certainly considers that he has “accepted his father’s death” and that he can “move on now”.
- c) Maturity – It appears as though Sabelo is no longer feeling helpless as in the pre-therapy test. His maturity level appears to have increased significantly.
- d) Reality level – Sabelo appears to face the reality of most situations with more honesty and insight than previously.
- e) Manner in which conflicts are expressed – Conflicts are expressed verbally. There appears to be less defensive and aggressive behaviour than was found on the pre-therapy test.

c) *Summary of Emotional Assessment*

Sabelo appears to have begun the journey toward balance and harmony within himself. There are emotional difficulties still present with regard to ego development and impulse control, but the uncontained feelings of emptiness, depression and aggression appear largely resolved. Sabelo has appeared to have accepted his father’s death and has come to a place of peace within himself around this issue. In the pre-therapy test, Sabelo’s father’s death was cited as the main reason for the emotional problems he was experiencing. This was supported by the *Impact of Event Scale* conducted in the pre-test situation, where significant symptoms of PTSD were found. The post-therapy *Impact of Event Scale* analysis should cast more light on Sabelo’s progress.

5.1.8 The Impact of Event Scale – Post-therapy

Sabelo completed the *Impact of Event Scale* without objection. The results were as follows (Appendix H):

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------|
| <u>Avoidance Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22 | : | 0.00 |
| <u>Intrusion Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 20 | : | 1.14 |
| <u>Hyper-arousal Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 4, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 | : | 0.00 |

The *IES-R* score: Sum of the above 3 clinical scales: 1.14 (out of a maximum figure of 12) = 0.09

This score reveals a negligible percentage of PTSD symptoms. For Sabelo this effectively means that there is a 64% reduction in PTSD symptoms when pre-therapy and post-therapy scale scores are compared.

5.1.9 The Connor's Behaviour Checklist - Post-therapy

The *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* post-therapy revealed a very different picture of Sabelo's inter-personal relationships within the classroom setting. A comparison between pre-therapy (2003) and post-therapy (2004) results, are presented in Table 4. The figure shows the areas of improvement in the span of a year. Areas improved include the following: less fiddling with small objects; less restless and over-active behaviour; less excitable and inattentive behaviour; less difficulty concentrating; less daydreaming, sad or sullen behaviour; less disturbing of peers and quarrelsome behaviour; less teasing of peers, defiant, impudent and stubborn behaviour.

Thus there appeared to be significant change in interpersonal relationships within the classroom environment. By the previous and present teacher's verbal reports, there had been no uncontrolled outbursts of emotion witnessed in the classroom for some months. The present teacher reported the following

voluntarily: “Sabelo seems to have blossomed this year. He takes responsibility seriously. He has carried out his telephone duties with dignity. He covered his books immediately and seems to be trying to focus on his work. He is attempting to keep up with first assignments”.

5.1.10 Conclusions

a) Conclusions with regard to the Cognitive Assessment

- A 21 point positive shift in the Non-verbal Scale of the post-therapy *SSAIS-R* influenced the Full Scale result positively by 8 points.
- It appears that emotional aspects affecting poor and/or variant performance on the Non-verbal sub-tests had been adequately addressed.
- The high anxiety and poor concentration as seen in the pre-therapy testing results appeared to be somewhat eased.

b) Conclusions with regard to the Emotional Assessment

- Drawings conducted included the *DAP* and *KFD*.
 - Results of the *DAP* reveals a boy who may be angry, insecure and sensitive. However, there is an absence of the empty, helpless quality as seen in the pre-therapy *DAP*. This may be a boy who is working intra-psychically on assertion, ego control and power needs.
 - Results of the *KFD* This family drawing appears healthier and more appropriate than does the pre-therapy *KFD* This may reveal that he may be beginning to feel more part of his family.

- The *Sacks Sentence Completion Test* revealed that there are emotional difficulties still present with regard to ego development and impulse control. However the uncontained feelings of emptiness, depression and aggression appear to have largely been resolved. Sabelo has appeared to have accepted his father's death and has come to a place of peace within himself around this issue.
- c) Conclusions with regard to the *Impact of Event Scale*
- There are a negligible amount of symptoms with regard to the criteria for PTSD in terms of the DSM-IV-TR.
 - This effectively means that there is a 64% reduction in PTSD symptoms when pre-therapy and post-therapy scale scores are compared.
- d) Conclusions with regard to the *Connor's Behaviour Checklist*
- There was great improvement in Sabelo's behaviour as reported by the class teacher within the classroom setting in comparing the pre-and post-therapy checklists (Table 1).
- e) Summary of Conclusions
- In comparing the pre-therapy and post-therapy tests; cognitive, emotional and social aspects of Sabelo's development appear much improved. There is an absence of PTSD symptoms and a lowered experience of depression. Sabelo will continue with art therapy to address the present areas of conflict, namely ego development and control.

While the changes that have occurred in Sabelo are noteworthy, it is important to make realistic observations before making any deductions about the positive

effects of art therapy. The changes that were observed in the post-therapy assessments may have been due to the following:

- The fact that someone was interested and involved may have been healing of its own accord.
- The therapeutic relationship.
- The passage of time, which may have been healing in itself.
- The developmental maturity of each child that was gained in three months or a year.

These factors may have been mostly or partly responsible for the favourable changes that occurred. In asking each of the children what helped them the most, Sabelo indicated that the art itself was useful to him.

5.1.11 Sabelo – A Personal Summary

Sabelo's story is one of hope. It explores the reality of a child's personal world following the death of a nurturing parent. His story also reveals the phenomenon of traumatic grief as experienced in a child. The trauma for Sabelo was not only in the loss of his father but in the ongoing effects his death had on the family. The financial burden of being a single parent may have made Sabelo's mother absent to him. Being the youngest in a much older sibling group may have its role to play. This absence of real emotional support from the immediate family may have contributed to the development of PTSD. But perhaps the most telling aspect of Sabelo's experience was his disillusionment with life in general. All that he had believed in and based his life upon until his father's death, had crumbled and come to nought. His recovery in cognitive, emotional and social dimensions, were in my opinion secondary to his spiritual recovery. In coming to terms with his father's death Sabelo's spirit was again able to find belief and trust in life, through the use of simple paints and brushes in a safe, contained space.

5.2 Case 2 - Introducing Petunia*

5.2.1 *Background*

The background was supplied by an interview with Petunia's mother, interviews with her teachers and school principal and information gathered from her school file.

5.2.1.1 Family background

Petunia was 11 years old and in Grade 6 when we met. She is the younger of two children. Her sister (25) lives away from home and is self-supporting. She lives with her parents in a Johannesburg suburban area. Her father is retired and her mother is a domestic worker. After Petunia was born she was sent to live with her grandmother in a rural area until she was of school-going age. She was then sent back to Johannesburg to live with her parents and attend pre-school.

By all reports, it appears that while Petunia lived with her grandmother she enjoyed a free, happy and carefree existence. She bathed in the love that her "granny" gave her and yearned to return to her every school holiday. "Granny" was Petunia's primary caregiver. Two years ago Petunia's grandmother contracted an illness. She ailed for about 6 months before her death in 2002, when Petunia was in Grade 5.

*Names have been changed to protect individual identity

5.2.1.2 Birth, Infancy and pre-school history

In terms of birth history, Petunia was an unexpected arrival. Her mother had been told she could no longer bear children because of a previous ectopic pregnancy. However Petunia was welcomed unequivocally. Pre-natal and post-natal health was reported to be normal, with no complications. Her infant and pre-school development progressed according to the norm. She appeared to have average sleeping and feeding habits and experienced no serious diseases or injuries in this period. She suffered from asthma occasionally but this was not considered serious. Petunia is described as having a free early childhood living with her grandmother and aunt in a rural area. Once Petunia was ready for primary school at age 6, she came to live with her parents in Johannesburg. She attended a suburban pre-primary school mainly to learn English and she made adequate social and language adjustment according to these school reports.

5.2.1.3 Primary School History

Petunia did not settle into primary school initially. Her behaviour was described as over-active and disruptive by her teachers. In Grade 2 she was assessed by a psychologist for learning difficulties. She was found to have a Low Average Range Full Scale Score (no score given on the report). The Verbal Scale placed her verbal functioning in the Average Range (no score given on the report), with the Non-Verbal Scale placing her in the Low-average Range (no score given on the report). There was a difference of 13 points between Verbal and Non-Verbal Scores. Petunia was assessed to have learning difficulties and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and was prescribed Ritalin. No emotional or projective tests were reported.

In Grade 3, reports by the school teacher described below level achievement with regard to reading and concentration. She was described as enthusiastic, friendly and outgoing, impulsive, affectionate and excitable. In spite of her scholastic difficulties, Petunia continued to gain entrance into the next grade each year. Between Grade 4 and 5, there were continued reports of poor scholastic performance and poor behaviour which continued into Grade 6.

During her Grade 6 year Petunia became quiet and withdrawn, which, given her outgoing personality, was noticeable to her teachers. She would stay in the bathroom at break and was often found in tears. She sought support from staff members who became increasingly concerned about her behaviour. She was found to be mixing with the “wrong” group at school and “acting out” inappropriately during class. Her behaviour in class was disruptive and attention-seeking to the point that some teachers excluded her from classes. She was found bringing alcohol onto the school property and was suspended from school for 3 days.

5.2.2 Pre-therapy Cognitive Assessment

a) Senior South African Individual Scale – Revised (SSAIS-R)

i) Behaviour during Testing

Petunia was nervous in the test situation. She expressed low self-expectation with regard to her possible performance indicating possible low self-esteem with regard to cognitive tasks. She did begin to relax somewhat after testing commenced but continued with negative comments about her performance. She very often wanted to give up on tasks and required encouragement to continue with the task at hand.

i) Test Results

- Full Scale : Average Range (101)
- Verbal Scale : Average Range (89)
- Non-verbal Scale : Average Range (95)

TABLE 4

| <i>Verbal Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> | <i>Performance Scale</i> | <i>Score</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Vocabulary | 8 | Pattern Completion | 9 |
| Comprehension | 12 | Block Designs | 8 |
| Similarities | 16 | Missing Parts | 9 |
| Number problems | 6 | Form Board | 7 |
| Story Memory | 8 | | |
| Memory for Digits | 7 | Coding | 6 |

- Full Scale : Average Range (95)
- Verbal Scale : Average Range (101)
- Non-verbal Scale : Low Average Range (89)

b) Summary of Cognitive Assessment

The summed score on the *SSAIS-R* reveals Average potential. There is a non-significant discrepancy of 12 points between the Scaled scores, in favour of the verbal. This 12 point difference however does approach the significance discrepancy threshold of 15, which would alert the tester to a possible learning disability. What can be seen by the inter-test scatter on the Verbal Scale is unevenly developed auditory perceptual and language skills which may be impacting negatively on scholastic performance. The superior Similarities score may indicate intellectual defences and/or positive prognosis for therapy (Ogden,

1979:13). The Low Average Non-verbal score may also be attributable to emotional difficulties. The inter-test scatter may be consistent with attention difficulties, anxiety or tension supporting the hypothesis of possible emotional difficulties. These emotional aspects may be affecting Petunia's ability to concentrate and apply herself to her schoolwork. Analysis of an emotional assessment is thus essential in order to clearly understand the nature of Petunia's difficulties.

5.2.2 *Pre-therapy Emotional Assessment*

a) Drawings

i) Analysis of the Draw-a-Person (DAP) – Figure 16

The global impression of the *DAP* is one of emptiness. According to the indicators on Appendix F anxiety may be seen in the sketchy and broken lines and the frequent erasures. The angular, square body may be an expression of powerlessness or the need for power. The floppy, frail arms reveal helplessness. There may be an over-compensation for depression in fluctuating between aggression and helplessness. The small feet may reveal fearfulness and a need for safety. According to Ogden (1979:74), the dominance and treatment of the hair may be an indication of possible anger and aggressive tendencies or anxiety. The hair covers the sensitive ears which may indicate that the aggressive tendencies may be compensating for sensitivity. The strongly shaded eyebrows may indicate acting-out tendencies. The face is more feminine (emphasized lips and eyes) than the body indicating the possibility of not feeling ready for impending adolescence

ii) Analysis of the *Kinetic Family Drawing* (KFD) – Figure 17

Petunia drew her father first, her mother second, her sister third and herself last almost as an after-thought. The females appear to be grouped together while the father stands aside from the group in a dominant and yet self-absorbed fashion. The feet of the females are turned away from the father, which may show a level of rejection of the father figure. Petunia looks up at her sister with anxious eyes while her sister and mother are described as talking to one another. All figures have short, ineffectual arms which are drawn into themselves perhaps revealing a helpless feeling within the family. Petunia uses hair to convey a lot of meaning. Her hair appears more unsophisticated compared with the rest of her family who have more sophisticated hairstyles. In this way she reveals her feeling that the family may not accept her fully.

b) The Sacks Sentence Completion Test

The results of the *Sacks Sentence Completion Test* reveal Petunia to have an attitude toward the family that reveals a punitive environment with little emotional support. The figure of nurturance in Petunia's life is her older sister; which corroborates what was found on the *KFD*. There are definite feelings of sadness and regret with regard to her grandmother's death. She misses her immensely and Petunia expressed that she should be dead instead of her grandmother. Low self-worth, feelings of depression and suicidal ideation were expressed.

5.2.4 The Impact of Event Scale – Pre-therapy

The results of the pre-therapy *Impact of Event Scale* with regard to Petunia's grandmother's death were as follows (Appendix I) :

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------|
| Avoidance Sub-scale: Mean of items 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22 | : | 2.5 |
| Intrusion Sub-scale: Mean of items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 20 | : | 4.00 |
| Hyper-arousal Sub-scale: Mean of items 4, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 | : | 2.5 |

The *IES-R* score: Sum of the above 3 clinical scales: 9 (out of a maximum figure of 12) = 0.75

This score reveals that Petunia is experiencing a high percentage of PTSD symptoms in terms of the criteria for PTSD in the DSM-IV-TR. Qualitatively the high score on the intrusion sub-scale is noteworthy in terms of emotional functioning.

5.2.5 *The Connor's Behaviour Checklist - Pre-therapy*

The results of the *Connor's Behaviour Checklist* reveal that Petunia is finding difficulty in interpersonal relationships. She is found to be disruptive in class, disturbing proceedings with loud verbal outbursts and excitable behaviour. She is restless and over-active and is found to be impudent and defiant in her attitude towards teachers. Independent comment from teachers included that she does not do her homework nor respect the rules of classroom etiquette.

5.2.6 *Conclusions and Recommendations*

It is concluded that Petunia is experiencing significant symptoms of PTSD. The high level of intrusive thoughts about death and the meaninglessness of life as expressed on the *Sack's Sentence Completion Test* may be responsible for her

disruptive and “acting-out” behaviour. The intrusive thoughts on the *Impact of Event Scale* may also be affecting her ability to concentrate on scholastic work.

It is recommended that Petunia receive art therapy to address the areas of PTSD and her resultant emotional difficulties.

5.2.7 4 Selected Art Therapy Sessions over the Course of 3 Months

Due to the limited scope of this dissertation, only 4 sessions have been chosen for the reader. The sessions themselves are also abbreviated but perhaps give a brief insight into Petunia’s world.

5.2.7.1 Session 1

Petunia came into the session looking past me. She sat down nervously and after a while she burst into tears. Her body shuddered as she spoke about wanting to die. She said that she did not deserve to live because she was not a good person and her grandmother who was such a good person was dead. She cried for some time and I encouraged her to feel everything she was feeling and be aware of it in the moment. After she had allowed herself to experience all of this emotion, I suggested that perhaps she would like to paint her feelings. She sat passively; tired from her crying; until at a certain point she was ready to begin. She set about painting a picture of her grandmother (Figure 18). The colours were dark and sombre. The lungs with red specks in them (cancer) gave the impression of angel’s wings. She did not wish to comment on the painting. When the session was at an end she placed the painting on the ground to dry and left politely closing the door behind her.

5.2.7.2 Session 2

Petunia knocked on the door and after she was welcomed, she came in with her eyes on the ground. She had been crying. I reflected that she was feeling emotional today and I wondered what that was about. She said that she is missing her grandmother so much as it was her birthday. She was angry “at the world and God” for taking such a special person from her. She described her grandmother as someone who gave her love, acceptance and warmth. She knows that her mom loves her but she cannot feel it. She feels that her dad hates her and he is “always on her case”. She would have liked to have been raised by her grandmother like her sister was. She feels sad and scared about life and doesn’t know if she can carry on. When she saw her grandmother at the funeral it was the worst. “There was a glass over the coffin and she looked like a block of ice. And when the coffin went into the ground I wanted to fall over”. I wondered if all these feelings could find some release in drawing or painting. She shook her head. She put her head in her hands and said that there were so many things she had wished she had said to her grandmother before she died and she never got a chance. I asked if she would like to write her feelings to her grandmother in a letter. She seemed to like this idea and proceeded to do so (Figure 24).

“To you, I had so much to say but I never got the chance, but I have to write this letter to you and it comes from the heart and you will write and read it with me and all the other people as well who I love but they left me alone. I finally know that I will never see you again but it is hard for me, grandmother. You mean the world to me. I’ve just got to tell you that I love you and not a thing will change my love for you. But not a word will change the way you mean to me even if I know that you will never come back. I will always love you, from the girl you fell in love with, Petunia”.

When she had finished she read it out to me. She asked if she could keep the letter into her memory box (Figure 19 from a previous session). We did this and she seemed pleased.

5.2.7.3 Session 3

Petunia bounded into the therapy room. She was panting, having run up all the stairs. She flopped into the chair and she began to tell me about being in a group of friends that were bad for her, that her grandmother would not like them. She was finding it difficult to remove herself from this group as they will not let her leave. "They beat you up if you try to leave". She told me about the "group" making her bring alcohol into the school and that they had drunk some at break. She has decided that she does not want to do this kind of thing anymore but she is afraid of the consequences. I invited her to paint her feelings about this (Figure 20). After she completed the picture she told me that her picture was about the "good things" (yellow sun) and "bad things" (red spots) in her life. I reflected that it appears that she feels divided about these things and that it is hard for her to choose which way to go. She agreed. She said at the end of the session that she knows which way her grandmother would like her to go. I reflected that it sounds as though her grandmother is still very close to her.

5.2.7.4 Session 4

Petunia burst into the therapy room announcing herself with a smile. She had been voted in as House Captain by her peers. (The teachers had wanted to transfer the honour to someone else but were convinced to allow Petunia a trial period to prove herself). She was however afraid that she would not be able to keep the badge as her behaviour was "not good". I wondered how it felt to be wearing the badge. She spoke about the pride she felt in herself and how proud her granny would feel about her. I affirmed all these experiences and encouraged

her to hold all these feelings, to enjoy the good feelings and savour them like a large gummydrop. She decided that she would like to draw what she was feeling (Figure 21). The large star reveals her excitement and enthusiasm. The acknowledgement of becoming House Captain allowed Petunia to experiment with the positive leadership qualities within herself. She stills wears the House Captain badge proudly.

5.2.8 Post-therapy Cognitive Assessment

a) Senior South African Individual Scale – Revised (SSAIS-R)

i) Behaviour during Testing

Petunia was generally confident in the test situation. She however did express doubt over her capability to complete tasks correctly when they appeared challenging. She felt anxious during the Block Design Sub-test but managed to grow in confidence as she experienced success.

ii) Test Results

TABLE 5

| Verbal Scale | Score | Performance Scale | Score |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Vocabulary | 9 | Pattern Completion | 9 |
| Comprehension | 12 | Block Designs | 11 |
| Similarities | 10 | Missing Parts | 14 |
| Number problems | 7 | Form Board | 10 |
| Story Memory | 13 | | |
| Memory for Digits | 10 | Coding | 5 |

- Full Scale : Average Range (105)
- Verbal Scale : Average Range (103)
- Non-verbal Scale : Average Range (107)

The Full Scale score falls within the Average Range. The Verbal Scale and the Non-verbal Scale each contribute Average Range scoring to the Full Scale score, with a difference of 5 points. In comparison to the pre-therapy *SSA/S-R* test there is less inter-test scatter with a greater evenness in scores. The score on the Number Problems sub-test continues to show a difficulty with concentration and high distractibility. There may also be poor fundamental understanding of mathematical concepts that have compounded over time. The low score for Coding may indicate a psycho-motor or a reading difficulty.

b) Summary of Cognitive Assessment Results

There is evidence of a learning disability with continued attention difficulties that require ongoing supervision. However certain emotional aspects which were contributory factors to the pre-therapy results on the *SSA/S-R* appear to have been addressed. This is evidenced in the greater evenness in scores and the rise in the Non-verbal Score which is significant (18 points). Performance anxiety and low self-esteem continue as difficulties for Petunia as seen on the behaviour during testing. The improvement in scores may be due to the short interval between pre- and post-therapy testing where prior knowledge may have influenced responses.

5.2.9 *Post-therapy Emotional Assessment*

a) Drawings

i) Analysis of the *Draw-a-Person (DAP)* – Figure 22

The overall impression of the post-therapy *DAP* is that it may be higher in the features of “well-adjusted” than on other factors on Appendix F. There is “central placement, reasonable size and firm rounded strokes” (Appendix F). There is however evidence of anxiety in the treatment of the dress. The overworked checked pattern on the dress reveals anxiety, which echoes the behaviour findings on the *SSAIS-R*.

ii) Analysis of the *Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD)* – Figure 23

A global impression of the post-therapy *KFD* reveals Petunia’s more positive perception of her family. She may be feeling as though she is becoming part of the family unit and that she is not so different to them (hairstyling). The placement of the figures in the post-therapy *KFD* is interesting. Petunia drew her mother first and then herself. This may indicate that she feels closer to her mother at present. This was followed by the drawing of her father with her sister drawn last. The mother and father are talking, Petunia is trying to talk to the mom and the sister is speaking on the cell-phone to someone else. Everyone is talking but no-one is listening. The mother has neither legs nor feet indicating that Petunia may consider her mother ungrounded or unstable. Petunia also has only one leg and one foot drawn which may also indicate emotional instability. Both mother and Petunia have large ears indicating high emotional reactivity. In comparison to the pre-therapy *KFD*, Petunia’s sister is seen in less of a supportive position; her sister is seen to be focused outside the family. All figures have a sideways slant to the cupid-shaped lips which may indicate difficulty with communication in the family and exhibitionistic tendencies (Ogden, 1979:78).

b) *The Sacks Sentence Completion Test*

The results of the *Sacks Sentence Completion Test* show that Petunia has become future-focused. There are few references to her grandmother except for a positive childhood memory of which she spoke. What came out strongly in the attitudes to mother, father and family, is that Petunia's family is not in a healthy position and this may require future intervention.

5.2.10 *The Impact of Event Scale – Post-therapy*

The results of the post-therapy *Impact of Event Scale* with regard to Petunia's grandmother's death were as follows (Appendix J):

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------|
| <u>Avoidance Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22 | : | 1.00 |
| <u>Intrusion Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 20 | : | 0.28 |
| <u>Hyper-arousal Sub-scale</u> : Mean of items 4, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 | : | 0.28 |

The *IES-R* score: Sum of the above 3 clinical scales: 0.52 (out of a maximum figure of 12) = 0.13.

This score reveals a negligible percentage of PTSD symptoms. For Petunia this effectively means that there is a 62% reduction in PTSD symptoms when pre-therapy and post-therapy scale scores are compared.

5.2.11 *The Connor's Behaviour Checklist - Post-therapy*

The results of the post-therapy *Connor's Behaviour Checklist*, shows that Petunia has become less of a hindrance in the classroom. She continues to be excitable, enthusiastic and noisy but is more appropriate in the timing of her expression. She is reported to have less emotional outbursts, crying less and displaying less

“needy” behaviour. Overall there has been improvement in Petunia’s reported behaviour as noted by her teacher.

5.2.12 *Petunia - A Personal Summary*

To conclude, Petunia appears to have made improvement in cognitive, emotional and social aspects of her development. This improvement is assessed according to a comparison between pre- and post-therapy assessments. There is an absence of PTSD symptoms. There are however continuing difficulties with regard to Petunia’s family life which need to be addressed. Recommendations include family therapy and continued individual art therapy to address areas of anxiety and low self-esteem.

The loss of a primary caregiver, in the form of her grandmother, who loved unconditionally and who nurtured lovingly, was enough to shake the foundations of Petunia’s world. This was the trauma that this child experienced. Not the death itself; not even the manner of death. The trauma was in what the loss of this person meant in terms of who Petunia is and who she is becoming. By her own words she felt that the world and God had failed her and she was alone. There was no-one in her family or community to mediate the transient nature of this pain and give hope for the future. Therapy provided a safe place to experience the pain of her loss; to feel contained in safe environment and allow herself to rebuild a belief in tomorrow.

5.3 Summary of Chapter 5

This chapter has traced the lives of two children who had lost a primary caregiver through death. Sabelo’s father and Petunia’s grandmother were both seen by each child as primary caregivers. The deaths of these two people were not

accidental, nor violent, and yet they were experienced by these children as traumatic. Cognitive, emotional and social difficulties were cited in both these children's school experiences. These difficulties, in my opinion, were secondary symptoms to the primary experiencing traumatic grief due to the death of primary caregivers.

This is especially so as these two children found themselves somewhat alone and with little social support in the midst of this existential crisis. Both these children did not appear to have close family support in their experience of loss which, in terms of the literature, is the strongest contributing factor in the development of PTSD after a trauma.

Art therapy provided an appropriate vehicle to emotional recovery as it allowed each child to meet their primary need to find safety in a contained space. Within this safety the full extent of their grief could be explored. Art therapy also allowed the individual to proceed at an internally determined pace, not influenced by the therapist. Both children found their way through the limitations PTSD had placed on their development. Art therapy was the key that unlocked closed doors.

FIGURE 3

THE CONNOR'S BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

| Date: 01.03 Sabelo | Not at all | Just a little | Quite a bit | Very much |
|------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Sits fiddling with small objects | | | • | |
| Hums and makes other odd noises | • | | | |
| Falls apart under stress and examination | • | | | |
| Co-ordination is poor | • | | | |
| Restless and over-active | | | | • |
| Excitable | | | • | |
| Inattentive | | | | • |
| Difficulty in concentrating | | | | • |
| Oversensitive | | | • | |
| Overly serious or sad | | | | • |
| Daydreams | | | | • |
| Sullen or sulky | | | | • |
| Selfish | | • | | |
| Disturbs other children | | | | • |
| Quarrelsome | | | | • |
| Tells tales | | | • | |
| Acts "smart" | | • | | |
| Destructive | • | | | |
| Destructive | • | | | |
| Steals | | • | | |
| Lies | | | • | |
| Temper outbursts | | | | • |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Isolates himself from the other children | | | • | |
| Appears to be unacceptable by the group | | | | • |
| Appears to be easily led | • | | | |
| No sense of fair play | • | | | |
| Appears to lack leadership | • | | | |
| Does not get on with the opposite sex | | | • | |
| Does not get along with same sex | • | | | |
| Teases other children or interferes with their activities | | | | • |
| Submissive | • | | | |
| Defiant | | | | • |
| Impudent | | | | • |
| Shy | • | | | |
| Fearful | • | | | |
| Excessive demands for teacher attention | • | | | |
| Stubborn | | | | • |
| Overly anxious to please | • | | | |

Session 12

Sabelo came into the room with a packet. He untied it excitedly and began to take out some items to put into his memory box. There was a coin, a tie, some seeds, a handkerchief, a video and some photographs. He showed me all these items one by one and put them unceremoniously into the box.

A comparison between pre-therapy and post-therapy SSAIS-R testing

| | | BELOW AVERAGE | | AVERAGE | | | | | ABOVE AVERAGE | | | SUPERIOR | | | |
|---|---|---------------|----|---------|----|----|----|----|---------------|----|----|----------|-----|---------------|--|
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | SCALED SCORES | |
| 2 | 5 | 9 | 16 | 25 | 37 | 50 | 63 | 75 | 84 | 91 | 95 | 99 | 100 | PERCENTILES | |

