

Handout: Bird's Nest Drawing

References:

Francis, D.M., Lavonne ser, D. & Deaver, S. 2003. Representations of attachment security in Birds Nest Drawings of clients with substance abuse disorder. *Art Therapy Journal of AATA*, 20 (3), 125-137.

Lavonne ser, D. 1996. Indicators of attachment security in a drawing task. *The Arts In Psychotherapy*, 23,(4), 333-340.

Ages: No age limit is noted.

Purpose: This assessment helps identify a person's attachment style and may provide insight into the person's past attachments. This assessment may be particularly suited for children with attachment disorders, who experience separation anxiety, or are living in a non-traditional living arrangement.

Materials: One sheet of blank, white 8.5 x 11 paper, 10-color pack of fine-point markers

Administration: The evaluator hands the client a piece of paper and the pack of markers and asks him or her to, "Draw a picture of a bird's nest." There is no time limit, but the evaluator should remain cognizant of the amount of time used.

Inquiry: Once the drawing is completed, the evaluator asks the client the following inquiry questions. Write (or tell) a short story with a short beginning, a short middle and a short end.

Create a title and write it on the drawing.

Is there anything else you'd like to add or change?

Interpretation: The Bird's Nest drawing represents an unconscious metaphor for the client's perception of his or her home and family life. The following features of Bird's Nest drawing may suggest a secure home and positive familial attachments:

Birds are in the nest.

Four or more colors are used

The dominant color used is green.

The entire bird family is depicted.

The nest is drawn in a tree.

The nest scene is drawn in profile, not from a bird's eye point of view.

The entire tree is drawn.

The main themes in Bird's Nest assessments are:

Home and family

Hunger / need for food

Abandonment issues

The wonder of nature

Anecdotes of personal experiences

After the drawing and post-drawing inquiry have been completed, the therapist will evaluate the drawing by using the “Attachment Rating Scale” (ARS). The therapist will rate the below areas on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = lowest/least, 5 = highest/most).

Are there contents within the nest?

Does the environment look supportive?

Does the story about the nest reflect a theme of security or attachment?

Is a parental nesting animal included?

How sturdy is the nest?

Strengths: The Bird’s Nest drawing can offer valuable information about a client’s familial relationships, security of home life, and the nature of his or her attachments. This drawing allows the person to communicate about his or her family through the use of a non-threatening metaphor.

Limitations: The client may feel limited by the restriction on materials other than markers. Only one drawing is produced, which may provide a narrow view of the client’s reality. This assessment, like many art therapy assessments, needs additional empirical study.