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WORKING WITH THE RELATIONAL WORLD OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD USING PSYCHODYNAMIC GROUP THERAPY

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For over forty years, Bellevue Hospital's Therapeutic Nursery Program has been addressing the emotional problems of New York City preschoolers, aged two to five years, with the help of their families and other caregivers. Typical psychiatric disorders treated in the Therapeutic Nursery Program include anxiety disorders (separation anxiety, generalized anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder), disruptive behavior disorders (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder), mood disorders, adjustment disorders and attachment disorders.

We have found that group psychotherapy provides a safe and secure place where, through psychodynamic intervention, children can repair dysfunctional relationships, identify and express a full range of emotions, resolve cultural differences and develop age appropriate skills.

Our Therapeutic Nursery Program employs a wide range of additional treatment modalities in order to reach the treatment goals. Individual or family sessions, as well as meetings with teachers and social service workers, are scheduled to address issues.

We have also found that dyadic or sibling work is often needed to stop or reverse the development of inappropriate family relationships.

One of our indications of a successful intervention is that either during or after their participation in the Therapeutic Nursery, children return to community-based daycare centers and preschools. We have also found that via participation in the Therapeutic Nursery program, families have opportunities to strengthen their ability to nurture their children, share successful parenting with other families and build pleasurable experiences with their children.