



## Alfano Family Arts in Medicine Studio

### Examples of Patient Interactions

By Nitza Danieli, Resident Artist, and Her Colleagues

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#### **Pizza**

1. R. is 3 years old. He has been unable to eat as a result of treatment. On R.'s first date in the Studio, we played using red earthy clay (air hardening). His spirits lifted as he beat and pinched the clay. He sang a song and roared with joy. We poked holes in the clay with our fingers, poured water and played in the muddy water.

We padded the clay to a round form and crushed it into a pizza pie. Nitza Pizza, he roared! Let's make lunch! We added pepperonis and broccoli, (sand, glitter and paint) and spoke about his favorite foods. We fed almost everyone in the waiting room till R. was called in for his infusion. I pierced a hole in the finished piece and put a ribbon through it. I gave it to R.'s mom. What a time piece!

The creative relationship we have with R. is built on trust and it has allowed me to use art to comfort and distract his attention from the reality of difficult treatments.

A few weeks later, after R.'s surgery, he didn't want to eat but when it became part of our play he was able after a time to eat a whole fig bar.

R.'s mother shared later that he was not urinating and asked if I could help. I sat in the back of the clinic with R. and his mother, closed the curtain and played with a big tub of water, cups and colored sand. I poured water in and out of the tub and we listened to the sound of running water—a river, a waterfall. Your turn R.! He was able to pee into the bottle as he replicated the sound. It was an immediate success. This method was used several times by R.'s nurses and it allowed his chemotherapy treatment to be applied faster, shortening long clinic days. Later, R.'s nurses told me that now all he has to do is touch water to be able to pee.

#### **A Shy Girl**

2. Today I worked closely with a very shy little girl. Her father kept repeating, "I can't believe she is making art with you at the table. I really didn't feel she would participate. I can't believe she is laughing with you right now." Recent tears from getting a needle began to dry up. We didn't speak the same language but could easily communicate while making art. We laughed a lot while placing stickers on each other's nose and cheeks.

#### **Celebration**

3. Today was a fabulous day at the clinic. I brought out the papermaking materials. What a hit! Small children, tweens, young adults, parents, even the clinicians were captivated by the papermaking production. One teenager had just been given great news that she only needed to return once a month for checkups, that she was

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cancer free! It was a joyous moment as the other patients' parents expressed their congratulations. There was a whole lot of laughter and joking around because the teenagers didn't want to put their hands into the pulpy water. I observed a moment of real community, of sharing stories, of expressing true joy and love among strangers brought together by similar circumstances.

### **Grandmother**

4. A grandmother was with her grandchild in the seating area. She appeared tired. I brought over a small weaving project that could be done while sitting. There were many children at our art table today so I would just check in with the grandmother to see how her weaving was coming along. She looked up at me and said, "This is so relaxing. What great therapy. My day started out very difficult but this has really calmed me down."

### **A Toddler**

5. I am amazed by how water play is so effective for the little ones. There was a very busy toddler getting fussy, running around, whining and frustrating his already exhausted mother. I remembered watching the calming effects of water play days earlier and brought out a medium sized container with water. Sparkles, small wooden letters, textured bits of material were placed alongside the container. Immediately the toddler calmed down and played attentively with his water concoction.

### **Zoetrope**

6. The zoetrope captures the attention of all ages but in particular those that tend to play on their phones and tablets. It's a great activity for those who have to sit or may not have the strength/energy to come to our table. A family activity usually occurs as they draw small shapes and figures on paper, experimenting with simple animation as they place their small drawings into the zoetrope.

### **Isolation**

7. I met J. and his mother on Friday at his bedside. They seemed preoccupied and distant. His mom told me that J. was losing strength in his hands. I arrived with four packages of bright colored modeling clay and as the colors appeared, J.'s eyes widened! Mom and J. following me, kneading each color, first with the palms of our hands, and then blending two colors with finger tips to create new colors! Hands and fingers worked together and separately. Focusing the eyes on the red and yellow to make a beautiful orange pumpkin!