

# ASSESSING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP

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## Giftedness and Mental Health Anecdotes

1. A father was trapping mice using bait under his car in the garage to kill the rodents that had become a nuisance to his car engine. Oblivious that he was being watched by his three-year old son, but aware that the colourful bait might attract the child, the father pushed the bait plate far out of sight under the car using a rod. He was surprised to hear his little boy telling him that **“You know Dad, if the mice eat bait stuff, they will die. Me, I don’t want to eat mouse bait because if I eat bad stuff, I’ll also die.”** He thought the boy was intelligent and agreed with him emphasizing that mouse bait was dangerous to people to which the boy agreed by nodding. Then the father called the child and together they went into the house but the garage unclosed. A while later while the father was doing other things in the house, the little boy sneaked out of the house and went back to the garage, crawled under the car and tasted a few grains of the bait stuff and spat it out immediately as it did not taste well on his tongue . Meanwhile, the when the father suddenly realised that the boy was no longer in the house, he went out of the house calling the boy’s name only to find him in the garage spread eagled under the car spitting and spitting near the bait plate. He immediately pulled out the child, washed his mouth and rushed him to hospital but the boy was ok. Later when the doctor asked by the boy why he ate poisonous stuff that was meant to kill mice, the little boy replied, **“I really did not want to die and become dead; I only wanted to die just a little and see what’s out there and then, immediately come back to life before I really die for good.”**

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2. I told a folktale story with animal characters to Grade 3 children at U-Hill Elementary School. Ref: *The Mbira Metaphor* Ngara (2009)

Baboon was charged with the duty of entertaining wild animals with *mbira* music when they returned home from a hunt. Hare, a supposedly talented character, quickly learnt *mbira* music thumbing techniques from Baboon and later outmatched Baboon in a *mbira* music contest to resolve the ownership wrangle between them.

In their reactions to the folktale, children came up with, interesting, unexpected and yet supportable points of views many of them missing its original moral. One little girl appeared to be sobbing during the story. When asked what the trouble was, she told us emotionally that she was terribly upset by how Baboon was unfairly treated in the story. When the class was asked to vote on who deserved the *mbira* musical instrument, most of the children wanted it to be given back to Baboon despite his lack of talent arguing that it was originally his anyway. However, a few other students argued that Hare deserved the *mbira* musical instrument because he was better able to play it than Baboon. One particular little girl stunned us when she told us that the folktale reminded her of the "The Parable of Talents" (*Matthew, 25 v.14–30, The Holy Bible: English standard version*) in which the lazy servant lost his only talent.

### References

- Ngara, C. (2009). The *Mbira* Metaphor: Inspiring creative thinking folktale. *Exceptionality Education International*, 19 (3). 128-135.