

# PLAY THERAPY

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# INTRODUCTION

- **Play therapy refers to a method of psychotherapy with children in which a therapist uses a child's fantasies and the symbolic meanings of his or her play as a medium for understanding and communication with the child**
- **To resolve psychological difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development. (Association for Play Therapy Board, March 1997)**

**Play therapy is the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained play therapist use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychological difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development. (Association for Play Therapy Board)**



# Indications:

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Children dealing with parental conflict, separation or divorce.

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Traumatized children (sexual, physical or emotional abuse)

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Children who have been adopted or are in foster care

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Children with social anxiety

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Children with school avoidance

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Children with low self-esteem

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Children who have experienced serious accidents or disasters.

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Children dealing with issues of loss

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Children who have been hospitalized

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Children who have witnessed domestic violence

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Children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder

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What else?



# Guiding Principles

- ▶ 1) forming a warm, friendly, therapeutic alliance with the child
- ▶ 2) accepting the child,
- ▶ 3) establishing a therapeutic environment that fosters permissiveness
- ▶ 4) recognizing and reflecting back the feelings the child expresses
- ▶ 5) recognizing and respecting the child's ability to solve their own problems
- ▶ 6) being nondirective and letting the child lead the therapy
- ▶ 7) recognizing that therapy is a gradual process, and
- ▶ 8) establishing limitations to anchor therapy in reality.



# IMPORTANCE

Play therapy is generally employed with children aged 3 through 11

It provides a way for them to express their experiences and feelings through a natural, self-guided, self-healing process.

Children's experiences and knowledge are often communicated through play,

It becomes an important vehicle for them to know and accept themselves and others.

# Displacement





- ▶ Develop a more positive self-concept
- ▶ Assume greater self-responsibility
- ▶ Become more self-accepting
- ▶ Become more self-directing
- ▶ Become more self-reliant
- ▶ Become more trusting of self
- ▶ Experience a feeling of control
- ▶ Become sensitive to the process of coping
- ▶ Develop an internal source of evaluation



- ✓ **Engage in self-determined decision making**
- **Reduces anxiety about traumatic events in the child life**
- **Facilitates a child expression of feelings**
- **Promotes self-confidence and a sense of competence**
- **Defines healthy boundaries**
- **Creates or enhances healthy bonding in relationships**
- **Enhances creativity and playfulness**
- **Promotes appropriate behavior.**
- **Develops a sense of trust in self and others**

All emotions are important, valid, and allowed





CALL OF DUTY  
**WARZONE**  
MOBILE



# Skill Strengthening

- ▶ Cognitive Skills
- ▶ Social Skills
- ▶ Self-esteem
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Motor skills

# Case Study



# Therapist Skills

- ▶ Body Posture
- ▶ Appearing interested and relaxed
- ▶ Expression and Tone Congruency
- ▶ Succinct Responses
- ▶ Rate of responses
- ▶ Tracking Behaviors



# Phases of play therapy

- **Introduction phase.** During this phase the child will be getting used to the play therapist, the playroom, and the play therapy process. The more shy or anxious the child is, the more difficult this period may be.
- **Tentative Acceptance:** This stage begins after one to several sessions and is the period when the child feels eager to go to counselling . Parents start noticing some positive changes.
- As play therapy begins some changes occur. these changes are necessary, and may not be easy. Initially, change makes all of us uncomfortable. This is called the **Negative Reaction** phase. Some children pass through this phase with virtually no problems.
- **Growth** This is the most important and, usually the longest, part of the play therapy process



Tentative  
Acceptance

## Techniques

- ▶ Non-directive
- ▶ Directive





# NON DIRECTIVE PLAY THERAPY

**Non-directive play therapy is a non-intrusive method in which children are encouraged to work toward their own solutions to problems through play.**

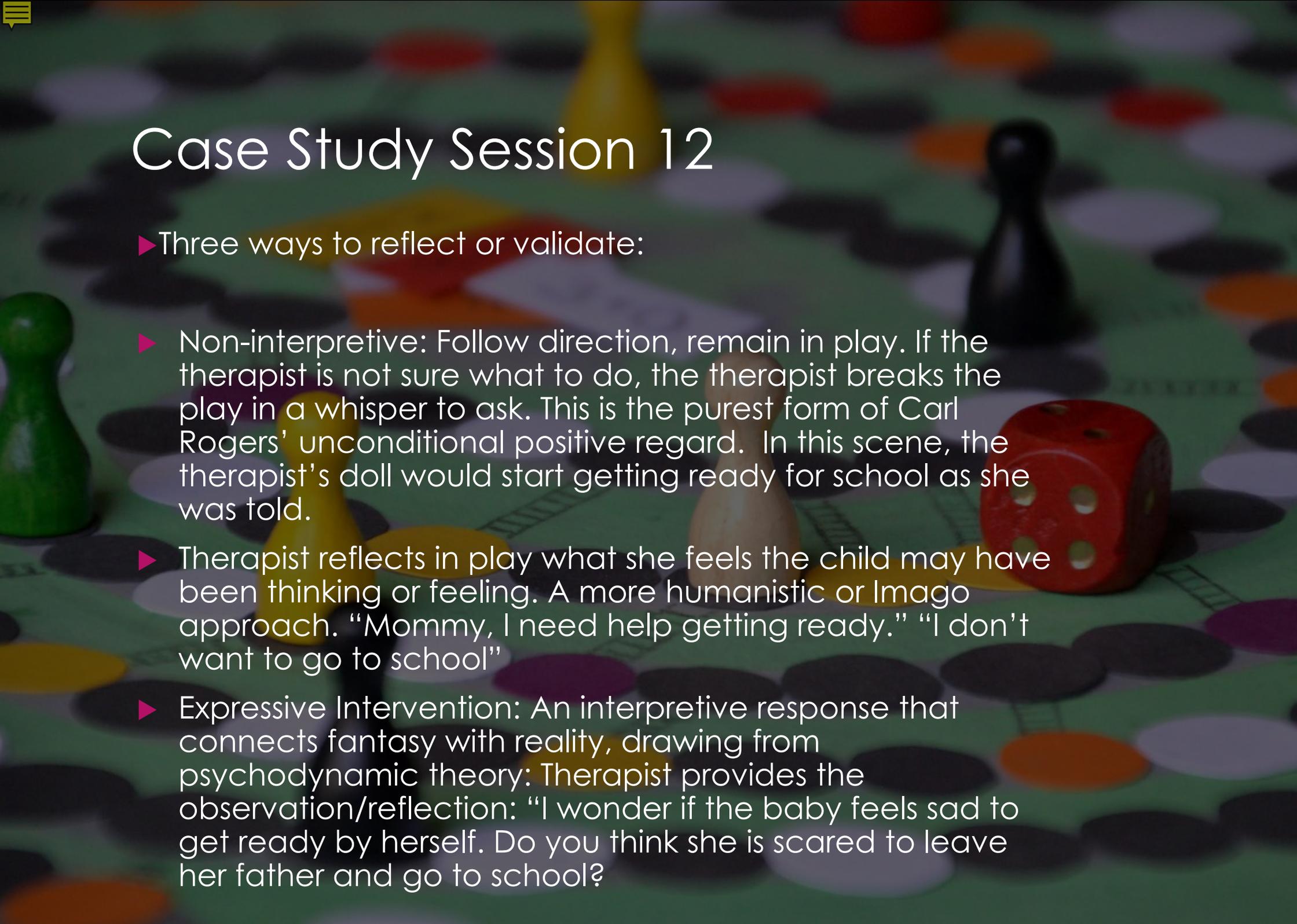
**It is typically classified as a psychodynamic therapy.**



# Reflecting Content



# Reflecting Feelings

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of a chessboard. The board is covered with various chess pieces, including a green pawn, a yellow pawn, a black pawn, and a red die. The pieces are scattered across the board, which has a pattern of light and dark squares. The lighting is soft, and the colors are slightly muted, giving it a calm and thoughtful atmosphere.

# Case Study Session 12

- ▶ Three ways to reflect or validate:
  - ▶ Non-interpretive: Follow direction, remain in play. If the therapist is not sure what to do, the therapist breaks the play in a whisper to ask. This is the purest form of Carl Rogers' unconditional positive regard. In this scene, the therapist's doll would start getting ready for school as she was told.
  - ▶ Therapist reflects in play what she feels the child may have been thinking or feeling. A more humanistic or Imago approach. "Mommy, I need help getting ready." "I don't want to go to school"
  - ▶ Expressive Intervention: An interpretive response that connects fantasy with reality, drawing from psychodynamic theory: Therapist provides the observation/reflection: "I wonder if the baby feels sad to get ready by herself. Do you think she is scared to leave her father and go to school?"



# DIRECTIVE PLAY THERAPY

- **Directive play therapy is a method that includes more structure and guidance by the therapist as children work through emotional and behavioral difficulties through play.**

Typically the therapist will give a project or a prompt: i.e.

Draw a picture of your family

Set up the sand tray to show me your best day at school

Let's make a collage of your favorite things





# Facilitates:



Exploration



Discovery



Decision Making



Creativity



Growth

# Room Setup

- **The necessary elements within the play room are: the child, the therapist, the relationship formed by the child and therapist, the play therapy room and the play room contents.**
- **The play therapy space is usually set up in a particular and predictable way. Therapist should set out the toys prior to the child's arrival if possible**
- **Within the room, there are a wide range of expressive tool and toys.**

# Great toys to have

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**craft materials**

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**dress-ups and masks**

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**musical instruments**

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**Puppets**

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**toy animals**

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**toy weapons and military characters,**

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**Superheroes**

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**Books**

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**Vehicles**

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**building blocks**

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**Dollhouse**

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**dolls,**

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**Balls**

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**Play-doh**

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**Food**

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**Medical instruments**

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**What else?**

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## Termination

Termination phase. The final stage of therapy begins when you and the parent(s) are confident that behavioral and emotional functioning are stable enough to maintain what the child has accomplished

This can be both an exciting and difficult time. the end of therapy is a sign of success, it is also the ending of the therapeutic relationship.



# Cultural Awareness



Important to be sensitive and aware of the cultural diversity of the children and families you are working with.

Dolls, puppets, toys to reflect diversity in culture, age, physical ability, gender, whenever possible.

Same for other toys such as food items, home items, clothing,

There are challenges that come into conflict with some of the common play therapy goals, such as returning the responsibility to the client, and interpretation

# ADVANTAGES OF PLAY THERAPY

- ❖ **Helps overcome resistance to therapy**
- ❖ **Increases communication and socialization**
- ❖ **Strengthens quality attachments, enhance relationships**
- ❖ **Gives a child confidence, and dealing with fears**
- ❖ **Enhance relationship with family**

## DISADVANTAGES

- ▶ Requires long-term commitment
- ▶ Children might not like it
- ▶ Children with behavioral difficulties or trauma may respond in an aggressive way
- ▶ Can cause temporary stress and anxiety





Research

# References and Resources

## Directive Play Therapy

### Theories and Techniques

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- Boswell, Jennifer N., PhD, LPC-S, NCC, RPT

- Raising Cain: Protecting the emotional life of boys, by Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson

## Aggression in Pretend Play and Aggressive Behavior in the Classroom

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- Early Education and Development, Volume 24

- Slideshare: Play Therapy by Nimisha Chacko [https://www.slideshare.net/nimishachacko1/play-therapy-238974871?from\\_search=1](https://www.slideshare.net/nimishachacko1/play-therapy-238974871?from_search=1)

- An Introduction to child-centered play <https://adpca.org/article/pcj25/pcj25-an-introduction-to-child-centered-play-therapy/>

- Play Therapy, the Art of the Relationship, by Gary Landreth