

# Play Therapy and Us

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HOW WE INTERPRET AND DELIVER PLAY THERAPY

# What Is Play Therapy?

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There are many kinds of Play Therapy- from Lego Therapy to Psychotherapy.

All of them are designed to help children who struggle in one way or another.

As children naturally use play to learn, adults can engage children and deliver safe, beneficial messages by using play.

It provides children with the tools they need to be able to overcome the difficulties they have.

# We aren't Therapists

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Therapists usually work 1:1 with a child, often with a parent involved.

We don't deliver play therapy like this.

Therapists see children for a short time on a weekly/fortnightly basis.

We don't deliver play therapy like this either.

Therapists do assessments and can give diagnosis.

We don't do ANY of that!

So what do we do??

# Attachment Theory, Dan Hughes and DDP

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We are inspired by Attachment Theory- the idea that children thrive by developing an attachment to a significant carer.

Dan Hughes' model of working with traumatised children has wider uses and implications, particularly in childcare settings.

Children who struggle with day to day behaviour will benefit from having a significant attachment to an adult in their setting

We have used ideas from Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) to be able to create safe, significant relationships with our Key Children

We apply these ideas broadly to support all children in our settings

# PACE- The Basis of Our Model of Practice

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P is for Playful: engaging in play with a child develops trust, allows barriers to drop and creates a bond.

A is for Accepting: accepting the child's behaviour without judgement- we don't say things like 'That was naughty', we convey that we think they are doing the best they can

C is for Curiosity: we show the child that we are interested in their thoughts, feelings and life.

E is for Empathy: we show the child we empathise without turning the conversation into one about us!

# Safety

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Safety has a broader sense than simply being physically unharmed- it also implies feeling safe to be who you are, that the people around you can see who you are and still want to be with you.

To create this we need to remain in control and present as being unphased by children's often challenging behaviour.

For some children, making people dislike them is a defence- it's easier to accept dislike if you've created it. Children who feel unloveable may present like this.

Its doubly important to maintain an accepting, calm and controlled manner!

# So if we accept what they do, can they get away with otherwise unacceptable behaviour?

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NO!

*We accept the child and not the behaviour.*

We help the child to regain control.

They have a consequence- make reparation for their actions.

We then discuss what can be learned from that incident.

We help the child continue to learn from it in future.

In groups, discuss how you might put this into practice.

# Alien Visitors to Our World!

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It is helpful to think of children in this context- they are new beings into our world, they don't have the understanding of it that we do, the physical tools to deal with it that we do, they don't have the capabilities, understanding or knowledge that we do, it is our role to guide them through these difficult situations.

In pairs- think of a recent situation where you had to speak to a child about their behaviour. Now imagine they didn't know the social boundaries that they broke- would you speak to them differently? Practice some of those conversations.



# Building the Bonds with Play

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There are many ways we can help build a bond with our children- here are a few ideas:

Play didactic turn taking games- two player Snap, draughts, chess etc.

Sit opposite so you can make eye contact, play peek-a-boo, hide and seek- these help a child establish permanency.

Play games or do activities that involve *safe* contact (ie hand to hand, foot to foot)- clapping games, drawing round each others hands and feet, songs with actions

Singing, music, dancing.

# Building the Bonds with Attitude

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We need to convey to our children that we accept them, warts and all! Here are some useful tips to help develop a 'therapeutic attitude'

I noticed you ... eg 'I noticed you got very upset when I asked you to put the pen down.'

I wonder... eg 'I wonder why you got so upset'

My guess is... eg 'My guess is you were very upset when Kiara spoke to you like that'

I know this is hard for you, that's ok, I'm here to help you with this.

*USE THESE POSITIVELY TOO-* I noticed you playing by the window, I wonder why you like apples so much? Etc Why do you think you should use these positively? Discuss in pairs and present to the group.

# Reflective Talking

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Often children genuinely don't know why they did something. Talking reflectively is a very useful tool:

'It must be so hard to be so angry that you rip up your own picture'

'You must have been so cross to tip all the paint on the floor'

Guess out loud:

'Last time I saw someone do that they were actually really sad inside, the sadness made them angry, I wonder if you felt that way just now'

'My guess is that you knew it would upset her and you did it because you wanted to show her how angry you were'

# Consequences

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There must be consequences! It is also important for them to be delivered calmly and supportively:

‘You aren’t yet ready to join in with the other children, so I’ll find you something to do to help you calm down/ stay with you etc’

‘You need to tidy that mess up, I’ll help you/here’s a brush’

‘You feel upset about what you did, that’s why you got even angrier, let’s write her a sorry card together and you’ll feel better about it too’

It’s important NOT to deliver a message that we only like the child when they behave, but that we’ll help them through the tough times too.

# Moving Forward, Learning Lessons

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The behaviour has happened.

The child has been supported to calm down.

Reparation has been made.

Now it's time to learn how to do better next time

In groups, can you think of some ways that you could help specific children in your setting make better choices for themselves?

Eg, 'Next time you're feeling like that, how about...'

# To Sum Up

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We have a positive attitude.

We are interested in helping the child for their sake, not ours.

We look behind the behaviour.

We accept people often do things for less than perfect reasons.

We help the child feel safe and supported.

We help them identify their feelings and behaviour.

We help them find less hurtful or dangerous ways of communicating

# Further Reading

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Building The Bonds of Attachment- Dan Hughes

Hold onto Your Kids- Neufeld & Mate

Inside I'm Hurting- Louise Bomber

Talking Outloud- Julie Hudson (Handout)

Creating Loving Attachments: Parenting with PACE to Nurture Confidence and Security in the Troubled Child- Kim Golding & Daniel Hughes

AND books about feelings- When I'm Feeling Sad (Trace Moroney), The Big Bag of Worries (V.Ironside) and anything by Margot Sutherland!