THE BUTTON TREE

AIM

This direct work tool is a projective technique, which is aimed at identifying a young person's family and social relationships, which are important to them.
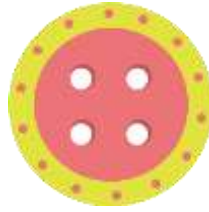

KIT REQUIRED

A selection of coloured crayons, pens, paints etc (must include a variety of shades of brown, green and red).

Large sheet of paper

A selection of buttons – (large, small, bright, dark and sparkly). The more the better!

METHOD

Ask the YP to draw their own tree - Allow time with limited conversation to enable the YP to concentrate on their drawing. If chatting keep the topic basic – i.e. how's your day been etc. When tree is completed to their satisfaction introduce the buttons and ask them to choose a button that represents themselves and to place it on the tree wherever they choose.

When their button is placed ask the YP to choose as many buttons as they want and place them on the tree – tell them they can choose as many buttons as they like to represent people or animals, living or dead or activities that are important to them. Allow time with limited conversations so they are able to concentrate on their choices.

(Choice of Buttons) - Once they are happy and they have finished choosing all the buttons they want to - explore with them why they chose the button they did to represent themselves – "what was it about that button that you liked / is like you / represents you". Then ask questions about the other buttons on the tree – "who do they represent – why that particular button"

(Position of Buttons) - Once you have talked about each button you are then going to start to move some buttons around – say to the YP "how does it feel for you if I swap this button with this one" – slide a button closest to them and swap with one further away – talk about the emotions that action made them feel – RETURN the button to its original place.

Look at the buttons on the tree – take note of anyone missing from the tree – think about a typical family tree / social relationships and who is not there, ask why. "as I look at your tree and buttons I have noted you have not chosen a button for your 'father / grandfather / uncle / friend" be sensitive and if the

YP becomes upset at forgetting – immediately give them permission to choose a button and place it on the tree.

When task completed – ask the YP if they are happy to place all the buttons back into the box and allow **them** to do this task. If there is a particular button that they would like to keep allow them to. Allow the YP to keep their tree if they choose to – you can always take a photo for your files but remember to ask the YP first.
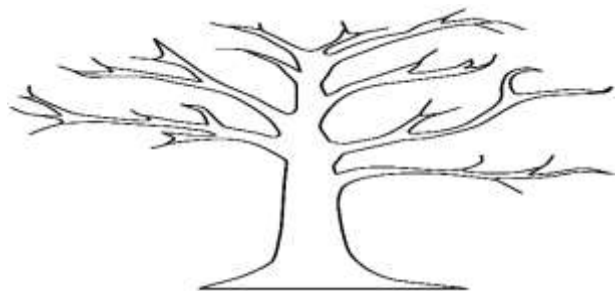

ANALYSIS

When thinking about the YP tree how is it formed?

Are there leaves, are there roots, are animals living in the tree, is it colourful – used a variety of shades of each colour – drawn details on the tree – are there apples or fruit on the tree.

As a projective technique, the YP who draw a colourful detailed tree tend to be happier than YP who use a single colour with no details. The ultimate you would want from a confident and happy YP's tree would be lots of colour, details and apples or fruit. Some YP's trees who have issues with OCD and similar can tend to very detailed, draw individual leaves, which are similar in size and colour.
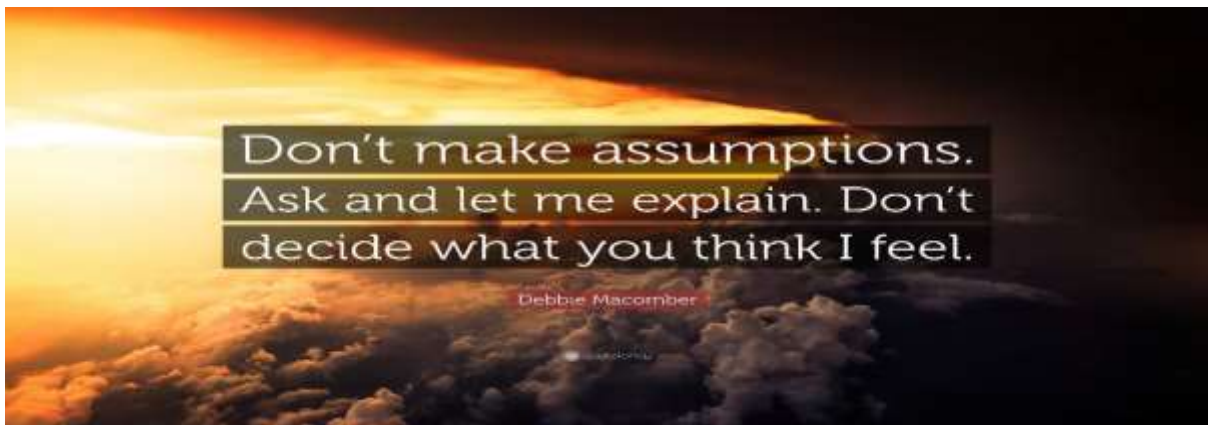
When thinking about the buttons?

Which buttons did the YP choose to represent each person or animal important to them?

Did they place someone on their tree you didn't know about?

Think about who they placed closest to them and furthest away – what was YP's reaction to swapping the buttons around.

Don't make assumptions – ask the questions!

Big bright buttons tend to be important good people

Big bright and sparkly buttons tend to be important attachment figures usually females.

Small bright buttons tend to be for nice people who are either less important or much younger

Big dark buttons tend to be for people who are not nice or very old males

Small dark buttons tend to be for people who are not nice and either less important or much younger.

YP still appear to choose buttons by colour such as pink for females and blue for males. Bright tends to be for nice people and dark for people who are not as nice.