

Dynamix Play Therapy

Play Therapy and Your Child



How to know if your child may need Play Therapy

It is a natural thing to feel worried when a child is upset, angry or generally not quite themselves. It may be that they are being disruptive and aggressive at school and home, something has happened within the child's family and they are unable to cope, or even experiencing developmental issues such as bed wetting, eating or relationships.

Every child copes with it in a different way but some may find it really difficult to deal with and therefore experience problems with feelings or behaviours that disrupt everyday life and the lives of those around them. This can be a really hard thing to realise and to come to terms with, but it is the first step in the process of realising that the child needs some help with how they are feeling.

What is Play Therapy?

Play therapy is a form of therapy that allows a child to understand the feelings they have inside them or an upsetting event that they have been involved in. For children, it is very hard for them to use words to explain how they feel as they use play as their main form of communication. It also allows them to feel less pressured to find a verbal answer to a question that has been asked which is something that would usually come naturally for adults. The only similarity that Play Therapy has with adult therapy is that it will happen at the same time every week and the same time to create a trusting relationship between the child and Play Therapist.

How will this help my child?

Play is the initial form of communication that children learn to use from an early age, helping them to develop social, physical, emotional, creative, and cognitive and language skills. When an adult is upset and wants to talk to someone about their problems, they usually sit down and talk through how they are feeling. This is incredibly difficult for children to do, so play is used as a form of talking to the child and helping them to make sense of their distress.

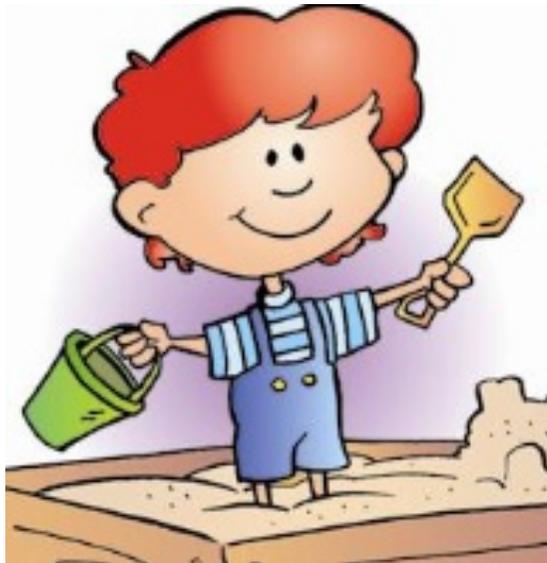
Play therapy would offer a chance for a child to talk about any concerns they have through features such as role play and metaphors. For example, they may act out a traumatic experience to help them understand and make sense of how they feel and how they could possibly cope better with this in the future.

The result of Play therapy varies in every child from either a reduction in anxiety or a better self-esteem, to a more specific outcome of a behavioural change and improved relationships with family and in school.



What will happen in the Play Therapy session?

The Play Therapist would have a large amount of toys for the child to choose from including, human and animal figurines, build blocks, puppets, arts a crafts, sand play and sensory objects. The child will have the freedom to do whatever they want in the play room for the hour session. The Play Therapist will let the child lead the play most of the time and play with the child if they invite them to, enabling the child to use the resources to express themselves without needing to use verbal explanations.



What does a Play Therapist do?

A Play Therapist has extensive training in subjects such as the cognitive development of a child from birth, attachment theory and bereavement and trauma experiences at a young age. All this training is based around the use of play as a form for a child to express emotions they may not necessarily be able to vocalise, therefore keeping it inside and letting it build up creating behaviour and developmental issues.

The Play Therapist would talk to the parents/care givers first to address any concerns they may have about the child. This will be done by taking a history of the family and the child along with information about school life which they may want to collate from the school its self. The Play Therapist would then want to meet the child with the parent/care giver and discuss a few things with the child.

The Play Therapist would inform the adult on what to tell the child to prepare them for Play Therapy and how to anticipate and answer the child's questions.

How long will the Play Therapy take?

Every child is different and will react in different ways to Play Therapy. A short term intervention would be roughly 12 weeks which would include a 6 week meeting with the parent/care giver and a 12 week closure meeting.

If problems continue for a long time or are complicated, a longer term intervention would be more suitable for the child to help them as much as possible.

The sessions would be for an hour a week at the same time in the same place to create a sense of safety and to develop the relationship between the Play Therapist and child.

Confidentiality

Just like adult therapy, the Play Therapist will usually keep the information about the child and family confidential. This is explained to a child as 'what is said and played with in the play room is private but not secret'. This means that the Play Therapist will not be discussing with anyone including the parents/care givers what exactly happened in the play room. If there is something that a Play Therapist is worried about in relation to the child's safety, they would have a responsibility to discuss this with whoever is appropriate. The Play Therapist would usually talk to the adult about this first.

In the meetings with the parent/care giver, the Play Therapist would discuss themes of the child's play and to check in with how it's going. They would not disclose any specific details of what the child has played or talked about. This is important as it maintains the child trust with the Play Therapist and makes them feel safe in the play environment.



How can the parent/care giver help?

As the parent/ care giver is the most important part of the child's life, it is very important for them to be involved in the process. This can be done in many ways:

- Be encouraging and consistent with the child attending the sessions
- Resist the urge to ask what the child did during the Play Therapy session as this would cause pressure on the child to comment on something they may not want to talk about or can't find the right words to express.
- Praising the child for attending is an easy thing for an adult to slip into. Play Therapy can be a good or bad experience for the child and they can react to their experience in an uncensored way.
- If a parent/caregiver has any concerns, it would have to be expressed to the Play Therapist not the child, making them feel safe within the play environment.
- Play can be messy so the child would have to be dressed appropriately and should not be told off for coming out covered in paint, for example.
- During a therapeutic intervention, the child may seem to get worse before they get better which is to be expected as it would be a process and emotions would come to the surface. Play Therapists would urge the parent/care giver that this is a natural part of the process and if there are concerns, the therapist would be there to answer any questions.

