

# The “Carpet-Matrix”: A Tool To Facilitate Therapeutic Work With Children And Adolescents

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## BACKGROUND

- Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by the presence of anxiety symptoms and a constant and excessive state of worry, disproportionate to the reality of the facts.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been shown to be effective in treating anxiety disorders across several studies.

## MEASURES

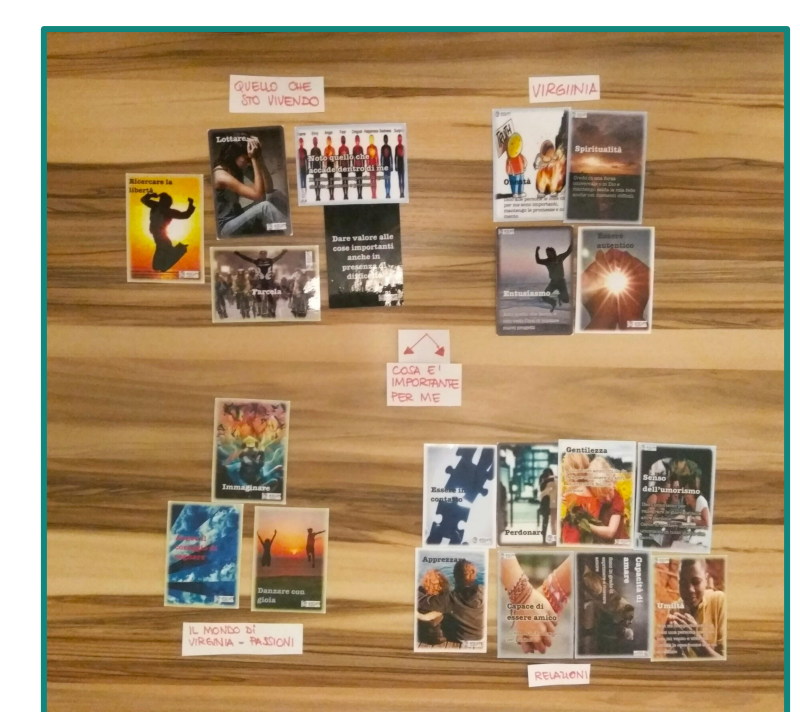
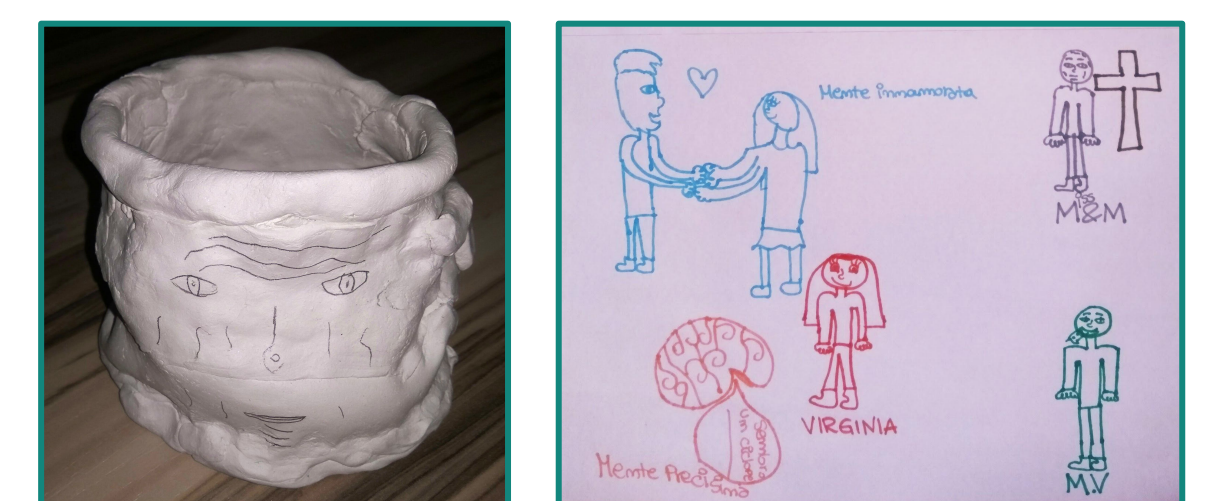
I-AFQ and I-CAMM were introduced at the beginning of treatment and retested after 12 sessions.

## CASE PRESENTATION

- V. is 12 years old and attends the second year of the secondary school
- Good cognitive functioning
- She lives with her parents, her brother (14 y old) and her young sister (6 y old)
- V. experienced anxiety problems at the age of 8 after her grandfather died
- The girl had already followed a psychotherapy after the death of her grandfather
- At the age of 12 anxiety problems re-emerge following another traumatic event: grandmother's death
- The girl has a nervous cough and can not say several words related to her fears
- V. was totally absorbed by thoughts of past events and worried for the future respect to herself and her family.
- No drug treatment was prescribed

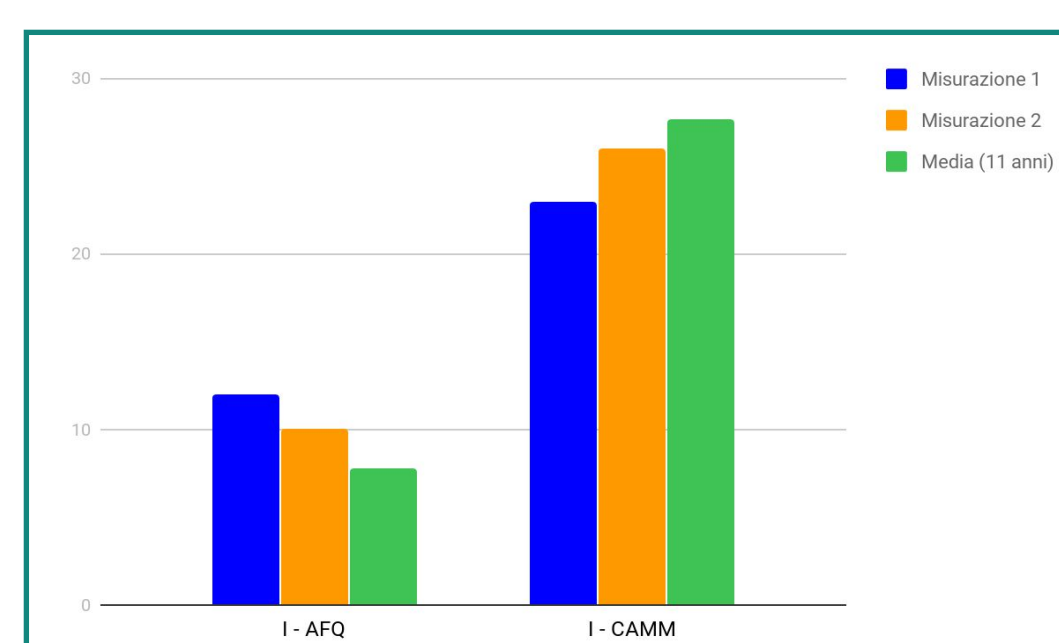
## TREATMENT

- In the first phase, mindfulness, physicalization and defusion exercises were carried out to allow the girl to get in touch with her fears and thoughts (fig 1 and 2). To help V. to clarify and contact values and goals, we introduced a values card (fig.3).
- During the second phase the matrix model was introduced as a “carpet” (fig. 4). It was possible to place on the “Carpet-Matrix” the works realized in the previous sessions: the vase of the fears, the “characters” of Virginia’s mind., the values cards. The girl was invited to move from one quadrant to another of the “Carpet-Matrix” and post notes were placed on the various quadrants in order to facilitate the process of discrimination of her own experiences and behaviors.
- Several post-its were used:
  - The heart, to identify people and important things (values);
  - The fis, to describe fears and thoughts that often capture Virginia's mind (just like the fish that bites on the hook);
  - The feet, to highlight the behaviors implemented toward or away from.
- The Carpet-Matrix facilitated the development of experiential exercises related to self as context as a perspective that helps us to observe internal experiences and behaviors (fig. 5).



## RESULTS

The results after 12 sessions show increasing psychological flexibility and mindfulness skills as shown by I-AFQ and I-CAMM scores.



## CONCLUSION

The use of the “Carpet-Matrix” allowed V. to increase the skills of discrimination and choice in a more concrete way. Currently the “Carpet-Matrix” has been used in therapy with children, adolescents and in group parent training. What we could observe is that this tool allows us to create a physical context in which every person can stop and observe his own internal and external experience and the direction of his behavior. The “Carpet-Matrix” makes the therapeutic session more dynamic and engaging.

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