

What is Play Therapy?

As children grow, their use of language becomes more sophisticated, but throughout childhood, they usually express much more of themselves in their play. Children's feeling, thoughts, motivations and behaviors can often be understood by watching them play. Play is the language of childhood and it is one of the most critical elements of healthy child development.

Play therapy provides a structured environment with games and toys and offers a way for children to express their experiences and feelings through a natural, self-guided, self-healing process.

Play Therapy can also be used as a tool of diagnosis. A play therapist observes a client playing with toys (play-houses, pets, dolls, etc.) to determine the cause of the behavioral/emotional struggles.

How is play therapeutic?

Play therapy creates a safe atmosphere where children can express themselves, try new things, learn more about how the world works, learn about social rules and restrictions, and work through their problems. Play therapy gives children an opportunity to explore and open up more than usual.

When we, as adults, encounter a tough problem, we often think about it for a while, look at it from different angles, determine our options, and sometimes talk about it with someone we trust. When things go wrong for us, we might mentally review what happened and think about how we might handle the situation in the future. During play therapy, children do these same things using their imaginations. Play therapy provides the tools (toys and activities) and the atmosphere to help children express themselves, work on their problems, "try on" different solutions, and learn more effective coping methods.