

What is Theraplay®?



AN INFORMATION
LEAFLET FOR
FAMILIES

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WHAT IS THERAPLAY®

Theraplay® is a child and family therapy for building and enhancing attachment, self-esteem, trust in others, and joyful engagement. It is based on the natural patterns of playful, healthy interaction between parent and child and is personal, physical, and fun. Theraplay interactions focus on four essential qualities found in parent-child relationships: Structure, Engagement, Nurture, and Challenge.

HOW DOES THERAPLAY WORK?

Theraplay is a special type of play therapy that can improve your child's behaviour in unique ways. Using the therapeutic benefits of joyful play and sensitive caregiving, Theraplay focuses on strengthening your relationship with your child, enhancing your sense of connection and mutual understanding so that your child no longer needs to resort to problem behaviours. As the most important people in a child's life, caregivers are actively involved in sessions. With the help of the therapist who is skilled at changing what may seem to you a permanent negative dynamic between you, you and your child will experience delight and enjoyment in each other, and your child will become more responsive to you.



WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THERAPLAY?

Children of any age; children who are withdrawn, passive, or depressed, children who are overactive or aggressive, children on the autism spectrum, and those who are afraid of relating or attaching because of adoption, losses, or trauma can be helped by Theraplay. Theraplay is an especially effective treatment for young children - even for those under three years of age, because it is play-based rather than language-based. The active playfulness of Theraplay often engages children who have not responded to more traditional therapy approaches or who are oppositional. Theraplay's appealing activities help these children "buy into" the therapeutic process and bring about change without the need for the child to talk about or express problems.

WHAT CHANGES CAN I HOPE TO SEE FROM THERAPLAY®?

- Your child may, over time, show less anxiety and agitation and be more able to regulate their emotions
- You and your child may start to feel better connected. Children often tell us that they feel closer to their parents after Theraplay, and often feel more able to cuddle, play, love and be loved
- The parent and child can hope to experience a greater sense joy, playfulness and happiness together

WHAT IS A TYPICAL THERAPLAY TREATMENT SESSION?

A Theraplay session usually lasts up to 45 mins - 1 hour depending on the child's age. In a typical session, the therapist will invite the parent and child into the room in a fun way, such as hopping on one foot, and lead you and your child to a special seat that the therapist has prepared. The therapist will lead the child through a series of simple, fun games and activities, while helping the child be successful and competent. In addition to playful, physical games, the therapist will also initiate quiet activities to nurture your child. Depending on the stage of therapy (parent involvement increases as therapy progresses), the therapist will ask you to play the games in order to facilitate the connection with you and build your skills at responding to your child's needs. At the end of the session, the therapist may ask you to play some of the games at home. Typically every fourth session is a parent-only session, where you and the therapist will talk about progress and how to address any behaviour problems at home.

HOW LONG WILL THE THERAPY LAST FOR?

Typically, the total number of sessions is 24, depending on the resources available. Therapeutic progress will be explored throughout the intervention, with a formal review at the end of the work.