

**Practical Play Therapy
in the Schools**

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**playroom
lubbock**
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Overview and Objectives

- Gain an increased understanding of the brain science that supports play therapy
- Experience play activities treated as a metaphor
- Preview the theory of Child-Centered Play Therapy
- Describe the attributes of a play therapist
- Learn how to incorporate play therapy in schools
- Practice fundamental play therapy techniques and approaches

**Interplay between Play
Therapy and Neuroscience**

- Creates new neural pathways
- Enriches the therapeutic relationship
- Enhances neuroplasticity
- Constructs a wordless narrative of self-awareness
- Integrates affect and cognition
- Sets the stage for change and learning to occur

[Outcome Research and Meta-Analyses/Review](#)

Neuroscience and the Magic of Play Therapy, Stewart, Anne., Field, Thomas A., Echterling, Lennis G., International Journal of Play Therapy 2016, Vol. 25, No. 1, 4-13

EvidenceBasedPlayTherapy.com





Child-Centered Theory

Derived from Carl Roger's nondirective counseling approach, the child-centered approach is based on the theory that the child's behavior is caused by the drive toward self-actualization (reaching fullest potential and consistency between ideal and real selves).

Children possess:

- Intrinsic motivation
- A capacity for self-direction
- Ideal Self: the self a child wants to be
- Real Self: the self a child actually is

The child-centered play therapist moves at a pace of growth determined by the child's unique, forward-moving pace.
(Carl Rogers and Virginia Axline)

Child-Centered Play Therapy

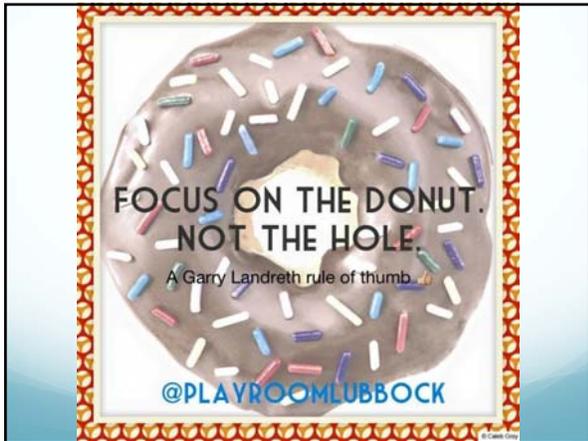
- Ascribes to a deep commitment that all children have an innate yearning and capacity to realize positive growth and maturity.
- Recognizes that children are:
 - capable
 - resilient
 - constructively self-directing
- Relates in a way that releases and draws-out the child's inner-directional, forward moving, creative, self-healing power.

When we learn to integrate
our ideal self with
our true self,
to just BE,
we open ourselves up to
possibilities of
love, hope, and life.

Kelly Martin
The Playroom Lubbock

Therapeutic Conditions for Growth

- One must be:
- Genuine
 - Warm, caring, and accepting
 - Empathic



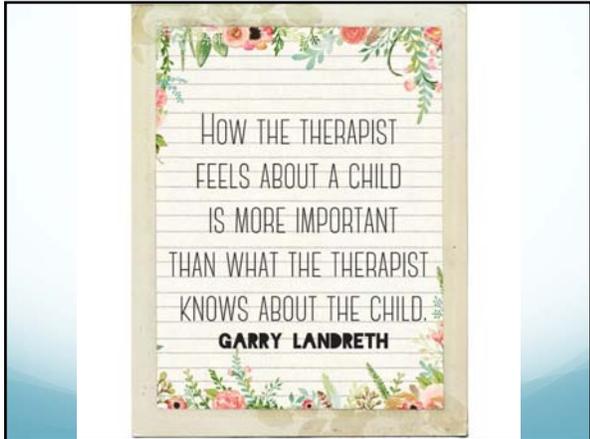
Attributes of a Play Therapist

The play therapist (an adult), exhibits characteristics children rarely experience with adults. (Landreth, p. 96)

- Acceptance of the child
- Respect for the child's uniqueness
- Sensitivity to the child's feelings
- Appreciates the child as capable and unique
- Being fully present (actively engaged)

Qualities of a Play Therapist

- Open-minded (non-judgmental)
- Personally secure (loves who they are, although not perfect)
- Sense of humor (can relate to humor in various ways and shades)
- Respects the direction determined by each child (allows for the child to express themselves "outside the box")



Facilitative Responses

- Tracking
- Restating content
- Reflecting feeling
- Setting limits
- Returning responsibility
- Questions
- Recognizing metaphors

Facilitative (Child) 1st Response(s)

- Katie, an 7 year old in her 2nd play session, says "Today is my birthday...but my mom said....she said I have been too mean to my little brother...so...she's not going to bake me a birthday cake."

Therapists Observation: The child looked very sad and her head drops.

Facilitative (Therapists) Responses

- 1. Oh, so you're been too mean for a birthday cake. I bet that makes you feel sad.
- 2. You feel sad and wish you could have a birthday cake from your mom. You're so worried that your mom is mad at you because you've been mean to your brother.
- 3. Sometimes it hurts when people don't do what we want them to do.
- 4. You seem disappointed that your mom is not going to bake you a cake.
- 5. You're really sad about a birthday and no birthday cake. You just feel like crying.

Facilitative (Child) 2nd Response(s)

- CH: Do people come here a lot? (Excited Voice, eagerness)
- CH: My puppy got killed and I cried.
- CH: Vrrrooom Vrrrooom (pushing block along the floor)
- CH: (places alligator puppet on her hand)
- CH: (child finds a comb, and combs the hair of 2 dolls)
- CH: Maybe I'll paint after this.
- CH: The house is for you. What color do you want it to be?



Limit Setting

A-C-T (A 3-Step Method of Limit-Setting)

- ACKNOWLEDGE the child's feeling or desire
- COMMUNICATE the limit (specific and brief)
- TARGET acceptable alternatives

Limits are not needed until they are needed.

- Protect child/counselor
- Protect valuable property
- Maintain acceptance of child
- Provide consistency in the play session
- ❖ Is this necessary? Can I enforce it consistently? Can I continue to accept the child if I don't set a limit?

Play Themes

- Exploratory
- Relationship
- Power/Control
- Helpless/Inadequate
- Aggressive/Revenge
- Safety/Security
- Mastery
- Nurturing
- Death/Loss/Grieving
- Sexualized

Play Therapy in the Schools

- Challenges
- Rationale
- Goals

Influences Affecting Emotional and Academic Development

- Cognitive Style
- Family Influences
- Peer Influences
- School Atmosphere
- Child Abuse/Trauma
- School Violence
- Emotional Disorders

School Based Play Therapy by Athena Drewes, Lois Carey, Charles E. Schaefer 2001

Goals for CCPT

- Develop the capacity to relate to an adult in an open, positive, caring and respectful manner
- Become aware of feelings (perceptions and perspectives)
- Learn social skills by practicing in situations similar to real life (applicable healthy life-skills development)
- Build self-concept, self-control, self-efficacy
- Enhance opportunities for academic success

Toys

- Toys and materials should be selected, not collected. (Landreth, 2002, pg 133)
- Toys should provide variety in choice of expression
- Toys should be durable
- Toys should not be complex
- Toys should allow reality testing of limits
- Toys should allow development of positive self-image as well as self-control

Material adapted from Landreth, G. L. (2002). Play therapy: The art of the relationship. (2nd ed.). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Toys

- **Real-life and Nurturing** Doll family, doll house, baby bottle, variety of puppets, animal families, cars, money, cash, register, kitchen food, medical kit, phone, etc.
- **Acting-out, Aggressive, Scary Toys (or not?)** Bop bag, toy soldiers, guns (colored plastic-not real looking!), scary/aggressive puppets and animals (alligator, shark, etc.), rubber knife, foam sword, handcuffs, etc.
- **Creative expression and emotional release:** Sand, water, paints, craft materials, clay, musical instruments, magic wand, dress-up clothes, etc.

Logistical Aspects

- Individual vs Group Play Therapy
- Portable Play Therapy Kit
- Toys that Release Aggression
- Dealing with a Mess
- Setting Limits
- Clean up Time
- School Interruptions

Children work hard in the playroom, and it can elicit strong feelings that can sometimes be revealed after a session.

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Teacher Consultation

- Positive outcomes possible
- Importance of confidentiality
- Process of retrieving and returning children to the classroom
- How to speak with children after their session
- Arrange regular consultation meetings to discuss progress.

Assessing Progress

- Teacher or Parent Feedback Form
- Stages of Play Therapy (a4pt.org)
- Discipline Records
- Themes

Additional Play Based Techniques

- Boat in a Storm Expressive Drawing
- Model Magic Animal
- Collaborative Drawing Activity
- Create your world in the Sand
- Kinetic Family/School Drawing
- Assorted Objects Box
- Puppetry
- Clay

Resources

- School Based Play Therapy by Athena Drewes, Lois Carey, Charles Schaefer
- Play Therapy Basics and Beyond by Terry Kottman
- Play Therapy: The Art of the Relationship by Garry Landreth
- Child Parent Relationship Therapy Treatment Manual by Sue Bratton, Garry Landreth, Theresa Kellam, and Sandra Blackard
- Favorite Therapeutic Activities for Children and Teens by Liana Lowenstein. FREE Ebook
 - www.gway.org/websites/gway/images/Creative%20Interventions.pdf
