



A CLOSER LOOK AT Play Therapy

WRITTEN BY PH & W STAFF

Chances are you know a child who is receiving some type of therapy for an emotional, behavioral or mental health issue. Children, because of their developmental level, do not typically benefit from traditional talk therapy. They simply do not have the brain development, language skills, or attention span needed to sit on the couch and talk through their problems. Researchers have found that play therapy is more suitable at times.¹ Since play is the language of children, learning and development are best fostered through play.³ The assertion is that using the child's natural first language of play offers a better line of communication between therapist and child.²

To help us better understand Play Therapy we asked Randi Herman, a Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist for some clarification. She explains play therapy as a way to communicate with children in their own language, the language in which they are naturally talking about and working through their issues. Play connects us to people in a positive way, stimulates creative thinking and exploration, regulates our emotions, and boosts our ego.³ In addition; play allows us to practice skills and roles needed for survival.

Play therapy allows trained mental health practitioners to meet the child at their level and talk to them in their language to achieve well-being. Therapists utilize play therapy to help children express what is troubling them when they do not have the verbal language to express their thoughts and feelings.¹ "I practice Child Centered Play Therapy because it allows the child the opportunity to express and work through their issues in a safe, therapeutic environment without imposing an assumption from the therapist as to what the child needs to address or how they need to do so." Randi explains, "In addition to working with the child, I work with the parent/s on behavioral interventions that they can use at home. This allows the child individual therapy to work on development of the self, while also addressing the needs of the parents".

Mental health professionals who are also Registered Play Therapists are more difficult to find but have received extensive training, practice, and supervision in play therapy. "It's especially appropriate for children ages 3 through 12 years old since children these ages are typically still using play as their primary means of emotional expression," says Randi. Play therapy can be used to address many issues, including such issues as social skills, the parent-child relationship, non-compliance, anxiety, depression, and abuse/trauma resolution. "I see it as therapy that allows the child opportunity for development of the self, by facilitating the improvement of self-esteem, self-expression, self-control, and self-direction," explains Randi.



BY THE BOOK :

Play Therapy is a mental health treatment by which licensed mental health professionals use developmentally appropriate play to communicate with and help clients obtain optimal mental health. Play therapy may be used to address a broad spectrum of mental health concerns, e.g. family relationships, trauma, behavior problems, etc.¹

ABOUT THE SOURCE:

Randi Herman has specialized in play therapy for over 13 years. To learn more she suggests www.a4pt.org. For additional information, Randi offers a free phone consultation.

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