

Shakespeare's Heartbeat: Drama games for children with autism

Kelly Hunter



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Children on the autistic spectrum experience varying degrees of difficulties; all of which can be understood as a disassociation of mind and body. Expressing feelings, making eye contact, keeping a steady heartbeat and recognizing faces are all part of the autism dilemma which can be poetically explored by Shakespeare.

Over ten years, Hunter worked with children on all points of the spectrum, developing drama games for the specific purpose of combatting autism. These unique games, derived from specific moments in the plays, shed new light on how to teach Shakespeare to children, using the drama as an exploration of how it *feels* to be alive.

Shakespeare's Heartbeat is a step-by-step guide, detailing how to demonstrate, play and share these sensory games. The book includes:

- Games based on A Midsummer Night's Dream
- Games based on The Tempest
- Tips and advice for playing one-on-one with the children
- An afterword describing Hunter's journey from performer and practitioner to creator of this work.

Shakespeare's poetic definitions of seeing, thinking and loving reveal the very processes that children with autism find so difficult to achieve. This book provides an indispensable learning tool for those wishing to encourage children's eye contact and facial expression, improve their spatial awareness and language skills and introduce them to imaginative play.

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