

# Drama activities as a support to the parents of children in hospital care

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How it  
all  
started

# Parents admitted to the hospital with their child

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The unfamiliar environment and stressful treatment procedures for the child strongly impact the parents.

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A lot of tension and anxiety experienced.  
For some parents, the emotional support that is an integral part of the overall medical care is sufficient, but for others, it is not.

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Stress reduces receptivity to verbal communication.  
The positive impact of support programs for parents is recognized.

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Parents often find it easier to talk about their problems with someone not directly involved in the treatment.

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It is also essential to identify other needs of parents and help them to cope with their concerns; parents' needs change during the process of treating their child's illness.

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Appropriate support will increase the parent's ability to cope with the situation, increase his/her self-confidence and reduce feelings of anxiety.

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# New insights, adaptation, new knowledge and skills needed

H. and R. Bakwin, H. Edelston, R. Spitz, J. Robertson, W. Goldfarb, L. G. Lowrey

J. Bowlby and Attachment theory

Increased involvement of family members in caring for their sick children

1988 – Magna carta > a possibility of parents being hospitalised together with their child



„You can discover more about a person  
in an hour of play than in a year of  
conversation.“ (Plato)

**Drama therapy uses the potential of drama to raise awareness and to transform life experiences**

- Indirect communication
- Symbols, myths, archetypes, stories
- Exploring of a theme, a story or a role
- All done in a framework of a game
- Creativity
- Humor
- Aesthetics
- Spirituality



# Five-month process



How do parents feel and think when they are admitted to a hospital with their child?



How does helping with drama activities affect parents' well-being (thoughts, emotions) when admitted to the hospital with their child?



Can drama activities have a supportive effect on parents' relationship with their child in hospital care?

# 1st objective

## Non-standardised semi-structured interviews

**Themes:** child and the illness, hospital environment, family, parent, broader environment

**Categories:** perception, information, needs, communication, hospital environment, support, family, relationships, parent's role with the child, stress management strategies

shock, confusion, pain, distress, fear, doubt, uncertainty, ambivalent feelings, anxiety, stress, feeling trapped in a vicious circle, helplessness, anger, depression, habituation and resignation, hope, joy, trust and relief, need for privacy

mistrust, trust, security, insecurity, stress, ambivalence, need for a more adapted environment to the child's illness, "terrible", pain at the sight of other children's and parents' suffering, aversion, accustomedness, acceptance, liking the additional program, (pet therapy, kindergarten), belonging

Pain of a family separation and dispersion, fear, stress, distress, and helplessness



helplessness, vulnerability, panic, detachment, need for control, failure to support their child, feeling like realistic personalities, and those who are reluctant to feel pity from others

pain, need to distance, disadvantaged in terms of contact and involvement in different activities, a sense of support in connecting with parents with similar experiences, a sense of non-support in accordance with society's regulation



# 20 parents

**20** 90-minute or 60-minute workshops in three different formats:

individual, group and individual workshops together with the child



## Structure

Warming up  
Core body of the workshop  
Wrapping up

## Goals

- enabling an experience of improved well-being and health
- enabling a feeling of greater confidence in oneself
- enabling a feeling of a sense of lightness and joy in being
- connecting with others in similarities

## A field of creativity and a space to play

Body and voice work

Games (drama, symbolic, with rules)

Improvisation

Role play

Fictional language

Theatre of images

Literature

Pictorial material

Creating stories

Puppets

Guided visualisation

Warming up  
our bodies,  
being in the  
present  
moment,  
tuning in with  
the group



## *2nd objective*

*Non-standardised semi-structured interviews, non-standardised observation scheme, table comparing participants' well-being before and after the workshops, personal research diary*

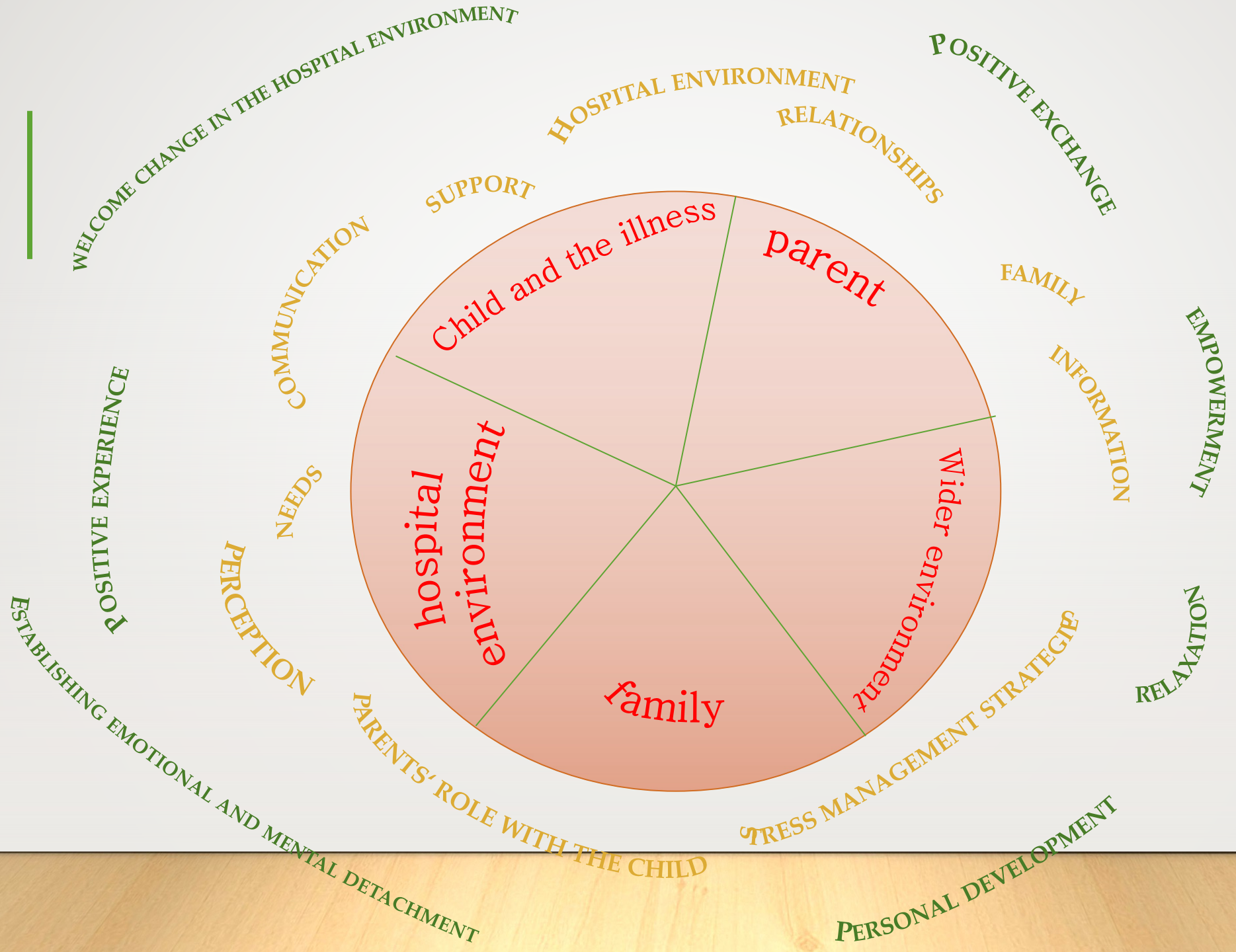
**Categories: relaxation, positive exchange, welcome change in the hospital environment, personal development, establishment of a mental and emotional detachment, positive impact on the relationship with the child, empowerment**

# Drama activities in the hospital environment

## *3rd objective*

*Non-standardised semi-structured interviews, non-standardised observation scheme, table comparing participants' well-being before and after the workshops, personal research diary*





»Snowflakes, though at a glance  
beautiful as flowers, vanish  
when touched by the hand.«  
N. Thinley

„Flying elephant“ by Rica in Sao Paulo, Brazil,  
street art

