

GROUP PLAY THERAPY ONLINE

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TODAY'S CLASS CONTENTS

- A Nod to the Efficacy of Group Play Therapy
- Benefits and Challenges
- Types and Topics Play Therapy Groups for Different Age Groups
- Tips and Techniques
- Intervention Ideas
- Q & A



WHAT'S THE RESEARCH SAY?

- Play therapy can be used in pre-school centers to help children learn problem-solving skills and communicate with others.
- Citation: Chinekesh, A., Kamalian, M., Eltemasi, M., Chinekesh, S., & Alavi, M. (2013). The effect of group play therapy on social-emotional skills in pre-school children. *Global journal of health science*, 6(2), 163–167. <https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v6n2p163>

WHAT'S THE RESEARCH SAY?

- Measures of innovation, expansion, and flexibility components in the experimental play therapy group were significantly higher than the control group.
- Citation: Jamshid Jarareh, Aref Mohammadi, Maghsoud Nader & Seyyed Akbar Moosavian | Stefan Elmer (Reviewing Editor) (2016) The impact of group play therapy on creativity and control of aggression in preschool children, Cogent Psychology, 3:1,

WHAT'S THE RESEARCH SAY?

- Results demonstrated statistically significant decreases in behavioral problems with moderate to large effect sizes over children in active control group.
- Citation: Ojiambo, D., & Bratton, S. (2014). Effects of group activity play therapy on problem behaviors of preadolescent Ugandan orphans. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 92(3), 355-365

MORE RESEARCH

- [Go download this pdf!](#)





BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

ALL GROUPS PROVIDE SUPPORT, CONNECTION, LEARNING AND GROWING

- To help children not feel so alone with their challenges
- To connect with other children and normalize their experience
- Can be short term or longer term
- Can provide new skills
- Can provide fun bonding

BENEFITS OF ONLINE GROUP PLAY THERAPY

- Many children currently not in school and feeling isolated
- Convenience of plugging in and connecting from home vs. scheduling for in person after school and in some cities, transportation issues
- Parents can often be a support system
- Might be more affordable for you as a therapist as costs of running a group online are often less than in person (no need for finding or renting a room large enough. Supplies sometimes can be gathered from the child's home)
- It is a way to serve MORE clients in one hour or 90 minute session
- Can you think of other benefits?

CHALLENGES OF ONLINE GROUP PLAY THERAPY

- Can be hard to structure a group of children when they are in so many different locations
- Can be hard to capture and hold the children's attention due to distractions and so many uncontrollable variables of distance connections
- Online fatigue if children are also going to school online
- Privacy
- Tech failure
- Technology not always available to all children
- What other challenges can you imagine?



TYPES AND TOPICS FOR PLAY THERAPY GROUPS FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

CLOSED VS. OPEN

- An open group might have new children joining on a rolling basis – usually more of a support group than a process group where skills are learned
- A closed group will be created with a set group of children in advance – more likely to be a process group with a set plan for addressing particular issues specific to the children enrolled.

CAN YOU DO A CCPT GROUP ONLINE?

- You can always implement the basic tenets and practices of reflection, tracking, returning responsibility and therapeutic limit setting.
- With parental involvement and very light structure to the supplies provided/invited there can be child centered choosing and sharing – works best with small group.
- Most online play based groups are going to be more directive with the therapist serving as director, teacher, facilitator.

AGES AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

- Preschoolers ages 4-5
- Kindergarten and 1st grade
- Elementary – ages 7-11
- Middle school – ages 12-14
- High school – ages 14-18

SOME GROUP TOPICS

- Adjusting to a new school
- Social skills
- Changing families: Divorce
- Mastering anxiety
- Emotion regulation
- Body positivity
- Assertiveness skill building
- Dealing with bullies
- Loneliness: Making new Friends
- Parent-child groups
- Sibling groups
- What ideas might you have? Enter in the chat box now!

A young child with light brown hair, wearing a blue Superman cape with red and yellow accents, is sitting on a blue couch. The child is looking intently at a laptop screen. A hand is visible on the left side of the frame, holding the laptop. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people on the couch.

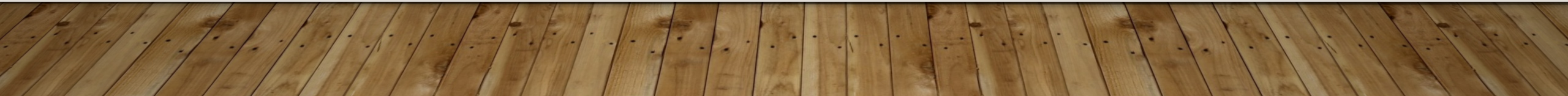
TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

SOME IDEAS FOR MAKING THE ONLINE EXPERIENCE WORK FOR GROUP PLAY THERAPY

- Look to structure and directive activities with a focus
- Prepare in advance!
- Enlist the help and support of parents
- Set up the structure and ensure supplies for activities are available and or mailed in advance.
- Provide instructions for parents (see handout)
- Keep it simple!

OTHER THOUGHTS TO HAVE YOUR GROUP SUCCESSFUL

- Utilize a platform that allows for a group to meet, screen sharing and white board
- Create a fun backdrop for your group session and ensure you have great lighting.
- Ensure your microphone provides clear sound without any background noise.
- Utilize the gallery view and instruct the children to set their view to gallery when you want everyone to see and be seen and then utilize the spotlight feature when you want all eyes on you and your screen. Go back and forth between gallery and spotlight view.
- Check in with each of the children and engage each one helping each to feel warmly welcomed and connected.
- Keep the group to between 6-10 children.
- Set up some group rules (one person talks at a time; everyone's feelings are allowed)
- Bring the fun! Be fun! Have fun! Fun is contagious





INTERVENTION IDEAS

SUPPLY LISTS AND PLAY PACKETS

- Provide parents in advance with a list of items they will need to help their child gather for sessions and keep all the items in a special bin along with what you send in your play packet if you send one.
- You may opt to mail a play packet which will be some basic items, maybe cut outs, fun-sheets, etc.
- Be sure the bin contains items for each session only so children are not too distracted with too many items.

ICEBREAKER GETTING TO KNOW YOU INTERVENTION

AGE 6 -18

- Give me 5 of your favorites!
 - Hand cut outs either prepped or sent in advance
 - Thin Sharpie

Thumb: What's your favorite snack?

Pointer finger: What's your favorite tv show or movie?

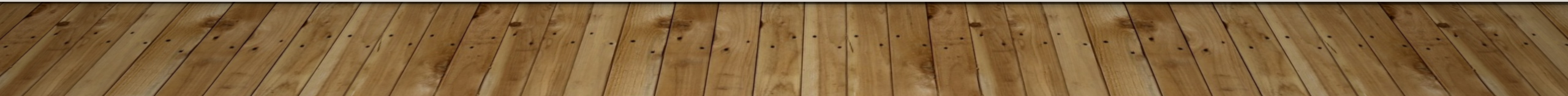
Middle finger: What's your favorite place to hang out?

Ring finger: What's your favorite game to play?

Pinky finger: What's your favorite animal?

Each child has a turn sharing their hand and after everyone puts their real hand up for a virtual high five!

HIGH FIVE WELCOME!



SHOW OR TELL GAME— AGES 6-18

- Spin a wheel (assign numbers to each group member) you can show on the screen whoever's number it lands on gets to choose **Show or Tell**
- Have a stack of cards you've made in advance (index cards) with age appropriate Tell challenges and Show challenges and pull from the stack after shuffling. Here are examples:
 - Tell a time you felt really frustrated with someone in your family
 - Show us an item from your house that is special to you
 - Tell a time you felt proud of something you accomplished
 - Show what your mad face looks like

MONSTER FINGER PUPPET MAKING –AGES 6-11

- Provide simple supplies in your play packet and as a group have everyone create a monster finger puppet
- Good for anxiety – worry monster – listening to what it has to say and talking back to it.
- <https://www.inspirationmadesimple.com/monster-finger-puppets/>

READ MY LIPS!

(THIS WILL HELP ENSURE KIDS ARE REALLY PAYING ATTENTION!) – ALL AGES

- One person will be sent privately a word or phrase through Zoom chat by the therapist. They will mute themselves (really important) and say that word or phrase into their camera and everyone will use chat box to type in what the group member was saying.
- First to guess it correctly, will be given 10 points.
- Goal is to let every person try one word or phrase. After each person has had a chance, the score will be tallied and the winner gets to choose the next activity! (have a list of choices – watch a fun video, do a coloring activity, play another game)

GROUP GROUNDING – ALL AGES!

- This is good at first of the group session and at the end.
- simple and effective *54321 Grounding Technique* that you can utilize to help your group members feel more focused and calm.
- Take a deep belly breath to begin.
- **5 – LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see, and write it down.
- **4 – FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and write it down
- **3 – LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds. Write it down.
- **2 – SMELL:** Say two things you can smell.
- **1 – TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste.
- Take another deep belly breath to end.
- Go around and ask group members to share what they saw, felt, heard, smelled and tasted

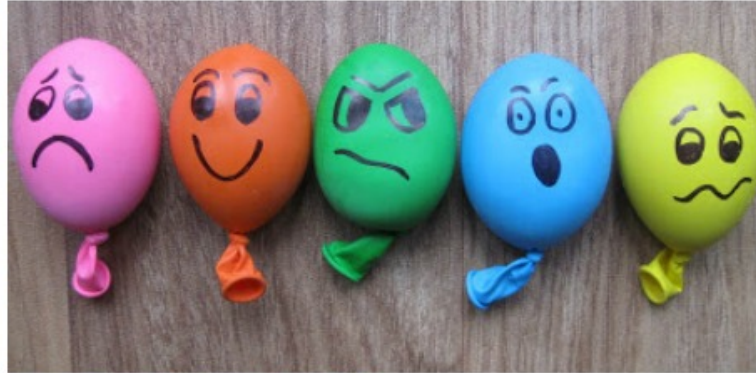
STORY ONLINE TIME – AGES 6-11

- Check out this video for group bibliotherapy and therapeutic discussion after watching and listening to the stories: <https://www.storylineonline.net/>

HOW BIG IS MY PROBLEM

- Teachers Pay Teachers downloadable \$1 at this link:
- <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Cart/Checkout/Done/133277880>
- Teaching children how to identify intensity of feelings but also objective measure of the degree of problem – can be used throughout the group for members to measure when sharing.

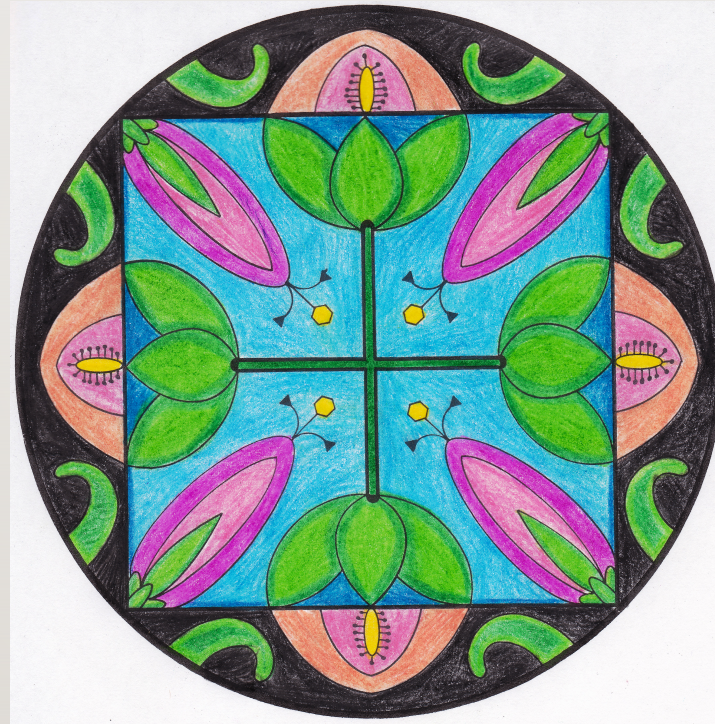
HOW BIG IS MY PROBLEM?		
5	Emergency -Earthquake, tornado, fire, or other danger -Broken bone -Someone's hurting you	I can: cry, scream, call for help, feel worried or scared
4	Gigantic -Hurt or bleeding -Parents are divorcing -Grandparent is very sick -Pet passed away	I can: cry, tell a teacher, go to the nurse, feel sad, worried or scared
3	Big -Someone didn't respect your personal space -Feel really sick -Someone is destroying your or classroom property	I can: tell a teacher, go to the nurse, feel frustrated or disappointed
2	Medium -Forgot homework -Argued with a friend -Someone was mean to you or is bugging you -Lost recess time	I can: take a break, use an i-message or a meaningful apology, feel irritated, frustrated or disappointed
1	Small -Got a toy taken away -Someone cut in front of you in line -Stuck on a problem or assignment -Working with someone you don't like	I can: take a deep breath, take a break, use an i-message, try a different strategy, feel irritated, frustrated or disappointed
0	Glitch -Don't have a pencil -The teacher didn't call on me -Not first in line	I can: borrow a pencil, feel disappointed



STRINGING UP MY FEELINGS – ALL AGES

- Circle or Square cutouts from construction paper (precut) with a hole at the top of each. Use colors red, yellow, blue, green, orange, pink, brown and black
- Yarn
- Thin sharpie
- On white board as a group brainstorm lots of different feelings
- Invite children to

MAKING MANDALAS & PROCESSING AS A GROUP ALL AGES APAPTABLE



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FOR PRE- TEENS/TWEENS

- Teens need three primary things to successfully embrace the group counseling alliance:
- sense of power, competence, and significance (Jones, 1980).
- **Power** is the notion that the teen sees him or herself as making a difference in the relationship or in the greater world.
- **Competence** is the teen's awareness of having talents, skills, or abilities that produce a product or promote goal achievement.
- **Significance** is the teen's sense of belonging and having been deemed an important member of the group.
- Citation: Jones, V. F. (1980). Adolescents with behavior problems: Strategies for teaching, counseling, and parent involvement. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

PAPER SACK STORY WITH TWEENS

- The use of collage allows for teens to attempt to explore feelings about one's self and bring awareness to their goals for change (Slyter, 2012).
- Magazines to cut out pictures and words; paper sacks, glue and scissors
- When bag is folded – flat sides are what everyone sees
- Bottom of the bag is what the person doesn't show most people about themselves
- The sides of the bag that can only be seen when the bag is open are the things the person has gone through that have been hard.
- The inside is for the things about the person or the person's life that they feel need to stay private for now.

THE MOST
IMPORTANT PART IS
YOUR AUTHENTIC
PRESENCE AND
CONNECTION WITH
THE CHILDREN



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