

**Practical Play Therapy
in the Schools**

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**playroom
lubbock**
Twenty Solutions for 2016

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

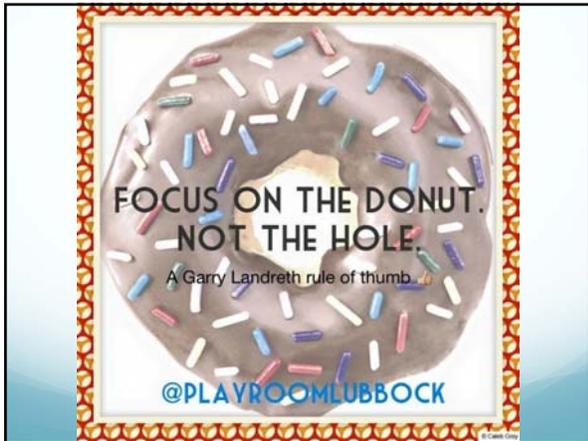
- Ascribes to a deep commitment that all children have an innate yearning and capacity to realize positive growth and maturity.
- Recognizes that children are:
 - capable
 - resilient
 - constructively self-directing
- Relates in a way that releases and draws-out the child's inner-directional, forward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

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Therapeutic Conditions for Growth

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



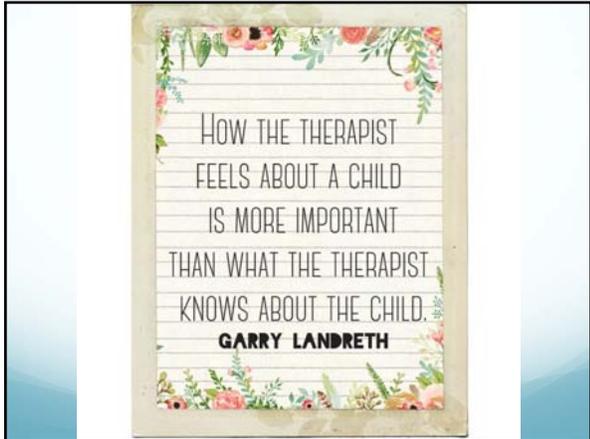
Attributes of a Play Therapist

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
