



PLAY THERAPY

PLAY

Play is FUN! It allows us to explore, and interact in a pleasant way. It encourages creativity, helps to relieve stress and express emotions. For children, play is their natural and universal language; with toys and actions becoming their words

WHY PLAY IN THERAPY?

In therapy, play assists the child with self exploration, social and emotional development, strengthening relationships, and self expression. It provides the therapist an opportunity to learn about the child's thoughts, feelings and struggles. Children who come to play therapy have often exhausted the coping skills they know, resulting in problems at home, in school or with peers. Play therapy allows children to change the way they think about, feel toward, and resolve their problems.

WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY?

Play therapy differs from regular play in that the therapist helps children to address and resolve their own problems. Play therapy is a structured, approach, based on theory that builds on the normal communication and learning processes of children. Play therapists are skilled in

creating a safe, inviting environment. They have training in understanding the meanings in a child's play. Sessions are usually held in a playroom, which contains carefully selected toys and materials to assist the child in expressing themselves.

In **Child Centered Play Therapy** a relationship of safety and trust develops between the child and therapist. The child controls the play and has freedom to express him/herself during the session. The therapist will set limits as needed and this is done in a way to help children feel safe and make choices.

Filial Play Therapy allows the parent to partner with therapist to bring about change. The parent learns to conduct their own play therapy session with their child. This type of therapy assists in strengthening the parent/child bond and provides the parent with an opportunity to understand their child better.

Theraplay® is a specific type of play therapy that works to strengthen the bond between child and caregiver (s), through the domains of engagement, nurture, challenge and structure. This type of therapy is beneficial to a wide range

of children, from those who have experienced trauma, to children who struggle with self-control. There are specific activities that parents can utilize at home to enhance their relationship with the child.

HOW CAN FAMILIES BE INVOLVED?

Parents are a key ingredient to success in the play therapy process! Therapists can help the parent(s) understand the child and their behaviors to a greater degree. Additionally, therapists can help the parent learn new strategies and provide support to manage their child's behavior. It is important for parents to communicate any stressors, or changes in behavior that have occurred between sessions. This gives the therapist a bigger picture of what the child may be experiencing. At times, play therapy can bring difficult emotions to the surface, and regression may occur. If you experience this, communication with the therapist is vital, so concerns can be addressed quickly. Children and families heal quicker when they work together!

For more information on involving your child in play therapy, contact FCS Counseling.



Jeanine Jantz, LPC, is a Licensed Professional Counselor. She has a Master's degree in Counseling from Wichita State University and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Fort Hays State University. She has more than 12 years of experience in the child welfare system and more than eight years experience as a therapist in a residential group home. Jeanine serves ages three to adult, with specialties in early childhood trauma, survivors of neglect and physical & sexual abuse. She utilizes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Lifespan Integration, and Play Therapy.

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